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> Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (Geertz 1973, p. 5)

1 In this well-known quotation featured here as an epigraph, culture is defined as a web of meanings that humans weave to hold themselves up and, one can assume, to provide a panoramic perch where they can wait in comfort for their prey. Already salient in the previous century(ies), this image is even more so now—in the digital age—when the link between "web" and "culture" has become cyber-obvious. But what happens when the web is woven by others, and one risks being stuck in it rather than suspended by it? Is the cyberworld really what it claims to be, open and accessible to all, or is it a sly avatar of cultural imperialism? As noted by James Maffie (2009) in an article that reflects on the future of indigenous knowledge, "In the end, we have the Gatling gun, and they have not." That the strike force is measured today in terms of the capacity to structure metadata rather than to fire off automatic weapons makes little difference.

2 It has often been said that digital repatriation is paradoxical in that the items returned have inevitably been alienated by the act of collection, eroded by the passing of time, and reconfigured by the contextual framework of their return. As developed in the introduction to part one of this double issue (Vapnarsky 2020), to preserve is necessarily to transform. Therefore, whatever is returned necessarily has a hybrid status and only acquires meaning for the community of origin by means of heated intra- and intercultural negotiations. An object may be returned to its place of origin, certainly, but one never steps twice into the same river. Moreover, as Eric Jolly (2008)

so rightly observed, archival collections should be seen as a succession of outside perspectives on a given society rather than as a repository of traditions as they may once have existed. Archives are the result of a cascade of choices, depending on the angle of observation adopted, technical constraints of the recording apparatus, and choices in archiving and accessibility. Sound bites, video footage, and written notes are all relative to a point of view, to a specific historical and political moment. They correspond to specific research objectives (Naepels 2008) and can therefore disappoint members of the community of origin to whom the items are returned (Christen 2009).

3 Many institutional actors seem to understand the crucial importance of the co-construction of meaning in the development of archival collections boosted by digital technology. Our era is clearly marked by a growing sensitivity to the ethics of consultation and to what could be called the legitimizing process of collaboration (Delaître and Robert 2019). Henceforth, as Peers has highlighted for collaboration between museum curators and indigenous populations, emphasis is placed on dialogue that acknowledges:

> the shift from the assumption that museums exist to house relics of dying cultures to seeing museums as material archives, resources for living cultures; the shift from museum staff being authorities on Indigenous cultures to acknowledging that Indigenous people are the authorities on their own cultures; the shift from thinking about museum objects as things, to thinking of them as potentially animate, and as embodying sets of relationships; the shift from museums working in isolation from source communities to working in partnership with them. (Peers 2010, p. 187)

4 We should of course welcome these shifts, and also the growing tendency to attenuate as much as possible the unilateral character of projects in the human sciences and cultural engineering (Athias 2018; Hoffmann and Noack 2016; Kraus 2016; Pierrebourg forthcoming; Van Velthem et al. 2017). Instead of "restitution," for museums as well as for archives, should we not be talking of "sharing" (Jolly 2008)? But let us not delude ourselves: "collaboration" is far from synonymous with strict equality. Asymmetry often slips into projects specifically intended to avoid it: for example, the names of indigenous collaborators are sometimes relegated to a generic mention, appearing only in marginalia or the anonymity of a footnote. More constraining, the very foundations of heritage infrastructure—from preservation law and regulations, to database structure, to the hermeticity of the system to the so-called "under-resourced" languages,[1] and the mysterious labyrinths in the access to materials and funding—make it difficult, or even impossible, to integrate the perspectives and initiatives of native peoples. Good intentions can only take us so far.

* * *

5 The introduction to part one of this double issue ended with the optimistic suggestion that the potentialities of digital repatriation are remarkably compatible with the modalities of circulation and reconfiguration of knowledge in Amerindian societies. Could this perhaps be generally true for societies with oral traditions? Compared to traditional media, digital technology exhibits more flexibility and versatility, as well as a higher capacity to embrace the multimodal dimension of recorded materials and performances. Furthermore, as suggested by philosopher Achille Mbembe, in those indigenous groups that are open to the outside world and that welcome intercultural encounters, circulation, mobility, and malleability have always existed. Furthermore,

"this flexibility and this aptitude for constant innovation, to the furthest extent possible, is also the spirit of the internet, [...] the spirit of the digital world" (Mbembe 2017, p. 204, our translation). When Mbembe states that "the power of digital technology derives from its capacity to detach itself from its original context to become incorporated in a different cultural matrix" (ibid., p. 204), he obviously has the African continent in mind, but his statement holds true for the Americas as well. And we can only be seduced by this image of non-Western civilizations "already digital before the digital age" (ibid., p. 204), using the internet as a "portable granary for stockpiles of knowledge" (ibid., p. 198).

6 Caution is nevertheless required. Access to the internet and the ability to navigate through it remain complicated in some parts of the world, and making databases "virtually" accessible is certainly not enough to decolonize them. The "virtual," by definition, cannot become real except by ceasing to be virtual, and for that reason very concrete means are called for to "de-virtualize" them. In order to circulate on the "web," one needs a computerized network, but also a network of social relations (Glinka, Meier and Dörk 2015). One needs hardware, software, data delivery speed, but also go-betweens, cultural mediators, and initial and ongoing training. Data have often been made available long before anyone thought to let members of the source community know of their existence. Such materials were available only to over-educated geeks, inveterate websurfers, preferably English speakers: a species that has few representatives in the remote villages of the Andes or of Patagonia. What had been thought of as a megaphone turned out to be a muffler, to borrow the metaphor of Gibson and Kahn (2016).

7 Thus, the Watau portal[2] was developed, among other reasons, in order to respond to the concerns of educated Wayana who were wondering about the future of photographs, sound recordings, and other artifacts that several generations of European researchers had collected in their villages. Where are all those materials now? Why did the researchers want them? What was done with them? How could they be accessed? Answers to these questions were of course available in museum catalogs, university libraries, archives, photograph collections, etc., but those are all places that, as Mataliwa Kuliyaman remarked with his habitual humor, could not be reached with canoes.[3] As for on-line resources, it is no doubt significant that the neologism used by the Wayana to refer to the web is *ëwa*, a term referring to the enchanted rope that allows shamans (and only shamans) to reach other cosmic layers.[4] Will everyone else be left stuck in the web?

8 In this issue, Vincent Hirtzel's article provides a good illustration of the numerous cases in which online repatriation, while an integral part of the project he describes, was not enough. His Yurakaré consultants and acquaintances insisted on recuperating documents on hard drives, which would better allow them to "reify" their culture, to manifest it concretely, and to display it at public meetings, which family and friends are more likely to frequent than websites. Andrea Scholz and Mirĩgõ-Diana Guzmán Ocampo's account of the obstacles involved in collectively developing an intercultural digital portal also attests to the difficulties inherent in the overly technical, pre-structured dimension of such projects, and also the tremendous human and financial investment they require. However, there can also be unexpected positive repercussions, such as basket-weaving workshops being set up rather than discussion groups focused on gathering metadata on baskets. Perhaps we should draw the

conclusion that repatriation, intended only for contemplation, is not an end in itself, but rather a step in a much more complex process. The example of the Xetá in southern Brazil, described by Edilene Coffaci de Lima, Liliany Rodriguez Barreto dos Passos, and Rafael Pacheco, shows clearly that, using what has been "returned" as a starting point, one can go as far as reconstituting a collective identity and attempting to recuperate ancestral lands. In short, repatriation can bring about existence.

* * *

9 The title of the panel where the papers in this special issue originated was "Digital repatriation of traditional indigenous knowledge: a threat or an asset for its transmission? *(La restitución digital de saberes indígenas tradicionales: ¿un recurso o una amenaza para su transmisión?)*." The panel presentations, as well as subsequent publications, reveal that there is not yet enough distance for us to examine the matter in depth. Rather than exploring the impact of new technology on the transmission of knowledge, most of the papers, like most of the specialized literature we have consulted, have focused mainly on simply describing the repatriation initiatives. And this was done with particular emphasis on the positive effects of digital sharing (Powell 2016), despite good reasons for skepticism (Göbel and Chicote 2017). In other words, as though driven by the need for justification, the focus has up to now been on the beneficial aspects of these projects and the good intentions that inspired them. There are fewer accounts of situations in which repatriation initiatives ended in deadlock. For example, not only "foreigners," but even members of certain insider groups, might see their access to content restricted for reasons stemming from identity politics or local epistemic regimes (Cantz 2018).[5] Indeed, failures and adverse effects are not rare, as many of the texts assembled in this issue attest. Like development projects, cultural projects are also subject to all sorts of misunderstandings and to what might be called "the clash of cosmographies" (Wright, Kapfhammer, and Wiik 2012).

10 Some of the misunderstandings undoubtedly arise from the fact that the status of what is "returned" can vary depending on the perspectives taken (Shepard et al. 2017). What stands for "culture" from the standpoint of heritage institutions, and also of anthropologists, may correspond more to "family memory" in the minds of source communities. In other cases, recipients of returned items may have a very tenuous, even phantasmagoric, connection with practices attributed to self-proclaimed ancestors. This is often where conflicts arise, as is shown in Augustat's (2020) analysis of the Pataxó's efforts in Brazil to reconstruct their lost cultural heritage using materials produced by the ancestors of other Amerindians and preserved in the repositories of German museums.[6] Even though all of anthropology has, in recent decades, reflected on the complexity (and sometimes questioned the relevance) of the notion of culture, we continue to "repatriate" with a vengeance, with "linguistic and cultural revitalization" in mind, without overly concerning ourselves with what might lurk behind such terms.

11 Ektachrome slides, glass plates, manuscripts, incunabula, cassette tapes, wax cylinders, and other objects too fragile to circulate, once transposed into megabytes, can finally leave the storeroom. Guided by altruistic anthropologists and curators, their digital avatars are now finding their way back to their community of origin without the risk of disappearing forever. Some will protest that only "reproductions" are repatriated, but,

in many ways, is not reproduction the very essence of life?[7] Meanwhile, though simple in appearance, "repatriation" operations often bring about unexpected social consequences, sometimes disturbing, always fascinating. We saw this in part one of this special issue, from the personal experiences related by Clarice Cohn, Maria Luisa Lucas, Jean Langdon, and Margarita Valdovinos among the Kayapó, the Bora, the Siona, and the Cora, respectively (see *JSA*, 106-2). The articles presented here offer further, complementary illustrations.

* * *

12 The four texts presented in part one of this issue focused on individual repatriation initiatives, in other words, on situations in which researchers wished to share with their Amerindian interlocutors resources concerning their past, their traditions, and their culture. They did so by essentially taking on the role of intermediary, taking back to the field images, texts, and sound recordings that sometimes came from personal collections, but that often were collected by others (sometimes several decades earlier) and that, above all, had not originally been intended for repatriation. The three articles that make up part two have in common that they offer examples of repatriation on the institutional level, involving return in digital form either as a condition of collecting in the first place or as an end in itself. These programs often integrate a wide range of actors and sometimes have substantial budgets, especially in the context of ambitious collective projects carried out by museums or universities, and aim at building databases and digital platforms.

13 Continuing from part one, the articles in this second part also highlight the wide variety of ways in which virtually restored items have been reappropriated personally, identity-wise, and politically—that is, in digital form and sometimes also in their potential uses. The dramatic example of the Xetá, described in the article by Edilene Coffaci de Lima, Lilianny Rodriguez Barreto dos Passos, and Rafael Pacheco, represents an extreme case. Indeed, the few survivors of this decimated Amazonian group have become dependent on archives in order to justify their very existence, past and present, as an ethnic group. The next two articles illustrate new configurations that repatriation brings about. First, in the field, repatriation has become an integral component of collecting ethnographic and linguistic materials. Superimposed over processes and temporalities that were once disjointed, it transforms the way in which local participants invest in their relationship with research, as much in its sociopolitical and historic importance as in its new intimate and personal meanings. This is what is shown in Vincent Hirtzel's article on a DoBeS program carried out among the Yurakaré of Bolivia. Second, the repatriation process has also entered the realm of museums, where digital repatriation offers an attractive alternative to the material return of objects. Above and beyond access to the objects—whether by direct (and privileged) consultation or remotely, via reproductions—the dialogue initiated between the communities under study and the museum curators or documentalists leads to new considerations of forms of presenting, classifying, and documenting the materials (to say nothing of the question of their conservation and restoration). Nevertheless, the flexibility promised by digital infrastructure turns out to be illusory, with digital technology clamping down on, or even outright preventing, the integration of indigenous perspectives, regardless of the good intentions of the creators of the heritage databases. Breaking free of such constraints, or circumventing or perhaps

even countering them, involves using old-fashioned methods. Sometimes we must go back to using paper and pencil, the spirit and the hand of creating, just as we seek support from powerful institutions willing to finance costly and lengthy computer engineering projects, even though the communities targeted are in the minority and far from the public-eye. The article by Andrea Scholz and Mirĩgõ-Diana Guzmán Ocampo, written in two voices, that of the Ethnologisches Museum of Berlin and that of local communities in the Vaupés region of Colombia, illustrates this remarkably well.

14 The article co-authored by Edilene Coffaci de Lima, Lilianny Rodriguez Barreto dos Passos, and Rafael Pacheco presents a case both tragic and remarkable of a group whose very existence seems inextricably linked to (mainly museographic) documentation projects. In some respects, one could even say that the Xetá (Paraná, Brazil) are themselves archives. Living archives, because for several generations, they seem to exist only to provide testimony of their former lifestyle. The few Xetá who survived the massacres that occurred at the same time fieldnotes and audiovisual recordings were being collected, and who, for the ethnographers of that time, represented "the last Indians of the Stone Age," were dispersed and prevented from living together. Deprived of the means to survive as a homogeneous political group, they rely on archives to regain the social cohesion and legitimacy needed to recover a "culture" (in the political sense). Portable hard drives and USB thumb drives are safeguarded and consulted with enthusiasm and emotion. The Xetá have assorted themselves into a division of labor of memory: the elder brother specializes in stories, the younger brother in song and language, while sisters are responsible for recuperating artisanal techniques. Houses thus become a sort of living ethnology museum, lived and monitored by those who are as much its objects as its subjects. Digital archives acquire the status of relics; they attest to a past that is lost forever, but without which the Xetá can no longer imagine a future for themselves.

15 In the second article, Vincent Hirtzel recounts his experience in a DoBeS project carried out jointly with linguists and speakers of Yurakaré, an Amazonian language spoken in the Andean foothills of Bolivia. The project, whose goal was to build a linguistic corpus, was financed on condition of planning, right from the start, for the return of all recorded materials. This condition, associated with the goal of collaboration, now regularly appears in large-scale financing agreements for linguistic and cultural documentation projects. It is turning the relationship between collecting and returning upside-down. Indeed, up to now, these two activities were clearly separated in terms of both timeframes and the people involved; but today the two are integrated in the same process, with the objects being returned (or at least being prepared for return) at the same time they are being constructed. However, if collection and return are now inextricably linked, the relationship between the two is no less complex. In order to understand the issues of how digital copies are received and circulated locally, Hirtzel underscores the need to take into account the political context as well as what he calls "regimes of culture," along with the role played by national and regional heritage programs. In other words, he shows that a DoBeS project would be locally received and appropriated very differently depending on whether it were carried out among groups in the Upper Xingu of Brazil or among the Yurakaré in Bolivia.

16 Hirtzel also reflects on the individual motives of indigenous partners who arrive spontaneously to offer their collaboration in such projects. Between collecting and

returning, these projects bring about dialogue and open up communication channels, but they are also particular in that the addressee is not necessarily clearly identified. Is the person being recorded addressing the anthropologist or linguist? Him- or herself? His or her descendants (even before they are born)? His or her community? Unknown Yurakaré? Foreigners in general? And why even choose to record one's autobiography, to relate very personal experiences, rather than share stories more suitable for the general public, less dependent on the caprices of fate and therefore more apt, at least from the perspective of the collectors, to represent a shared culture (and a culture to be shared)?

17 The third article, co-authored by Andrea Scholz and Mirĩgõ-Diana Guzmán Ocampo, illustrates beautifully the stakes involved, and also the difficulties and frustrations inherent in the collaborative nature of projects to digitally repatriate collections in museums and large heritage institutions. The project "Compartir saberes (Share knowledge)" revealed that the decolonization goals of the museum and those of the source communities were at cross-purposes. The museum hoped to open its databases to contributions by descendants of the northwest Amazon communities where the collections originated in order to include native perspectives in the museographic discourse on the collections. On the other hand, the local communities were most interested in gaining access to distant materials. Since the museums were caught up with producing networks of meanings within which collected objects could be conceptualized, the process local communities were invited to participate in was strewn with obstacles, from the "simple" access to the internet network, to efforts to integrate the various connections that defined the objects for them (the communities). Forced into a hierarchical classification system imposed by the online database, these connections ended in a vision that was the opposite of that of the museum. For the communities, it was a matter not of documenting an object but of understanding "the life of the objects"—that is, their circulation and uses and their multiple recontextualizations involving, for example, the relations to various spatial anchors, whether related to their origin myth, embodiment, production, utilization, preservation, re-utilization, etc. It was a matter of undoing the univocal model used in the museum's online (and offline) classifications: of recognizing the link between an object and different ethnic groups, of integrating multilingualism, of taking into account local group hierarchies and the codification of rights to access knowledge, etc. But as Scholz and Guzman Ocampo's article reveals, the usual heritage databases have a "birth defect" that leads to a series of exclusions. Any attempts to introduce other logics are rejected by the code's inflexible wall. Against this system, which many—including us—would call perverse, there seems to be but one solution. Start from scratch. Reboot.[8]

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NOTES

1. In the IT world, this term refers to languages with few digital linguistic resources (glossaries, automatic spell-check, grammar correction, etc.). The creation of digital platforms fully accessible in the language of source communities requires extensive translation efforts. An article by Mataliwa Kuliyaman and Sara Tandar on this process and the Wayana and Apalaï neologisms created for IT terminology and the interface of the portal https://watau.fr was meant to appear in this issue of *JSA*. But since the information has already been pre-published in Camargo et al. (2020), interested readers are invited refer to that article instead.

2. The Watau portal (https://watau.fr) was developed in the context of the collaborative project Sawa ("Savoirs autochtones wayana et apalaï [Guyane] : une nouvelle approche de la restitution et ses implications sur les formes de transmission"/"Wayana and Apalaï Indigenous Knowledge [Guayana]: a new approach to restitution and its implications for forms of transmission"); its goal was to make accessible in the languages of the Wayana and Apalaï and in modalities (ergonomy, visual, classification, accessibility ...) determined in collaboration with them a body of data related to their cultures. That project, the result of an initiative similar to the one analyzed in this issue by Scholz and Guzmán Ocampo, was the starting point for the reflections that led to this volume, as was explained in the introduction to part one (Vapnarsky 2020, p. 81, n. 2). The illustration chosen for the cover of the volume in which the first part of this issue was published shows Mataliwa Kuliyaman during a formal presentation of the portal in Wayana villages of French Guyana.

3. Interview with Mataliwa Kuliyaman 2019, quoted in Vapnarsky (2019-2020, p. 71), see also Pierrebourg, forthcoming. Several of the Amerindian partners of the Sawa project, assisted by ethnolinguist Eliane Camargo, wrote an account of their experience with the project (Palanaiwa et al. 2019). Though written entirely in Wayana for an Amerindian readership, it is accompanied by a preface in French for readers less familiar with Caribe languages (Erikson 2019).

4. This neologism is mentioned in Camargo et al. (2020, §31). Though *ëwa* is commonly translated as rope, string, or cable (Camargo and Tapinkili 2020, p. 82), the term can also refer to the bast of the bark of certain trees in the Lecythidacea family; the bast is particularly strong and can easily be detached in long filaments that are used to make straps. Damien Davy (2007, p. 339) calls it "suspender bark." The strips are collected by slicing into the bark and bast at the base of a suitable tree across a width of about 15 cm, then peeling it up a bit; this piece serves as a handle for the collector to peel off several meters of long, vertical strands (much like peeling off strips of wallpaper). This action obviously evokes a vertical ascension in the mythical world, for example to pass from one level of the cosmos to another. It is likely also this connotation of *ewä* that explains its being used in the cyberworld to translate what the Wayana have heard called in French *la bande passante*, or bandwidth.

5. In Australia there are numerous examples of initiatives originally meant to make data widely available but which, paradoxically, ended up doing the opposite: the data were sequestered in the name of respect for the right to self-determination and to secrecy (De Largy Healy 2014). Similar situations are common in North America, such as the case reported by a colleague who stated that: "If organizations and individuals become increasingly reticent to allow public access to interviews they originally agreed to share, archives may turn into depositories that do little to disseminate information. [In some situations,] individuals would not object to their recordings being online but their community might. This has happened to the web-based version of Project Jukebox [developed in 1988] at the University of Alaska Fairbanks [...]. The original computer-based program was designed to integrate oral history recordings with associated texts, photographs, and maps. In recent years, however, permission and ethical issues about making people's recordings so widely accessible have slowed the process of putting more projects online" (Nagy 2011, p. 212).

6. In other cases, even if returned archives are undeniably connected with a group's heritage, such problems can occur. For example, if a ritual can no longer be performed, sometimes one can only control access to the recording of a past performance, which then becomes standard, even though at first it was just one performance among others.

7. For a Melanesian perspective on the difference between originals and copies in repatriation projects, see Were (2021).

8. Translated by Margaret Buckner.

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