

INDIGENOUS BRAZILIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

Colonial deliriums and shamanic performances in the house of the Other: notes from an indigenous student of anthropology in Europe

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Abstract

I want this essay to be a reflective, personal and critical account of the experiences of an Indigenous Brazilian anthropology student navigating European academic institutions and spaces. I situate these experiences within broader histories of colonial knowledge production, legal violence, and epistemic injustice. Drawing on encounters with German and Austrian speaking scientific traditions, archival collections, political arenas, and contemporary Anthropologic debates, I interrogate how Europe continue to imagine and classify Indigenous Peoples through colonial epistemologies that persist in museums, universities, and emerging global legal-political frameworks, therefore, I name this as colonial deliriums. Dialoguing with Indigenous scholars such as Shawn Wilson, Vine Deloria Jr., David Kopenawa, Ailton Krenak, and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. My essay develops the concept of shamanic legal imagination as both critique and method, displayed as a mode of knowledges grounded in relationality, territory, and cosmopolitical ethics. My narrative juxtaposes examples of legal and political spaces: the ongoing legal struggles in Brazil, including the *Marco Temporal* correlating with the pressures of European sustainability legal frameworks, such as CSDDD, Raw Materials Act); I'm able to do it because of my experience of advocacy, and facing the epistemic oppression and racialized disciplining within European academia. Through this lens, the text proposes a "counter-anthropology" that recentres Indigenous epistemologies, advances methodological reciprocity, and confronts the extractivist logics embedded in the legal and academic imaginary and regimes in the old continent. By foregrounding Indigenous cosmologies, archival readings, and shamanic methodologies, the essay argues for a renewed anthropological practice capable of supporting Indigenous sovereignty, territorial justice, and the recognition of other worlds within the house of the Other.

Keywords: Indigenous Epistemologies; Shamanic Methodologies; Epistemic Resistance; Academic Experience.

Delírios Coloniais e Performances Xamânicas na Casa do Outro: notas de um estudante indígena de antropologia na Europa

Resumo

Pretendo que este ensaio seja um relato reflexivo, pessoal e crítico das experiências de um estudante e ativista indígena brasileiro de antropologia navegando por instituições e espaços acadêmicos europeus. Situo essas experiências em histórias mais amplas de produção de conhecimento colonial, violência legal e injustiça epistêmica. Baseando-me em encontros com tradições científicas de língua alemã e austríaca, arquivos de museus, arenas jurídico-políticas e debates antropológicos contemporâneos, questiono como a Europa continua a imaginar e classificar os povos indígenas por meio de epistemologias coloniais que persistem nesses espaços, por isso chamo de delírios coloniais. Dialogando com acadêmicos indígenas como Shawn Wilson, Vine Deloria Jr., David Kopenawa, Ailton Krenak e Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, meu ensaio desenvolve o conceito de imaginação jurídica xamânica como crítica e método, apresentado como um modo de saber fundamentado na relacionalidade, no território e na ética cosmopolítica. Minha narrativa justapõe exemplos de espaços jurídicos e políticos: as lutas político-jurídicas em curso no Brasil, incluindo o Marco Temporal, correlacionando-se com as pressões dos marcos legais europeus de sustentabilidade, como a CSDDD e a Lei de Matérias-Primas; consigo fazer isso graças à minha experiência em advocacia e ao enfrentamento da opressão epistêmica e racismo estrutural no meio acadêmico europeu. Através dessa lente, o texto propõe uma “contra-antropologia” que re-centra as epistemologias indígenas, promove a reciprocidade metodológica e confronta as lógicas extrativistas arraigadas no imaginário e nos regimes jurídicos e acadêmicos do velho continente. Ao dar destaque às cosmologias indígenas, às leituras de arquivo e às metodologias xamânicas, o ensaio argumenta em favor de uma prática antropológica mais audaciosa, capaz de apoiar a soberania indígena, a justiça territorial e o reconhecimento de outros mundos dentro da casa do Outro.

Palavras-chave: epistemologias indígenas; metodologias xamânicas; resistência epistêmica; experiência acadêmica.

Colonial deliriums and shamanic performances in the house of the Other: notes from an indigenous student of anthropology in Europe

EDSON KRENAK

INTRODUCTION: REASONS

This text is a reflective note, perhaps a kind of memoir. I write as a way of organising my own experiences and sharing the complexities I encountered in attempting to combine different fields of knowledge. More than an academic account, it is an exercise in memory that sets out to understand how my personal and academic trajectories became entangled with the history of colonisation, resistance and indigenous identity in an unexpected anthropological venture set in Europe. In revisiting these moments, my aim is to consider the impact of the colonial structures that still permeate the European academic environment and how these have shaped —both positively and negatively — my own path of study and my work as an indigenous person in foreign lands.

This text also emerges from three reading experiences. First, my reading of the history of the Prussian and Austrian expeditionary era when many German explorers came to Brazil, including Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius (1794-1868), Johann Baptist von Spix and Alexander von Humboldt (who never entered Guarani or Tupiniquim lands, yet determined much of what later generations of Germans would say about Brazil). Alongside them, the Austro-Hungarians Johann Natterer and Johann Baptist Emanuel Pohl left notable legacies in the collections of the Weltmuseum in Vienna (where I had the pleasure of working with Claudia Augustat on her campaign to discuss Austria's role during Brazil's colonial period; in other words, the rather deft involvement of the Austrians in colonisation). Friedrich Sellow, Prince Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied, Hans Staden and the 'indigenised' Curt Nimuendajú (originally Curt Unckel) also contributed significantly to a particular exotic, heterogeneous, naturalistic and ethnographic vision of Brazil.¹ Over the last two hundred years, Ger-

1 Obviously, there are more recent examples as well, such as my friend Georg Grünberg and my supervisor Renne Kuppe.

man-language science has striven to know, classify and describe Brazil's lands and peoples. This stirred my curiosity. Compiling everything they learned would be a herculean task still yet to be undertaken, but as a starting point, I decided to learn more about their legacy and discovered that much has changed, while certain structures and institutions unfortunately still have a lingering colonial and denialist aftertaste, as I shall explain in brief.

Another essential reading for an indigenous student — and one that helped in my own questioning — is the book by Professor Shawn Wilson of the Opaskwayak Cree people of northern Manitoba, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (2008). From this reading I asked myself: which aspects of my research and academic practice might support other indigenous researchers? And how? This is something I am currently working on.

More recently, I wished to understand how indigenous students in the United States and Canada (or in the wider English-speaking world) grapple with the questions posed by anthropology within the hegemonic context of scientific production in English. I came across a debate organised by the American Anthropological Association (AAA 2015). At this 2015 event, entitled *Emergent Praxis against Anthropological Delusions*, young indigenous scholars and senior academics from different regions discussed the gains and losses for indigenous peoples in their engagement with anthropology. Above all, they addressed the familiarity — and the strange and productive tensions — between contemporary indigenous praxis and certain anthropologists. Our colleagues in the northern hemisphere debate how indigenous identity is celebrated in the twenty-first century as a set of 'practices of self-determination against the daily traumas of colonial domination' (perhaps our own *retomadas* or recuperations of usurped lands and the emergence of new indigenous groups in Brazil resonate here), while our practices and identities are simultaneously dismissed as being dependent on obsolete anthropological notions and a romantic and false ethnographic vision by the likes of Mr Adam Kuper² — whose retrograde and colonialist views our colleagues have seldom if ever found the courage to question.^{3 4}

Our indigenous and anthropologist colleagues in the United States treat as 'delusions' the positioning of indigenous worlds as a 'Fourth World' and the persistent tutelary method and expropriation of indigenous peoples by the West — processes still present in contemporary

2 See Audra Simpson (2014).

3 Here I refer to the interview conducted by Carlo Fausto and Federico Neiburg with Adam Kuper, published without the critical questioning that his ideas demand. The questions posed and the lines along which the dialogue was guided missed a valuable opportunity to directly confront the controversial – and, in some cases, disrespectful – positions Kuper maintains in relation to indigenous peoples. Rather than destabilising his reductionist notions concerning indigenous identities or his sweeping critiques of multiculturalism and collective rights, the interviewers adopted an excessively accommodating tone, which ultimately worked to legitimise arguments long challenged by anthropologists committed to decolonial perspectives and, above all, by indigenous scholars. See Carlos Fausto and Federico Neiburg (2002).

4 Although trenchant, my remarks regarding Adam Kuper are not directed at him alone but at the broader anthropological paradigm in which he is situated. For further discussion, see the indigenous critique of Coulthard (2014) and Tallbear (2013).

indigenous experiences, including the ongoing legal struggle for demarcation and the ongoing protection of lands demarcated in Brazil since the 1988 Constitution. Their remarks also echo the thought of the great indigenous intellectual Vine Deloria Jr., who in the 1960s critiqued anthropology for its limited commitment to indigenous peoples and argued that anthropologists needed to engage directly in matters of law and advocacy with indigenous communities. Deloria Jr. called on anthropologists to climb down from their thrones of authority and from the realm of PURE abstract research written in an incomprehensible idiom (which we still see today among the *almas selvagens* of academia).⁵

Indigenous critiques in the United States, Canada and Aotearoa/New Zealand point out that the possibilities for the emergence of an indigenous anthropology are often undermined by the colonial delusions that linger within the discipline — a return to Kuper's notions of the 'invention' and 'reinvention of primitive peoples and their identities' by anthropologists. If this struck, and continues to strike, with force there, perhaps our experience in Brazil is different. Or perhaps not.⁶

The imperial delusions of anthropology today have reached a global scale, almost passive in the face of the oppressive burdens of neoliberalism. With the globalisation of debates and discourse, indigenous anthropologists may need to engage more actively in understanding indigenous worlds beyond the confines of 'western cultural theory' and, while we critique

5 It is perhaps unnecessary to point out that not every Castro writes with the clarity of Josué de Castro; see, for example, the works of Viveiros de Castro.

6 Although I assume we have made considerable progress on paper, as Viveiros de Castro discusses in the preface to *A Queda do Céu* (the Portuguese translation of *La Chute du Ciel* by Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert, 2015) where he advocates the conversion of the researcher into a 'political ally' and 'diplomatic representative' of 'natives,' with the aim of mediating the relationship between them and the dominant society. But do we need mediation? When will issues of power, status and institutional investments be addressed? The institutional and political structures involved in this 'ethnographic pact,' which requires researchers to be representatives, mediators and intellectuals, ultimately still makes them heralds of the state. Casting the researcher as a 'diplomatic representative' of indigenous peoples ignores the indigenous discourse of the 1980s when Álvaro Tukano, Marcos Terena, Ailton Krenak, Mário Juruna and others were already advocating for an 'indigenous embassy' in Brasília, which perhaps exposing the vanity of these non-indigenous diplomats? Vine Deloria Jr. and Edward Said long ago highlighted the importance of communities speaking for themselves, rather than perpetuating the colonial power dynamics of a diplomacy led by anthropologists. If historically we have been subjects interpreted by outsiders, culturally and politically silenced (dominated!) then we no longer need this. Indeed, is this not a colonial legacy? Moreover, the status of 'diplomatic ally' recentres attention on the external observer (as occurs in publication practices and research funding), thereby weakening the autonomy and development of indigenous knowledge systems and political agency. This perpetuates – or risks perpetuating – the colonial and arrogant notion that indigenous peoples still require external intermediaries in order to be understood. I take it that anthropologists and scientists more broadly must work to build structures in which indigenous epistemologies and leadership prevail. This paternalistic dynamic, already criticised by both Deloria and Said, upholds systems of oppression rather than dismantling them. (I have not found Deloria's books in Portuguese, but there is much available online, such as *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1988 and *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion*, Fulcrum Publishing, 1994.) Considering Gersem Baniwa's pungent critique of the tutelary relationship exercised by indigenism and by certain sectors of anthropology, the situation in Brazil is not so different. His proposed epistemic shift will only be effective when more indigenous academics occupy financially supported positions in research, teaching and outreach. The appropriation of indigenous knowledge within institutions such as FUNAI and the universities, for instance, cannot remain hostage to a so-called political and ethnographic partnership. (I thank the reviewers for suggesting the inclusion of Baniwa's critique here. For further discussion, see Baniwa 2019: 337.)

these imaginaries projected onto us, we may also develop our own theories and frameworks. It is important for these to be shared.

Honouring the legacy of many others, moreover, we must reflect on a profoundly relevant aspect of indigenous thought and practice in the contemporary world: activism on a global scale.⁷ Issues once regarded as exclusively local quickly become global concerns, exposing the interconnections and power dynamics between the local and the global. Yet, from a critical —and especially decolonial — perspective, we can perceive that local demands should not be automatically reframed as global problems on the terms and in the interests of the colonial system. What frequently occurs is that the needs of indigenous communities are appropriated and reshaped by global agendas without due recognition of the autonomy of these populations to define their own struggles and strategies of resistance. This transition from the local to the global, when viewed through a colonial lens, tends to reinforce a hierarchy of knowledge in which local problems are absorbed and redefined by dominant narratives, obscuring indigenous voices and forms of knowledge.

One example — which could just as well come from any part of the world — concerns the scientific policies frequently promoted by industry and by states to address climate change. Informed by the ontology and epistemology of the so-called western world, carbon sequestration is postulated as a global solution to global warming. However, these policies often ignore or subordinate indigenous peoples' traditional systems of forest management, imposing technical criteria and carbon-market logics that fail to dialogue with local cosmologies. For this type of praxis, trees and rivers, for instance, are valued primarily for the 'service' of capturing carbon. Many communities report that their territories have come to be regulated by national and international agreements that they neither defined nor control, nor even fully understand, transforming their ways of life into 'environmental services' according to western criteria, ignoring the spiritual, ecological and cosmological dimensions of their relationships with their environments. In many countries, local communities have been displaced or had their access to ancestral lands restricted with the creation of conservation parks managed by research institutes, international NGOs and governments, under the justification of biodiversity protection. Although presented as 'global solutions for the climate and wildlife,' such measures often disregard the traditional ecological knowledge of pastoral peoples and hunter-gatherer groups. This reveals a hierarchy of knowledge: globalised scientific and economic logics redefine the territory, local relations and indigenous knowledge as

7 I refer to this as a *contemporary pajelança* (*shamanic healing*), an ongoing political and epistemological engagement of constant translation and re-signification of spiritual and healing practices – 'religious' perhaps in the specific sense of an indigenous ontological context. Contemporary shamanic healing entails a dispute over ontological – and therefore epistemological – legitimacy in urban settings and in spheres of indigenous mobilisation around environmental, health and educational narratives. This work, described by some as healing and restoration, seeks to reaffirm the relevance of indigenous knowledges in the external public sphere, confronting the environmental, religious and biomedical monopolies of scientific policy. The *pajés* (shamans) are no longer confined to their village or their own community; they circulate in other spaces.

climate-mitigation resources, rather than recognising the forest, rivers and land as relational living entities, as expressed by numerous indigenous peoples.

Here, as in other areas, the hierarchy of knowledges becomes evident when traditional knowledges and practices are routinely labelled as inadequate and thus ignored and shelved as ‘primitive’ or ‘unscientific.’⁸

Along these lines, I have been attempting to describe what might constitute an indigenous juridical imaginary within a methodology I call shamanic. This shamanic and juridically-oriented methodology does not propose a new indigenous legal doctrine for white people but an epistemic disobedience and a radical openness to the multiplicity of worlds. It is based on three performances: (a) ritual and political displacement as a mode of acting in and transforming the world; (b) an ontological critique of law as a colonial instrument; and (c) performative translation as a means of existence and resistance.

My emphasis on the need for an indigenous and ontological questioning critique of law is based on its redemptive yet violent force. Redemptive, because it is a pathway for achieving justice; yet violent, because it is rooted in the foundations of the colonial state. After our participation in and celebration of the 1988 Constitution, we already knew that the pursuit of justice would remain a violent path — as indeed it still is.⁹ The necessity I see in this endeavour is a conception of true justice, one that demands not only political reparation but a transformation in power relations, in how the other is understood, as well as the construction and dissemination of adequate narratives about indigenous peoples.

8 Another, more subtle example, though no less pernicious and troubling, is the issue of the *marco temporal* in Brazil. The legal thesis *marco temporal* (temporal landmark) asserts that indigenous peoples are only entitled to demarcation of their land if they were physically present there on 5 October 1988, the date of the promulgation of the Federal Constitution. This interpretation has been defended not only by sectors of agribusiness, mining and congress but also by key sectors of the judiciary, including the Federal Supreme Court. The problem with this thesis is that legitimacy does not stem from the community itself, nor from its originary existence or its historical relationship with the ancestral territory, but from conformity with the positivised legal norm in Brazil. It is a clear expression of how the logic of law is not grounded in ancestry, belonging or spiritual bonds, or in the terms of the community, but rather in the European positivist legal tradition. This restrictive and chronological reading of the Constitution and of history ignores ancestral knowledge and oral history. In such cases, indigenous peoples possess political and juridical legitimacy only to the extent that they submit to the constitutional criteria of a system that has historically excluded and criminalised them. (For more on this topic, see Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (2018), Manuela and Samuel Barbosa (eds.). 2018. *Direitos dos povos indígenas em disputa* São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 368 pp.).

9 The Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin approached law and legality critically in his 1921 essay ‘Toward a Critique of Violence’ (*Zur Kritik der Gewalt*), in which he identifies two forms of violence: law-founding violence and law-preserving violence. The first relates to our constitutional experience, which since 1824 has established laws and orders dictating our assimilation and integration, and thus our genocide. The second preserves the existing order; even after 1988, the Brazilian juridical imaginary remains, in many respects, anchored in the nineteenth century. Other Jewish and Palestinian thinkers – and here the observation is intended to explore indigenous issues in light of the twentieth-century Palestine-Israel issue, which has generated a profound juridical debate since the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem – have signalled a conception of justice not limited to the recovery of rights or land, but extends to the restructuring of historical narratives that dehumanise the colonised – such as revisiting the archives, for example.

TRAVELLING TO THE DOCTORATE IN EUROPE: CHANGES

Eight years ago, I arrived in Europe almost by accident to study the relationship between indigenous literature and law,¹⁰ but within the field of anthropology. I was somewhat confused, of course, since in academia — both in Brazil and elsewhere — I had been told that I needed to clearly define three distinct areas of knowledge. In other words, it would not be possible to place the three feathers of three different birds in the same headdress. I decided not to change my approach and instead sought somewhere that would accept this intersection. Naturally, a question that continues to cast a shadow over my studies is whether we actually need anthropology at all. While anthropology may have changed internally since Malinowski, often considerably so, in the field and among communities the old practices and interactions appear determined to remain conservative. Furthermore, the emergence of new areas of knowledge — such as indigenous studies, Amazonian studies, eco-agriculture and other specialisations around the world — has challenged the limits of the discipline, along with its hierarchies of knowledge and its traditional compartmentalisation or exoticisation of local knowledge, all of which have acquired new dimensions and nuances. At an event organised by the Max Planck Institute in Jena, Germany,¹¹ in 2024, scientists and researchers from diverse fields celebrated the birth of a new area, geo-anthropology, which, despite its holistic proposal, does not include indigenous bodies of knowledge, as these are deemed insufficiently scientific (see footnote 8).

A great deal has changed since then. Some aspects of my research have become more ethnographic, others more theoretical. On one hand, anthropology has prevailed over law and literary studies, whether through my own limitations or through anthropology's keen desire to encompass everything. As some people say, anthropology has something of an anthropophagic impulse, the spirit of a hunter and a devourer. I am unsure.

My first impressions of European academic anthropology were that it represented rather well the expression 'old continent,' not only because of the colonial architecture of its buildings but also due to the formality present in classes and lectures. There was little room for the exchange of ideas, even in postgraduate classrooms, and knowledge was centralised in

10 It had never been my plan to go to Europe; I had hoped to *head south*, remaining in what is called the Global South. But on a leisure trip, I discovered the links between the Botocudos and the museums of Vienna and Germany. I met interesting people studying the topic and what was meant to be a tourist trip became a journey to apply for the doctoral programme.

11 Scientists in this field seek to advance the agenda that human beings are not only cultural but also geological agents. Anthropology without archaeology, geology and biology, they argue, is self-limiting since the activities that irreversibly transform human life and the planet — such as agriculture, urbanisation, mining, fossil-fuel combustion, deforestation and river contamination — are geological. The alteration of the planet's biophysical systems therefore requires, in their view, new epistemological and ethical approaches for thinking about humanity's role on Earth. See the website of the Max Planck Institute of Geoanthropology at <https://www.gea.mpg.de/7481/profile> and MPIWG *Geoanthropology* at <https://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/research/projects/geoanthropology>.

the figure of the professors, even when their expertise extended only to the Buryat of Siberia or the Bushmen of Namibia.

I recall a class in which the professor proposed a semester on ontologies and perspectivism without any reference to South American anthropology or to French authors — only Americans, Germans and others. When I questioned this, I was reprimanded and penalised with low marks for the remainder of the semester. On another occasion, during a class in which I asked about Austria's colonial legacy, an Austrian colleague interrupted me to say that the country had no connection whatsoever to colonialism. Another time, I received notes passed from someone in the room asking me to stop interrupting with my questions.

This resistance to questioning became even clearer during an event at the Max Planck Institute when, after a presentation on how German science would save the world, I asked about the role of indigenous peoples, who are responsible for protecting 80% of global biodiversity. The speaker replied that the programme did recognise indigenous peoples, so much so, they had used photographs of them in the conference booklet. When I returned to my seat, a professor walked past me and, with sarcasm or irony, said: 'You people from the Global South are not allowed to ask questions here.'

Being in Europe may seem glamorous but we should remember that this is the birthplace of colonialism, capitalism, racism and so many other 'isms' that continue to shape people's behaviour. In the beginning, I was often asked who funded my studies and a certain relief was perceptible when I said it was not a European funding agency. I arrived with the promise of a scholarship that never materialised and with the devastation of Brazilian science under Temer and Bolsonaro, my hope of funding vanished entirely. Today, I support myself by teaching and working with international NGOs, especially Cultural Survival, which supports indigenous communities. This has helped me combine theoretical and practical research with putting food on the table. Many people ask me: 'Why Austria?' I ask myself that question too now, but perhaps my ancestors placed me here for a reason, as my *cacica* Lidianie Krenak said. I received an invitation to view the collection at the Weltmuseum in Vienna, where I saw objects belonging to the former Botocudos. I phoned Ailton Krenak, who told me there was much to be done and learnt here, not just in Vienna but also in other museums across Europe and even in Russia.

I encountered many researchers interested in these subjects, such as Christian Feest, who writes about the presence of the Botocudos in Europe (Feest 1996, 2023), tracing the 'visits' made by six Botocudos brought over by curious Europeans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Angel Bojadsen remarks:

A large crowd of curious Viennese had already gathered for the arrival of the ship transporting the cannibals, but they were quickly taken by carriage to the Imperial Palace, were given a room in the adjoining Imperial Garden and were placed under the protection of Emperor Franz I. Although Leopoldina had warned her father not to trust the Botocudos... (Bojadsen 2006).

This text is an invitation to our kin for us to think together about a critical indigenous anthropology, a kind of counter-anthropology, one that places at the centre of our discussion not the ‘self-other’ relation but the question of our future and our knowledge, our ways of being, knowing and doing, led by ourselves, indigenous peoples.

My theme is both a provocation and a central preoccupation of my work: the juridical and colonial delusions that permeate Brazilian law vis-à-vis indigenous communities and the new European legislation that directly confronts the indigenous imagination. This imagination, far from being conceived here as merely science or method, is a form of epistemological resistance. It is a struggle that unfolds in the house of the Other, in Europe, which still presents itself as the major source of laws, policies and economies that impact the Global South and, specifically, Brazil. As a centre of global scientific and juridical normativity, Europe encounters in indigenous resistance a narrative that rejects both this centre and its norms.¹² As an indigenous student of anthropology in Europe, this tension is felt daily: the clash between the rigidity of colonial norms and the fluidity of indigenous thought, which challenges imposed structures and asserts itself as a legitimate and necessary mode of knowledge, both in the juridical sphere and in the political and cultural arena.

Obviously, I am not a jurist when it comes to discussing matters of law and order, but from the perspective of working with and alongside indigenous peoples, it is crucial to understand this field as one that intersects all others. My spiritual mentor at the beginning of my research, Paulinho Payakan, once told me in a conversation with Daniel Munduruku that law is the most dangerous indigenous battleground because winning in court does not necessarily mean a practical victory — we still have to continue defending our rights and territories against constant new threats — while losing would be devastating for indigenous territories and ways of life.

In Brazil, the issue of the *marco temporal* — the ‘temporal landmark,’ which has become a central legal doctrine in the country, holding that indigenous peoples are entitled to land rights only if they were physically present on their territories at the moment when the 1988 Brazilian Constitution was promulgated¹³ — has struck our political discourse and activism as a form of political, historical and epistemic violence. This reductionist view not only ignores the complexity of indigenous relationships to land but also places numerous territories at risk. Moreover, the green economy and the rush for transition minerals for sustainable technologies have introduced a profound new global dimension to research in the human

12 See the emblematic examples of counter-narrative in the Munduruku cosmological letters on law and wealth; in the Sarayaku people’s notion of *territorio vivo* in Ecuador; in Davi Kopenawa’s shamanic ethics; and in Ailton Krenak’s world philosophy. These examples reconfigure law by bringing together spirituality, ancestry and politics, challenging colonial norms and proposing alternative epistemologies – or other anthropologies.

13 TN: The legal thesis of the *marco temporal* was ratified by Brazil’s Federal Supreme Court in 2009 but later ruled unconstitutional by the same body in 2023. Pushback from a right-wing congress, however, led to its reinstatement in legislation shortly afterwards, meaning that there is currently (as of late 2025) no stable legal position.

sciences, law and economics, especially in our interactions with kin beyond Brazil, drawing us into critical engagement with colonial powers far from our homelands.

For example, European legislation approved in 2024, such as the CSDDD (the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive) and the Raw Materials Act (RMA), has a significant impact on indigenous peoples, especially in the context of resource extraction on their territories. Although these laws aim to promote more sustainable practices and ensure that companies respect human and environmental rights throughout their supply chains, they still operate within an extractivist framework that has historically ignored indigenous epistemologies and ways of life. When we dialogued with various actors to ensure that these items of legislation respected the existence of indigenous peoples, there was a clear and direct demand for the use of both community knowledge and international legal instruments, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The RMA, for instance, seeks to secure access to minerals essential for energy transition, yet the growing demand for these resources directly threatens indigenous lands, often without prior or adequate consultation. Despite the CSDDD's 'due diligence' guidelines, which in principle should protect the rights of affected communities, European companies frequently continue to act in complicity with local governments, resulting in deforestation, pollution and the forced displacement of indigenous populations. For indigenous peoples, such legislation not only perpetuates the exploitation of their territories but also fails to recognise the importance of their ancestral knowledge in environmental protection, thereby undermining the true sovereignty and self-determination of these communities.

The *marco temporal* is directly connected to these European laws insofar as these and other legal rulings and laws facilitate the exploitation of natural resources by European companies, many of which are located on indigenous territories in Brazil. The legal thesis of the temporal landmark is a local economic reaction to European demand for strategic minerals. The state once again positions itself as the bulwark and ambassador of colonial powers. Deterritorialisation, displacement of communities, violence and other pressures on indigenous populations are just some of the consequences of these juridical delusions, which operate as facilitators of global extractivist interests, reinforcing the vulnerability of indigenous peoples to such international legislation. Colonial delusions have always been devastating for indigenous peoples since the 'Encounter' in the sixteenth century. These global issues are deeply entangled with the local challenges faced by indigenous communities and reveal the constant struggle for sovereignty and rights. Laws and juridical decisions operate within a much broader structure of knowledge that privileges an extractivist worldview. We are familiar with this extractivist vision through western sciences such as anthropology, biology and linguistics, which have either mischaracterised, disregarded or delegitimised indigenous knowledge and epistemologies. Indigenous ontologies, which understand the land to be sacred and deeply interconnected with the balance of life — our Mother Earth — are systematically ignored in

favour of a Eurocentric epistemology that treats land and its resources as mere commodities. Ailton Krenak formulates this relationship as follows:

The notion that white Europeans could jump in their ships and go colonizing the rest of the world was based on the premise that there was an enlightened humanity that had to go in search of the benighted humanity and bring those savages into their incredible light. This call to civilization was always justified by the idea that there is a right way of being in the world, one truth, or concept of truth, that has guided the choices made down through history. (Krenak 2022: 6)

QUESTIONS OF THEORY AND METHOD

Western epistemology, which informs both global economic policies and local legislative frameworks,¹⁴ still disregards the ancestral knowledge of indigenous peoples concerning land, biodiversity and sustainability. Indigenous epistemologies, which offer a holistic understanding of the environment and resist the nature-culture dichotomy imposed by the west, could contribute significantly to a more sustainable model, yet they are left in the waiting room — or outside altogether — of scientific discussions at COP (the United Nations Climate Conference) and other public policy arenas. Compounding this discursive exclusion, they often lack the conditions to travel and participate.

For this reason, one of the major challenges facing the indigenous researcher — if they aspire to free themselves from the epistemic tyranny and oppression of western sciences — is dealing with the secondary position assigned to indigenous knowledge. This is a place of subalternity that offers visibility and representation before ‘modernity’ and ‘science,’ yet frequently denies the agency and impact of these knowledges. In the postcolonial context, we are no longer ‘spoken’ for exclusively by western intellectuals or local elites (or only rarely). Nonetheless, our own discourses, when transmitted in certain spaces, are often instrumentalised to legitimise the power of academic institutions or events that invite the indigenous

14 The reader will be familiar with Ruth Benedict’s intriguing work *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, written during the Second World War to inform the United States government about Japan and its people and thus assist in shaping occupation policies and the country’s post-war reconstruction. Benedict explored the symbolic duality of Japan, represented by the ‘chrysanthemum’ (a symbol of beauty, peace and harmony) and the ‘sword’ (a symbol of discipline, loyalty and military strength) evoked in the book’s title. This work reportedly helped the Americans devise strategies for the ideological occupation and colonisation of Japan and to promote social and political reforms. The question that remains is: did anthropology, as an ally of the state, serve Japan or its occupiers? In Brazil, indigenous communities must undertake their own analysis of the impact of the institutions that succeeded the Indian Protection Service (*Serviço de Proteção aos Índios*: SPI, created in 1910) and later FUNAI (created in 1967), both directly shaped by anthropological and indigenist studies. Many such studies were used to implement policies of assimilation and integration of indigenous peoples into the developmentalist projects of republican and dictatorial governments alike, but especially during the military regime. ‘Opening’ the Amazon — as one rapes a woman — and other regions to economic exploitation and extraction of raw materials often cost indigenous peoples their rights, their lands and, in many cases, their very existence. The same logic, grounded in western scientific paradigms, continues to operate in the public policies of governments that call themselves democratic. Today, with the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples, we hold in our hands both the ‘chrysanthemum’ (our ways of life in the village) and the ‘sword’ (our activism and urbanised lives). How will we make this work? Time will tell.

voice but do not promote the structural transformation required. It works for programming events but not for transformation.

Indigenous researcher, who ought to be protagonists in the management and protection of their own territories and knowledge, are frequently reduced to symbolic figures in a spectacle that values superficial inclusion over genuine changes in power structures. Although it is said to be important to include an indigenous person in the event's programme, there is seldom any commitment to transforming the structures of power that marginalise this knowledge.

By confronting anthropology's colonial structure, Gersen Baniwa's critique adds a crucial layer to this analysis. the discipline's "feudo" (2019, p.32) not only accumulates knowledge, but metabolizes the *indio*, imposing what he calls a 50/50 (idem) split that fractures the indigenous scholar and replicates the very *fragilidade* socio-politico and cultural colonization enforce. this is the tragic result of the colonial delirium, its contagious power, which seduces indigenous and young scholars into internalizing and reproducing the harmful hierarchies beyond the academia within their own communities and territories. As we shall see, the deliriums are neither abstract or vague, nor solely academic. Rather, they take appear in concrete form in spaces of such profound influence and impact that their transatlantic connections would require a separated article to explore. Thus, a revolutionary Indigenous anthropology must transcend analysis and commit to "ceremonial research", ensuring that collective ownership and epistemic sovereignty redirect and defines knowledge, and the resources away from the academy and back to the community. Ceremonies exist, not to describe or explain, but to sustain, strengthen and protect the world.

In another text, Gersem Baniwa asks whether anthrpoopology will remains the same after being embraced by Indigenous intellectuals who would use it as a weapon to defend their worlds. "The interest in appropriating anthropology is part of an empowering strategy (...) in order to prevent it from falling into the hands of enemies" para impedir que ela caia nas mãos dos inimigos." (Baniwa 2023: 12)

This triple transformation required for the discipline to free itself from the colonial delirium has trhess aspects: political methdological and epistemological:

pluriepistemic anthropology would consist of an anthropology that promotes a symmetrical practive between academic scientific knowledge and traditional indigenous knowledge, it being constituent of plural anthropology (...), an anthropology with different anthropologies, with their various epistemological matrices and cultural and cosmological bases. It is impossible, or even undesirable, for anthropology to continue being the same after the introduction and the presence of indigenous people. In fact, anthropology is not the same for quite some time (Baniwa 2013: 13).

What Baniwa affirms is that Indigenous anthropology is not anthropology with new actors; it is anthropology with a new ontology, the future discipline is pluriepistemic.

By connecting this anthropological discussion with epistemology, I also emphasise that the real issue goes beyond land possession or access to resources. It involves a struggle for sovereignty

and for recognition of indigenous knowledge and existence *for and through indigenous land*. Resisting a juridical, economic and social system that continues to silence and devalue these forms of knowledge, which are nourished by and exist for *indigenous land*, lies at the heart of indigenous epistemologies. Indigenous knowledge will attain its full relevance and freedom when it is granted the power to decide the political, economic and social direction taken by indigenous peoples, and when such decision-making translates as genuine governance and real self-determination at local level, free from the oppression of international demands.

My relationship with universities, museums, professors, researchers and other post-graduate students in Europe has made clear, therefore, that both the ‘old continent’ and twenty-first-century science remain far from any genuine *decolonisation*. The structures of knowledge and power (juridical, political and economic) remain deeply rooted in colonialism with little openness to indigenous approaches and epistemologies, which severely limits dialogue and the exchange of knowledge.

As indigenous researchers, we must also expose how the sciences — and the researchers who work in our communities and engage with our lives, when they are funded by the state, frequently assume an epistemological complicity with the latter. This complicity reinforces the *epistemic oppression* (Dotson 2011)¹⁵ characteristic of state institutions both locally and globally. In constructing an indigenous anthropology, we must challenge these monopolies of power and knowledge, creating space for our shamanic epistemologies and traditional forms of knowledge — epistemologies that integrate spiritual worlds, nature and politics (terms already translated in indigenous contexts, though, as Bruce Albert has noted, often inadequate for expressing Yanomami perspectives at least)¹⁶ as a single body of knowing and practice. Plural, like indigenous diversity itself, these epistemologies are ways of knowing and acting that refuse the separation between subject and territory, proposing ontological and juridical forms of resistance — *re-existence* — that displace the centre of colonial power. The centre is not the city: it is the biome, as the activists of the Brazilian indigenous women’s movement — the *mulheres-bioma* — would say. It is not capital: it is ecological relations.

Naturally, this is a critical exercise based on observations from my own study and work practices. I have also witnessed far more fruitful and enriching interactions between anthropologists, biologists and other scientists who engage with indigenous knowledge — or with indigenous communities — on equal terms rather than hierarchically. I have observed a growing interest in breaking with complicity in academic structures. I see researchers becoming strong

15 In her words: “Epistemic oppression refers to persistent epistemic exclusion that hinders one’s contribution to knowledge production. The tendency to shy away from using the term ‘epistemic oppression’ may follow from an assumption that epistemic forms of oppression are generally reducible to social and political forms of oppression. While I agree that many exclusions that compromise one’s ability to contribute to the production of knowledge can be reducible to social and political forms of oppression, there still exists distinctly irreducible forms of epistemic oppression. [...] Distinguishing between reducible and irreducible forms of epistemic oppression can offer a better understanding of what is at stake in deploying the term and when such deployment is apt.” (Dotson, 2014, 117).

16 See Bruce Albert (1991).

allies of indigenous communities and I see a significant transformation in research practices, now frequently carried out at the request of, and in accordance with the interests of, indigenous peoples themselves. Yet much remains to be done. Recently, I spoke with an indigenous community in Minas Gerais who described a visit from a group of researchers from USP and Unicamp, interested in learning about their food production system. These researchers conducted interviews, took photographs, gathered materials and collected samples of foods and plants. However, there was no prior and informed consultation, and the researchers left no document of commitment nor established any terms of agreement. Moreover, they did not share with the community any prospectus or preliminary account of the results of the research carried out by the interdisciplinary team — this in 2024! The example demonstrates that, despite certain advances, extractive practices and the lack of reciprocity remain challenges that must be overcome if genuine partnerships between academia and indigenous communities are to be achieved.

Nonetheless, in the country of Paulo Freire, it is urgent and essential to discuss all forms of oppression and to find ways to avoid reproducing them. Kristie Dotson, in a text now more than ten years old, analyses and discusses forms of epistemic oppression — that is, the exclusion or silencing of marginalised groups in the production and validation of knowledge.

In her work, Dotson identifies two forms of epistemic oppression: testimonial injustice, when the contributions of certain groups are dismissed or devalued; and hermeneutical injustice, when marginalised communities lack the resources to understand their experiences within dominant frameworks. In her critique, Dotson highlights how these forms of exclusion perpetuate inequalities in the production of knowledge, limiting the participation of the oppressed in intellectual discourse. I myself experienced a form of oppression when, during the defence of my research project at the University of Vienna, one of the professors questioned the legitimacy of indigenous studies related to my topic, accusing me of ‘inventing a tradition’ and totemising my own culture.¹⁷ This critique reflects colonial assumptions that indigenous cultures are static and that indigenous people are incapable of producing academic research without a tutor. As an indigenous researcher, I argued that all traditions, including my own, are dynamic and continually evolving. What is perceived as ‘invention’ is, in fact, resilience and new strategies for counter-narrating the academic discourses surrounding us. By reinterpreting and reclaiming our traditions, we resist epistemic oppression and assert our right to indigenous sovereignty in the production of knowledge.

Along the same lines, another way of problematising and overcoming epistemic oppression is found in the seminal work by Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert, *The Falling Sky* (first published in French in 2010), which arguably inaugurated this critical counter-anthropology. The book goes beyond the conventional limits of literature, anthropology and law, offering an incisive shamanic ethnography of the Other — the colonisers — who, in their delusion, believed

17 The term ‘invention of tradition’ was coined by the British historian Eric Hobsbawm, together with co-editor Terence Ranger, in the influential 1983 volume *The Invention of Tradition*.

themselves to be the sole possessors of knowledge. By focusing on the indigenous perspective and Yanomami cosmology, Kopenawa (Kopenawa and Albert 2015) subverts the colonial narrative, producing a powerful critique of the western delusion of epistemic superiority.

The Falling Sky represents this path — that is, a counter-anthropology — since it offers pathways via which we can subvert the traditional structures of critical ethnographic practice and academic knowledge. The shamanic cosmology of the Yanomami is the guiding thread of this counter-anthropology. First published for a French readership, the book crosses literary and anthropological boundaries, operating as a testament to the complexity and depth of indigenous/non-indigenous relations. By narrating the destruction of the forest and the relations between visible and invisible beings, Kopenawa exposes the illusions of the western world — whose point of reference, notably, is not western science — and its belief that it can dominate and understand everything through science and rationality (therefore scientists and anthropologists “speak like a ghost” p. 389) He shows us that western knowledge is not the only form of knowledge, less still the most legitimate, bringing to the surface a radical critique of the way in which white people delude themselves with the idea they are the sole possessors of understanding. It is an epistemological analysis of the monoculture of the west. *The Falling Sky* is thus a critical ethnography that reverses the colonial gaze: it is the Other — the coloniser — who becomes the object of analysis and critique, not the indigenous population.

In this way, Kopenawa not only narrates Yanomami cosmology but uses it to dismantle hierarchies of knowledge, exposing the epistemic blindness of the west and showing that true wisdom lies in the interconnection between all beings. Yet this very operation was also employed by western epistemology — in anthropology, literature, and law — to distort the view of indigenous peoples and their lands. Along these lines, I include here what would otherwise have been a footnote on Edward Said’s (2007) argument in his seminal book *Orientalism* (1978), where he demonstrates how the West — not only Europe but also the United States — constructed and perpetuated a distorted and stereotyped vision of the Orient, creating a multimodal discourse (scientific, industrial, cultural, economic and legal) to sustain and justify colonial and imperial domination over the territories of Asia, Africa and the Middle East up to the present.

This critique of western knowledge can be understood as a contemporary version of the radical resistance and rejection of the colonial state from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, when confrontation was military, direct and dangerous. The Botocudo peoples resisted by fleeing from the coast into the forests, as did many others. Ailton Krenak, in *Ideas to Postpone the End of the World*, emphasises that escaping and fleeing are forms of indigenous resistance (Krenak 2022: 15). In his broader body of work, Ailton Krenak delivers a more profound critique of Western thought, challenging its core ideas: its utilitarianism (2020a/b), its narrow definition of humanity (2019), and the destructive relationship it keeps with the planet (2019 and 2022)

Today, however, this resistance must take place within the structures of the state. The indigenous thinker Leanne Betasamosake Simpson argues that true indigenous freedom can

only be achieved through a radical resistance that rejects the structures and impositions of the colonial state. She critiques colonial systems for attempting to integrate and co-opt indigenous peoples within a structural framework that perpetuates colonialism, capitalism and environmental destruction. Rather than seeking to reform the state, Simpson proposes a refusal to submit to it, promoting forms of resistance that go beyond conventional protest and centre on the revitalisation of indigenous practices.

Quoting Binoojinh, she reminds us that ‘the freedom realized through flight and refusal is the freedom to imagine and create an elsewhere in the here; a present future beyond the imaginative and territorial bounds of colonialism. It is a performance of other worlds, an embodied practice of flight’ (Simpson 2017: 173). Just as Kopenawa shows in his description of Yanomami cosmology, this *performance of other worlds* takes place through a systematic action of flight, refusal and performance. These three strategies — fleeing the traps and assimilationist policies of the state; rejecting the illusory and delusional alternatives offered by capitalism; and performing in line with indigenous methodologies — are fundamental for grounding an indigenous counter-anthropology. This entails living and researching through reciprocal relationships with the land, ancestral entities (the *encantados*, for some peoples) and the community. The performance of knowledge occurs in practices such as the ritual use and stewardship of medicinal plants, in the oral narratives transmitted by elders, in youth activism, and in the community management of rivers, forests, food systems and local politics. Moreover, the celebratory participation in ceremonies activates these living forms of knowledge that underpin the relational ethics of resistance and the foundational epistemologies of ‘indigenous anthropologies’ (Baniwa 2019).

BEFORE GOING, SOME RESEARCH PRACTICES AND PROPOSALS

I conclude by discussing some ideas concerning how these *performances of other worlds*, as an anthropological practice, might guide our work within the discipline and in other areas. In my view, it is essential that we move towards a counter-anthropology in such a way that we never become heralds of a state institution. Bringing shamanic epistemologies to the centre of the discussion is crucial since it challenges the academic and institutional structures that devalue our knowledge and enables instead a genuine epistemic plurality. Rather than a field of knowledge that seeks to dominate, this shamanic approach promotes a *re-cognition* of indigenous cosmologies as legitimate modes of understanding the world and, therefore, as possessing the capacity to operate within these worlds. In short, indigenous knowledge is a pedagogy of territory.

I therefore propose five pathways for discussion:

- 1. Shamanic Epistemologies as Methodology:** One of the most effective ways we have to advance is to place indigenous ontologies at the centre of our research. Even if the people concerned do not have a *pajé* or shaman, what I call shamanic epistemologies can also be understood through the words of Ailton Krenak:

Human beings are not the only interesting beings, nor the only beings with a perspective on existence. Many others have one as well. Singing, dancing and living the magical experience of suspending the sky is common in many traditions. To suspend the sky is to expand our horizon — not a prospective horizon, but an existential one. It means to enrich our subjectivities, which are precisely what our era seeks to consume. If there is an urge to consume nature, there is also an urge to consume subjectivities — our own subjectivities. So let us live them with whatever freedom we are capable of inventing, rather than placing them on the market. (Krenak 2022:15)

This vision not only recognises other forms of knowing but also challenges western dualisms, questioning the assumption that human knowledge is the only knowledge in the world. Ailton Krenak affirms that other beings — such as animals and the natural world, often accessed through the work of *pajés* and shamans — also possess their own perspective on existence. This challenges the idea that only humans can understand and decide about life. Krenak speaks of ‘suspending the sky,’ a metaphor for expanding our worldview, going beyond the future and connecting ourselves more deeply with the present.

My aunt Jovina used to say that mosses were the dwellings of the *Marét*, the forest spirits of the Krenak, similar to the *xapiri* of the Yanomami. For this reason, we were to walk carefully and respectfully in the forest, for these mosses were the first homes. As my aunt said, they teach us valuable lessons. I was surprised to discover the work of the indigenous American biologist Robin Kimmerer (2013), which reveals how mosses point in the same direction as my aunt Jovina’s stories. As my research expanded and I drew on an international bibliography of indigenous scholars, I came to see the immense potential for global collaboration among these thinkers.

We are only at the beginning of this new tendency and, thanks to the translations of our thinkers, I believe it will increase even further. Authors such as Daniel Munduruku, Ailton Krenak and Davi Kopenawa are opening the way for young researchers. Krenak and Kopenawa, for instance, critique the way contemporary society seeks to ‘consume’ not only nature but also our ideas, feelings and cultures, transforming everything into a commodity. Instead, we should live our experiences and subjectivities with freedom, creating new ways of existing without having them commodified or controlled. Our knowledge and our ways of living must remain connected to the meaning of existence, not merely to profit or power.

2. Promoting Multidisciplinary Approaches: The intersection between activism, political ecology and the arts needs to be explored in much more depth. The work of indigenous anthropologists must extend beyond the traditional boundaries of anthropology, supporting and amplifying the struggles of our communities. Although *transdisciplinarity* has been an academic trend for decades, its protagonists remain mostly non-indigenous. Those with the largest grants and the most prominent names in publications are still overwhelmingly non-indigenous. The tutelary mindset persists both in academia and in transdisciplinary initiatives, perpetuating unequal power relations.

3. Challenging the Extractivist Nature of Anthropology and Western Sciences: Reciprocity must be the central axis of academic practice — just as it is in our communities and in everyday life — achieved through ethical practices that benefit communities and foster collaboration

throughout the entire research process. Reciprocity, an almost universal indigenous principle, must be exercised with responsibility (the ability to respond together). One way of achieving this goal is to integrate indigenous researchers into projects conducted in their own villages. With consultation and consent, the community becomes a genuine partner, ensuring that research results do not slip away from the communities from which they originate.

4. Revisiting the Archives and Making Them Speak: The archives of the state and colonisation must be revisited by us, indigenous peoples, so that we can develop our own critique of the history of the Brazilian state. Archives possess an agency powerful enough not only to transform History and its relationship with the Brazilian community, but also to mobilise our own epistemologies. Indigenous researchers can benefit from investigating archives, revealing how colonial governments, military regimes and even the recent democratic period produced knowledge and exercised power through documents. As Brazilian anthropology has shown,¹⁸ the archives of the SPI, FUNAI, the military forces and other Brazilian agencies — perhaps more than any other kind of archive — are far from neutral: they expose the racial and social prejudices that shaped colonial domination, bearing witness to violence and to the violation of original rights, while also containing the potential to reveal our history.

Indigenous researchers can use these spaces to challenge these power structures, recovering lost histories and giving new meanings to their narratives, bringing *pajelanças* and other ceremonies to the forefront in retelling these histories, just as we have long done (*shamanism/pajelança as methodology*). By treating archives as sites of ethnography, young indigenous researchers can expose the lacunas within colonial knowledge and subvert traditional extractivist research practices. Urban indigenous communities face both internal and external challenges, including the denial of self-identification and the impacts of forced relocation to urban areas. Indigenous migration has become an almost irreversible phenomenon in the twenty-first century due to assaults on our lands, climate change and other pressures. Documenting these experiences offers a valuable opportunity to show how these communities resist, adapt and preserve their identities even in urban contexts. This process is crucial for understanding the complex forms of resistance and cultural re-signification that emerge amid forced urbanisation.

But we need to go beyond understanding. Without disregarding the important contributions made in this field by Professors Antônio Carlos de Souza Lima and João Pacheco de Oliveira in terms of comprehending the Brazilian state's role in shaping, controlling and supervising indigenous identities and agencies — I would observe that, according to them, the indigenist practices of state tutelary institutions and policies of incorporation sought to reduce indigenous peoples to state labourers or second-class citizens. This critique, while crucial, still seems to position indigenous peoples as objects of state policy and as merely

18 I take up the suggestion made by the editors to make use of the works of João Pacheco de Oliveira and Antônio Carlos de Souza Lima, although it is not my intention to discuss their works in detail. For further reading, see: Lima (1995) and Pacheco de Oliveira (2016).

reactive historical actors, rather than as full epistemic, political and legal subjects—producers of worlds and their own political actions. From this perspective, we need to explore and create indigenous categories to describe not only these archives but also the world of the time and the world that has since been created within academia and Brazilian society.

The visit to the archives should allow us to reimagine politics, law and history as spheres in which we are agents and creators, not merely forces of resistance or reaction. When I provocatively suggest making the archives speak, I mean that they should speak through indigenous grammars and categories, not through those of the state that classified, supervised, subordinated and confined them. We must translate our worlds and our histories without centralizing the colonial and over-familiar terms of the state. We possess distinct ways of reading, rewriting and redirecting the archives of our ancestors: hence we are not lacking methodologies or epistemic frameworks with each indigenous people developing their own. The decolonial critique nourished by the agency of native peoples envisages other forms of social contract not based on the denial or subjugation of alterity. Revisiting the archives and thus seeking out and reimagining our own conceptions of time, justice and belonging means performing other practices of citizenship, politics and memory that escape the state-form, still deeply embedded in academic discourse.

5. Anthropology and Literature: New Forms of Representation and Ethnography. In *Tempo de Retomada* (2025),¹⁹ the poet and researcher Makuxi Truduá Dorrico follows the contemporary tradition of indigenous authors, writers and artists who, through literature, transform the archives — those topographies of memory produced by state institutions, including the university — into a space of *retomada*, retaking and recuperating our past and future. By mobilising poetry, prose, autobiographical material, historical documents and political manifestos, as Daniel Munduruku and others have done in literature and others like Daiara Tukano, Jaider Esbell, Nani Terena and Gustavo Caboco explore in the arts, she proposes a radical *retomada* involving the recovery and re-signification of physical, cultural, affective and epistemic territories that have been denied throughout Portuguese colonisation and the Brazilian republican state. Literature can mobilise the ancestral power of shamanic narratives that stitch together indigenous cultures and languages. Our identities inhabit this affective and spiritual territory of language transformed into the materiality of sound or image (through text on skin or on paper). Indigenous literature has much to teach about context, audience, authorship and authority. In the field of anthropology, with the multivocal power of ethnography, young anthropologists can explore new forms of representation that transcend traditional anthropological writing and interrogate its limits. Incorporating indigenous languages, oral histories and creative expressions — including the visual arts (see Jaider Esbell's reinterpretation of *Macunaíma* in his paintings!) — opens innovative pathways. Historically, explorers and researchers extracted and published the narratives of our peoples, claiming for

19 Although classified as fiction, the work offers a poetic critique of the Brazilian state.

themselves not only the labour of translating and recounting these stories but also publishing them as authors. If anthropology is to be decolonised, it must pass through this terrain. Only then will indigenous literatures, produced and researched by indigenous people, be able to respond in more creative ways to the central ethnographic question: to describe a culture?

These five proposals, which have been part of my research work, postulate a counter-anthropology within the discipline, not only to transform the colonial practices of the discipline imposed on indigenous peoples, but also as a way of bringing the political and cultural struggles of indigenous peoples into the spaces they now occupy, creating new pathways for comprehending and respecting their modes of life and their knowledge.

Thus, what remains in terms of indigenous research and methodologies is the question of whether we do anthropology *as* activism or *with* activism (see an interesting discussion in Willow and Yotebieng 2020). For me, this distinction does not exist. Research is a ceremony, just as activism is a ceremony in defence of Mother Earth. Drawing on the shamanic methods of Kopenawa and others, braiding together anthropology, literature, activism, advocacy and research grounded in a situated perspective, my aim is more than to understand and act from within these social, cultural and political experiences, but to center the knowledges that have always sustained us - shamanic, ancestral, territorial. Thus, I hope that my own experiences and vision have contributed a viewpoint for reflection, my kin.

Paraphrasing another philosopher:²⁰ in reclaiming anthropology's promise to *return to us an image of ourselves* in which it becomes possible to do justice, should we fail to recognise ourselves then we shall return the image to those who enveloped us within it. Thus, Indigenous researchers, regardless of their discipline, can move beyond speaking like a ghost or parrot, and cease amplifying the scientific frameworks that were instruments of colonization.

TRANSLATED BY DAVID RODGERS

RECEIVED: SEPTEMBER 22, 2024.

APPROVED: JULY 2, 2025.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT:

The data used in this essay are fully presented and discussed within the article. No supplementary datasets were generated or deposited on external platforms, unless the publishing house decided to relocate the data or expressly stated. All findings and analysis are based entirely on the information contained in the manuscript.

20 See the expression of Patrice Maniglier, cited on page 14 of *A Queda do Céu*, the Portuguese version of *La Chute du Ciel*, in which this philosopher defines what he calls the highest promise of anthropology, namely 'to return to us an image of ourselves in which we do not recognise ourselves' (*nous renvoyer de nous-mêmes une image où nous ne nous reconnaissons pas*: quoted in Kopenawa and Albert 2015: 14).

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