

## Museums and indigenous memories: the collections of the Katxuyana and the contemporaneity of musealized material culture

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### Abstract

Ethnographic collections are at the centre of a debate about how to give them new meanings, calling into question the actuality of material culture preserved by museums. This debate also refers to the promotion of otherness and the protagonism of 'peoples represented' by museums. Preserved for more than 50 years in European and Brazilian museums, the collections of the Amerindian Katxuyana comprise approximately 700 objects, collected by different expeditions at different times. These objects are material records of daily life, rituals or festive moments, and reveal a little of the life of this people in the first half of the twentieth century. Some of these collections have been the subject of collaborative experiments between researchers and the Katxuyana, stimulating memories and generating knowledge. The case analyzed, which brings the Katxuyana closer to the artifacts produced by their ancestors, indicates both the complexity and the limits of collaborative experiences among indigenous peoples, museums and researchers.

**Key words:** indigenous people, ethnographic collections, museum, social memory, Katxuyana.

### Introduction

In this study, we explore some data relating to ethnographic collections of material made by the Amerindian Katxuyana people and ways in which these musealized collections can be used to establish dialogues with them. The dialogical experience between Katxuyana people and objects their ancestors made, objects that have now been preserved for decades in some museums, draws us into the contemporary debate about the resignification of ethnographic collections and the actuality of material culture preserved in museum environments.

Our work with the Katxuyana people and the museum collections has been based on a number of different critical and reflexive perspectives. The literature on initiatives that seek to approach, consult, enter into dialogue, share and include indigenous peoples in museum processes goes back to the 1990s and moves through various different perspectives. Since then, we have seen an interesting but controversial debate about the relations between museums, collections and 'descendants of peoples whose objects are found in the collections of museums' (Russi and Abreu 2019: 19).

In the case of ethnographic museums, Russi and Abreu (2019) identify changes in their representational practices. According to the authors, discourses 'over others' have gradually been replaced, or added to, by discourses elaborated 'with others'.

One of the earliest examples in the literature is the case study described by Clifford (1997), which relates to a meeting held in 1989 at the Portland Museum of Art in Oregon (USA). This gathering brought Tlingit elders and young people together with curators, anthropologists and art specialists with the intention of creating a new model for the exhibition of objects from the museum's Northwest Coast collection of indigenous art. The events that took place during the meeting led the anthropologist James Clifford to coin the phrase 'museum as contact zone', a co-opting of Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the 'contact zone' (1992) for the museum context.

In this type of encounter, as in so many others of a similar nature, the objects in a

collection can act as aide-mémoire that may be used as a strategy to elicit stories and social memories. If Clifford's experience as a 'consultant' for this process was unusual at the time, the meeting provided an intense and fruitful rapprochement between those different subjects. On the other hand, Clifford also recognized that the expectations and objectives of the Tlingit differed significantly from those of the museum professionals.

The process may involve divergence, controversy, and periods of impasse, but also mutual learning, shared experiences, and collectively agreed solutions. The myriad of situations that occur in experiential encounters involving indigenous peoples, collections and museums exposes us to both to their complexity and also their limitations.

Numerous authors have contributed to this debate in the literature available in the English language. For example, the collection of essays published in 2006 by Ivan Karp *et al* in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations* offers a series of insightful analyses of the ways in which processes of globalization impact on the contemporaneity of museums, on exhibition management and display, and the dynamics of social interactions.

Another useful contribution to the debate is provided by Cristina Kreps (2003) in *Liberating culture: cross-cultural perspective on museums, curation and heritage preservation* who offers a comparative and cross-cultural analysis of museums and the preservation of heritage. The author provides a detailed and multifaceted summary of the different ways in which various peoples in Indonesia, the Pacific, Africa and Native Americans have attempted to develop alternative, non-Western forms of cultural preservation and heritagization. In addition, Kreps shares insights into her own assumptions and biases, which created initial difficulties for her when she arrived in 1990 at the Balanga Museum (Palangkaraya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia) to observe local practices of preservation and heritage expression.

Portuguese authors have made several important contributions to the debate. We highlight the article by Nelía Dias (2007) on the crisis of representation in ethnographic museums, particularly the problems of 'cultural translation' revealed by attempts to 'explain' the cultures of indigenous peoples in mainstream displays, and the need for museums to redefine their priorities to reflect the cultural differences of a globalized world. Andre Roca (2018) offers an analysis of the 'return of the protagonists' in processes of indigenization of museums in the province of British Columbia, Canada. Employing the concepts of agency and indigenous self-representation, the author examines both the historical context and the political implications of the exhibition *Speaking to memory: images and voices of Saint Michael's Indian Residential School*. Focusing on this exhibition, which was held between 2013 to 2014, the researcher reflects on the collective intervention and claims of indigenous peoples to the Canadian government for social justice.

In Brazil there have been many instances where museums and researchers have attempted to incorporate consultative and co-managed processes, involving indigenous participation, into their practices. In a 2003 article, Abreu describes the experience of the Wajãpi people at the Museu do Índio in Rio de Janeiro. Another publication by Abreu (2014) highlights innovative experiences of shared curatorship in Brazil.

In the context of indigenous peoples, a number of Brazilian authors (Abreu 2007; Lima Filho, Abreu and Athias 2016; Velthem 2012) recognize that having access to the museum objects manufactured by their ancestors has helped these peoples to better understand their past. Often this knowledge contributes both to a reflection on the present situation and to the development of future projects and activities.

Other Brazilian authors (Athias 2015; Cury, Vasconcellos and Ortiz 2012; Lima Filho and Athias 2016) draw attention to the ways in which Amerindians have become aware of the potential of museums and their collections in helping to defend their cultural rights and political interests. The recognition by indigenous peoples that museum collections can be used as a means for self-representation and activism leads us to think about the contemporaneity of musealized material culture. In this way, the Katxuyana have not only shown an interest in gaining knowledge about the objects that were made by their ancestors, but have used this knowledge to develop projects focused on promoting and preserving their tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Our experience, based on the new meanings attributed to the ethnographic collections by the indigenous peoples, suggests that we are facing the unfolding of a theoretical-epistemological change in contemporary museological processes and the understanding of collections (Ames 1990; Clifford 1997; Desvallées and Mairesse 2013; Françaço and Broekhoven 2017; Krepes 2003). Parallel to this phenomenon, there exists a complex process that articulates the indigenous protagonism to the objectification of culture (Carneiro da Cunha 2009; Sahlins 1997). In the case of Brazil, we would also refer to the dialogue between indigenous peoples and the State (De Oliveira, De Oliveira Neves and Santilli 2001) and the 'new subjects of collective rights' (Abreu 2012).

In this paper we describe the various expeditions that collected objects from the Katxuyana which were later musealized. We present a summary table of these collections and, finally, we offer a reflection on the new meanings of these collections for the Katxuyana people through an account of a series of field encounters in 2015. In this encounter-dialogue established with the Katxuyana, we observed intergenerational conversations, revolving around the collections, about the time of their ancestors and about potential future projects relating to Katxuyana culture. As a strategy to initiate these conversations, photographs or pictorial images of the objects held in museum collections were used to help awaken social memories, arouse curiosity and stimulate discussion.

### **The collections of the Katxuyana people: some notes**

The case analyzed, the participation of the indigenous Katxuyana people in museum processes (collection, documentation, conservation, shared curation and other activities), forms part of a distinct set of data and investigative paths. The preliminary material originated from data collected in European museums during an investigation<sup>1</sup> into the ethnographic collections which they hold that relate to these Amerindians. The second body of material stems from research for a master's degree – 'Re-assembling the Katxuyana collections: an analysis of past, present and possible futures of the Katxuyana collections as assemblages' – completed by Astrid Kieffer-Døssing (2016). This same researcher is currently completing a doctorate in the field of anthropology, drawing on the investigation into new meanings for these European collections among the Katxuyana. A final set of data comes from scientific initiation research developed by Marcela Endreffy, a graduate of the Cultural Production course at the Federal Fluminense University, which has been undertaken under the guidance of Adriana Russi<sup>2</sup>.

The process of bringing the Katxuyana closer to these collections has been developed between the researchers and residents of two of the six Katxuyana villages that now exist on the Cachorro River and Trombetas River in the municipality of Oriximiná, in the western part of the state of Pará, Brazil. In the village of Warahatxa Yowkuru – Santidade, in Portuguese – and also in the village of Chapéu, elders and mature men are determined to ensure that their *kwetó kumu* does not disappear. This means that they want to preserve the Katxuyana culture, the traditional way of being and living of the Katxuyana people, for it to be shared by future generations.

The collections include major European museum collections such as the Nationalmuseet in Copenhagen / Denmark, the Kulturistorisk Museum in Oslo / Norway, the British Museum in London / England, the Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg in Hamburg / Germany, as well as a small collection preserved at the Moesgård Museum, located in the Danish town of Aarhus. We also include the collections of Brazilian museums, such as the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi, in Belém (state of Pará), and the one that was held by the National Museum of Natural History of Quinta da Boa Vista, Rio de Janeiro (state of Rio de Janeiro), before a fire occurred in September 2018, destroying practically the entire collection.

In addition to linking these collections, the collaborative dialogue that is being built between the Katxuyana, the researchers and the curators of these museums is of crucial importance. In essence, this dialogue arises from the analysis by representatives of the Katxuyana people of digital resources, including images of material in these collections, which were prepared specifically for this purpose; these comprise photographs of museum artifacts and images of Katxuyana ancestors, as well as tables with information about the objects.

### A brief note on the Katxuyana people

The Katxuyana are an Amerindian people of the Karib linguistic group, who live in Brazil, in the Lower Amazon region. With a population of 382 individuals (Instituto Socioambiental 2014), they inhabit villages distributed in the north of the country: in the western of the state of Pará (in the municipality of Oriximiná, six villages scattered between the Cachorro and Cachoriinho and Trombetas rivers); on the border of the state of Amazonas with the state of Pará (two are located on the river Nhamundá); and on the border of the state of Pará with the state of Amapá (four are in the Indigenous Land Tumucumaque Park).

In the literature (Friel 1970; Kruse 1955), the Katxuyana appear as inhabitants of the region of the Cachorro river, a tributary of the river Trombetas. Like other indigenous people of this region, the Katxuyana were almost decimated by disease.

Throughout their history, the Katxuyana maintained contact with many Brazilians and Europeans, including both field researchers and collectors of objects for museums. One such instance occurred in the first half of the twentieth century, in the mid-1940s, when Protásio Friel began his career as an anthropologist, and came to study the Katxuyana in their villages. It was also in the late 1950s that foreigners such as Gottfried Polykrates, Christen Søderberg, and Jens Yde visited Katxuyana villages to collect artifacts that were soon to be incorporated into European museums.

By 1968, the process of depopulation had reduced the Katxuyana to just over 60 individuals, who eventually abandoned their territory and mixed with other Karib peoples (Friel 1970). Faced with an imminent danger of extinction, they left for distant places where they lived on religious missions. Most of the Katxuyana decided to live with the Tiriyo people, in the Indigenous Land Tumucumaque Park, and only one family moved to the Nhamundá river, where they lived mainly with the Hixkaryana people (Caixeta de Queiroz and Gonçalves Girardi 2012; Gallois 1983; Grupioni 2011).

### Katxuyana activism regarding their memories

The Katxuyana's mobilization to get to know the objects made by their ancestors, stored in museums in Brazil and in Europe, constitutes a complex process of cultural self-evaluation (Russi 2014b), although this is not the focus of this text.

In order to understand the context in which the Katxuyana wish to valorize their cultural heritage, it is necessary to mention the mobilization that this people made upon returning to their territory in the end of 1990s. At that time some Katxuyana decided to reclaim their lands in the Cachorro River. In 2003, families who returned from the Tumucumaque Park reopened an old village on the Cachorro River – the village of Santidade. This was the birthplace of family members who for many years lived under the leadership of their relative Juventino Matxuwaya, who is still today considered a great leader. Sometime later, some other families who had migrated to Nhamundá River also returned and reopened the village of Chapéu, also on the banks of the Cachorro River (Russi 2014b).

It was in the village of Santidade that, almost half a century later, relatives of Matxuwaya, concerned about the maintenance of their *kweto kumu*, decided to build a large communal house, like the one in which their ancestors lived: a *tamiriki*. In this village and in the village of Chapéu, during their festivals, men wear *txama* – a feather adornment (headdress) like those found in some of the museums surveyed. During festive moments, women and youth, in turn, wear their beaded aprons and all adorn their bodies with paintings (Russi 2014b).

In the process of valorizing the Katxuyana culture, the mature men and elders of the village talk about the importance of 'rescuing' their culture, through a sort of objectification of it. In order to do this, the Katxuyana developed a project in the name of their association – the Association of Indigenous Peoples Tiriyo, Kaxuyana and Txikuyana, or Apitikatxi. In 2007, following a public call for projects promoting indigenous societies living in Brazil, the Indigenous Cultures Award, launched by the Ministry of Culture (Apitikatxi 2008), they successfully submitted a proposal to build a *tamiriki*. Other projects, such as those developed in the village school, also focused on the valorization of the 'Katxuyana culture', among which we would draw attention to those that focus on handicraft and body painting (Russi and Rocha 2013; Russi 2014a; Russi and De Oliveira 2014; Russi and Alvarez 2016).

For the Katxuyana, 'rescue' is a word that encompasses ideas of rediscovery, of 'bringing what has been forgotten', 'returning', 'remembering', and 'bringing back'. They tell us that, since leaving their territory, much of their culture has changed. While living with other Amerindians, the old men 'were silent.' However, now they have reoccupied the Cachorro River, the old people 'want to talk'. Thus, initiatives such as gaining knowledge about the objects in the collections are related to the wish of the Katxuyana to reclaim the memories of their ancestors. The *tamiriki* house, for example, no longer functions as a dwelling place, but continues, however, to be used as a space of sociability for parties where different artifacts and adornments like those found in the ethnographic collections are used (Russi 2014b).

In this way, studying photographs of their ancestors, recorded in the late 1950s by the previously mentioned European researchers/collectors, has mobilized both old and young people from the villages. Looking at the images of their artifacts preserved in museums has also contributed to the Katxuyana initiative to assert their ownership of their culture.

### **The Frikel collection of the Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg: the material culture of the Katxuyana collected by Protásio Frikel**

Protásio Frikel visited the Katxuyana four times before they migrated to Tumucumaque and Nhamundá in 1968 (Becher 1975). His visit to the Katxuyana, on the Cachorro River, in 1944 was his first field experience as an ethnographer. After that, Frikel visited the Katxuyana on the Trombetas River in 1945. The following year he was among the Katxuyana on the Kuhá River; in 1947, among the Kahyana, on the Kaxpakuru River; and finally, he revisited the Katxuyana on the Trombetas River in 1948. He resumed his work with this people after two decades, in the early 1970s, when they were in Tumucumaque.

Frikel acquired 72 Katxuyana objects for the collection of his mother, Clara Frickel, and these were accessioned into the collection of the Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg in August 1959. These objects form part of the Frikel collection of 1959, consisting of 371 items, which include objects from other indigenous groups, such as the Hixkaryana, Chawiyana, Xarumã, Munduruku, Tiriyo and also a number of archaeological artifacts. In total, the Frikel collection comprises 900 objects from numerous other indigenous groups. These objects entered into the institution's collection at five different moments, beginning in 1956.

The Katxuyana objects preserved in this museum were collected by Frikel when he was visiting the Trombetas River. The museum files contain no information relating to the date of this collection but, if we consider Frikel's biographical details (Becher 1975), we may assume that the ethnographer probably collected them from the Katxuyana of the Trombetas River when he was among them in 1945 or 1948.

The documentary archives of this institution also contain files with descriptive information about each object, its name in indigenous language and drawings of great value, made by Dascha Detering, the author of an article about the Katxuyana artifacts (Detering 1962). During one of Russi's (2014b) research phases in the field, the drawings from these archival records were shown to Katxuyana elders from the village of Santidade. They confirmed the names of the objects in their own language, but, above all, they commented on the ways in which the objects were used and admired the drawings of artifacts which they no longer make today.

### **Polykrates and Søderberg Expedition of 1957<sup>3</sup>**

Between August and September 1957, two amateur ethnographers, Gottfried Polykrates and Christen Søderberg set out from Copenhagen, Denmark, to the Amazon. They travelled to the Mapuera River region, initially with no specific indigenous group in mind from which to collect objects. By chance they travelled to the settlement of Cachoeira Porteira on the Trombetas River and from there departed to visit the Katxuyana in the rivers Trombetas and Cachorro.

This expedition was funded by the Greek-Danish Søderberg and the Danish Polykrates themselves. However, after their return to Denmark, the Nationalmuseet bought most of the objects they had collected, with financial assistance from Konsul Georg Jorck and Emma Jorcks Fond. The money was released after a letter of recommendation from the National Museum signed by Jens Yde, then curator at the museum.



There are several documents of interest relating to the Polykrates and Sødeberg Expedition of 1957 in the files at the Nationalmuseet. These show that they intended not only to collect ethnographic material for inclusion in the museum collections but also to make a film that was not, in the event, ever realized. Both the first part of the Nationalmuseet collection and a collection housed at the British Museum (London) derive from this expedition.

From the set of objects collected from the Katxuyana in 1957 by the Polykrates and Sødeberg Expedition, 158 artifacts are stored in the Nationalmuseet and 96 artifacts in the British Museum. Polykrates published some articles in German (Polykrates 1957a, 1960, 1961, 1962) and in Danish (Polykrates 1957b, 1958, 1959a, 1959b, 1963a, 1963b), although possibly still unpublished in Brazil. These articles deal with the Katxuyana, often with a particular focus on their material culture.

### ***The National Museum's 2nd Expedition to British Guiana and Brazil, 1958: Waiwai, Essequibo River; Shereo, Mapuera River; Hishkaruyéna, Nhamundá River and Kashuyéna, Cachorro River***<sup>4</sup>

The previously mentioned Jens Yde, researcher and curator of the Department of Ethnography of the Nationalmuseet, had already made an expedition to the region close to the one in which Polykrates and Sødeberg visited in 1957. Yde organized the Danish National Museum's first expedition to British Guiana and Brazil, which took place between August 1954 and January 1955, with the participation of the then student Niels Fock. It was an official expedition of the Nationalmuseet to the Amerindian Waiwai (Fock 1963).

Jens Yde also organized the National Museum's second expedition to British Guiana and Brazil, which took place between August and December 1958, in which Polykrates took over from Niels Fock as Yde's assistant. On this expedition, the two travellers and researchers visited the Waiwai, Xereo, Hixkaryana and Katxuyana peoples, and collected numerous objects to complete the Nationalmuseet's collection of material relating to the Waiwai, Katxuyana and other indigenous peoples. Both National Museum expeditions to British Guiana and Brazil were financed by Statens Almindelige Videnskabsfond.

The Brazilian collection housed in the Moesgård Museum (Aarhus), comes from this expedition and consists of objects from the Waiwai, Katxuyana and Hixkaryana, with a total of 75 objects collected by Jens Yde. Among them, 22 are Katxuyana artifacts, with one or two examples of different technologies such as basketry, pottery, weapons and feather adornments. The collection was incorporated into the museum in 1959.

The Polykrates collection, at the Kulturhistorisk Museum (Oslo), also had its origins in the second expedition and consists of about 305 objects. These are items collected among the Amerindians who once occupied the region of the Trombetas and Mapuera rivers. In case of the Katxuyana artifacts, they were collected by Polykrates in the Cachorro, Trombetas and Iaskuri rivers<sup>5</sup>. The Kulturhistorisk Museum bought the collection, directly from Polykrates in 1959. In addition to Katxuyana material, the Polykrates collection includes artifacts from other indigenous peoples such as the Xereu and the Hixkaryana. Ninety-eight items are attributed to the Katxuyana, which accounts for a third of this collection. In this museum, a feather adornment (headdress) – the previously mentioned *txama txama*, which will also be mentioned later – is on display in the long exhibition in the room dedicated to the Americas.

### **Artifacts of the Katxuyana in the Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen**

It appears that the largest single collection of Katxuyana artifacts in museums is preserved in Denmark, at the Nationalmuseet. This collection comprises 220 different objects, among them basketry, pottery, body adornments, feathered adornments, weapons, cassava processing implements and other items. Among the feathered adornments, we again highlight the *txama txama*, which is also the only Katxuyana object included in the museum's permanent display. It is exhibited in an area dedicated to America (Brazil), alongside a Tupinambá mantle and paintings made by the Dutch artist Albert Eckhout while he was in north-eastern Brazil in the seventeenth century.



*Picture 1 – txama txama on display in the room The Americas of the Kulturhistorik Museum of the University of Oslo. Source: Photo by Ida Maria Bergh*



*Picture 2 – txama txama on display at the National Museum of Denmark  
Source: Photo John Lee and Arnold Mikkelsen*



Picture 3 – Eugênio Wanaruku places a row of macaw feathers on the braided straw base of the headdress *txama txama* (photo at village Santidade, 2011). Source: Authors.

As previously mentioned, the first section of the Katxuyana artifacts (a total of 158 objects) was collected by Søderberg and Polykrates in 1957, among the Katxuyana of the Cachorro River (Polykrates and Søderberg Expedition) and acquired by the museum in 1958. In fact, during the expedition, Polykrates and Sødeberg divided the tasks between themselves: Polykrates was given the responsibility of making the previously mentioned film, while Sødeberg collected the actual objects. The remaining 62 Katxuyana items in the collection were collected by Jens Yde in 1958.

Beltrão (2003) states that the artifacts themselves are testimonies, remnants of other times. For Dorta (2000: 35) the feather works represent 'the convergence of aesthetic solutions and ingenious techniques, combined with the unique characteristics of the raw material used – bird plumage'.

The example of the feather adornment (the *txama txama*) may help to illustrate this. Today, few Katxuyana men possess the skills and knowledge needed to make a *txama txama*, which is worn by men during celebrations. However, there are some older men who still hold this knowledge. Creating a *txama txama* requires days of preparation – from the collection of the raw materials through the complex making process to its completion. The base of this artifact is made from braided straw, while the feathers used can be taken from different birds or different parts of the same bird. Although some elements of the raw materials traditionally used may be varied or substituted, this artifact, which was described in detail by Detering (1962), continues to be made using the exact technique explained by the author.

This artifact, on display at the Nationalmuseet, was collected by Polykrates and Søderberg during the 1957 expedition, when they also took some photographs of men wearing the same headdress.



### Field research experience: ethnographic collections and contemporary challenges

Taken together, the ethnographic collections of the Katxuyana total 711 objects, collected by foreigners and Brazilians at different times, between the late 1920s and until the mid-1970s, in different contexts and for various purposes.

The oldest collection with Katxuyana artifacts dates from 1928 and 1929 and was preserved in Brazil, at the National Museum of Natural History of Quinta da Boa Vista, Rio de Janeiro. Little is known about it as the whole collection and much of its documentation was destroyed by a fire that occurred in September 2018. Between 2016 and 2017 we were able to make photographic records of the objects and to digitize some of the documents, but the incomplete nature of the records does not allow us to confirm who actually collected the artifacts and what their objectives were (Russi and Endreffy 2016).

In Brazil, the largest collection from the Katxuyana is in the Museu Paraense Emilio Goeldi, which was established in the 1970s. The majority of the objects here were collected by the German anthropologist and Franciscan missionary Protásio Frikel, by the Brazilian linguist Ruth Wallace, and the Brazilian anthropologist Roberto Cortez. The first six objects in this collection came from the 1957 Polykrates and Sødeberg expedition. The objects in European museums were collected, as previously indicated, by Gottfried Polykrates, Christen Sødeberg, Jens Yde and Protásio Frikel.

Museum	Country/ City	Collector	Collection Year	Total of Artifacts
Museu Nacional de História Natural da Quinta da Boa Vista	Brazil/ Rio de Janeiro	?	1928/ 1929	46 <sup>7</sup>
Museum für Völk-erkunde	Germany/ Ham-burg	Frikel ?	anos de 1940?	72
Nationalmuseet	Denmark/ Co-penhagen	Polykrates/ Sødeberg	1957	158
		Polykrates	1958	62
British Museum	England/ Lon-don	Polykrates	1957	100
Kulturhistorisk Mu-seum	Norway/ Oslo	Polykrates	1958	97
Moesgård Museum	Denmark/Århus	Jens Yde	1958	22
Museu Paraense Emilio Goeldi	Brazil/ Belém	Polykrates/ Sødeberg	1957	06
		Frikel / Wallace	1969	85
		Frikel / Wallace	1969	06
		Frikel/ Cortez	1971	12
		Wallace	1972	45
Brazil: 200				
Europe: 511				
Total: 711				

Table 1 – List of Museums that hold the Katxuyana collections

As mentioned, Friel was probably responsible for the collection of objects for the collection in Germany between the late 1940s and 1950s (Russi, Kieffer-Døssing and Endreffy 2016).

European collections hold around 500 items, including feathers, adornments, hunting and fishing artifacts, weapons, ceramics, ritual objects, miniatures, basketwork and other items. As previously noted, the largest collection is preserved at the Nationalmuseet in Copenhagen.

Knowledge about the collections and objects is slowly being built. Until recently, even the Katxuyana themselves had no knowledge of these collections. In the literature there are articles in German by Polykrates and Detering and in Danish by Polykrates.

In 2014 and later in 2015, after reviewing the photographs of artifacts and images that Polykrates recorded of their ancestors decades ago, a group of Katxuyana elders also discussed and admired the adornments and body paintings worn by men during a healing ritual (the feast of Mori, described by Friel 1961).

The contemporaneity of the material culture held in the museums has been revealed in part by the political character attributed to it by indigenous peoples. In this way, the recognition of the value of these collections is not limited only to scholars. An increasing number of curators, researchers, and artifact producers interact with them in different ways. New theories and methodologies in museology and anthropology favour approaches that are realized, above all, in a collaborative way to produce new knowledge. In many indigenous societies, a significant number of the artifacts kept in storage facilities or exhibited in museums are no longer made. In other cases, these material testimonies serve as an element for social groups to understand their ancestors, to reflect on their cultures in modern times and to help elaborate projects aimed at defending their rights.

Following the mapping of the collections, it was possible to prepare digital material to deliver not only to the museums, but importantly also to the Katxuyana themselves. This process made us think about the possible ways of drawing this material closer to the Katxuyana in their process of cultural valorization. This research points to the possibility of the requalification of these collections and to the problematization of the processes of musealization of indigenous artifacts in contemporary times. To sum up, under what circumstances were the collections gathered and the objects subsequently incorporated into the museum heritage?

Prior to the expedition to the Cachorro River in November 2015, an undergraduate student at the Fluminense Federal University, Marcela Endreffy, and Astrid Kieffer-Døssing of the University of Aarhus, currently a PhD student at the same university, prepared material in both digital and printed form incorporating selected images of objects from the Katxuyana collections at the Nationalmuseet and at Moesgård Museum.

This publication included images of a variety of objects, including examples of different types of artifacts from the collections. One criterion used in the selection of objects was to include both items of daily use and objects used for festive occasions. As the making of various objects reflects a gendered division of labour, it was also important to include both objects made by men and objects made by women.

In addition to images of the objects, the publication included a translation (Danish into Portuguese) of the museum records for each item. Using this, the Katxuyana could comment on this documentation and even correct it where necessary. This activity helped them to reflect on the culture and heritage of their ancestors. Since the area around the city of Oriximiná generally has a low-speed internet connection, while the villages visited have no electricity supply and, consequently, no internet service, this strategy of taking photographs and written information back to the Katxuyana people represents a kind of 'virtual repatriation', as Renato Athias (2018) suggests.

In the city of Oriximiná, it was possible to deliver copies of this material in a printed booklet to elders and community leaders, heads of other villages and also the president of the Katxuyana, Tunayana and Kahyana Indigenous Association (Aikatuk).

The objects collected among the Katxuyana's ancestors sparked great interest from all sections of the community. Both young and old came together to examine the different objects illustrated in the booklet. The objects provided a stimulus to remembrance among the elders, who were later responsible for teaching younger members of the community at a series of workshops. After learning to make some of the objects, the youth, in turn, sought to explain orally or by drawings and written records how some of these objects are made.

The memories and conversations of the Katxuyana stimulated by images of the artifacts from the collections bear out the ideas about memory postulated by Maurice Halbwachs (1994, 1997) and Roger Bastide (1970). The memory of the Katxuyana elders arising from their examination of photographs of the ethnographic collections and, above all, from the photographs of their own ancestors does not fix the past, something which is impossible. On the contrary, efforts to rebuild a 'Katxuyana culture', as they say, are not confined to a distant past time. These memories, which arise through animated discussions about the objects, illuminate an ongoing exploration of the present, an objectification of their own culture, and demonstrate possibilities for projects for the future.

These memories also relate to another idea described by Halbwachs (1994), about the importance of the role of the elders in the maintenance of tradition and in its transmission to young people.

## Conclusions

In Brazil, as well as in the rest of the world, we have seen the development of innovative museological processes that have introduced new practices in the relationship between museums and indigenous peoples. In post-coloniality, the museum is understood as a partner and not exclusively as an authority and a place of representation of the 'other.' The dialogic experience of drawing the Katxuyana people and the ethnographic collections closer together is only one element in the complex process of valorisation of the cultural identity of this people.

If, during the 1970s, shortly after the Katxuyana migration to the Tumucumaque, Frikel foresaw the cultural extinction of this people, it is now clear that, more than 40 years after the migration, his prognosis has not been confirmed.

The multiple possibilities that are outlined and materialized in the perspective of 'collaborative experiences' between researchers, museums and indigenous peoples point to a fertile and renewed field for both museum studies and anthropology (Lima Filho, Abreu and Athias 2016). They also reveal the limitations to which these activities are subject because of the lack of financial resources, institutional bureaucracies and other impediments, such as the small number of specialists working in the field.

The reconstruction of the *tamiriki* house (Russi 2014b), as well as the making of artifacts and the performance of other cultural practices are interwoven in a process that demonstrates the Katxuyana's determination to reclaim, revivify and manage the social memories and culture of their ancestors (Kieffer-Døssing 2016; Russi 2014a). Talking about their material culture or examining photographs of artifacts made by their ancestors and now preserved in museums is related to this process. In this context, the preservation of the material culture of the museum objects seems to gain a new resonance.

The case of the Katxuyana exemplifies Sahlins' (1997) critical analysis of the paradigm of culture as an 'endangered object' and the encounters of the Katxuyana with ethnographic collections is only one element in a complex process currently being experienced by these people.

After all, what is it to be Katxuyana in the twenty-first century, when young people attend formal education and have access to digital media, computers, cell phones and social networks, such as Facebook? How are they to deal with that? This seems to be one of the major challenges that the Katxuyana face. To a certain extent, it allows us to affirm that they have, in different ways, already appropriated the images of the objects preserved in museums. One example of this appropriation was a workshop held at the village school in 2016. Here canoes were made using a photograph of a Katxuyana canoe preserved in the Nationalmuseum as a template. This, however, is something we will address in another paper.

All this indicates that the mobilization of the Katxuyana for the 'reconstruction' of their culture and their dialogue with the collections, prompted by the researchers, opens up new perspectives and also points to new challenges for the requalification of the ethnographic collections.

Received: 5 November 2018

Finally Accepted: 15 November 2019

## Notes

- 1 The research in European museums was a part of Adriana Russi's activities during the internship in her PhD (PDSE/Capes).
- 2 The scientific initiation research, entitled 'From museums to subjects: survey of Katxuyana's ethnographic collections' had as one of its products not only a report (Russi e Endreffy 2016), but also an overview table of Katxuyana artifacts in Brazilian museums, which has been used in meetings and dialogues with this people.
- 3 In this expedition the name of the ethnicity is currently written as Kaxuyana or Katxuyana. Cashorro is a form we founded in numerous documents to write Cachorro River.
- 4 Original title of the second expedition, indicating the indigenous people and rivers visited at the time.
- 5 Also located in the Alto Trombetas region, western part of the state of Pará, Brazil.
- 6 During field research, the elders among the Katxuyana in Warahatxa Yowkuru village analyzed an image of a wooden artifact (code UEM1219) attributed to them by the museum. The Katxuyana reported that the object was not theirs. Thus, there are 97 Katxuyana artifacts and not 98.
- 7 This collection was destroyed in a fire in September 2018.

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