
Representation and Self-representation

Archaeology and Ethnology Museums and Indigenous Peoples in Brazil

Marília Xavier Cury and Rebeca Ribeiro Bombonato

■ **ABSTRACT:** The article analyzes experiences in archaeology and ethnology museums in Brazil that promote collaborative actions with Indigenous peoples involving studies of collections, exhibitions, preventive conservation, and collection management policies. We reflect on how these practices supplant thoughts and practices of the past concerning Indigenous rights, especially those related to the dialogic relations between Indigenous people and museum professionals, and the inherent conflicts, disputes and negotiations involved in decision-making. We rely on published articles, documentation of exhibitions, and testimonies from Indigenous people to understand the development of and contributions to collaborative processes, presenting reflections on experiments that point us to circumstances and possibilities of joint/shared activities from representation to self-representation as expressions of the active participation of Indigenous peoples in museums.

■ **KEYWORDS:** archaeology and ethnology museums, collaboration in museums, Indigenous peoples, self-representation

Collaborative museology with Indigenous groups is at the center of the discussion in this article. Special attention is paid to curatorship in archaeology and ethnology/anthropology museums, based on processes implemented from the 1970s onward prompted by the activism of Indigenous peoples. It was the Indigenous movement in search of the objects of their ancestors that led them to the museum. But collaborative museology favors Indigenous self-representations in the museum, sometimes reaffirming Indigenous logics in the museum space, at other times sharing perspectives with mainstream representation. Collaboration is a positive response from the museum to joint work with Indigenous groups.

Collaboration, whose application takes place in different fields, is a method that is developed between researchers and populations, or groups involved in research and, in the museum, in actions around collections formed in the past or in formation in the present. It promotes dialogic relationships between contemporary agents from academia, museums, and identity groups, subjects whose cultural interests as well as fundamental and human rights are related to the museum's archaeological and ethnographic heritage. It consists of always unique dynamic and



experimental processes based on particular circumstances, which opens possibilities for work and joint construction of original knowledge, in dialogue with the global.

Collaborative processes result from theoretical-epistemological transformations that have been taking place for decades. The new museology, whose initial steps took place in the 1960s, plays an important role, mainly because it pays attention to the social function of the museum and to participation in musealization (Desvallées and Mairesse 2010). It is not by chance that from the 1960s onward there were civil rights movements, as well as a strong criticism of museums and their elitist, centralized, and barely dialogic forms. Not only were the representations being questioned, but also the interpretation, in the singular, since the different visions and vocalities were gaining more and more social weight. The museum begins to change in its relationship with its audiences, but it also starts to consider the “others,” including Indigenous peoples. Alongside the idea of the “other” revisited, a deep anthropological review takes place in the relationship between researcher and the other, overcoming the position of the researcher speaking for the other (Fabian 2019).

It is in this revisionist dynamism that collaboration takes shape(s) and expands, as other relationships would need to be established between museologists, anthropologists, archaeologists, other museum professionals, and traditional populations and Indigenous peoples.

We must mention Canada, where the ideal of the Western museum, strongly linked to both the idea of nation and the expression of national public policies, was manifested by the methods of formation for collections for Canadian and European museums, including controlling and inhuman colonial practices and theories of social evolution that reinforced western superiority (Onciul 2015). In this context, intense debates with Indigenous peoples took place in anthropology museums, without forgetting that such discussions were driven by Indigenous claims in the face of constant threats to rights over their lands (Ames 1992). The document “Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships between Museums and First Peoples” (TFMFP 1992) was then formalized and was the result of discussions between the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Museum Association. We can see in this process the strength of dialogic relationships and their complexity.

The strength of public policies, however, led museums to profoundly reformulate their practices, bringing dialogic relations with Indigenous peoples into the daily routine of curatorship. This was the case of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA 1990). This law provoked transformations in anthropology and archaeology museums in the United States. NAGPRA provides guidance on the return of human remains¹ and three types of objects—funerary, sacred, and cultural heritage—to lineal descendants, Indigenous peoples, and Hawaiian organizations, applicable to institutions that receive federal funding (Bombonato 2020; Nash and Colwell 2020). For the first time, punishments are mentioned for violating the guidelines presented or even for trafficking, although the tools for the application of such punishments are not specified, a weak aspect of the legislation. However, state museums as well as those maintained with public resources follow the law, as do most research institutions in North America. It is important to remember that NAGPRA has had repercussions in many other countries, and its capacity for guiding and mediating conflict should not be ignored.

The legislation has provided Indigenous peoples with access to objects of their ancestors, objects sacred to their cosmologies, and the repatriation of their ancestors in a way that was previously not possible: NAGPRA pushed museums into an era of recognition of the agency and individuality of Indigenous peoples. The law also contributed to the improvement of different forms of collaboration between museums and Indigenous peoples. The development of collaborative principles, the recognition of Indigenous protagonism, and the inclusion of new knowledge and practices involving active community participation in the museum—regarding

objects from cultural groups collected through different guidelines and criteria under the custody museums today—are also closely linked to the practical effects that NAGPRA has achieved over its thirty years of existence.

João Pacheco de Oliveira and Rita de Cássia Santos (2019: 8) say Indigenous participation in museums should not be seen as a concession by the holders of hegemonic narratives but rather corresponds to a process in which these populations exercised their right to self-representation. If the resistance of Indigenous peoples is recognized, the museums and their teams are prepared to act in this new “methodological place.” The more prepared museums are, the more effective interactions with Indigenous peoples will be; the more museums open up, the greater and better the possibilities for Indigenous people to represent themselves by their own means, that is, self-representation (Onciul 2015).

In the interdisciplinary fields of museology and anthropology, Michael Ames (1992) made a lasting contribution to the discussions based on the experience of the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. James Clifford (1997) discusses “contact zones” between Indigenous groups and professionals in the museum and the challenges of joint work with historical museum collections as a result of contemporary issues. On the other hand, Christina Kreps (2003) sees curatorship in museums operating through Western and non-Western approaches, including the work of Indigenous curators. Lastly, *Museum Frictions* edited by Ivan Karp and others (2006) presented local cases and new critical debates and reflected on the intersection of theory and practice in dialogue with the global.

In the interface between museology and archaeology, which is strongly present in the museum, we can highlight the reflexes that arise from NAGPRA in the US. For some authors (e.g., Chari and Lavalée 2013; Graham and Murphy 2010), NAGPRA made it possible to strengthen Indigenous people in the face of the recovery of their heritage and led museums to turn their attention to the criticisms and concerns of Indigenous people. However, one of the greatest advances that NAGPRA has brought to museology and archaeology is, according to Megan Highet (2005), how human remains began to be treated. Before the passage of NAGPRA, the legislation dealing with objects found in archaeological excavations was the American Antiquities Act of 1906, which in turn defined Indigenous human remains found on federal lands as “objects of antiquity” and not individuals (Highet 2005) or human beings (Pereira and Melo 2020). To Chip Colwell (2019): “This law [NAGPRA], although imperfect, has facilitated the return of some 1.7 million grave goods, 57,000 skeletons and 15,000 sacred and communally owned objects.”

Actions with Indigenous peoples require methods. Colwell and Rafael Lopes (2020: 45) see in the collaboration methodology “an act of decolonization” when dealing with archaeology. In stating that collaboration is an end, the authors draw our attention to the risks of the methodology which when used as a means to this end may actually strengthen colonialist structures. Driven by Indigenous activism in the 1970s, collaboration is understood as a:

continuous process of working together with communities of descendants. To this end, a four-step process would involve (1) forming a group of co-researchers; (2) create conditions for co-learning; (3) act on questions; and (4) building meaning by building knowledge in a group. (Bray et al. 2000). (Colwell and Lopes 2020: 44)²

Starting from discussions that involve Indigenous participation in museum curating through collaboration, this article aims to bring up questions generated by Brazilian experiences. The central axis of the article is dialogic relationships and how they are processed, in the hope of better understanding how museums and their teams have been adapting to the decolonial agenda.

Collaboration in Archaeology and Ethnology Museums in Brazil

In Brazil, the 1988 Constitution inaugurated a new period for the relationship between the state and Indigenous peoples through articles 231 and 232, guaranteeing cultural, spiritual, social organization, and land rights. Democratization in the 1980s also put social issues in the foreground, and cultural policies began to receive significant investments. The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions of 2005 gained weight in Latin America, the Caribbean and in Brazil. During the government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and the administration of Minister of Culture Gilberto Gil, followed by Juca Ferreira, the concept of culture was expanded.

For Américo Córdoba, the scope of the Convention is great, such as Law 10.639/2003 on the compulsory teaching of Afro-Brazilian history and culture, and Law 11.645/2008, which also took the teaching of Indigenous history and culture to primary and secondary education. For him: “When we defend Indigenous reserves, we are applying the convention that Congress ratified”³ (Barros 2009: 51) by Legislative Decree 485/2006. Several public notices were issued by the Secretariat for Cultural Identity and Diversity, a strategy adopted for the democratization of access to public resources within the Cultural Identity and Diversity: Brazil Plural program (Menezes et al. 2009).

At the museum level, the National Museum Policy (Brasil 2003) and Law No. 11,906 (Brasil 2009) guides museums, in their broadest sense, toward participatory planning and other forms of citizen inclusion. Museums have begun to move away from classical models and pay attention to the idea of “new museums” shaped by the new museology (Desvallées and Mairesse 2010), in which museum processes and techniques are seen as social practices with their recognized complexity (Brasil 2007). In this new inclusive approach museums engage with both community organizations and Indigenous museums.

As well as these changing public policies, it is worth remembering the seminar “On Indigenous Experiences with Museums and Cultural Centers” at the National Museum of Brazil in Rio de Janeiro in September 2009, coordinated by João Pacheco de Oliveira. With the participation of Indigenous representations, public sectors, and other institutions, this seminar aimed at the:

creation and operation of an articulation network between ethnographic museums and Indigenous cultural centers, aimed at strengthening Indigenous protagonism in the reflection and implementation of proposals for valuing and disseminating these cultures. (Oliveira and Santos 2019: 15)⁴

As a result, the book *De acervos coloniais aos museus indígenas: Formas de protagonismo e de construção da ilusão museal* was launched, edited by Oliveira and Santos (2019).

In Indigenous museums, the guidelines for fundamental and constitutional rights (articles 231 and 232) are intertwined with their sustainability challenges in a given territory. Museums, mostly public in Brazil, cannot neglect Indigenous rights, and these rights aimed at musealization. Indigenous peoples in Brazil have the right to participate in federal, state, and municipal museums and those benefiting from public resources.

As we have argued, collaboration in the museum opened methodological paths for joint projects and activities to be carried out with Indigenous people and other heirs of historic cultural heritage held in museums, remembering that the 1988 Constitution breaks with the idea of guardianship and guarantees Indigenous people their autonomy and differentiated rights to school and health and, why not, to the museum. Conflicts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Brazil are centuries old. Archaeological and ethnographic heritage is part

of this historical relationship and collaboration can contribute to overcoming and reconciling conflict over this heritage through dialogic curatorship.

Collaboration is still an expanding practice. However, limitations, challenges, and concerns persist, but contributions and advances are aimed at creating new thoughts and developing new museum practices. In other words, we need to practice collaboration, but we need to study it as practiced. On the other hand, collaboration is not a guarantee of self-representation, but it can achieve it. In this sense, Aramis Luis Silva (2020: 49) proposes to reframe self-representation:

as a new object of representation of the museological field, that is, a meta-object of socially recognizable forms, derived from a specific social technology, whose operational logic and practical effects of its possible modes of use still call for more detailed investigations.⁵

Among so many issues, this article focuses on processes in archaeology and ethnology museums in Brazil that involve the methodology of collaboration with Indigenous groups. To this end, it is organized into themes such as preventive conservation, curation of collections, and exhibitions. We then discuss the potential of the method as a dialogic construction, that is, we want to learn from the experiences of authors in order to understand and theorize about museum practices.

Thought and Practice: The Permanence of Representation and the Emergence of Self-representation

Since the 1970s, archeologists have been involved in research in collaboration with Indigenous peoples. Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh and T. J. Ferguson (2008) remind us that collaboration is not a uniform idea—or practice—but constitutes a varied range of strategies and actions that seek to connect archaeological research with different participants who are working together. It is by thinking about these different actions aimed at Indigenous representation and self-representation through collaborative practices that we draw on Brazilian experiences to contribute to this global debate.

Many archaeological and ethnographic collections in Brazilian museums were formed more than a century ago by various agents and researchers from the institutions themselves in the past 50 years. Even so, not all of them were created from the direct actions of the museum, as is the case of the Xikrin-Kayapó ethnographic collection, now under the guardianship of the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology of the University of São Paulo (MAE-USP). Formed during anthropological research for more than 20 years by the anthropologist Lux Boelitz Vidal with the Xikrin-Kayapó—people who inhabit the Serra de Carajás region (Pará)—this collection was donated to MAE-USP in 2001 (Gordon and Silva 2005). In 2004, two Xikrin men were chosen by the Indigenous community themselves to work on the description of the pieces and on clarifying ethnographic questions at MAE-USP. Anthropologist-collector Lux Vidal participated in these exchanges, building with the Indigenous people a discourse about the collection, with some divergences among the participants, as part of the dialogic process (2005: 99). In addition to generating new knowledge about the collection, questions about the conservation of the objects were also raised. The MAE-USP Conservation and Restoration Laboratory works with a preventive conservation policy, but during the work with the Xikrin, they retouched and restored parts of the objects in order to improve them, coupling their own vision to conservation procedures (100).

The same museum has been involved, since 2010, with the Asurini of the Xingu (Pará), initially through the project “Territory and history of the Asurini of the Xingu,” aiming to understand the historical process of occupation of the territory of the Koatinemo Indigenous Land.

The collection formed by the project was directed to MAE-USP, which in 2017 invited Myrá and Matuja Asurini, two Asurini potters with great knowledge of the history, way of life, and ceramic techniques of the Asurini, to participate in the conservation and restoration of vessels rescued in 2013. During the project, the potters discussed with each other and with the museum professionals the types of vessels and marks present in each one, trying to identify which marks should be removed/restored and which should be kept. These actions were carried out considering the principles of preventive conservation (preserving the original form), curative (which suspends the harmful processes present in the objects), or restorative (which improves the readability, understanding, and use of these objects), allowing the construction of an Asurini discourse on the conservation and restoration of ceramics from their culture (Lima and Silva 2021: 300).

Visits by Indigenous peoples to museum technical reserves or collection stores—often in university museums—are among the main forms of interaction between museums and Indigenous people in Brazil. The Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Federal University of Bahia (MAE-UFBA) has a collection of objects from the Kamayurá people formed by the anthropologist Pedro Agostinho in the 1960s. The MAE-UFBA received a technical visit from three Kamayurá researchers with the aim of getting to know the collection and museum processes as part of the “Kamayurá Archives” project. The museum prepared for this visit through a series of activities to deepen the knowledge of the team about the Kamayurá people, among the main ones were a workshop on material culture of the upper Xingu, the preparation of “Guia para a documentação das coleções etnográficas do MAE-UFBA” (Guide for the documentation of the ethnographic collections of the MAE-UFBA) and a “Linha do tempo da coleção Pedro Agostinho” (Timeline of the Pedro Agostinho collection) (Santana and Vasconcelos 2021: 95). Both the guide and the timeline produced for the workshop were also presented to the Kamayurá themselves.

In addition to this requalification⁶ of the collections, partnerships between Indigenous people and museums can be found in the management of collections, in order to respect the needs and desires of these peoples, as is the case with the updating of the archaeology technical reserve of the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi (Pará). For years, museums left funerary materials in its reserves—and in exhibitions—without any differentiation in relation to other objects. The Goeldi Museum’s archaeological collection is an important testimony to the Indigenous history of the Amazon and has numerous funerary materials. The new Mario Ferreira Simões Technical Reserve had its area increased to also include a separate room outside the visitors’ viewing area, so as to respect Indigenous feelings and values. This place was reserved for housing sensitive collections (Lima and Barreto 2020: 50). In addition, the museum also developed the *Kuikuro do Alto Xingu* Ethnoarchaeological Project, through which the Kuikuro worked with the collections of the new reserve, with the aim of studying the objects, in order to understand the transformations of material culture over time (Lima and Barrett 2020).

However, collaboration between Indigenous peoples and museums encompasses other processes and actions that go beyond the requalification and conservation of collections. The Indigenous voice in the museum must be more than a collaborator for the generation of knowledge about objects in the collections, capable of reaching the audiences that visit the museum. The exhibition *Nhande Mbya Reko: Nosso jeito de ser Guarani* (*Nhande Mbya Reko: Our way of being Guarani*) at the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Federal University of Paraná (MAE-UFPR) can be seen as focusing primarily on the expographic development in collaboration with five Mbya Guarani communities—linked together by kinship relations, collaboration, and common political struggle—and eventually in the incorporation of new objects produced by the participating communities. Although it was not initiated as an exhibition proposal, but was rather aimed at the construction of a collection with Indigenous objects for the museum

(which lacked objects of regional origin), after some meetings between museum professionals and representatives of the Mbya Guarani, mostly couples in leadership positions, everyone opted for the development of a collaborative exhibition (Pérez Gil 2021). The meetings took place both in the communities themselves and in the museum with the aim of defining the themes of the exhibition, the narrative, floor plan, visual identity, and objects (Pérez Gil et al. 2020). The theme defined by the Indigenous people was handicrafts, mainly due to the need to value this type of work done by the Indigenous people, with special attention paid to the different purposes of the objects—some created for sale, others developed for the daily use of the Mbya Guarani, and others still linked to the spirituality—with some being produced by the communities participating in the project. Although a description of the steps and activities related to the development of the exhibition may convey the idea of a simple and conflict-free process, we must not forget that such collaborative actions constitute a continuous process of negotiation. In this way, the exhibition becomes a contact zone, a space for dialogue where different stories and meanings meet (Pérez Gil 2021).

Still in southern Brazil, one of the experiences that took place at the Professor Oswaldo Rodrigues Cabral Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at the Federal University of Santa Catarina was related to the process of developing the exhibition *Tecendo saberes pelos caminhos Guarani, Kaingang e Xokleng-Laklãnõ* (Weaving knowledge through the Guarani, Kaingang, and Xokleng-Laklãnõ) with the Guarani, Kaingang, and Xokleng-Laklãnõ (Santa Catarina). As for the requalification of collections for the exhibition, the composition of the participating group was very important. The groups of Indigenous people for this work included elders, young people, children, and Indigenous teachers, who discussed the know-how of objects in the museum's technical reserve, generating new and updated records and producing new objects for the museum, such that the museum became yet another place of new forms of learning for Indigenous people (Lopes et al. 2019) and for the team of professionals. With a clear curatorial position that valued the views of the groups involved, “listening has become an act of extreme relevance. Aiming at the plurality of discourse and believing that the producers of memory should be responsible for telling their own story, listening was, in fact, an essential act”⁷ (2019: 93).

As on many occasions in which Indigenous people visit the museum, the collaborative work involving MAE-UFPR's Xetá collection was an important demonstration that the community's reunion with their ancestors brings to the surface rather sensitive memories and remembrances. For this reason, many issues need to be treated mindfully, considering the emotion that is present for whoever participates:

It is important to note that in most of these moments our main task is to interfere as little as possible, as memories and feelings are, in most cases, very sensitive and personal. And it is all these conversations and testimonies that permeate the visits that make us, MAE employees, see the collection in a very different way after everyone leaves. Not just because we know better the uses and meanings of the pieces we come into contact with on a daily basis, but because we humanize them, so to speak. We came to understand them as part of the growth of the people who passed through here, their kinship relationships and their belonging to an identity that, against all odds, still persists.⁸ (Freire and Carmo 2019: 109)

Numerous issues can be addressed regarding the relationships involved in collaboration. But we want to highlight the lessons learned by the museum and its teams, as they are responsible for the changes in museological, archaeological, and anthropological ideas and practices. Such learnings involve a large part of the institution, thinking about organization, planning and management, but also those who work at the museum, indeed the entire staff, and each individual. To this end, the museum exhibition becomes a great strategy for transformation, as no other museum

practice involves the entire structure of the institution as much as it does. In a collaborative exhibition this can be realised, as seen in the case of the exhibition *Resistência Já! Fortalecimento e União das Culturas Indígenas: Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa e Terena* (*Resistance now! Strengthening and union of Indigenous cultures: Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa, and Terena*) at MAE-USP. The curatorship of this exhibition was developed in an interdisciplinary way between various sectors of the of the institution: museology and museological communication, education, archaeology, conservation, and administration and with various technical (expography, museum education, documentation, conservation) and administrative (management and direction, finance, accounting, purchase, maintenance, informatics) sectors. During the process, several opportunities were created for interaction between Indigenous people and museum employees, in a way which effectively favored only dialogic relationships, friendships, and respect. All the employees' dedication to the organization of the work, from the administrative, technical, and academic point of view, was recognized and acknowledged by the Indigenous people (Cury 2019a), who in turn left several teachings with their knowledge, contextualization, guidelines, requests, alerts, and the like.

In this exhibition process, we can highlight some points that emphatically contest museological thinking and museography. In collaboration, visibility becomes fundamental for Indigenous peoples in their political struggles for constitutional and human rights. A museum and an exhibition fully meet this demand; it is not by chance that work with Indigenous people in the museum begin with or become an exhibition. Added to the visibility is the investment that Indigenous people make in dialogue with non-Indigenous people, which the museum favors with its visitation structure. Through exposure and educational actions, self-representation becomes an institutional reality, meeting the demand to “talk about oneself,” “research one’s own culture using one’s own resources,” and, based on one’s ancestors, speak of the Indigenous reality and present, overcoming views that leave them in the past.

The exhibition with the three Indigenous groups took place in the Araribá, Icatu, and Vanuíre Indigenous Lands (São Paulo) and at MAE-USP, bringing together different generations (elderly, young people, children) and leaders (chiefs, shamans, Indigenous teachers). The composition of the participants was defined by each group. It was important for the MAE-USP team to get to know the Indigenous Lands, as well as to present their work at MAE to the Indigenous people.

An essential part of the collaborative process is the recognition by the museum of the Indigenous right to repatriation. Crawford and Jackson (2020: 80) comment on the museum’s sense of ownership towards objects under their care, especially when those objects were obtained “under less than a bilateral or multilateral relationship”. On this issue, Françaço (2013: 455–456) states that two common assumptions are that Indigenous peoples want to repatriate all of their heritage—thereby emptying museums—and that the repatriation of cultural property is the only way for former colonial empires to do historical justice to exploited populations. But neither of those assumptions considers collaborative approaches.

The exhibition process in which the Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa, and Terena were involved led to the requalification of many collections (Cury 2019a) currently under the care of MAE-USP. The Indigenous partners were invited to take part in this requalification, which has provided new and unusual information for the museum (Cury 2021). This reunion of the Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa, and Terena with their old objects was much closer to the feelings of gratitude previously expressed by Freire and Carmo (2019) for the professional care dedicated to those objects. In this case, the museum understands that, even though requests for repatriation are yet to be lodged, it will always be a possibility since it is their right to do so.

The most profound lessons, however, were to do with spirituality, as among the Indigenous participants were the shamans of the Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa, and Terena. Information

about sacred objects—from shamans, rituals, human remains—was passed on, as we received guidance on how to keep them in the technical reserve, what may or may not be exposed, and the information that must be kept secret. A Terena sacred object was restored by artisans from this group, with the support of the shamans and the authorization of the enchanted ones. The enchanted ones, in turn, conducted the collaborative work, always communicating through the shamans and bringing us the curatorial precepts of the spiritual world (Cury 2019b, 2020a).

As important as the sacred, other aspects were discussed with the Indigenous people, such as repatriation and human remains in museums (Cury 2020b). Regarding human remains, *Kujá* (shaman) Dirce Jorge and her assistant Suilene Elias de Melo, both Kaingang from the Vanuire Indigenous Land, recorded their positions (Pereira and Melo 2020), inaugurating Indigenous authorship among the groups of participants, meeting the claim to “speak for itself,” reinforcing self-representation, and addressing that representation will persist in museums as a form of intercultural dialogue.

Susan Pearce (1999) says objects in museums are polysemantic and can have different meanings that can be reelaborated by different actors at any time. Such a plurality of meanings and discourses is evidenced when museums recognize the importance of multivocality and self-representation by Indigenous peoples through their musealized objects. These and other experiences have highlighted the particularities of the interactions between Indigenous peoples and museums; the way in which each Indigenous people appropriate the institution and the objects musealized by them with their own cultural prerogatives, histories, and ontologies; and the way in which museums, by an active effort, commit themselves to transform their practices and protocols which have become so sedimented over time (Cury 2019a, 2021).

Final Thoughts

The political role of museums is undeniable, especially in terms of the valorization of museum heritage in these institutions. Part of this political character is linked to its high visibility through exhibitions, but also through different projects with new participants—as is the case with Indigenous peoples. However, it is important that the different Indigenous groups who work with museums actually have a voice of their own, with the museum recognizing, then, that it is at the service of their Indigenous political agendas, contributing to social dialogue through self-representation.

New legislation, the result of decades of struggles for recognition, enables Indigenous empowerment while forcing museums to be attentive to social demands. In this new scenario, the museum must recognize—and engage in—the need for practices such as the requalification of collections, the recontextualization of objects, the encounter of Indigenous people with their ancestors, dialogues between different generations, and Indigenous visions (young, old, chiefs, shamans, teachers, etc.) through museum objects.

The musealization of Indigenous objects must be understood as something at the service of memory processes and Indigenous identities, in order to contribute to their self-representation, integrating their past-present-future. In addition to a new way of understanding the objects already in the museum’s custody, new objects are also incorporated and musealized. The participation of Indigenous people as researchers of their own cultures, acting directly within the process of musealization, contributes to their self-representation, which in turn should be seen as a right and legacy for future generations.

Collaboration between museums and Indigenous peoples also has significant impacts on teams of professionals working in museums, who need to learn to work with self-representation, providing the institutional infrastructure for this purpose. In these new dynamics, it is necessary for museum teams to manage without overlapping, in order to provide an intercultural approach between representation and self-representation. On the part of museum professionals, it is necessary to develop respect for Indigenous peoples, their logic, historical narratives, feelings, values, visions, and social and political organization.

The museum as an institution is responsible for a reelaboration of new museological thoughts based on joint actions with Indigenous groups, as well as a reorganization of museum practices. Finally, through these new theories and practices, we envisage a necessary process of building new ethics that involve the relationship between museums and Indigenous peoples.

■ **MARÍLIA XAVIER CURY** is Museum Studies Researcher and Associate Professor in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at the University of São Paulo. Her research focuses on critical museology, social museology, and collaborative museology on topics such as museological communication, expography, heritage and museum education, museological reception and evaluation, and participation and collaboration/cooperation in museums. Since 2010 she has dedicated herself to a collaborative research action with Indigenous peoples, recognizing the contributions of Indigenous peoples in the constitution of the idea of a museum and in the development of museology.
Email: maxavier@usp.br. ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4661-9525>.

■ **REBECA RIBEIRO BOMBONATO** is a PhD candidate at the Graduate Program in Archaeology in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at the University of São Paulo, under the guidance of Professor Marília X. Cury. She graduated in Geosciences and Environmental Education and has a master's in Museum Studies from the University of São Paulo. Her research focuses on the Indigenous protagonism through self-representation exhibitions in archaeology, ethnology, and history museums. ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4537-9387>.

■ NOTES

1. All translations are by the authors unless otherwise noted. Please note: in Brazil the term *remanescentes humanos* (human remnant) is used, given that the word *restos* (as in *restos humanos*, or human remains) has a pejorative meaning.
2. “[C]ontínuo processo de trabalho conjunto com comunidades de descendentes. Para isso, um processo de quatro passos envolveria (1) formar um grupo de copesquisadores; (2) criar condições de coaprendizado; (3) atuar nos questionamentos; e (4) construir significado ao construir conhecimento em grupo (Bray et al. 2000)” (Colwell and Lopes 2020: 44).
3. “Quando defendemos reservas indígenas, estamos aplicando a convenção que o Congresso ratificou” (Barros 2009: 51).
4. “[C]riação e a operacionalização de uma rede de articulação entre museus etnográficos e centros culturais indígenas, voltada para fortalecer o protagonismo indígena na reflexão e na implementação de propostas de valorização e divulgação dessas culturas” (Oliveira and Santos 2019: 15).
5. “[C]omo um novo objeto de representação do campo museológico, isto é, um metaobjeto de formas socialmente reconhecíveis, derivado de uma específica tecnologia social, cuja lógica de operação e efeitos práticos dos seus possíveis modos de uso ainda reclamam por investigações mais detalhadas” (Silva 2020: 49).

6. “Requalification of collections” is the re-evaluation of an object’s meanings and adding of information to the documentation of collection objects by Indigenous peoples. This term is mostly used by Romance languages authors such as Mélanie Roustan, Yves Girault and Isabel Orellana Rivera, but is also used by Anglophonic authors such as Gillian Whitlock (2017).
7. “[O]uvir se tornou um ato de extrema relevância. Visando a pluralidade do discurso e acreditando que os produtores da memória devem ser os responsáveis por contar sua própria história, ouvir foi, de fato, um ato essencial” (Lopes et al. 2019: 93).
8. “É importante notar que na maior parte destes momentos nossa principal tarefa é a de interferir o mínimo possível, pois as lembranças e sentimentos são, na maior parte das vezes, muito sensíveis e pessoais. E são todas essas conversas e depoimentos que permeiam as visitas que fazem com que nós, servidores do MAE, enxerguemos o acervo de uma maneira muito diferente depois que todos vão embora. Não apenas porque conhecemos melhor os usos e significados das peças com as quais temos contato diariamente, mas porque os humanizamos, por assim dizer. Passamos a entendê-los como parte do crescimento das pessoas que por aqui passaram, de suas relações de parentesco e de seu pertencimento a uma identidade que, contra todas as probabilidades, ainda persiste” (Freire and Carmo 2019: 109).

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