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FOR AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF ARCHIVES AND MUSEUMS[1]

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Abstract: Given the possibilities that the title refers to, it seems prudent to explain that this article aims to problematize what ethnography is in "archives" and "museums" and, in parallel, explore contemporary ethnographic practices. Finally, I will seek to debate, in a prospective way, ongoing modalities of ethnographic exploration of objects susceptible to being considered "in archive mode". The proposed path involves an initial tour of the archive of ethnographic practices; then follow some of their divergent trajectories, which lead to the incorporation of "archives" as their objects and try, from there, to outline a kind of state of the art regarding this relationship between practices – that is – between the ethnographic practice of archiving and of museum.

Keywords: ethnography; files; museums.

ETHNOGRAPHY AS A METHOD

In the canonical history of Anthropology, ethnography has been defined as a method. The ethnographic method was established as a guarantee of the scientificity of the discipline, based on the scientific assumptions of Natural Sciences. At the beginning of the last century, this notion of scientificity implied a positivist character, and it was this character that the ethnographic method ensured, insofar as it was defined by "participant observation". Continuing within the scope of a canonical history of the discipline, Bronislaw Malinowski would have been the founder of it – or its European version in the English academy – by explaining what the method consisted of. And one of the particularities resulted from the creation of laboratory conditions for observation. According to him, it was necessary to learn to speak their language and communicate with the "natives" without intermediaries, translators or interpreters; creating a daily life identical to that of the "natives", which was made easier if you lived alongside them (instead of having conversations with selected people on the balconies of colonial homes); and, finally, waking up each day to a day identical in every way to that of the "natives".

The ethnographic method implied "participant observation", which meant that the researcher must not limit himself to collecting what appeared, but – in his words – must be an "active hunter" of information, grouping information according to precise areas (life family, domestic activities, collective activities, ritual, political relations, etc.) and building, from these areas, synoptic tables, which would allow periodically questioning what had been done and what remained to be done.

The purpose of this information collection, understood as an objective exercise of a method, was summarized as three purposes: recording what, according to them, they thought they were doing; record what they said they were doing and, finally, record what they actually did. The articulation between the three levels of information produced the result of applying the method, which was the perception of your world, in your own terms. As historian of Anthropology George Stocking (1983) explains, "the mythography of the creation of Anthropology as a scientific discipline – the foundation of the ethnographic method – works like magic, in which Malinowski ends up saying not only that such a method was possible, but that, moreover, he had applied it.

It is important, for now, to remember that, mythography aside, the notion of ethnography – even in this positivist version that establishes an observer and an observed; an agent who knows and a passive subject of that knowledge – is an interested description: that is, an investigation motivated by specific problems and which aims to provide answers to emerging questions in the field. The problem here is that perhaps ethnography is

not exactly a method. Other descriptions of what it means to do ethnographic work are part of the Anthropology anecdote (a kind of parallel archive on the discipline) and do not do much to support ethnography as a method.

Evans-Pritchard, for example, summarized his recommendations to his students, when they went to the field, to the principle of being well educated. Isaac Shaper, another Africanist, recommended that they take a lot of quinine and... try to stay alive. Anecdotal aside, the method as explained by Malinowski at that time in the 1920s, was already incorporated into North American Anthropology, with Franz Boas, from a perspective of relationship with the natives of the Pacific Northwest Coast, which went beyond the positivist opposition between " us and them" and placed the very possibility of the ethnographic method in a relationship of understanding between subjects.

By this I mean that, if we look in detail at the ethnographic method, we are left between two perspectives. On the one hand, following Malinowski's version, ethnography would be a method of collecting and processing information. The application of method principles would make anthropological work an objective, depersonalized, cumulative science, tending to build an archive of knowledge about human groups. On the other hand, following the fieldwork practices of most of the founders of Anthropology – including Malinowski's non-doctrinal texts – ethnographic work emerges as a kind of art: that is, a series of information gathering procedures, devoid of a precise roadmap whose application needs to be assessed circumstantially and considered on a case-by-case basis.

In this regard, the comparison that Evans-Pritchard makes regarding his work among the Azande and among the Nuer, carried out a few years later, is well known. Evans-Pritchard

explains that the Azande had no choice but to live in a village, among them, as one of their own. With the Nuers, it was the opposite: the possibility of an ethnographic relationship was based on the fact that he was not one of them, nor, as such, could he live as one. It was, as a foreigner, that his presence was tolerated, sometimes more, other times not so much (1951).

In one way or another, the notes refer the ethnographic work to a relational universe. The "immersion in the everyday life" of others, which Malinowski spoke of, is only possible – and only becomes significant, from an ethnographic point of view – because anthropological knowledge establishes that ethnographic work is relational knowledge. First of all, from a strictly human point of view, it is a type of exercise that is based exclusively on intersubjectivity, that is, on differentiated bundles of relationships between subjects. As has been noted since early on, any classic monograph today – let us think of Malinowski's Argonauts – would show a radically different world if the basis of that work had been a woman. Or, as Margaret Mead would say, in the 1940s: people of her generation had learned that Anthropology is the "study of Man". As if there could be men without women, and as if some had not, at some point, been children. And from this critical perspective, the project of ethnography of Samoans from the perspective of teenagers was born, opening the disciplinary field of "Man studies" to a discipline that, in addition to men, also includes women and children. A possibility, moreover, opened up by the fact that Margaret Mead is a woman, a feminist, and, in the relationships she establishes with the Samoans, is considered, in principle, as a woman and, as such, is – naturally from a cultural point of view – associated with the their local counterparts: Samoan women. Just one example of one of the qualifications

of ethnographic work as relational, which is a basic qualification resulting from the fact that it results from circumstantial relationships between subjects, and in which the researcher is – despite himself – framed by local perceptions that give him existence sociological.

A second qualification of ethnographic work as relational – perhaps of greater relevance for thinking about the issue of archival ethnography – is epistemological. It is relational knowledge in the sense of being systematically informed by the field, which implies taking the risk of embarking on research with an open agenda. That is, a research agenda flexible enough to allow the supposed object of investigation to be defined by the field itself, until, eventually, any similarity between the starting object and the object constituted in the field is pure coincidence.

The implications of taking on a knowledge production project on a relational basis are multiple. On the one hand, the ethnographic relationship, like any other relationship, occurs in a face-to-face context and presupposes forms of reciprocity between subjects in that context. But this situation, in turn, occurs in the historical process, and the qualification of occurrences in the relational context often results from factors located outside it and which are, sometimes, not perceptible at the time. On the other hand, the ethnographic relationship nowadays often dispenses with a localized context, insofar as it is possible for relationships between different subjects and groups to be established through forms of mediation that ensure daily lives that are shared to a certain extent, but which are multi-sited.

It happens to think about this situation in fact based on Clifford Geertz's aphorism when, in the 1970s, he suggested an interpretative program that aimed to systematize the end of the assumption of objectivity in anthropological knowledge, in favor of a hermeneutic logic for the analysis of culture. At a certain point, Geertz says, it becomes important to remember obvious things. In this case, it was important to remember that although anthropologists experience the ethnographic field in a specific place, and spend a significant part of the investigation – as he says – living in a village, the purpose of the work is not "studying villages", but "studying in the villages" (Geertz, 1973). It is, therefore, not the thing in itself, but the ways in which the world in which we live converges, and manifests, and particularizes, in a specific place, whose "local" dynamics are crossed by factors that transcend it and that are an integral part of the explanation of local occurrences.

The objective, therefore, is to try to understand how the lives of specific people, people who could be ourselves, are processed in a particular historical moment, of which we normally are not aware, precisely because while we are living our daily lives, we are not concerned to analyze it.

Regardless of this, and as Paul Rabinow (1977) very well reminds us, the relational context of ethnographic work is essentially formed by interpretations by others about occurrences that affect them and in which they participate in a necessary way. As he says: the facts that anthropologists study are facts. Made and remade in local interpretation; and it is necessary to carry out an exercise in multiple contextualizations to assess the exchange value – contextual and relational – of an action, a classification, an assessment, or a value judgment. The enunciation of something, in itself, is empty, and needs to be made explicit by clarifying the structural and relative positions of speaker and recipient, with the utterance situation, its immediate and distant antecedents, etc.

The exercise tends to take on other forms when the village becomes our contemporary world, marked by deterritorialized forms of community, where our relationships – as Ulf Hannerz explains – go through "non-mass" forms of communication that allow us to maintain affinities and feelings of belonging with subjects and places that are territorially dispersed and, eventually, thousands of kilometers away from each other, but that are closer to us and are more present and significant in our daily lives than, say, the neighbor in the apartment next door. side (1991). Part of our face-to-face relationships becomes mediated by technological prostheses, which, among other things, ensure the reproduction of diaspora communities, the maturation of ties between migrant families, or the production and sharing of memory in electronic networks. As Arjun Appadurai states, "the archive of possible lives is today richer and more available to anyone than ever before" (2003). And, through the accessibility and circulation of digital content, digital technologies may also be reconfiguring memory, by undermining the possibility of forgetting (Mayer-Schönberger, 2009).

In short, the specificity of ethnographic knowledge is to sew perspectives on whatever, close to the experience of concrete subjects, which give them meaning. It is, necessarily, the production of a decentered perspective from the observer. Strictly speaking, it is a deliberate, intentionally multicentric perspective, seeking to cover different angles that coexist in the same order of reality and configure it. And it is, also in this sense, relational, resulting from partial participation in networks of meanings immersed in social relations. It is also in this sense that relational knowledge configures a practice.

ARCHIVES AND MUSEUMS

After the digression, which is very partial, around the ethnographic relationship, the question that arises is: what are the possibilities of an ethnography of archives and museums? To do this, we can start by thinking about what archives and museums consist of, and do so starting from the common features of the enormous diversity of objects designated by the terms "archive" and "museum".

Starting from a first observation – of a historical nature – that brings together the formation of modernity in the formation of an archival complex: archives, museums and libraries were born together with the emergence of capitalism (economy); the emergence of the Nation-State (politics) and the emergence of the individual (psychology) (Brown; Davis-Brown, 1988, p. 18). In this configuration, the archive complex emerges as a place not of "sacred tribal memory, but of secular national memory" (idem, op. cit., p. 19). In this sense, archives – more than simply storing memory – in fact manufacture it. Consequently, the issue of memory production, as a constructive process, asymmetrical in the recruitment of those who produce them, involves power relations. No body of knowledge can be formed without a system of communication, recording, accumulation and displacement that is in itself a form of power and that is linked, in its existence and functioning, to other forms of power. Conversely, no power can be exercised without the extraction, appropriation, distribution or retention of knowledge. At this level, there is no knowledge on one side and society on the other, or science and the state, but only the fundamental forms of power/ knowledge (Foucault, 1980, p. 131).

The architecture of archives is all the more elusive the more it is distributed across forms of power delegated in technical-rational processes that are, ostensibly, non-political.

Technical-rational work is necessary for the maintenance and even the definition of the modern archive, it comprises activities that are usually routine and performed at a micro level, but they contribute to the formation of national, collective and public memory, and, consequently, to the shared conceptions of its origins, nature and destiny (Brown; Davis-Brown, 1988). Shared conceptions are not necessarily consensual, given, in turn, their occurrence in history and, consequently, the dynamic nature of the relationship between groups and their respective archives, susceptible to ruptures in consensus, open to conflicts and disputes, subject to negotiation permanent.

The archive and the museum can therefore be thought of as a modality of knowledge, in privileged articulation with the forms of knowledge that sustain the secular world: the sciences. The association between archiving, collecting and knowledge can be found in several scientific domains with different consequences. An initial association refers to the perception of scientific knowledge as cumulative and to the correlative possibility of its constitution from sets of discrete, classifiable and cumulative objects. The accumulation of ethnographic objects, for example, can be understood as a disciplinary variant of the establishment of standardized formats for data collections, capable of supporting work similar to that of Natural Sciences. The coincidence between the knowledge of a given disciplinary area and the collection of objects in that area (be they biological specimens or geological samples) results from this first association, manifested, in the Social Sciences, in the currents of positivist conceptions in which the data capable of being archived would be also susceptible to quantification. An extreme example is provided by the case of Human Relations Area Files, proposed by G.P. Murdock, based on the numerical coding

of cultural traits (Velody, 1998, p. 6-7).

In addition to this characteristic (the cumulative nature of knowledge), a second association entails structural consequences, insofar as archival procedures contaminate conceptions about what can be known and the forms assumed by knowledge. The discipline of Art History provides an illuminating example for this purpose. For Donald Preziosi, the discipline articulates an art of memory that consists of a series of knowledge-elucidating protocols and a prescriptive grammar for the composition of historical narratives. From this perspective, knowing consists of classifying art objects by "periods" or "styles" in a "period" (1992, p. 376). Consequently, the exhibition of art objects according to a historical narrative makes it possible to see, with these objects, the prescriptive entries of the archive. In this sense, knowledge, integrating the archive's own functions, tends to identify with them.

Jacques Derrida identifies the functions of the archive as unification, identification and classification. These characteristics would obey the topological and nomological principles: each thing in its place; each thing with a name (1995, p. 3). Neither the place nor the name, however, are random. In this place of absolute exclusion of disorder and the unknown, name and place obey what is called the power of consignment, that is, they obey the power to achieve "[...] the objective of coordinating [the archive records] into a single corpus, in a system or synchrony in which all elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration" (ibidem).

The archive and the museum are, therefore, simultaneously institutional and conservative. Conservation, protection, seclusion are at the expense of creating a law and imposing respect for that law, which are, ultimately, forms of archival violence (idem, op. cit., p. 7), precisely because they do not arise from the nature of things, but, rather, because

they intervene in them, in the world and in the relationships between subjects. To the extent that they are integrated into different modalities of perception and knowledge of the world, these forms of archival violence colonize the possibility of knowing.

The perception of the archive as a form of colonization is inspired by the work of Foucault, for whom the archive is not a collection of discrete objects, specific discourses or particular speakers, but a system of demarcation between outgoing discursive practices and current discursive practices. The archive does not designate, for Foucault, the Library of libraries or the Museum of museums. It does not designate specific institutions or spaces. It designates a practice, simultaneously diffuse and systematic, of differentiation. It designates a work of exclusion that functions as a diagnosis of the present and that "manifests itself in fragments, regions and levels" avoiding the possibility of a total description (1969, p. 171). It is, in this sense, of a diffuse, fragmentary and multi-level institutionality that "archival violence" (which can, discarding Derrida's psychoanalytic reading, be replaced without any other harm by "archival culture") assumes a colonial nature. Literally everything, from this perspective, is susceptible to being archived and collected, because that is how it is, the archive and the museum become a form of knowledge inherent to other modalities. It is these modalities of knowledge, the connections between them, the historical specificities of their constitution and development, as well as the universe of cultural representations that they allow that constitute the field of an ethnography of the archive and the museum.

THE ARCHIVE AND COLLECTIONS AS ETHNOGRAPHIC OBJECTS

Taking the archive and collections as ethnographic objects is part of the rise of the contemporary displacement of the discursive space of ethnography, in relation to the classical notion, in the anthropological discipline, according to which cumulatively published ethnography constitutes its most basic contribution to knowledge. George Marcus, for example, records that this ethnographic archive is established in the tension between the contemporary realism of the production of ethnography and the relativism that its future contextualization in the anthropological archive – where it is inscribed according to the contingent categories of its production (geographical area, theme, etc...) – attributes it to him (1998, p. 50).

When carrying out ethnography, in turn, the researcher produces and makes use of a wide range of written, graphic, sound, film records, etc., which constitute, on the one hand, his personal archive and, on the other, a verification directory and authorization of the elements to which, from this archive, public existence is given (idem, op. cit., p. 53). It must be noted that ethnographic realism is not, from this perspective, an intrinsic result of field work ("the magic of the ethnographer" that Stocking (1983) identifies in Malinowski's writings on the method alluded to previously), but the product deliberate work on a series of materials for different purposes, with a view to giving them the autonomy and authority that enables them to enter the archive and the museum.

But how would it be possible to use certain objects, transformed into "documents" and kept in a private museum, as "source", "text" and pretext for an ethnographic encounter? Would it be possible to experience a particular type of dialogue, relationship and

ethnographic encounter based on practices supposedly limited to archival researchers and historians, such as "reading documents", "seeing images/objects" or "listening to sounds/voices"? How to share the solitary and, at times, authoritarian experience of reading, deciphering and interpreting what is housed in collections and archives? To what extent records made by others about our colonial past, transformed by the regimes of truth typical of archives and museums, could "make sense" and encourage the production of new narratives, not only about the past converted into a "document", but also about the present made relevant and subject to new readings and encounters? It is precisely inspired by these questions that I propose here to reflect on the ambiguities and tensions derived from the ethnographic experience lived in a field equally marked by encounters and diverse knowledge relationships: the museum and the archive (Cunha, 2005:17).

From a methodological point of view, the proposal aims to reflect on the use of archival sources in anthropological research and its relationship with ethnographic production. It proposes, in other terms, an "ethnography of/in museums and archives" (Cunha, 2005; Castro & Cunha, 2005), whose effort implies a re-reading of the meanings attributed to ethnographic collections and their uses in field research and ethnography.

Cunha (2004), in a text about the archives of the North American anthropologist Ruth Landes, identifies a locus of ambiguity inherent to the archive: where it begins and ends – in the case of Ruth Landes as, I would venture, in any other professional – the domain of the "personal" and the domain of the "professional" (idem, p. 296). This ambiguity is not soluble by the archival classification itself; Distinguishing "personal archive" from "ethnographic archive" seems, on the contrary, to elude the fact that any archive – a hypothesis I would like to counter – contains the sources for its ethnographic interpretation.

As anthropologists Celso Castro and Olívia Maria da Cunha (2005) observe, with increasing intensity, anthropologists have carried out a type of research work – in and about archives – traditionally associated with historians or archivists. In addition to using archives as a source of knowledge to produce their analyses, since at least the 1980s, anthropologists have reflected on the nature of documentary records transformed into *sources* and, in some cases, have produced and/or organized archives and collections from an anthropological perspective. Still, it persists, among the general public and in the academic world (even among anthropologists themselves), the idea of a privileged association of anthropology with a model of field research established since Malinowski's classic introduction to *Argonauts of the Western Pacific, 1922*.

Although several important anthropologists have done little or no field research in the Malinowskian sense – Marcel Mauss and Lévi-Strauss are two eloquent examples – fieldwork remains a hallmark of the discipline in the eyes of non-anthropologists, as well as a a kind of identity rite of passage for the anthropologists themselves, as if anyone who did not do field research was not "really" an anthropologist. Furthermore, the territories of the archives have been occupied by new subjects. Even though new uses of archives by these populations have been observed and, at times, shared by anthropologists, the political and discursive implications of these forms of intervention allow us to imagine the archive as a field populated by subjects, practices and relationships susceptible to analysis and anthropological experimentation.

In thinking about this article, my intention is in no way to deny the fundamental role

that "traditional" field research had and still has in the constitution of anthropology as a discipline and as a powerful method resource for the production of ethnographies. My objective involves, however, an expansion and diversification of the way in which anthropological practice can be thought of, which does not leave it restricted solely to field research. There is still very little reflection in the field of anthropology, particularly Brazilian anthropology, on this topic. I imagined that a useful way to contribute to this discussion would be to draw on my concrete experience as an anthropologist dealing with archives and museums in Germany. I would like to emphasize, once again, that I am not disregarding the "theoretical" reflection on the topic, but rather emphasizing a perspective that, without the support of real research experiences, there is a risk of remaining in a discussion that is not very useful. productive about disciplinary boundaries and abstract methodological principles. It is in this sense that this article intends to contribute, in its own way, to stimulating new discussions on the topic.

In a literal sense, methodologically complementary to the previously outlined picture, archives are things. The analysis of archives thus contemplates the possibility of starting from their materiality. Paraphrasing Grant McCracken (2007), the advantage, for the analysis of culture, of starting from material culture, is that material culture materializes culture. This way, each file can be taken, from an ethnographic point of view, as a discrete object, susceptible to description as such. It can be taken as a thing.

Things, as Barrie Reynolds (1986) reminds us, are a bit like cherries, in the sense that a cherry never comes alone. In his classic text on material culture, Reynolds identifies three central elements in the analysis of artifacts, which he calls the "material system of the artifact." A material system consists of a complex unit of behaviors, ideas, and other objects that is polarized around any element of material culture. From this perspective, describing an archive (or an ethnographic collection) in the sense of isolating what specifies it in the face of any other archives would imply identifying behaviors associated with that archive. For example, what is the circulation universe of your items? Who produces them? How are they organized and/or arranged? Who consults them? And so on.

Image 1 –

Image 2 –

Identify ideas specifically associated with it. What is an archive/collection of? Of a subject or a population? Personal, private, self-constituted, or common, public

information, produced by an institution? What objects make up this file? Buildings? Tables? Bookshelves? Shelves? Drawers? Do archival materials include objects? Texts? Images? Are they physical or virtual materials? Tangible or merely digital things? Without identifiable location, migratable at any time to an indeterminable instance? Made available by the person himself, or his representative, or by an institution? Or by a company through prior agreement (but with another wording that is more in line with current contractual standards)?

Objects, any objects – is another heuristic factor in artifact analysis – are social agents. Not because they are, in themselves, endowed with intentionality, but because they act through human delegation (Gell, 1998) and, usually, in association with human agents. Around any object – around any archive – there is a network of agents, human and non-human (Latour, 1989 and 1991), which animate the materiality of the archive in a relationship of mutual determination. A central purpose of an ethnography of the archive is to articulate, over time, the mobile formats of the networks of social agents that form, reform and change around the archive. The relationships they establish with each other and with the archive; the relative positions they occupy and allowing specific practices in this configuration.

SACRED OBJECTS OF AFRO-BRAZILIAN RELIGIOSITY

The empirical universe that I present here is a matter of excerpt; excerpt from my thesis proposal. At this point, it is relevant both from an archival point of view and from an ethnographic and museological point of view, to also articulate this case study, whose contribution only meets the development of a theme that has been sparsely documented to this day, in addition to being very little studied by researchers.

The history of African slavery and its religious rituals in the extreme south of Brazil still remain gaps in scientific studies. Working with a combination of new sources, I conduct – in addition to the ethnography already carried out in archives and museums in Germany – an attempt at ethnographic recontextualization of the collection together with the groups of Afro-descendants previously studied (Silveira, 2020). Furthermore, the importance of this contribution constitutes an opportunity for both sides to gain access to new scientific knowledge around this ethnographic collection as well as the processes of cultural exchange that involved such artifacts of Afro-Brazilian religiosity.

Regarding the character and methodology of research, it can be stated that the 'field' are the archives and ethnographic collections deposited in the Ethnological Museum in Berlin. In this case, the "native culture" to be studied is found in documents, objects, minutes, correspondence, narratives and travel reports. As this is also historical material, it was necessary to combine historical research methods with anthropological approaches of observation and interpretation (Dülmen, 2001). Furthermore, the 'field' had to be "multi-located", as in Marcus' ethnographic proposal (1986, 1995). In fact, it ends up bringing together a plurality of methodological contributions – since such an object requires a combination of different approaches ranging from archival, historiographic to ethnographic – whose investigation will seek to follow the interpretative lines of what is called in Germany Empirische Kulturwissenschaft (Empirical Cultural Sciences), also known as Cultural Anthropology, Volkskunde or even European Ethnology, characterized by the combination of a particular empirical approach together with the use of qualitative methods. "From this perspective, archival

research does not appear as the antithesis of field research, and its transformation into ethnography is not viewed with skepticism" (Cunha, 2004, p. 293).

As it has a variety of research domains, the methodological approach that accompanies it can include everything from the investigation of archival sources and the analysis of material culture, as well as field research using images, analysis of photography and videos, as well as as discourse analysis. As a science with a particular empirical approach, qualitative methods are also used, such as field research, participant observation, "narrative interviews" – and "dense descriptions". In this case, therefore, Empirical Cultural Sciences perceive culture as the permanent arrangement of rules and meanings, according to which groups and societies live together, communicate and also distinguish themselves from each other, as they deal with natural heritage. and cultural and what image they themselves have of these relationships. Allied to this combination of methods from Cultural Anthropology (Volkskunde) and German Ethnology (*Völkerkunde*).

In order to reflect on the theoretical-conceptual frameworks to be initially used in the thesis proposal, I will deal with some pioneering studies within the ethnological field that are important in that they reveal the constitution of a science, a nascent German ethnology and its significance for an ethnology Modern.

At the time of overseas discoveries, Europeans accumulated fragments of the new realities they encountered on their travels, in so-called 'curiosity cabinets'. Collectors specialized and, from the 18th century onwards, the first scientific museums emerged. At the end of the 19th century, universal exhibitions exposed the "barbarity" of colonized peoples. The avant-gardes of the 20th century rediscovered "primitive" art as a source of renewal. Gradually, museums became research institutions that sometimes operated in isolation, sometimes linked to universities, until the collections definitively assumed a scientific character. They began to serve the elaboration of knowledge, supported by observations, research and theoretical constructions. The development of science in the 18th and 19th centuries was strongly associated with the emergence and consolidation of museums (Goldstein, 2008:285-6).

Already in the mid-19th century, German ethnologist Adolf Bastian highlighted the place of ethnographic museums as laboratories of the scientific myths of the time, in his obsession with archiving, analyzing and discovering human universality. With the inauguration of the *Royal Museum of Ethnology* In 1886, Bastian had created an institution that would maintain direct contact with academic circles, and still maintain its own autonomy (Penny, 2003; Kraus, 2007).

The thesis of the American anthropologist Glenn Penny, *"Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany"*, a prominent reference on the subject, offers precisely a critical history about the emergence of ethnographic collections in imperial Germany and the patronage networks that supported them. An important contribution not only to the history of a certain type of museum but, above all, to the history of German ethnography, provincial politics in the Wilhelmina era and modern Germany in general, Penny's work proposes to consider

> how the cultural and social as much as the intellectual interests and desires of scientists, civic associations, collectors, patrons, and visitors, as well as the force of a growing international market in material culture, shaped the science of ethnology and German ethnographic museums (Penny, 2002, p.11).

In this sense, in addition to the focus on the museum as an institution, Penny's study

considers the broader historical context: the professionalization of ethnographers, their changing conceptions of their work and their collecting missions, the influence of supporters and sponsors, the meaning of a culture of exchange, and the central role played by visitors in interpreting and even influencing the layout of the showcases.

The central argument of his book is that these ethnographic museums were not necessarily nationalist, racist or imperialist in origin, but that the various pressures of professionalization, market concerns and the demands of an increasingly broad and socially diverse public – educated in visual culture, ready and eager for entertainment and distraction – would have altered museum modes of display and even the ethnological vision behind them. Penny argues that local politics and civic pride with a decidedly cosmopolitan outlook played a more essential role in the creation of these museums than proper national or nationalist sentiment. For the author, museums therefore offered a means of exploring cultural diversity, discovering the 'essential nature of humanity' and allowing the public to gain an understanding of others, and also of themselves (Penny, 2002).

In their studies on the history of ethnology in recent years, particularly Annemarie Fiedermutz-Laun (1970), George W. Stocking Jr. (1996), Klaus Peter Köpping (1983/2005) and Klaus Peter Buchheit (2002, 2005, 2006) highlight the humanistic origins of Adolf Bastian's works, even pointing to the relevance of these origins to modern ethnology. Unlike their colleagues in Britain or the United States, German ethnologists like Adolf Bastian were not guided in their efforts by racial hierarchies; instead, they viewed the world from a Humboldtian perspective, whose different cultures were seen as "part of a cosmic whole." It can be seen that Bastian was deeply influenced by Alexander von Humboldt, to whom he even dedicated his first major work *"Der Mensch in der Geschichte"* ("Man in History"). Thus, the idea of the museum as a "universal archive of humanity" prevailed.

In the article *"Transnational History in Historical Perspective: Bastian's Museum Project"* (2007), Glenn Penny argues that Adolf Bastian deserves a re-reading by historians and ethnologists. While many have criticized Bastian's writing and his obsession with collecting, the similarities between current arguments about the value of transnational history and many of the pioneering ethnologist's intellectual efforts reveal the degree to which Bastian was engaged in a 'true global project', a effort to think across varied national, international and cultural boundaries, which he recognized were in constant flux.

Given the renewed interest of many historians in the multinational character of European states in the 19th century. XIX and the constant mixing of people over the last three centuries, Bastian's early insights into these problems – based on his considerable travels and a period of life, experience and reflection – must be taken seriously into consideration. From this perspective, Bastian was engaged – as Penny indicates in all successful cases – in understanding many of the same problems raised today and related as transnational and global (Penny, 2007, p.50).

In addition to the current nature of the 'problems', the relevance of the 'methods' proposed by Bastian in the panorama of current anthropological studies also stands out. The fact of privileging methodology – to the detriment of theory – meant that Bastian refused to offer answers that did not have an empirical basis. Bastian's methodological commitment allowed him to persist in his studies without theoretical losses, something that few 20th century ethnographers could claim (idem, p.51).

However, by exposing the central characteristics of Germanic Ethnology in the 1880s, Glenn Penny provides us with enlightening arguments also in relation to the Anthropology of Franz Boas, which was a "continuation" of the project that guided German ethnographic museums in the 19th century. XIX. In 1907, a new generation of German ethnologists reportedly "abandoned" the goals and methods prescribed by Bastian. According to the author, *"they began championing diffusionist theories and creating easily-digestible, pedagogical museum displays"* (ibidem). From this point of view, it is clear that Franz Boas would have developed and expanded Bastian's vision beyond material culture. Through such efforts, Boas would not only have realized Bastian's legacy, but also - and mainly - would have expanded it.

ARCHIVE AND MUSEUM PRACTICES

At this point it is worth summarizing this article. In brief, I sought to establish some principles of archival analysis based on the ethnographic exercise. I explored the ethnographic exercise as a relational practice, which involves risks, but which has the advantages of great plasticity in the inventory and analysis of social contexts, which in turn, exist only in relation. Files, as mentioned, are things. The advantage of thinking about the archive as a thing lies in the possibility of removing from it the conditions – which it itself contains – of its ethnographic analysis. This analysis implies transcending the borders that the archive is intertwined with and with which it presents itself to us in finished form. An ethnography of the archive implies taking it as a nodal point of overlapping networks of social relations. It is, to that extent, an ethnography of destitution.

It implies starting from it and permanently depriving it of its status as a finished thing, and searching – on its shelves, drawers, files, texts, images, records, notes and so on – for the statements of its own constitution; look for the rhythms of the progressive accumulation, or reformulation of its materials and follow the agents that mobilized criteria of relevance; understand the reasons for your choices; contextualize the conditions of its application; inventory the circulation networks of practices, subjects and actions that gravitated around the archive, including those that go beyond its scope, but eventually affect its dynamics.

Which would be – I believe – to exhaustively exercise the possibilities of ethnography in an archive and a museum. An ethnography refined by a deliberate program of refusing to consider the archive and the museum and their instituting effects as a 'finished thing', as a *opus operatum*, to, programmatically, restore the population of diverse and often conflicting, *modus operandi*, carried out by concrete subjects, in particular historical settings, as they lived their lives.

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