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# Rethinking Latin American Archaeology: "Affective Alliances" and Traditional Community-Engagement

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**How to cite**: Sallum, M. 'Rethinking Latin American Archaeology: "Affective Alliances" and Traditional Community-Engagement'. *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology*, 2023, 34(1): pp. 1–42. DOI: 10.14324/111.444.2041-9015.1392

Published: 09/05/2023

#### Peer Review:

This article has been peer reviewed through the journal's standard double-blind review.

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#### **Open Access:**

Papers from the Institute of Archaeology is a peer-reviewed open access journal.

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### **RESEARCH PAPER**

# Rethinking Latin American Archaeology: "Affective Alliances" and Traditional Community-Engagement

Marianne Sallum

**Abstract**: The integration of archaeology and community engagement in Latin America remains a new challenge, largely because the multiple social configurations, practices, and theories intrinsic in each need to be considered instead of creating a unified pattern. In Brazil, there are more than 16,000 communities of Indigenous, Maroon, and traditional membership, all with many demands that test the collaborative capacity of researchers. Seeking a basis for action within a decolonization perspective, this paper provides the theoretical background that outlines some benefits of an affective alliance and collaboration based on the equivalence of knowledge and practices from different epistemes. This paper also offers regional cases of the persistence of agroforestry communities that require the re-evaluation of academic and bureaucratic erasure. On one side, the Tupi Guarani of Peruíbe that manifest interest in recovering the language and practices that started in Indigenous contexts but extended beyond them, with people from different places and times joining the communities of women potters.

Keywords: Indigenous People, Ceramic Practices, Traditional Communities, Decolonisation, Gender.

### Pondering Theoretical Possibilities: A Dialogue Between Epistemes

In the territory currently known as Brazil, there have always been more agroforestry and bio-extractivist communities than cities, even today. This means that the country shelters a vast diversity of memories, knowledge, and practices with their own cultural regimes, regardless of the legal and scientific designs in which archaeology operates. It also means that it is extremely complicated to devise a standard model to define the relations and interests that will guide archaeological practice. Decolonisation should be produced in a particular way within each community. The Brazilian concept of "traditional populations", according to the National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities (https://censo2022.ibge.gov.br/sobre/povos-e-comunidades-tradicionais.html) established the guidelines for the State to recognise and preserve other forms of social organisation, defined as:

"culturally differentiated groups that recognise themselves as such, that have their own forms of social organisation, that occupy and use territories and natural resources as a condition for their cultural, social, religious, ancestral and economic reproduction, using knowledge, innovations and practices generated and transmitted by tradition". (translation by the author).

Anthropology has complemented the definition:

"Groups that have created or are struggling to create (through practical and symbolic means) a public identity that includes several if not all of the following characteristics: use of low-environmental-impact techniques; equitable forms of social organization; institutions with legitimate enforcing power; local leadership; and, lastly, cultural traits, selectively reaffirmed and enhanced." (Cunha and Almeida 2000: 335).

The idea focuses on the self-determination of people living in traditional lands with or without Federal acknowledgment. The recognition of identities has the goal of preserving their differences.

However, the Brazilian government's definition is restrictive because it does not consider the people from traditional communities who live in cities. Cities have always been home to people and communities who self-declare as Indigenous and Maroon and who persist despite prejudice and attempts to erase their history. An estimated 36% of Indigenous people now live in the cities (Cense 2010 <u>https://censo2010.ibge.gov.br/</u>).

Archaeology can contribute to understanding contemporary society in Latin America by exploring the multidirectional effects of colonialism. It is necessary to defend a decolonising perspective, which requires reviewing the ingrained unilateral and colonial construction of academic knowledge that has silenced the voices of people from traditional communities, and engaging with them to fight against the inequality of civil rights to preserve memory, diversity, and cultural heritage. This way of conducting research may entice more interest and collaboration among diverse people, resulting in the construction of knowledge based on a dialogue between different types of knowledge. We must consider that in the present-day, "responsible archaeological investigation requires working directly with the interested parties of the community" (Lee and Scott 2019: 87).

It is crucial to engage archaeology with traditional knowledge, wherever it is - in or outside the city, in communities, or individuals. Archaeology must go to the places where knowledge can be found - always! To quote Zoe Todd (2016: 17), we may say that decolonising the academy:

"cannot happen while the proponents of the discipline themselves are not willing to commit to the decolonization project in a substantial, structural, and physical way, and willing to recognize that Colonial is an existing and continuous reality".

As Rui Gomes Coelho suggests (2021: 26), decolonisation would become "an answer to coloniality, present in the way archaeology is planned, conducted, and communicated", and a fight against the racism, still ingrained in the eugenics that dictates the ideology of whitening and Europeanising the Latin America population (Ferreira 2010; Balanzátegui and Morales 2016 González [1983] 2021). The dialogue between knowledge must be accepted, bringing new possibilities of debates (Sallum 2015) and the intellectual authorship of knowledge holders into the construction of archaeology, thus creating a movement to reverse their erasure from literature and academic positions in education and public outreach, through which "native people themselves will increasingly become archaeologists", eliminating the separation between archaeologists and indigenous peoples (Dring *et al.* 2019: 354). A similar experience was carried out in the Maroon territory of the Aproaga people (Brazilian Amazon), produced with the active participation of people from the communities who are archaeologists, with an approach framed with various perspectives and local languages of African matrix (Moraes *et al.* 2022).

Archaeology must constantly remember that although humanity is just one, it is "extraordinarily diversified in its ways of cultural expression and social organization"

(Casimiro and Sequeira 2020: 12). This situation must be understood by the archaeological community, which should incorporate critiques, such as the one made by indigenous thinker Aílton Krenak (2019), against the homogenisation created by colonial interests.

Archaeology may help us understand contemporary society by participating in "affective alliances", and building other relationships based on cooperation, solidarity, and affection, as suggested by Krenak (2015). In this way, it can increase the public reach of the contents of social movements, promote full citizenship, and recognise cultural diversity, highlighting the importance of memory and practices transmitted by people who daily unite past and present to make their communities persist. As Xakriabá (2020) says: "it is a challenging task because it is not enough to recognize traditional knowledge, it is necessary to recognize the knowledge holders". Traditional knowledge is mixed with types of knowledge and practices from different times and places that should receive more attention from archaeologists. They provide a great opportunity to accelerate decolonisation by giving equal value to different sources of information, including memories. In this way, archaeology can incorporate the strategic efforts to achieve full citizenship and contribute to increasing Indigenous, Maroon, and traditional communities' quality of life, in a dialogue with the memories and languages spoken in the places where people are, whether in agroforestry communities or in the cities, inverting the unilateral formula of the Euro-Western academic perspective, and no longer reifying only theories and methods that erase indigenous and traditional knowledge.

I always highlight that archaeology is one of the "humanities". It cannot forget its commitment to people (Mickel 2021) and must ensure that traditional communities' memory is understood and heard. This is triggered inside me whenever I hear the clichés that Brazil is "a country without memory" or that people do not know their history. It partially seems to be a structural problem of our education. Still, it is, in fact, one of the effects of the coloniality inherent to a considerable part of academic knowledge. It still influences the current inequality and erasure in all their manifestations, assuming that the general population does not know their history and forgetting that many Indigenous communities know their trajectories very well. After all, archaeology is a way of fighting oblivion, of making people and things visible and available to the public. But we must remember that archaeology works from many angles, including on opposite sides of the political spectrum, bringing up stories of people who disappeared during oppression regimes or defending ideological manipulation, oblivion, and the erasure of the stories of communities and people (see, for example, Arnold 2006; Funari, Zarankin and Salerno 2010).

Those who study contemporary societies have highlighted that archaeology is about memory and presence, and presence may be the strongest political action in supermodernity (González–Ruibal 2008) since it means to be, literal or figuratively, in contact with people, things, events, and feelings (Runia 2006).

It is thus necessary to recognise that archaeology is politics, as McGuire (2015) highlighted, a mixture of a heterogeneous contingent of professionals with different interests and actions. It is not a group of alienated "simple lecturers" (McGuire 2015: 6), let alone mere activists committed to saving the world and fighting to "preserve, protect, interpret and salvage the past for the future" (Stottman 2010: 1).

Decolonisation thus entails practical actions and engagement to ensure that the stories of traditional communities are told and understood and that they can speak despite their differences. As McGuire (2015) suggests, it is necessary to convey coherence, context, correspondence, and the consequence of knowledge produced along the way to reduce inequality and ensure fundamental rights: from the right to the land, ecosystem protection and management; flora, fauna, and social, cultural, and political diversity. Finally, decolonisation also means counter-colonisation. On this matter, Antônio Bispo dos Santos (2020) highlights:

"What is counter-colonization?... For us, *quilombolas* (marooner's), and Indigenous people, this is the agenda: counter-colonization. The day universities learn that they don't know, the day universities agree to learn Indigenous languages – instead of teaching – the day universities agree to learn Indigenous architecture and learn what the caatinga16 plants are for, the day they are willing to learn from us as we learn one day from them, we will have a confluence. A confluence of knowledges. A process of balancing the diverse civilizations of this place. A counter- colonization."

Counter-colonisation poses a triple challenge to archaeology in contemporary communities in São Paulo. First, to question the histories of erasure and extinction forged in colonialist structures that have shaped academic institutions that have disconnected the present from its past. Second, to find in collaboration the confluence to discuss, debate, and compare multiple perspectives on research and teaching – some of "which overlap and intersect" (Cipolla *et al.* 2019: 128) – to integrate traditional communities' interests with decolonisation agendas. Third, to understand the diverse historical processes that have defined the persistence of agroforestry communities, something that has come to be effectively considered by universities only recently.

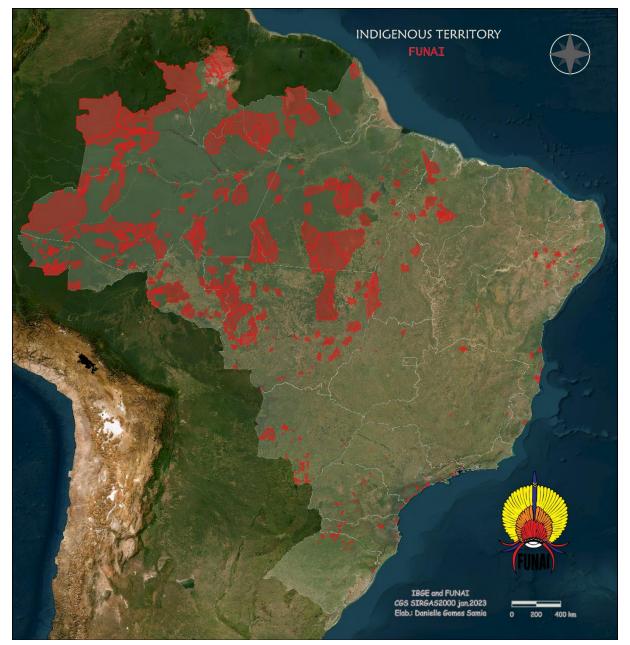
Based on these premises, this study investigates women who have been producing pottery for centuries, with present-day practices strongly anchored in the past, in selfsustaining ancestral knowledge transmitted to new generations. Some of these communities do not identify themselves as "Indigenous" or "Maroons".

### Traditional Communities' Territory

In addition to theoretical grounds, I would like to show the broader context of the communities of traditional knowledge around the world. Indigenous peoples and local communities manage 33% of forests, and 90% of farms are "run by individuals or a family who rely primarily on family labour" (https://www.fao.org/family\_farming-decade/en/). According to the FAO UN (2014) family farmers are defined as:

"the custodians of a finely adapted understanding of local ecologies and land capabilities. Through local knowledge, they sustain productivity on often marginal lands, through complex and innovative land management techniques. As a result of the intimate knowledge, they have of their land and their ability to sustainably manage diverse landscapes, family farmers are able to improve many ecosystem services."

To understand the needs of contemporary society in Brazil, first, we must understand the population size represented by the communities of traditional knowledge (Figures 1 and 2). There are more of these communities than the 16,000 urban nuclei registered in IBGE (2019), divided by municipalities, districts, and subdistricts.



**Figure 1:** Native land acknowledgements by Brazilian government (IBGE 2019 and FUNAI).



Figure 2: Maroon's land acknowledgements by Brazilian government (IBGE 2019 and INCRA).

At the time of writing, results of the 2022 Brazilian national census have not yet been disseminated. However, another was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which identified more than 20,000 communities of traditional knowledge, where approximately 10 million people live, representing about 5% of the total Brazilian population. About 2.5 million people live in 13,000 of these communities, distributed across 7,000 Indigenous lands and 6,000 Maroons' lands. Federal authorities need to recognise the propriety status of most of these places. To these values, we should add the people who moved to the cities, whose numbers we do not know.

The numbers are impressive and clearly show the importance of archaeology in understanding contemporary society. Archaeologists must learn different ways of listening and dialoguing with the manifestations of traditional knowledge, collaborating with the collectives that want to maintain their practices so that archaeology can have another social value. It is thus necessary to assimilate the critical role of local groups to face the current effects of internal colonialism since many actions of the past still echo in the present.

Today's numbers contrast with the 1920 census, allowing for some questions. The contrasting numbers show the communities' great strength and determination to maintain their traditional knowledge and highlight that they resist continuous pressures and oppression to disrupt their existence. Approximately 100 years ago, the national population was 31 million people, from which 25 million (80%) lived outside urban areas (Cense 1920). On one hand, most resided in agroforestry, rural and bio-extractivist communities, which could correspond to approximately one million villages and residences in every Brazilian biome. They maintained cooperation, partnership, and respectful relationships (Figure 3). On the other hand, properties dedicated to the agribusiness of monoculture, cattle, and mining totalled 648,000 properties with land deeds and collected taxes. So, internal colonialism and the reverberation of its actions caused radical changes in the decision to remain or leave their homes. Over the course of the proceeding century, the number of people who lived outside urban nuclei diminished from 80% to less than 20% today.



**Figure 3:** A) Yanomami Community, Roraima: Photo: Renato Soares (<u>https://www.renatosoares.com.br/</u>); B) Area of the Ivaporunduva maroon, Vale do Ribeira. Photo: Ricardo Martinelli. Available at: <u>https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/saopaulo/2018/11/1984204-quilombos-e-rota-da-ceramica-mostram-que-o-vale-do-ribeira-vai-alem-das-cavernas-do-petar.shtml</u>. Access date: 10/05/2021.

The 1920 census reveals the interest in making agroforestry communities unviable through the devaluation of the traditional lifestyle and the lack of legal security based on the public policy of not granting land deeds. According to that census methodology, "small places", or the traditional community with annual earnings of up to 200 dollars, should not have been considered. To understand the devaluation of traditional community farms, the census shows that a factory worker's annual income is three times the revenue of a small farm. The census methodology did not consider the farms with productions "destined for domestic consumption, i.e., small value, and are not a real and special business" (Cense 1920). I should stress that such a decision was also due to the logistical impossibility of registering all the places of traditional knowledge: their huge number, and generally difficult access because trails and roads were precarious, railroad infrastructure was limited and most transportation was divided between animal traction and boats. We must also consider that one of the State's interests was to change and eliminate the diversity of traditional knowledge, imposing a single economy to generate systematic gains from colonialism, increasing taxes to introduce products in the market and make everyone sell their labour.

According to the 2006 census, family farmers produced 70% of the food grown in Brazil (França *et al.* 2006), with a productive and diversified context in terms of species and management practices that cover 77% of the farming facilities, corresponding to 23% of the country's agricultural area.

### Towards to Decolonised Archaeology

One must consider the multidirectional effects of the education standards imposed by the State regarding oral practices of traditional knowledge. On one hand is the fight on behalf of cultural homogenisation to serve capitalism; on the other is the resistance to the taming of schools and the effort to preserve different knowledge (Xakriabá 2020). The agenda is complex, and it is necessary to conduct local studies to understand the articulation processes between traditional knowledge and public mainstream education. We must remember that many times, in many schools, local languages were banished, as a strategy to disrupt traditional knowledge and control people. We must bear in mind that, in 1920, orality prevailed in the transmission of traditional knowledge for nearly 80% of the state of São Paulo children under 12 years old (Mathieson 2018).

Resistance was always present, but Brazilian archaeology took decades to perceive it. In fact, individual/collective actions and community manifestations have been happening since the late 1990s, with criticism against the prevalence of "acritical and automaton excavators" over an "archaeology made for the people" (Rocha *et al.* 2013: 133). It is time for the archaeological community to stop resembling a homogenous entity and to give collaboration its true meaning; to stop being seen as a "perpetrator" or an accomplice of "urn theft" and other archaeological records, stored in places known by few (Pereira 2019). Collaboration should not be used as a symbol of promotional pieces or self-praise, separated from the required two-way street that should be built for communities.

Fortunately, there is an ongoing and growing movement of counter-colonisation and native, Afro-descending, and feminist intellectuality, from the traditional communities and the LGBTQIA+ community, that have driven the engagement and support of many people, academics and otherwise, to build relationships and collaborative knowledge founded in the diversity of ideas and practices. It is no mere activism, but much-needed contributions to understand the present, to understand that counter-colonisation is a continuous movement in effect since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, resisting invasion, degradation, and gentrification of territories, erasure of diversity and the repression to silence and eliminate people and communities. We must always remember that "counter-colonization [has implications in] every resistance and fighting process of territorial defence by the people against the colonizers, symbols, meanings, and lifestyles of those territories" (Santos 2015: 47–8). Simply put, it is a fight dedicated to arguing for full rights and opening new ways in public policies.

Archaeology needs to get out of its comfort zone and realise that its prominence was ensured by academic structures grounded on social inequality and the unilateral construction of knowledge based on rules and ideas perpetuated inside its community. These steps are necessary for archaeology to shift to relationships dedicated to multiple dialogues. These are "relationship epistemes" to effectively advance towards decolonisation. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2017) insists that decolonisation begins when the producers of knowledge and their interlocutors discuss "on an equal footing from different centres of thought", since there is no decolonisation discourse, nor decolonisation theory, without a decolonisation practice.

The construction of knowledge requires criticism and self-criticism of what is already established in order to assess the principles and fundamental questions of decolonisation, stop the erasure of different cultural and social versions, and reduce colonisation and subordination. Embracing diversity will infuse vitality into archaeology contributions since critical conscience, dialogues, and discussions between different types of knowledge bearers may generate new perspectives for the discipline to be part of the process that ensures civil rights. We must learn how to enable the ecology of knowledge along with the feeling of coexisting and understand the differences in the large spectrum of local and regional histories, as suggested by Atalay (2020), a 'braiding knowledge' model to create space for multiple ways of knowing that complement each other, arguing that such symbiosis is necessary for our contemporary forms of knowledge production.

Archaeology in Latin America has been evolving to deal with different alterities, opening to other realities and knowledge. As Gnecco suggested, construction may

change archaeology and make it seek new paths, becoming an archaeology of difference. Archaeology of difference is not recreating or making another archaeology but making it with "other worlds... which means other societies, other temporalities, other ways of agglutination and other ways of being". Archaeology of difference is not a simple theoretical alternative, let alone a Eurocentric rhetoric "changing while doing the same" (Gnecco 2017: 17).

Other areas of the humanities, such as sociology in Latin America, have already taken this route. For example, in 2015, Cusicanqui posited a new direction for the ecology of knowledge, highlighting the viability of intellectual and political understanding between different epistemes, and thinking if translation could make the ecology of knowledge work. Initially, Cusicanqui considered (Cusicanqui and Santos 2015: 92):

"There are no words, there is no way... in what language will people speak? How will we form the networks that allow an exchange of knowledge, and how will we recognize the corporal knowledge that has no verbal expression? It's easy to talk about the ecology of knowledge and multiculturalism, the problem is how to do it."

Two years later, she said that the idea of equivalence could be an alternative; something like saying "your way of knowing is equivalent to mine", even if "they are very different in their epistemes, they can be conceptually equivalent and equally necessary" (Cusicanqui 2017: 224).

This equivalence is similar to the collaboration experience in The Mohegan Archaeological Field School (Connecticut, US), a "long-running collaborative teaching and research Project" by the Mohegan Tribe with a non-Indigenous archaeologist. This project:

"showed that there are differences between us, but we did so by speaking and writing together, demonstrating that we do not occupy radically different worlds that are mutually unintelligible. Differences remain, but we occupy a world in which we can productively discuss theory and the future of our discipline (Cipolla *et al.* 2019: 139)."

In Brazil, the practice of resisting colonialism generated countless experiences of equivalence and translation, long before the ecology of knowledge. We have an example of the memory of the relationship between Indigenous, Africans, and Afro descendants in the words of Bispo dos Santos (2020):

"when we reach out in solidarity to Indigenous peoples, we find lifeways similar to ours. We find relationships with nature similar to ours. There was a great confluence in manner and thoughts. And it has strengthened us. We made a great cosmological alliance, even speaking different languages."

The academy must understand that connection and establish a research baseline dedicated to knowing the history of places of speech as one of the ways to understand the formation of contemporary societies.

To create another archaeology and find equivalences and confluences, and effectively contribute to understanding contemporary societies, we must repeat the words of Célia Xakriabá (2020): "it is not enough to recognize, we must recognize the knowledge holders". To achieve that, I think some general theoretical basis must be implemented for defining a research plan, with at least five guidelines for the general formulation:

- considering that Brazil is deeply marked by colonialism and that it still has not ended. The archaeological community must be part of the effort to dismantle the lingering personal and institutional internalisation that maintains colonisation. Thus, it is not possible to understand contemporary society without considering that people and communities always favoured "pragmatic choices to resist, accommodate, or avoid colonial impositions" (Panich 2020: 9). It is also necessary to consider that, even while captive, there was a continuous articulation of strategies to resist being ruled, an equivalent to the "critical attitude" (Foucault 1990).
- 2. understanding cultural, social, and political diversity, marked by a broad intellectual heterogeneity of practices and local and regional histories in order to reduce inequalities. As suggested by Krenak (2019: 12), "we must be critical regarding the formed idea of homogenous humanity" and consider Brazil as a platform of relationships between different cosmologies where people are related, inside or outside the cities. It means abandoning colonialist labels that

kept people outside history, such as "prehistorical", "primitive", "savage", "degenerate", and "Indians" (González 1983; Noelli and Ferreira 2007; Silliman 2009; Schmidt and Mrozowski 2013; Hartemann and Moraes 2017; Souza 2020; Senatore and Funari 2022).

- 3. recognising the places of speech means abandoning the notion of a homogenous entity. This principle of homogeneity disregards people, and their actions, and generalises events and historical processes, giving meaning to the ingrained attempts to discredit the "other", specifically rendering the individuals, along with their lands, natural resources, and knowledge, including archaeological heritage, as booty. Such a disregard of heterogeneity seeks to homogenise diversity, almost always under the assumptions of cultural loss and acculturation that are the base of the legal and theological arguments that established tutelage and the denial of the right of self-determination and possession of traditional lands, the drivers of internal colonialism in Brazil.
- 4. defining notions of time outside linearity. We must see time as relational. This notion is proposed by indigenous peoples from Brazil and other places (see, for example, Macuxi 2021; Berquist-Turori 2022), who believe in the existence of millenary non-linear time systems that interact with each other. In 1970, Foucault (2005: 291) already suggested that "history is not a duration", but multiple and intertwined times, and it is necessary to replace linear time with multiple duration since that is fundamental "to multiply the types of events the same way we multiply the types of durations". Later, Cusicanqui (2010) summarised a comprehensive perspective of Latin America, through which we may also contemplate Brazil. Time can emerge from the present as a spiral in which movement is continuous feedback from the past to the future, where the present is a scenario of strategies to preserve impulses simultaneously archaic, like the status quo, or modernisers, which means rebellion and world renovation.
- 5. considering that gender studies are important and must be integrated to show the particularities of each place and to try to understand the dynamics defined by each context, case by case (Segatto 2011; Geller 2016). However, there is no established formula to approach and think about gender because the

assumptions of Western thought tend to homogenise and eliminate complexity (Battle-Baptiste 2011). An earlier version of this perspective was suggested by Leila González (1988) to think of feminism in Latin America.

Gender issues must also be considered in the production of knowledge in contemporary societies, questioning who can serve as a representative of the communities of practice. Creuza Prumkwyj Krahô's (2017) example is enough to show a problem that occurred during an anthropological research project. She revealed a side of the gender prejudice that simultaneously creates distortion and incompletion, depending on the research's perspective. Distortion was caused by the fact that the people who conducted the research only considered information provided by men, even when it concerned female practices, thus being incomplete in many ways. The revelation was not that men silence female practices but, in this case, that female researchers did not seek information among Krahô women.

To exemplify how to put these theoretical precepts into practice, I will now reflect on some theoretical-methodological issues regarding the persistence of communities of practice that make ceramic vases. I have chosen ceramics because it is a recurrent topic in Brazilian scholarship which may provide access to other types of knowledge and intergenerational practices that connect the present to the past, such as food sovereignty and environmental management, family incomes, and social relationships, and cosmology. It is also a way to establish diversified and lasting relationships with the experienced potters today since they are usually interested in sharing and spreading the contents of their practices. In addition, the study of ceramics is an interdisciplinary theme, providing different sources of information.

The ideas I have mentioned converge on the notion of persistence. Persistence is more an idea or a framing device than a theory to guide research, and it is appropriate for the study of contemporary societies, especially when, besides the archaeological record, there is a living memory of the traditional knowledge communities and countless written sources. Archaeology can thus broaden its analytical and interpretative capabilities in an interdisciplinary environment, benefiting from the convergence of several types of traditional knowledge, theories, and methods. Moreover, it can be adapted to research programs dedicated to understanding the specific features of communities of practice, and their productions, that echo as solid references for present and future actions.

As highlighted elsewhere (Panich *et al.* 2018: 11–2), persistence is not a synonym for historical continuity, but the "intentional rearticulation of certain practices and related identities in light of new economic, political, and social realities... effectively linking past and present in a dynamic but unbroken trajectory". In other words, it does not separate past from present, functioning with multi-temporalities similarly to the philosophies of traditional knowledge. Persistence is more connected to the community than to culture, helping solve the dichotomy between continuity and change, repositioning Indigenous history and traditional types of knowledge between the long term and the short term (Silliman 2012). According to Silliman (quoted in Barros 2021), persistence refers to long-term stories:

"People may have actions or practices of persistence in daily life, but the manifestation of persistence takes time. It is often generational, and it may be extended during the time it seems reasonable to tell it. By reasonable, I refer to the importance of the evidence and the cultural stories of those who have persisted."

It is important to understand that the idea of persistence does not mean a static continuity or a continuous replication of certain materialities and practices (Sallum 2018). In many cases, the change and articulation of old and new practices enabled communities' persistence. That way, it is possible to stop adopting automatic concepts that see the linearity of continuities and changes and begin understanding the appropriation and transformation processes that connect people from different times and places (Noelli and Sallum 2019).

I will now counter two assumptions that still prevail in Brazilian archaeology and do not contribute to understanding the colonial legacy in contemporary society. The first is the idea that, in a specific geographical area, the transformation, or the end, of a certain type of "pre-colonial" materiality into another "colonial" type, which could mean the abandonment of a place or the extinction of its inhabitants. In regional terms, archaeology journals were dominated by the theory of extinction or evacuation, especially when historical information says those places were inhabited when the first interactions occurred. The second was to consider that that change resulted in cultural loss and acculturation.

Ultimately, two further assumptions are at stake, which until recently have dominated part of the archaeological theory. One of them considers the colonial period in the Americas as a time of contact between Europeans and Indigenous peoples, when "two slightly homogeneous identities collided, and the strongest exerted some sort of hegemony over the weakest" (Sheptak and Joyce 2019: 1). That perspective reified versions that supported the myth created by the academy, according to which Indigenous people were destined to disappear, and denied them the possibility of modernity (Rubertone 2020), especially because their lives did not seem to matter, or no one was interested in their trajectories. They were seen as "ethnical deserters", as if we had "given up our ancestral identity and joined a new identity in the city" (Baniwa 2021, *pers. comm.*), so archaeology did not know the articulation between practices in the context of new economic, political, and social realities.

The other assumption is considering that the homogeneity that characterises the precolonial archaeological record may be defined as an archaeological tradition, which according to Gordon Willey and Phillip Phillips (1958: 37) "is essentially a time continuity represented by persistent configurations in unique technologies or other systems in related ways". The perspective of "tradition" is still a common theoretical tool in Brazil to understand the distribution, in space and time, of materialities marked by certain technological choices (Samia 2021), which must be contrasted with historical information and community memories to understand modern societies.

In theory, the essential assumptions of homogeneity and homogeneous entities tend to eliminate people. The diversity "of and in" historical processes promotes generalisations that lead to a discourse that simplifies and reduces complexity to terms such as "Indigenous", "Portuguese", "African", or explains colonialism by automatically considering Indigenous and African as a tabula rasa/blank slate for the Portuguese (Sallum and Noelli 2020). One of the common decisions was considering that everyone simultaneously transformed materiality with the same events and processes. From this perspective, it is not possible to understand the events and their effects in different local and regional histories since it disregards the way people articulated their social practices until the present day and shaped modern society. Homogeneity fed the concept of automatic changes that led to another assumption: discontinuity. This was recurrent in Brazilian academic production, compromising the understanding of local stories of persistence, generating a pernicious effect in the present that exploits the non-recognition of indigenous lands, Maroons, and traditional communities. That colonial way of denying rights was repeated throughout history, questioning authenticity, and identity in different ways to justify legal recourses, such as tutelage, and the timeframe.

Another challenge is how to relate epistemes from different times. The timeline of the archaeological record defined by linear time offers a type of information, while different communities may have different concepts of time, covering a range from linear time to multiple times, including the coexistence of these concepts.

The relation of traditional knowledge with colonial remains full of uncertainties in Brazilian archaeology, as recently analysed by Souza (2017). He highlighted the essential in Lightfoot's critique (1995) to the assumption of discontinuity between "pre-historical" and "historical" contexts, a typical unilateral interpretation of the Western perception of linear time and homogenous entities. As highlighted by Silliman (2012), these questions derive from archaeological concepts and practices which were not decolonised by the majority, nor attuned to the way people relate themselves to their own stories.

Discontinuity also results from the absence of intellectual exchange in the field of cultural diversity, between the academy and the communities of traditional knowledge. It was imposed by a unilateral perspective that considers only what the coloniser knows and defends their purposes to rule and exploit people and their territories. The discontinuity is not an agenda for communities in their reality. As such, staying away from the diversity sphere is like saying that archaeology is not interested in other types of knowledge and practices, let alone in thinking about affective alliances and learning other languages.

To be present, we must place archaeology in the knowledge regimes marked by orality without any kind of writing sources. Effective presence marks exchange and dialogue, in which linguistic relationships among people based on listening are a way to understand the articulations and contradictions of different communities in new political realities (Cusicanqui 2010). Listening to people who live around or on the site where we work or their descendants "provides a wealth of knowledge about pasts that we could not otherwise understand or even be aware of" (Schmidt and Kehoe 2019: 1). A similar case occurred in Nahua Oral Narratives for decolonising spaces in Mexico (Flores-Muñoz and Murrieta-Flores 2022).

This is not a mere theoretical allegory or a qualification tool; it articulates epistemes about practices that solve daily problems and reveal contents passed down from generation to generation. Memory and orality must be accepted as significant sources for the archaeology of contemporary societies. From that perspective, new paths appear to enable the interaction of different epistemes, bringing to the surface erased or silenced memories, reconnecting people to their pasts and their loved ones, and abandoning the widespread practice of Brazilian archaeology of not recognising orality and memories. And we may finally acknowledge what previous generations have said in the past, as shown by three young thinkers from Brazil and the US:

Jaime Xamei (2019), from the Wai Wai people, in Pará:

"For us, old people are the theory, they are those who hold information. I grew up listening to stories. And that is how we transmit it, through generations."

Shianne Sebastian (Dring et al. 2019), from the Eastern Pequot community, in Connecticut:

"American native history was orally transmitted by generations, having few written records. We have access to European narratives, but before that, we must trust the stories that we are told and the artefacts we find to understand how the Pequot lived."

Célia Xakriabá (2020), from the Xakriabá people, in Minas Gerais:

"In the history of our people, the clay learning period represents a period when the school institution did not exist, but indigenous education already existed, transmitted by the chanting of words, by orality. Thus, there was no writing, but there was memory."

The examples given by these statements help emphasise the points I have made above on the importance of traditional knowledge from diverse cultures to understand contemporary society. So now is the right time to contribute to understanding the actions of communities that practiced traditional knowledge, the places where relationships between groups and individuals occurred, to focus on individual learning and group activities, in which learning is a continuous process, based on the transmission of knowledge between generations (Wendrich 2012).

Archaeology could contribute to projects created and defined in partnership with such communities. I have a few suggestions inspired by initiatives dedicated to the dialogue between epistemes in South America, such as the Programa de Formação em Saberes Traditionais of UFMG, The Laboratory of Indigenous Languages and Literature - LALLI UNB (University of Brasilia), and many others developed in Brazil and abroad, like THOA (Taller de Historia Oral Andina) and CONAMUNE (Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Negras del Ecuador) from the memory processes based on the fight of the *cimarronas* – Afro-descending women from Valle del Chota-Mira (Balanzátegui 2022), which is dedicated to the "alternative" ways of producing knowledge that are not centred in writing.

Considering the possibility of connecting different times and places, projects could contemplate, for instance: 1) maps of the places and the constellations of communities of traditional knowledge; 2) multiple time memory and transmission of the knowledge of material practices and how to handle raw materials; 3) food sovereignty, together of the use of natural resources and materialities to produce cuisines; and 4) social relationships of collaboration and consideration in alliances, resistance, acceptance, and avoidance of colonialism.

### A History of Persistence of the Communities of Traditional Knowledge in São Paulo

The second part of this paper recounts a practical example of how archaeology can contribute to understanding contemporary society, according to the considerations presented. This is based on the results of my research, published in my Ph.D. dissertation (Sallum 2018) and collaborative articles (Noelli and Sallum 2019, 2020a, 2020b, 2021; Sallum and Noelli 2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2022). It is a case of the

persistence of communities of traditional knowledge, which were considered extinct at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by archaeology in São Paulo and Paraná prior to my research. This research defined the general contours of colonial occupation on the coast and the contiguous inland regions of the states of São Paulo and Paraná during the last 500 years.

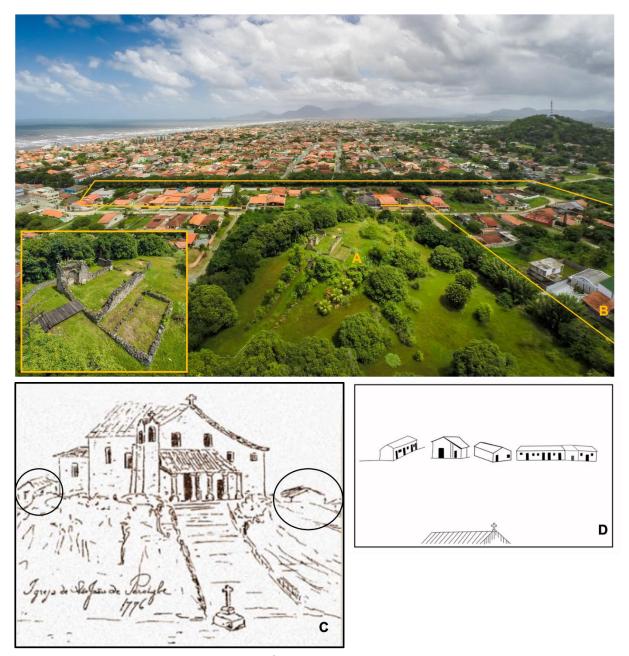
I started researching an archaeological site called Ruínas do Abarebebê a mile from the Tupi Guarani Indigenous land in Peruíbe (Figure 4), a residential area of the ancient village of São João Batista of Peruíbe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The church and the clergy's residence were previously investigated by other teams, who did a prospective survey of materiality but did not investigate the people's history.

I identified two layers of occupation (Sallum 2018). The older is from the later "precolonial" and early "colonial" period, where I found the ceramics, which I have designated "Tupiniquim' as that was a land of the Tupiniquim people (previously classified as Tupiguarani, Tupinambá, and Tupi). In the most recent layer, dated from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the village was born, I found the ceramics defined as Paulistaware (Sallum and Noelli 2020: 551):

"Portuguese coarse ware appropriated and transformed in the sixteenth century by Tupiniquim women from the São Vicente area for use in colonial settlements, which their descendants and newcomers reproduced until the present day in the southeast region of São Paulo."

Portuguese coarse ware attracted the interest of the Tupiniquim women, for whom the appropriation of Portuguese pottery was part of Indigenous conceptions of incorporating the Other and the ability to take in others – friends and enemies – without losing one's cultural self.

The Paulistaware was used until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when people who lived in São Vicente moved further away from the coast or migrated to larger cities (Figure 5). This ceramic style was previously classified in other research as NeoBrazilian, Local/Regional and Paulista Popular Ceramics.



**Figure 4:** A) "Ruínas do Abarebebê" (São Paulo, Peruíbe), aerial photo by Tipuana images (Vitor Barão); B) Area of the Indigenous residence between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries; C and D) Drawing by José Custodio de Sá e Faria (1776) – marked with a circle (C) are the Indigenous residence and (D) some details of size and layout of the houses (D) adapted by Carolina Guedes.



**Figure 5:** Pots produced in communities of São Paulo and Paraná that share the same features as those made in several archaeological sites dated between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: a) British Museum; b, c, e, g, h, m, n, o, p, q) Collection by Herta Scheuer - Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology of the UFPR; d) Historical Museum of Itapeva (reconstruction Carolina Guedes); f) Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology of the University of São Paulo; i) Visitor Center "Visconde de Porto Seguro"; j) Museum of the City of São Paulo; l) Sorocaba Historical Museum (reconstruction Carolina Guedes). Photos: M. Sallum: b, c, e, g, h, m, n, o, p, q; F. Noelli: d, j, l.

The orthodox interpretation espoused in research conducted prior to mine highlighted the discontinuity between the Tupiniquim occupation and later ones, according to the historiographic perspective that says the Tupiniquim were extinguished in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the village was abandoned.

It was considered that the village was re-occupied by Indigenous peoples brought from outside the coast after the 17<sup>th</sup> century, who lived there until colonial bureaucracy abandoned it in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some previous research applied the historical version of demographic collapse, a cultural loss that turned the Indigenous populations into a homogenous mass and a blank slate for the Portuguese, considering that the region automatically became a Portuguese place in every way, adopting the ingrained model of historiography often criticised (Monteiro 1990).

There is no doubt regarding the importance and quality of previous research. Still, I did not understand why interpretations of the historical process did not connect people from the past to the present more effectively, as is done by traditional communities of Juréia from São Paulo, particularly regarding their land management, traditional knowledge, and other practices (Lima *et al.* 2022).

Another example is the Tupi Guarani communities of the Piaçaguera Indigenous Land on the coast of São Paulo that goes back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when their Guaraní ancestors migrated from Paraná and established relationships with ancestors of the people that currently self-identifies as Tupí (Tupiniquim), creating Tupí Guaraní communities. They were called "interesting mestizos," and other disparaging names in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

According to Macedo (2019):

"The Tupi Guarani tell the story of their name and the theory of difference that it brings, in which mixing is not mestizaje since no whole syncretic results from it. They are not mestizos, but neither are they Guarani, Tupi, or white. Their uniqueness is to be one thing and another, experiencing the difference, not as something to be overcome or separated, but lived."

This community are struggling to revert years of academic and political power considerations about their extinction, whose representatives claim the recognition of their identity, criticising and questioning the prejudice against, and disregard of, their existence (Ladeira 2007; Macedo 2009; Mainardi 2010, Almeida 2011, 2015; Danaga 2012; Bertapeli 2015 2020; Sallum and Noelli 2022). As a reaction to external pressures to demonstrate an indigenous identity, these people chose to "rescue" the language, ceramic production, and other materialities (Mainardi 2010: 68). However, there is still much to do regarding their history from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Archaeology has disregarded countless languages identified in coastal and inland communities, ignoring their Indigenous and African ancestry, so often manifested by people themselves and many community studies published since the 1940s by geographers, sociologists, anthropologists, and biologists. Those communities were interpreted as metonyms of poverty and their lifestyles were ignored because they did not follow Portuguese social, cultural, and economic standards. As a result, there was no archaeological research, from other perspectives, on the relationships between Indigenous, Africans, Afro-descendants, and Europeans, and these relationships exist in materiality, social practices, and language on the most diversified themes of interest for archaeology.

It was at this point that I realised that the analysis of the archaeological record and its time distribution is just an early stage of research, a starting point to begin investigating social, cultural, and other possible themes. However, research conducted before mine stopped at the first stage, describing the record and the archaeological context and interpreting "pre-colonial" and "colonial" ceramics as products of different and unrelated populations; on the contrary, my research followed another direction, according to the five guidelines mentioned above.

From the idea of persistence, I critically reviewed the research bases conducted before mine. I began with the basic problem: questioning why archaeological research conducted in São Paulo did not consider the several long-term communities of ceramic practices on the coast that persisted in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Why was there seemingly no archaeological engagement with the studies of social sciences and geography conducted since the 1940s? Why did no one investigate the time-depth of ceramic practices, at least to see if they corresponded to archaeological vases? Why did no one examine the book published by Herta Scheuer in 1976, *Cerâmica Popular do Estado de São Paulo*, which provides a useful narrative report on the continuity of practices in ceramic communities?

The images and narratives of Scheuer's book show vases produced in nine communities, with features found in many archaeological sites within São Paulo dated from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, including Peruíbe. Vases were also made in Northeastern Paraná (Scheuer 1967), showing what Scheuer called "stylistic kinship" among places, evidencing the traditional knowledge shared between generations with

memories that go back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. She thus showed the importance of another research theme to connect people in the long term: the recognition of potters' lineages which may emerge from present memory and consulting lists of baptism, marriages, deaths, and other bureaucratic records.



**Figure 6:** A, C, D) Ceramist Ana Pereira and the production of the Paulistaware (20<sup>th</sup> century, Vale do Ribeira). Photo: Plácido Campos. Collection: São Paulo Museum of Image and Sound; B) "rescue" of pottery practice by the Tabaçu Rekoypy community, Piaçaguera Indigenous Land (Peruíbe), 2021, photo courtesy of Luã Apyká.

Scheuer (1976: 6) noted that it is possible to "find a continuity in shape... in which every recipient is manufactured with a uniform style" and with a "tenacious attachment to traditional shapes... which may be attributed to a spiritual motivation.

Conscient of tradition, they remain faithful to it, transmitting knowledge in the same way". She showed the fundamentality of persistence, which is the intentional articulation of practices because potters wanted to convey traditional knowledge in the same way, while also paying attention to other pieces of knowledge.

Herta Scheuer's research led me in two important directions. First, to the past: I saw that today's ceramics and those from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, found in the second layer of the Ruínas do Abarebebê site, dated from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, formed similar contexts to other archaeological sites in the region.

Evidence of the creation of Paulista pottery in the São Vicente/Santos area in the first half of 16<sup>th</sup> century, was found in Rio de Janeiro on the Cara de Cão Hill (1565-1567) and Camorim Mill Plantation (1594-1667). The results of the excavations of the two sites were analysed with historical and genealogical data (Peixoto *et al.* 2022). In both places, but especially in Camorim, ceramic production resulted from the exchange of people from São Vicente to Rio de Janeiro, with families and their Portuguese relatives, women descendants of generations of ceramists who were certainly among the originators or those who witnessed the creation of the Paulistaware.

The combination of archaeological and historical sources from São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro permitted access to these women's genealogies. This information facilitated a unique discovery on the historical archaeology done in Brazil, regarding people recognised by their names and families to specific communities of practice in the São Vicente area, chronologically situated in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Such genealogies refine the understanding of kinship and affinity relations in the Tupiniquim communities, serving both the past and the present through descendants. These genealogies permit understanding the relationships between people and their practices and the distribution of sets of ceramic vessels from different places. Thus, it is possible to explain how constellations of communities of practice are established and how women transmit their knowledge between generations since genealogical and historical sources allow us to map the agency of people in different places, including distant territories from São Vicente, like Mato Grosso (Mello 2022).

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Second, to the present: Scheuer influenced me to meet the experts, engage with their knowledge, the language of ceramics, food sovereignty, and its prominence within their communities. It also inspired me to engage closely with historical sources and look for vases from different times and places housed in several institutions (Sallum 2018). This gave me another perception on the long duration of traditional knowledge and made me rethink the production and use of ceramics from many sites, understanding the possibilities that enable me to create maps with constellations of communities. In this way, I collected information to show that the ceramic I designated Paulistaware was made by lineages of women from many places, but dates to the Tupiniquim of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 7) (Sallum and Noelli 2020).



**Figure 7:** Mapping the communities of women ceramists by Herta Scheuer (1960s and 1970s, São Paulo, Paraná, Minas Gerais e Goiás) (H. Scheuer photo collection from the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Federal University of Paraná: a, b, d, e, f); A, B) Coiling technique; D) Oven (barranco); E, F) Soenga; C) Coiling technique, Apiaí (Photo: Mayy Koffler).

I designated this class of ceramics Paulistaware, because these people's communities experienced what Monteiro (2001) defined as a game of identities, documented since

the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Sallum and Noelli 2020, 2021a). These are the communities of relationships between the Tupiniquim and the Portuguese, whose descendants – and the outsiders who joined them – recognised themselves first and foremost as Paulistas. This is the most common term to define their places of speech by identity and not a geographical space, and it is an option that ensures against homogenisation of people with historical trajectories defined by a critical attitude that has separated them from the Portuguese colonial nuclei. Today's potters use their places as a reference to their origin but identify themselves as Paulistas.

To understand the morphological and stylistic elements that were appropriated and transformed from Portuguese coarse ware, a set of 870 vessels from northern Portugal, belonging to the collection of the Museu de Olaria de Barcelos – the region where many people left for São Vicente in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries – was recorded and analysed, constituting an unpublished database in Brazil about the materiality observed by the Tupiniquim women in São Paulo.

By compiling data from the bibliographic review and the northern Portuguese sample, it was possible to verify that the morphometry of the various functional classes was quite standardised, suggesting practices transmitted in different places and times, similar to the Tupiniquim case. The Portuguese nomenclature is the most variable element, obeying the linguistic differences of the different regions and places, which needs to be studied in detail (Casimiro 2022).

Scheuer's directions also led me to meeting Dona Benedita Dias, 78 years old, in November 2017. She is a master representative of the centenary female potters' community of Jairê. She was an outsider and began learning when she was 19 years old, becoming a famous expert during her six-decade career. She learned by herself, watching other experts and her mother-in-law, a respected expert from a lineage of potters, and is an example that the arrival of newcomers has two results: the community increases, and the newcomer is engaged in the production of materiality, turning the practice into "an extension of the relationship between people" (Lagrou 2013).

Benedita Dias not only shows the ancestral ceramic knowledge but the continuity of a way of life where "sensory interaction with the material world is central to generate

and activate body memory" (Hamilakis 2013), linking them to the land, the activities of the fields with environmental management, planting and harvesting, food preparation, and the education of their children. Amanda Magrini (2019) noted in her Master's thesis that these women maintain leadership of various activities to this day, remaining closely connected to the preservation of nature's sustainable systems.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that female potters from São Paulo and their traditional knowledge ideally represent the five guidelines mentioned above:

- 1. in spite of the impact of colonialism, potters transcended generations, persisting with a critical attitude toward their traditional knowledge, producing for recreative purposes and as a way to provide for their families;
- 2. despite their academic erasure within archaeology, they are not part of a homogenous mass but acted within the markers of the knowledge of their communities of practice and the respect for the ancestral experts;
- 3. in spite of persistent generalisations, pottery communities are not homogeneous entities but rather people respected due to their capacity of awakening sensorial perceptions that intertwine the memory of present generations with specific collective pasts from different times and places;
- 4. despite the impositions of a conception of the linearity of time, potters act by making memory circulate in multilinear times to include and awaken the senses, flavours, and the aesthetic of knowledge of different times and places;
- 5. in spite of attempts to the contrary, as documented by countless sources today as well as in the past, female potters have been the leaders of many types of public social relationships, responsible for the logistics of places and the sustainability of their practices. They are often responsible for providing for their families.

Thus, from the case study outlined in this paper, it is clear that archaeology can make a valuable contribution to understanding contemporary Brazilian society in many ways, but particularly through using fundamental perspectives to forge the affective alliance suggested by Aílton Krenak.

Archaeology has the challenge of dialoguing epistemes with thousands of communities. The agenda will depend on each archaeologist and local context, contrary to the idea of centralised archaeology, putting in check the bureaucracy and national legislation.

Acknowledgements: To the editors of *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology*, and to the peer reviewers for their suggestions to improve my paper. This work was financed by Brazilian funds through FAPESP - São Paulo Research Foundation (grants 2019/17868–0 2019/18664–9 2021/09619-0). Portuguese funds through FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia in the framework of the projects UIDB/00698/2020 and UIDP/00698/2020. Thanks to Steve Silliman for the careful comments on the English version. To Herta Scheuer, in memoriam, whose research is a "contribution to understanding contemporary Brazilian society". To Dona Benedita Dias, a real expert, the starting point to understand the legacy of traditional knowledge in the constellation of potters from Vale do Ribeira. To Luã Apyká, professor of the Community Tabaçu rekoypy (Peruíbe), for the exchange of ideas. To Carmelita Moraes and her family for their support in promoting the legacy of Plácido Campos. Thanks to Danielle Gomes Samia for the maps. To Bruna Portela from the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Federal University of Paraná (Brazil). Thanks to Francisco Noelli for the partnership and daily debate.

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