MOULDING *QUILOMBOLA* IDENTITIES AND ETHNIC POLITICS

Understandings and Practices Around 'Quilombo Heritage' In Brazil

KATERINA HATZIKIDI

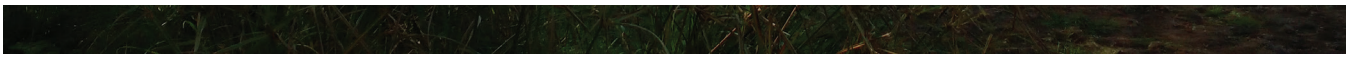

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Figure 1 *View of Alcântara.*

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Introduction

A village of some 500 inhabitants, Itamatatiua is one of the nearly 200 quilombos found in the backwoods of Alcântara, a municipality marking Brazil's eastern Amazon frontier. Its ceramic centre is one of the core sites of the community, situated in the swamp lands off Maranhão's north Atlantic coast. This houses the workshop where the local women potters gather to mould clay into decorative and utilitarian objects. Attached to it, a small shop makes this work available to community visitors. Amid naturally coloured, unglazed and minimally designed artefacts on display, the bonecas, brightly coloured figurines that depict female characters performing everyday chores, stand out. 'These women look a lot like you!', customers notice. 'That's true,' the artisans reply. 'They make pottery, they work in the fields, they breastfeed, they are Black just like us.'

Quilombos are formally recognized as 'remnants' of ancient communities, originally formed by enslaved runaways and their descendants (Arruti 1997; Wade 2010). Their formation was concomitant with, and as widespread as, slavery. However, they have not taken the same shape everywhere being decisively influenced by the specific geographical, economic and political conditions in which they emerged (or failed to emerge). Much like slave experiences, which, even at a specific location, at a specific point in time, have never been uniform (Slenes 2012), every quilombo was the product of a compound of elements that determined its lifespan, population, internal structure, subsistence activities and defence mechanisms.

In Alcântara, quilombos started to proliferate especially after the second half of the eighteenth century, when, due to the region's deep economic crisis, colonists were impelled to abandon their estates and seek lucrative opportunities elsewhere (Almeida 2006:72; Sá 2007; Viveiros 1999). The region's distinctive economic and trade history created propitious conditions for the creation and growth of rural communities of formerly enslaved people (self-emancipated, freed and runaways), who were able to establish their presence in a nearly uninhibited way (Almeida 2006:29–31, 2008; Andrade and Filho 2006; Linhares 1999), several decades before the official abolition of slavery in 1888. It is in large part due to this 'unique' history of quilombo formation, that Alcântara is currently the municipality with the greatest concentration of Black rural quilombo communities[1] in the country (Gomes 2015:154; Mattos 2005).

The hundreds of quilombos in Maranhão possess a long history of political organization, with established entities functioning both at local and national levels. Likewise, Itamatatiua, like most Alcântara quilombos, has been engaging in diverse channels of formal political representation. While acknowledging their centrality for the observance of land rights, this essay calls attention to the interconnections between modes of cultural production and political engagement that have almost entirely been neglected in the anthropological literature on Brazilian quilombos. By investigating the ways Itamatatiua pottery relates to the socio-political context from which it emerges, and to the broader, national one it pertains to and addresses, it shows that ceramic craftwork has acquired a rather powerful symbolic role in the community's everyday life, being directly attached to its land struggle. It will be suggested that recent reappraisal of practices inherent to daily life and their recasting as

1 The name 'black rural quilombo communities' (*comunidades negras rurais quilombolas*) has been adopted by quilombola political activists to describe and unite, under a common denomination, the different black rural communities across the country.

articulations of the community's unique 'quilombo heritage' form an integral part of Itamatatiua's political engagement in the struggle for the establishment of land rights. Drawing on long-term ethnographic research with *quilombolas* (residents of quilombos) in Itamatatiua, this essay explores local politics of heritage-making, the various nuances of quilombo cultural heritage, their influence on practices on the ground, and their significance for raising awareness of the ongoing struggle for land and other civil rights inside and outside the community.

Making ceramics in the backyard

Clay work in Itamatatiua goes several generations back, to a point where its beginnings get blurred at the intersections of oral narratives and practice. Archival sources are also relatively ambiguous about the influences, or the first input of knowledge of the practice, from which Itamatatiua's clay-work stemmed. It is known that in colonial times the Carmelite[2] fazenda Tamatatiua, the area of which roughly corresponds to Itamatatiua's greater territory, owned a brickyard (*olaria*) that produced bricks and roof tiles (RDHEM, Vol. I and II). It is not known, however, whether the fazenda also produced other artefacts out of clay, such as ceramic pots, plates and stewpots. But it is not unlikely, as this would have provided enslaved people with necessary crockery for cooking and eating.

Today, the pottery once produced at the Carmelite *olaria* survives in the traces of shards of tiles scattered around the community; unearthed accidentally by residents when planting in their backyards, or when the water floods the paths and scoops some of them up. At first, upon discovery, most Itamatatiuenses (the residents of Itamatatiua) found the shards peculiar, as they could not identify their source — they did not look like the ceramics made in the community today. They eventually began to connect the uncovered fragments with the 'time of the slaves' (*o tempo dos escravos*); a past which, as I show elsewhere (Hatzikidi 2018), lies largely remote, and dissociated from, the past and present of Itamatatiua.

The current potters of Itamatatiua do not make bricks or roof tiles, nor do they have memories or stories about making those artefacts. There is an artisanal brickyard today in the community, owned and run by a resident, Zé Elias, that caters for Itamatatiua and areas nearby. As Davi Pereira Júnior (2011:43–6) has argued, the community's long-established association with ceramic work produced by women has entirely overshadowed this one-man ceramic production. However, another way to approach the apparent neglect for the tile and brick production, is that not only is it a job undertaken by a single person (and occasionally his assistant) — unlike the group work of the women in the Centre — but the fabrication of tiles and bricks have long been associated with slavery, as it was enslaved people who would commonly undertake such work (see, for example, Dantas 2003 for brickmen and bricklayers of African descent in the Americas; Bowman 2008 and Pinto 2015 for examples from the USA; Kenny 2011 for Brazil). Artisanal ceramic production, on the other hand, does not usually come with such associations, which correlate with residents' accounts of Itamatatiua being founded as a free community. For the forms and techniques used to make Itamatatiua's ceramics coincide with widespread perceptions of 'African styles', and traditions inherited by their African ancestors, avoiding any explicit associations with slavery.

2 This refers to the Roman Catholic Christian Order of the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Mount Carmel.

When asked about how they acquired their skills, potters stress the centrality of conviviality (in the sense established by the Lowland South American literature, which understands the notion as one that emphasizes a social life characterized by principles of sharing and spending time together — see, for example, Overring and Passes 2000) in knowledge transmission. Hence, the different stories of their first memories of moulding clay, as narrated by the potters, all have in common an acknowledgement of a nearly 'organic' way of learning how to make ceramics, by observing mothers and grandmothers.

'In the old days everyone used to make crockery [*louça*],' Itamatatiuenses tirelessly reminded me. The oldest ceramicist in the community today, Dona Maria de Jesus, currently in her late eighties, vividly reminiscences about 'the old days':

> *We used to make so much crockery. My daughters, from the age of seven I was putting them to make crockery ... we say that things are bad now, but before, there was no Bolsa Família,*[3] *there was no state pension, we used to live only off [money from] this crockery. During the time of the festa of Santa Teresa,*[4] *the ovens were never enough. There were a bunch of ovens, but they were not enough. People used to come from far away. People from São Luís, from São Bento, from Peri-Mirim, from Pontal.*[5] *Many people would come to buy crockery here. It was from this and from the land [roça] that a family was sustained.*

The ovens mentioned in Dona Maria's account were situated in the backyards. And 'there were a bunch of ovens' because pottery, in the old days, used to be made by most women and involve nearly the entire community. The production and reproduction of knowledge of clay-work was situated in the backyard.[6] Gathered there, the women would mould clay into ceramic objects while men and children would also be assigned small tasks (see Noronha 2015:72–4). For instance, the men and boys of the house, Dona Maria told me, would often polish ceramic objects to make their surface smooth before a firing. They would also fetch firewood for the ovens. The young girls would usually be assigned more creative, yet manageable and hands-on tasks, so they could start learning from an early age.

The women commonly gathered together and helped one another through a co-working system based on time exchange. In this case, one would call another to help her, based on neighbourliness and friendship, as well as skills and expertise. Working together not only allows the making of more ceramics in less time, but also socializing at the same time. The person who lent their time would then receive the help (and time/company) of the person helped. This work-exchange system did not involve monetary transactions, and was used to enhance ceramic production and facilitate knowledge exchange. A similar system is used for work in the fields.

3 A social-welfare programme launched in 2003. Alcântara has a total of 7,455 families registered for the *Bolsa Família* social benefit, receiving an average of R$220 (equivalent to approx. £40) per month. 5,911 of those families have less than R$89 (approx. £16) per family capita. (MDS, 3 February 2020, accessible online at: aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagi/RIv3/geral/index.php?relatorio=153&file=entrada# (accessed 3 February 2020). In a 2016 article, BBC Brazil called Alcântara 'the capital of *Bolsa Família*' in the country': www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil/2016/05/160510_bolsa_familia_alcantara_dg_cc (accessed 3 February 2020).

4 The largest and most important annual Catholic Christian festivity in Itamatatiua and neighbouring areas.

5 The state capital (São Luís) and urban centres in the Baixada Maranhense region of Maranhão.

6 On the backyard (*quintal*) as place of knowledge-making, see Pereira and Almeida 2010.

Figure 2 Pots of Itamatatiua.

Only until a few decades ago, Itamatatiua's pottery was selling abundantly in Alcântara and nearby municipalities. The ceramicists would meet the great demand for water storage in the area by supplying ceramic pots. Such was the market for Itamatatiua's ceramics that 'we used to take out the pots while they were still hot in the oven,' Canuta, one of the potters, told me. According to my interlocutors in Alcântara, nearly all village communities in the vicinity would depend on Itamatatiua's ceramic pots for carrying and storing water. Seu Jonas, a 75-year-old resident, told me that Itamatatiua was one of the few quilombos that were well known in the town, before the main roadway, MA-106, connected Alcântara's peninsula with other towns and village communities in the Baixada Maranhense region in the late 1970s.

Navigating the intricate fluvial networks that connected several quilombos to one another and with nearby towns, was a fundamental aspect of male knowledge. Women used to occupy — as they still do today — the role of the potter. Men, on the other hand, used to have the role of the vendor, though they no longer do, as the women potters now also manage the sale and distribution by themselves. Once the pots were out of the oven, men would load them up in the canoes that were in dock in one of the two small ports that used to exist in Itamatatiua. Paddling through the saltwater inlets (*igarapés*), they would transport them to nearby and distant areas of the Baixada Maranhense. Once at their destination, they would either sell them directly to customers or to local retailers. The involvement of both women (production) and men (distribution) made Itamatatiua's ceramic work an essentially communal activity.

'If only we could sell these pots as easily as before,' said Ângela, one of the potters, in a nostalgic tone in one of our conversations. When plastic and metal bottles were introduced to the local markets at affordable prices, the demand for ceramic pots for water storage started to drop significantly, until it virtually disappeared. Unlike ceramics, the new commercial alternatives were stronger and lighter to carry. The women and men of Itamatatiua quickly realized that there was no market for their pots anymore, and that their

Figure 3 Itamatatiua's shop front.

main source of revenue had been exhausted.[7] In the years that followed, and until the opening of the Centre for Ceramic Production of Itamatatiua in 2005, most women stopped making ceramics, dedicating themselves to other daily activities, and most men returned to artisanal fishing and smallholder farming.

As will be shown below, the centre was fundamental to the revival and 're-semanticization' of ceramic production in Itamatatiua following the market decline. Its construction aggregated the small remaining number of potters in the quilombo, stimulating the beginning of a new era of production, and contributing to its gradual apprehension as part of the community's unique 'quilombo heritage', with its association with the political struggle for the establishment of land rights. This gradual shift in local perceptions of Itamatatiua pottery spread outside the community, as reflected, for example, in the words of Seu Jonas, who emphatically marks a clear difference in the ceramic work made in the past and now: 'In Itamatatiua they used to make pots. Artefacts that were not *artesanato* [handicrafts]. They used to make utensils for domestic use. *Artesanato* is what they make today. But back then they were utensils for domestic use that they used to bring to Alcântara.' What conditions enabled and shaped this redefinition and the ways the potters now apparently engage differently with their ceramic work? I now turn to the exploration of these questions.

7 Itamatatiua, like most Alcântara quilombos, relies on subsistence agriculture, extractive practices and artisanal fishing. Residents also rely heavily on conditional benefit programmes (such as the Bolsa Família), with the main income-generating activities being the sales from ceramics, animals, vegetable produce and fermented manioc meal (*farinha*).

Conserving pottery-making in Itamatatiua: The Centre for Ceramic Production

The construction of the centre, together with two other projects for the community (the construction of an artesian aquifer and a communal open-air oven-house), were implemented through the FUMAC fund.[8] This was part of a wider federal programme run by the State Secretariat of Agrarian Development and Family Agriculture (SEDAGRO), the main objective of which was combating rural poverty by means of generating employment and income.

I asked Dona Luisa, one of Itamatatiua's most dedicated potters, to tell me the story of the foundation of the centre, a story she likes to tell with delicate and humble delight. 'It's very funny!', she says and sits down comfortably, 'You're not going to believe how it happened.' It all started in March 2004, when Itamatatiua's ceramics were exhibited, for the first time, at a large fair of local artisanal production in Maranhão's capital city, São Luís.[9] Their participation in the fair, Luisa explained, was facilitated by Marilda's contacts there. Marilda is a former journalist who resides in Alcântara. Since visiting Itamatatiua and discovering its ceramics, she has made several efforts to help the women's work reach buyers from outside the community. Marilda currently runs OCA: Residência Artística, an open space for arts in São Luís, where she asked Itamatatiua's potters to participate with their work. Back in 2004, with her help, the Itamatatiua Women's Association (AMI), the legal entity representing Itamatatiua, was registered to participate in the fair.[10]

Dona Luisa, being the person most involved in the ceramic production at the time, represented the women of Itamatatiua by showing some of their ceramic work to the public. 'I was shying away from people. It was difficult for me to stand there and talk about the ceramics to those asking; I wasn't used to all that at all,' said Dona Luisa about her first experience of exhibiting and directly selling her and other women's pottery. But there she was, all proud and out of place at the same time. Worse still, given Luisa's timid side, Alexandra Tavares, the then state governor's[11] wife, passed by Itamatatiua's stand, and stopped to have a closer look. The discomfort was assuaged by contentment in Tavares's reaction:

> *She loved it! She was grabbing one piece after the other, looking closely and saying all the time how beautiful they were. She was asking where they came from, how was our community, what we did, how we did it, so many things. Then she asked, 'what is missing there?' ... 'Everything!', I exclaimed, 'there is nothing there!'*

8 Municipal Fund for Community Support.

9 The fair was a parallel event to the International Seminar on Gender Equality and Sustainable Development of Rural Territories that took place in São Luís from 23 to 26 March 2004, co-organized by the Interamerican Institute for Agricultural Cooperation (IICA), the State Federation of Agricultural Workers (FETAEMA) and the State University of Maranhão (UEMA).

10 There is no space here to discuss at length the creation of AMI and the predominant participation of women in local politics, more broadly. Created in 1989 by twenty-nine women from Itamatatiua and a neighbouring quilombo, the AMI is the single legal entity that represents the community as a collective. The initial bar to men entering the Association was eventually lifted and now men can also become members (but not president). 'Why only women?', I asked Dona Maria when she was telling me about Neide's initiative to create the Association in the 1980s. 'I don't know why,' she said after pondering for a bit over the question, 'I don't. It was just women. They didn't invite men. And men also don't care about those things. If they don't want to get involved so be it. Strange, right? With all those men around here...', she laughed.

11 José (Zé) Reinaldo Carneiro Tavares, governor of the state of Maranhão from 2002 to 2006.

On the last day of the fair, Alexandra Tavares returned to the community's stall with José (Zé) Reinaldo. After a few remarks on the ceramics and the artisans' skills, it was the governor's turn to ask Luisa: 'What is missing from your community?' Luisa gathered all her courage and said: 'Everything. Our community has nothing at all. People live in extremely poor conditions. We need piped water. And we could also use a centre for our association.' Luisa explained to me that during the dry season (summer) potable water used to be a scarce resource in the community, and that residents had had to make great sacrifices to ensure they would not spend any days without water. Since the creation of the community's association (AMI), the women's top priority had been the installation of an artesian aquifer for the collection and distribution of water. Constructing a space where the production of ceramics could be housed and centralized was also high on their agenda.

The meeting with the governor turned out to be extremely favourable to the community, and their participation in the fair more productive than anyone could have imagined. 'No more than twenty days later, people were sent to the community to take pictures of the site [where the artesian aquifer is today] and started making arrangements for the constructions,' said Ângela de Jesus, resident of Itamatatiua, potter, and at the time president of the association. Never before had residents seen such an investment being made in their community or works being concluded so promptly. When the governor himself visited Itamatatiua to inaugurate the constructions, most residents could not believe their eyes. Ângela welcomed him on behalf of the community in a small inaugural celebration. In his speech, Zé Reinaldo emphasized that projects like those built in Itamatatiua, aim to benefit the communities of Maranhão that are most in need.[12]

Itamatatiua was one of the five Alcântara communities to receive funds from the FUMAC.[13] Interestingly, however, it was the only one to benefit with three constructions under the project. In the eyes of many residents, the serendipity of having met the governor in person — an event that was made possible due to their ceramic production — contributed to this end. The FUMAC project was followed by several others, and the implementation of each was also initiated by personal contacts enabled through the community's legal representation entity (AMI) and realized by the ceramicists themselves. Gradually, the building of unmediated relations with an expanding a network of strategically important allies was consolidated, in the minds of many Itamatatiuenses, as an effective way in which politics could operate in the community. Moreover, local pottery, for the first time seen as the object of appreciation from (prestigious) outsiders, was gradually perceived as a potentially powerful apparatus for enhancing their political voice.

The creation of a communal space to house the (traditionally) diffused ceramic practice was a long-awaited wish of some potters. Since its creation in 2005, the centre has not only aggregated all potters under one roof, it has also become an important reference point for Itamatatiua itself. A reference point in a double sense, as the centre serves the dual purpose of being the community's ceramic workshop and its political hub, the place where all community

12 See further: kn.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TN24E252006.pdf (accessed 8 March 2021).

13 Paraíso, Prainha, Guaiba and Cá Te Espero were the other four communities that benefited from the project in the same year, with poultry farming facilities, rural electrification and road improvements, respectively.

Figure 4 Plates being removed from the oven.

meetings take place and where all important decisions are made. As simultaneously the physical space for political assemblies (in its role as seat of the community's association) and for ceramic production, it is at the core of Itamatatiua's political life. While this first purpose is directed at the local community and its political organization, within and outside the national quilombo cause, the second is distinctly outward-looking. The workshop and the attached shop bring visitors and attention 'from outside' to Itamatatiua, something that had been partly anticipated and partly wished for by the Itamatatiuenses involved in the implementation of the project. This attention is, in turn, seen as potentially favourable to the expansion of Itamatatiua's network of strategic allies. Ultimately, such alliances are hoped to contribute to, or facilitate, the final regularization of legal title to their collective territory. In what follows, I first explore the interconnections of quilombola political organization (especially) around land rights with articulations of quilombo cultural heritage, and subsequently discuss the salient forms in which they have emerged in Itamatatiua since the creation of the centre enabled the consolidation of dynamic associations between the two.

Political organization and 'quilombo heritage'

After long battles fought by diverse political organizations clustered under the general designation of the 'Black Movement', the 1988 Brazilian Constitution recognized final ownership of collectively occupied quilombo territories. Most Latin American countries have enshrined different types of collective rights at the level of statutory or constitutional law. Such measures have been an integral part of multicultural citizenship reforms aiming at remedying the political exclusion and racial discrimination suffered by different social groups within the nation-state, which were henceforth recognized

as 'ethnic groups'. As Hooker (2005:291) has observed, however, 'the main criterion used to determine the recipients of collective rights in Latin America has been the possession of a distinct cultural group identity', rather than their racial discrimination or socio-economic and political marginalization, as such rectifying measures dictate in principle. Similarly, in Brazil, the lengthy process of regularization effectively requires communities to 'prove', in the face of the state, that they possess a unique socio-cultural identity attached to specific localities — a process that has been called 'territorialization' by Brazilian anthropologists (Arruti 2006; Oliveira 1999). As a result, and despite legal provisions, not only have relatively few communities managed to acquire land titles,[14] but those who did often needed to painstakingly demonstrate tangible and intangible elements of culture and history that on the whole came to be recognized as 'quilombo heritage' ('*patrimônio*' and in Maranhão, commonly, '*herança quilombola*').

Drafted largely as an answer to human-rights violations and restrictions on freedom of expression by a brutal military dictatorship that had ended only three years before, and in line with global developments in registering 'national heritage', the 1988 Constitution significantly broadened the definition of heritage to include some of the voices 'from below'. While previously what had been largely regarded as national heritage was the monumental, colonial and 'white' material culture of 'stone and lime' (*pedra e cal*) (Silva 2012:110) — as seen predominantly in the Vargas era's early efforts to institutionalize heritage in the 1930s — in 1988 the definition was 'amplified' to include forms of expression, ways of creating, making and living (Chuva 2009). Brazil's 'Magna Carta', not only recognized land rights for 'quilombo remnant communities', but also, Articles 215 and 216 included Afro-Brazilian and quilombo cultural manifestations and some of their sites — e.g. quilombo territories — in the country's national cultural heritage.

These constitutional provisions, along with the grass-roots work of black social, and often socio-religious, movements centred around political education and citizenship, have had a tremendous impact on the ways *quilombolas* were to reflect on their own cultural practices and group identities (Arruti 2011:292–3; Oliveira and Müller 2016). While popular awareness of, and political mobilization around, collective rights was greatly fostered in national meetings of black rural communities that first took place in the states of Maranhão and Pará in the early 1980s (Arruti 2008), *quilombola* political articulation was also shaped by the influence of intellectuals, political activists, members of governmental and civil-society organizations, and even clergy and lay church agents (Arruti 1997, 2002; Hatzikidi 2019b). As I discuss elsewhere (Hatzikidi 2019a), the 1988 constitutional reforms, along with earlier, concurrent and subsequent developments in the field of *quilombola* political organization and awareness of civil rights, have led to the reappraisal of the historically negative connotations of the term 'quilombo' (first recorded in colonial records and attached to a dreadful slavery past), and its gradual positive re-semanticization (see also Gomes 2015). With time, more and more peasant communities proudly identified as *quilombolas* and actively engaged in their common struggle for

14 Only 181 quilombo territories in the country have been given titles deeds, while more than 1,719 are still facing land insecurity, and their permanence in their traditionally-occupied territories is often threatened. The figures are based on data published by the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA). For further details, visit the webpage of Comissão Pró-Índio: http://cpisp.org.br/direitosquilombolas (accessed on 3 February 2020).

the establishment of '*quilombola* rights' (Andrade 2006; Leite 2000; O'Dwyer 2002).

Furthermore, by constitutionally establishing all 'documents and sites that contain historical residues of the ancient quilombos as national heritage', and by attaching notions of continuity (as in 'residues') and specific descent ('ancient quilombos')[15] to contemporary social groups (modern-day quilombos), the 1988 federal constitution not only broadened pre-existing notions of heritage, but also, and equally importantly, inextricably merged such notions with, and produced new, specifically 'ethnic' ones. Most importantly for this essay, it yielded the multivalent notion of 'quilombo cultural heritage'.

In most quilombos, artisanal production — such as baskets made of palm leaves to carry food, or ceramic utensils — was traditionally made without any association with notions of 'cultural production' or 'heritage'. These were typically simply practices: either of everyday life (such as the ceramic work in Itamatatiua) or of festive and extraordinary occasions (such as the ditties chanted by the women drummers during Itamatatiua's *festa* of Santa Teresa), and were not really thought of as part of a collective tradition. As Herzfeld reminds us, 'the very idea of tradition is a modernist one: people did not, in the past, announce that they were living traditional lives' (2004:18). However, the 'archaeological paradigm', which searched for tangible 'proof' of quilombo descent, decisively shaped the technical reports necessary for land titles.[16] In this context, cultural production often became an effective way of demonstrating the expected 'traditional' ways of living, and of continuous land occupation based on the good knowledge and use of natural resources.

As Kenny has observed, 'an assemblage of social, economic and political conditions have come together to make a "quilombo heritage" relevant for those living in rural black communities' (2011:94). This heritage, Kenny argues, 'draws on the narratives, symbols and practices of black activists, human rights discourse and new federal politics on land restitution and multiculturalism' (ibid.). Through the 'assemblage' of conditions that gave shape to quilombo heritage, not only did 'blackness feature as a cultural asset' (Armstrong 2005:57), but 'new interpretations emerged for cultural practices with origins in the period of slavery, such as *jongo* and *caxambu* — circle dances and songs to the sound of drums — which were transformed into symbolic capital for the affirmation of the *quilombola* identity' (Mattos 2005:12).

15 'Brazilian cultural heritage consists of those material and immaterial goods, taken independently or as a whole, carriers of references of identity, livelihood, and memory of different groups that have formed Brazilian society, including: … II The modes of creating, making and living; §3. The law will establish incentives for the production and dissemination of cultural goods and values. … §5. All the documents and sites that contain historical residues of the ancient quilombos are listed as heritage.' (Article 216, 1988 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Brazil). All translations from Portuguese are mine unless otherwise stated.

16 The Presidential Decree no. 4.887/2003, inspired by Brazil's 2002 ratification of the 1989 International Labour Organization Convention 169 on indigenous and tribal rights, codified 'self-identification' (auto-atribuição) as the main requisite for a community to be recognised as a quilombo. It attempted to regulate quilombo land titles by revoking Decree no. 3.912 of 2001 and doing away with the need to marshal historical evidence showing that modern quilombos 'actually' had direct connections to ancient ones — commonly described in the literature as the 'archaeological paradigm'. While the new decree has influenced the technical reports issued ever since, it was not until February of 2018 that the Brazilian Supreme Court (STF) voted in favour of its constitutionality, which had previously been questioned by a Direct Action of Unconstitutionality (ADI-3239). See Hatzikidi 2019a:6–7.

Figure 5 Ceramics on display inside the shop.

I have thus far discussed the interconnections between the quilombo cause and specific 'ethnic' conceptualizations of cultural heritage, which provide the politico-legal and socio-cultural background against which I examine the case of Itamatatiua ceramic production and circulation. I showed that associations between everyday practices and notions of quilombo cultural heritage, although at this point often expressed in terms of deep-seated matter of facts, are largely grounded in Brazil's 1988 Federal Constitution. In light of this discussion, I will now turn to an examination of contemporary Itamatatiua pottery and its embeddedness in local political life.

An old practice under a new light

Aesthetically, the ceramic production of Itamatatiua is characterized by relatively plain forms, unglazed, coarse and unadorned surfaces and natural colour. Although a relatively small number of their ceramic artefacts are indeed painted (the ceramic figurines mentioned earlier), the greatest part of Itamatatiua ceramics follow non-elaborated design patterns with minimal decoration. The production persists in a manual way, resisting the use of any machinery, with the exception of the *maromba*, a machine used for the extrusion of raw clay into large chunks, which the potters mould into clay objects. Itamatatiua's ethnic identity, the significance of their historical trajectory and their attachment to modes of production inherited by their ancestors, are some of the most eloquent qualities communicated by members of the community and their trade networks in commercial transactions. A case in point is the leaflet given to customers and visitors to the centre, which describes the 'traditional

handicraft production, manually made by the artisans'. We also read (my emphasis):

> *They [the potters] use a very old technique that consists of rolling the clay against a surface with the palms of their hands in order to make the so-called clay coils (serpentinas), which are placed one on top of the other in a spiral formation in order to make the pot.*

'This type of pottery is a common artefact among assemblages from African Diaspora sites and continues to be made in a number of rural black communities in Brazil in the same way it was centuries ago,' says Kenny (2011:102) about the pottery of Telhado, a quilombo in the Brazilian state of Paraíba. Similar to that of Itamatatiua, the coil pottery of Telhado consists of unpainted and undecorated artefacts, a style that is generally considered to be aesthetically and even technically close to African pottery traditions. Such un- or minimally decorated ceramic objects are not generally characterized as 'traditional pottery', but bear a clear 'Afro-Brazilian' and 'quilombola' tinge. For instance, the pottery of Maragogipinho, in the state of Bahia, or that of the valley of Jequitinhonha, in Minas Gerais, are largely considered 'traditional' but feature mostly decorated pottery (see, for example, Moreira, N. 2011 and Moreira, R. 2007, for Maragogipinho and Jequitinhonha, respectively).

Kenny's ethnographic context shows important similarities, but also clear differences, with my own in Itamatatiua. Telhado also has a long tradition of ceramic practice and, like Itamatatiua, there seems to be a preoccupation in recent years with the continuation of this tradition by new generations. Furthermore, in both quilombos pottery is understood and communicated as a 'badge for quilombola heritage and identity' (Kenny ibid.). However, unlike the potters of Telhado, and as discussed above, Itamatatiuenses do not make associations between pottery and slavery, nor is it regarded as a 'derogatory and stigmatizing' activity due to its attachment to slavery and 'negro' identity (Kenny 2009:157). A second important difference between the two communities is that while for Telhado their official recognition as quilombo created a sharp distinction (and even envy) between neighbouring villages, in Alcântara nearly all rural communities have been given Palmares certification as 'quilombo remnants'.[17] Thus, this recognition has not been a basis for any differentiation or perceived injustice between quilombos. Finally, and unlike Telhado, Itamatatiua potters have been very receptive to novelty and change, which was often introduced by state-organized training courses and workshops.

Together with the centralization of Itamatatiua's ceramic work and the aggregation of all potters under one roof, the creation of the centre has also enabled the professionalization and institutionalization of pottery. It re-established a market, albeit a distinctly new one, for Itamatatiua's ceramics, and became the locus of a growing network of distribution. Furthermore, since 2005, a long series of collaborations with state and non-state organizations have, among other things, contributed to the innovation and diversification of their production. SEBRAE, the Brazilian Support Service for Micro and Small Business, has been one of the ceramicists' earliest partners, financing several knowledge-building workshops and training courses. In

17 The Palmares Cultural Foundation (FCP) is the government institution entrusted with the task of issuing official certificates to 'quilombo remnant communities' based on their self-identification as such. These certificates do not equate to title deeds, which, since 2003, can only be issued by INCRA.

Figure 6 Itamatatiua's raw clay.

one of the first workshops to take place in the Itamatatiua, the self-taught potters were instructed by Isabela, a professional ceramicist from São Luís, in making clay figurines (*bonecas*). Itamatatiua's potters, enthusiastically embraced the idea of the figurine, and quickly incorporated this knowledge into their work. Some of the elder ceramicists told me that there was a local woman who also used to make clay figurines 'out of her own imagination' many years before the SEBRAE seminar. However, other potters had not learned the technique, and only started making figurines in recent years (after the workshop). The *bonecas* today are amongst the fastest-selling and most sought-after objects. Each one bearing the unique signature style of its maker, they have turned into one of the most emblematic objects of Itamatatiua's pottery.

Unlike the bulk of Itamatatiua's ceramics, the *bonecas* are colourfully painted. The potters use conventional acrylic paints to dye the ceramic figurines, which they obtain from nearby urban centres. Some customers enquire as to their painting techniques, and are often surprised to find out that they do not use natural paints (as much indigenous pottery in Brazil does, for instance). During my fieldwork in Itamatatiua, a couple of young *Paulistanos* (residents of the city of São Paulo), who had previously stayed with a group of potters in Marajó, Pará, and learned from them a natural dying technique derived from local minerals, showed the potters how they could colour their ceramics by using a type of gravel-like red stone that is easily found in the community. While the women appreciated the aesthetic result, they never pursued this method. The pale red colour of the natural dye applied in round lines to some of their pots, bowls and platters did not appeal to Itamatatiua potters, who preferred to keep their *louça* undyed. They did not

Figure 7 Freshly painted bonecas.

find it useful for their figurines either, as they like to paint them with different colours and natural dyes produce only one set of tones at a time, thus excluding variation. 'You can't just paint them all red, it wouldn't be nice,' Carlianny said, when contemplating the possibility of using the natural dye. The industrial acrylic dyes, on the other hand, allow for great variety of colour options and creative combinations. Furthermore, the potters also pointed out that making natural dyes would significantly add to the already lengthy process of clay-work, which typically requires several days from the first moulding phase to the final object. Hence, and since colouring is largely restricted to the *bonecas*, the potters decided to continue using the acrylic paints. In way that is distinctive to these ceramics, it is the scenes of 'traditional' community life the figurines depict — rather than their shape, texture, or technique — that enables them to be appreciated as part of 'quilombo heritage'.

The *bonecas* are inspired by scenes from daily life in the community. Pregnant women carrying pots filled with water on their heads,

women breastfeeding while soaking manioc, or holding an infant while carrying logs on their head, and some rare male figurines herding their cattle, or working in the fields, inform the scenes of 'traditional life' and lived experiences of the potters of Itamatatiua that are being transformed into ceramic figurines. The common pregnant *bonecas* relate to the land through performing activities that manifest its centrality in community life. Land and social reproduction constitute the common thread that runs through the different depictions of life and work in Itamatatiua. The potters also strongly identify with the material qualities of their native soil: they say they are created in, and from, the land from which they extract their clay. They emphasize that they 'share the same colour', and feel they instil a bit of themselves in every piece they make. 'Children of the land' (*filhos da terra*), is what residents born in the community call themselves and one another. This identification is not simply figurative; it is felt and fostered through acts of daily care for, and engagement with, the land. Itamatatiuenses are nurtured by the land they inhabit and to which they will one day return. The embodied experience of belonging to the land, because one is part of it, is nuanced by the potters when they describe their clay work and their relation to the fired objects.

In this sense, the figurines are vibrant artefacts that carry with them the land and the people of Itamatatiua wherever the hands of the different buyers take them. 'We travel with them, we see the world. And the world sees us,' Nazaré, one of the potters, said. Through the selective depiction of scenes of community life as the *quilombolas* experienced it in the past and remember it in the present, the *bonecas* serve as important heuristic instruments, original forms of self-representation, through which the potters project their notions of collective identity and territoriality for the future.

This theme of the selectivity of the images of collective representation resonates strongly with initiatives taken by indigenous peoples in Brazil. Terence Turner (1991) has famously made the case regarding the Kayapo in Gorotire. After making their first peaceful contact with members of the regional Brazilian population in 1938, most Kayapo gradually removed their lip plugs, cut their hair short and wore shorts and T-shirts in the village. However, in the 1980s, a striking 'change in social and cultural self-consciousness' (1991:304) was instigated by the reassessment of their collective identity in their new historical 'situation of contact'. The Kayapo, argues Turner, developed an awareness 'of the potential political value of their "culture" in their relations with the alien society by which they found themselves surrounded' (ibid.:301). They subsequently re-adopted, among other things, some of their pre-contact bodily practices (body piercing and painting, hair decoration, and so on) and merged them with the new 'Brazilian' clothing. In this context, the evocative power images of 'real' indigenous people had (and perhaps continue to have) in popular imaginaries, propelled the active management, by the Kayapo, of their images of self-representation in their interactions with national society. In other words, 'culture' became 'a focus of political struggle' and the 'means by which a society maintains its morale and capacity for action, including both political action vis à vis the national society and the reproduction of its own pattern of life' (ibid.:302, 304).

The suggestion that indigenous peoples in Brazil, or elsewhere in Latin America, have tapped into widespread mental repositories of how 'real' indigenous people dress and act, so as to capture the attention of their intended audiences in their struggles for visibility and recognition, has been well explored in the anthropological literature (see also, Conklin 1997; Graham 2005).

Figure 8 Smoke coming out of the outdoor ovens during a firing.

As this discussion should have made clear by now, similar processes can be observed among *quilombolas*. The enduring relevance of such creative re-appropriations of images of the self by others, however, is a distressing indication of the many impediments to the establishment of land and human rights for indigenous and other social groups within nation-states. Operating within such political dynamics, largely constructed in terms of opposition of one to the other, the process is also logically constructed as an expected form of mediation between the national society and the 'exotic', 'ethnic' other. However, while the 'otherness' of the indigenous in Brazil was a given that needed to be mitigated if they were to protect their autonomous collective existence and their lands — hence, organize politically — this has not been the case for other groups whose 'alterity' was altogether denied. In many ways, the *quilombola* case followed an inverse path: to guarantee their land and collective existence, they had to (re)construct their alterity (violently stripped of them as soon as the colonial rule anonymized and classified them as 'slaves') and distinguish themselves from other landless peasants.

This phenomenon, far from being uniquely Brazilian, has to do with the 'different ways in which indians and blacks have been racialized in Latin America' (Hooker 2005:291). As Arruti has argued, in popular imaginaries the indigenous population in Brazil always corresponded to notions of 'isolation', and the black population to notions of 'interaction', the former commonly imagined as 'pure' while the latter as 'contaminated' (1997:10). While the indigenous would be defined in terms of a purported 'radical alterity', a 'universe of references absolutely foreign and which needs to be *translated*' (ibid.),

Figure 9 A boneca with miniature logs and axe.

the black would be defined in inverted terms: representing 'the problem of the unpleasant image of the self (a dilemma situated in identity and not in alterity), of the need to absorb, integrate, but without contaminating, without letting this other, so intimate and so numerous, change the image of an occidentalizing and white nationality' (ibid.).

These contrasting images of indigeneity and blackness had a direct impact on the ways these populations would (and could) organize politically in the multi-ethnic states of Latin America. The urbanized blacks would be generally seen as 'lacking "ethnicity" and therefore as underserving of collective rights' (Hooker 2005:293). Not only in Brazil but, as Hooker shows, in Latin America more broadly, 'it is only in cases where race and ethnicity coincide' that black people are able to claim group rights (ibid.). More specifically, she argues that:

> *the cases in the region where blacks have won recognition as distinct groups with collective rights (in particular to land or territorial autonomy), have generally been those in which the existence of rural communities of descendants of runaway slaves have made possible the articulation of their struggles in a similar rhetorical vein to those of indigenous peoples.*
>
> *(Hooker 2005:295)*

For the *quilombolas* therefore, the possibility of political organization and claims to collective land rights was premised on the condition of being able to successfully (re)present themselves as sufficiently different; not only from their rural neighbours and the national 'white' society, but also from the urban black population. Despite the sheer arbitrariness of such a distinction, which negates the historically complex and naturally porous boundaries between groups of peoples who have always been in movement, it has been a core element of their constitution as political subjects worthy of rights.

Hence, while the starting point is distinct (a 'given' alterity in the case of indians, and a 'constructed' alterity in the case of *quilombolas*), the ongoing negotiation of identity and self-representation, as well as the end point (recognition of collective rights) are aligned, when we look at the ways 'ethnic groups' have been able to organize politically and articulate their claims. We now see even more clearly, just how pertinent notions of 'ethnic' (*quilombola*) culture and heritage are to their collective struggle for

land. The 'timeless connection with the absolute past' (Monteiro 2007:6) that this type of pottery enables, and which Itamatatiuenses strive to communicate when selling their craftwork, importantly links specific contemporary communities to quilombo settlements in the past, something that speaks to the relevant legislation and has direct implications for the community's land struggle.

To the extent that all cultural production is, in certain ways, a 'representation of representations' (Arizpe 2013:19; Hobsbawm 1983), a degree of 'self-conscious tradition' (Clifford 2004:6) is often involved when larger issues are at stake for given social groups. In the case of Itamatatiua, the relatively recent introduction of clay figurines in the hitherto largely utilitarian ceramic production, was seen by the potters as an evocative way to instantiate and materialize specific images of the collective past and present. Made out of the potters' consubstantial relationship with clay, the figurines allude to a rural lifestyle that is ever-more threatened by the neo-liberal state, private capital holders, and large-scale agribusiness and development projects. It needs to be underlined, however, that an 'objectification of identity' by groups who 'market' themselves in order 'to "manage" their symbolic and material assets' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009:8), does not equate to fossilization of their collective identity, but, on the contrary, it speaks to the acknowledgment of its ever-changing quality. Its conscious deployment, far from being destructive to local cultural life, may indeed prove valuable to it. As must have become clear by now, for Itamatatiua, and Brazilian quilombos at large, the selectivity and mobilization of cultural production can be directly relevant to their 'control over territorial rights' (Kenny 2009:151).

The ceramic figurines not only encapsulate images of a collective past, they simultaneously project a future against all odds and communicate Itamatatiua's struggle to determine the course of its collective existence. Within a context of extreme land insecurity and limited visibility, pottery, and culture more broadly, effectively became a vehicle for political struggle. To this end, the clay figurines acquired a central role in the articulation of *quilombola* claims for recognition. Dona Maria de Lourdes, one of the potters, told me that she likes to make them to 'let the young ones know how it used to be here before' and also because 'tourists like this quilombo stuff'. These selected images of (re)presentation, firmly grounded in a lived and perhaps romanticized past, resonate strongly with contemporary national imaginaries of 'quilombo life'. The figurines, the ceramic objects par excellence for visualizing images of Itamatatiua's quilombo life, are seen as an emblematic representation of the community itself, and are thought, by potters and non-potters alike, to contribute to the community's land struggle by attracting more attention from the outside.

But have these largely external and/or institutionalized constructions of quilombo heritage decisively shaped the ways *quilombolas* perceive and value their collective life? In what follows, I argue that Itamatatiuenses tend to have a more inclusive understanding of heritage that is not situated in any particular practice or material culture, but which is rather anchored to notions of conviviality: of living in close proximity to one another, working together and sharing the land and natural resources.

The earth that people and pottery are made of

One day, on a shelf where the potters leave their artefacts once ready, I noticed a truncated female ceramic figure with no facial features, hair or head wrap, as usual, placed horizontally on her

Figure 10 Clay figurines drying on a shelf inside the centre.

Figure 11 Moulding clay heads.

right side (see Figure 10 for a similar piece). This, by Itamatatiua standards unusual, clay figurine was all painted black. I asked its maker to tell me how she had come up with the idea of making this one. 'Oh, that was not my idea. A client asked me to make it like that,' she said, and continued: 'They wanted her dark black [*negrinha*, *negrinha*] but with no arms or hair.' From that moment on I began closely observing the kinds of artefacts made by the women of Itamatatiua. The sporadic pieces that did not match the usual 'quilombo ceramic production' were either orders from loyal clients or innovations from individual potters who wanted to 'make something different'. If Itamatatiua pottery was so intricately associated with evocative notions of 'quilombo heritage'

and the community's land cause, what then gave these artefacts the cultural identity so skilfully and ardently imbued in the other pieces?

The potters turn to clay for the answer. It is the *barro* (clay) itself that gives them their unique identity: 'black just like us' (*preto que nem nós*), the women frequently say, referring to the colour of the clay. The forms may change, and that does not really matter, because what ultimately makes an artefact unique, what makes it a product of the *quilombola* artisanal production, is that it is made by the women of the community using the black clay they unearth from their collective land. That clay, the women argue, is unique to the lands of Itamatatiua; there is nowhere one can find clay like that. This perception of the quality of the clay is not only discussed when directly asking about the ceramic production's most characteristic element; it is also pronounced in casual conversations. Once I was asked if there were ceramics in my home country. When I said that there were, one of the women asked: 'But the clay there is white, right?' They did not care too much about the ceramic forms, but the colour of the clay, and hence the nature of my native soil, was of primary importance.

The soil is central to many *quilombolas*' understandings of (self and collective) identity. The black clay of Itamatatiua is unearthed manually by the women (and occasionally men) from small pits (*barreiros*) in the vicinity, which they carefully select in order not to disturb the natural process of clay-mineral formation. Due to experience and knowledge built over generations, Itamatatiuenses know where to find clay when they need to, without opening up a recently closed pit, which would risk 'exhausting the clay' (*acabar com o barro*). It is very important to 'allow time for the earth to recuperate', the potters repeatedly told me. A sustainable extraction, they insisted, was the only way clay work could continue for generations to follow. This approach to their native soil — one that stipulates a respectful and diligent relation with the land — is applied equally to clay extraction and agriculture, and is inherently connected to the community's foundation story. According to it, when their patron saint, Santa Teresa de Jesus (d'Ávila), invited them to live on her land and promised to protect them, the former enslaved people who accepted her invitation, made a pact with her and became her children. They also promised to take good care of the saint's land, and to share it equally among themselves (Hatzikidi 2019b). From the community's foundation to this day, a compound of histories, embodied experiences and shared knowledge, have contributed to the attachment of a range of affections and meanings to the collective land. More than any single understanding of it, 'land' in Itamatatiua is profoundly about living and working together; in the past, in the present and in the future.

For most Itamatatiuenses, 'quilombo heritage' is comprised of diverse elements of social life and, therefore, cannot be 'simply a site, place, or intangible performance or event' (Smith and Akagawa 2009:6). It encompasses all aspects of community life, which itself is comprised of affective relationships incorporating specific localities and their histories. Participation in local cultural practices, or what could be termed 'lived heritage' (Benton 2010; Harrison and Rose 2010), is therefore understood as an inherent part of partaking in, and sharing, a collective everyday life. It is simultaneously conceived as an essential part of, or an instrument for, the community's struggle for land rights. The intrinsic association of quilombo heritage with other constitutional provisions made to guarantee the rights of *quilombolas* has rendered it an inseparable part of the same political struggle for the recognition of territorial rights. In this sense, 'heritage is

not a substitute for land claims, struggles over subsistence rights, development, educational, and health projects, defence of sacred sites and repatriation of human remains or stolen artefacts, but it is closely connected to all those struggles' (Clifford 2004:8).

Hence, and notwithstanding the potters' intimate relation with clay that construes form as a superficial layer of the core that is of importance, the circulation of their ceramic production is of particular value for the makers and the community at large. Indeed, it is primarily through its pottery that the community is gaining visibility and recognition by state and national governments. In the early 2000s, for example, Itamatatiua's ceramic production was inscribed on the National Inventory of Cultural References. In 2015, it was also included in the initiative Selo Quilombos of Brazil, a strategy created by the Secretary of Politics for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPPIR) to identify products stemming from quilombo communities.[18] In 2017, Maranhão's state government inaugurated the award of the title 'Master of Popular Culture'. In the first public ceremony for the award, Neide de Jesus, a ceramicist, founder and president of the Women's Association (AMI), and customary community leader, was one of the ten *mestres* designated from across Maranhão.

In a way that is distinct from their commercial transactions in the past, the demand for their clay work today is taken as an index of the appreciation of Itamatatiua's *quilombola* identity. As some of the residents like to say, their pottery is 'known around the world', and 'people come here to study and learn about our history and culture'. In a similar vein, Alessiane, secondary education teacher from Itamatatiua, said: 'This is what characterizes us as *quilombolas*. It is our culture. And we are also known because of the clay, right? The women work with clay and through the clay we are known all around the world.'

A growing interest in, and approval of, their ceramic work and their quilombo from the outside, has consolidated a sense of pride in their work and cultural heritage among the women potters of Itamatatiua and the community in general. Tokens of accreditation, such as the ones mentioned above, are viewed by the potters, and residents at large, not only as indications of the valorization of their work, and a possible broadening of their market, but as acts that help raise awareness of their struggle for the establishment of land rights – often in ways that formal representations appeared to be unable to. Hence, while most *quilombolas*' perceptions of culture or heritage seem firmly enmeshed in a notion of a community life emanating from, and always referring back to, the collective land, pottery emerges as a privileged medium for negotiation and alliance with strategically important extra-territorial state and non-state agents.

Conclusion

As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has argued, and as we were also able to see in the case of Itamatatiua, participants are 'not only cultural carriers and transmitters … but also agents in the heritage enterprise' (2004:169). Through their engagement in *quilombola* movements, growing political awareness and interest from the outside in their production and in their community life more broadly, the potters started to communicate their ceramic production differently than in the past. The creation of the centre was a catalyst for this process. Along with the stimulus it brought to Itamatatiua's ceramic production,

18 The Selo Quilombos do Brasil is part of the Brazil Quilombola Programme (PBQ).

Figure 12 Itamatatiua's stamp impressed on soft clay.

it also significantly altered the ways in which knowledge was transmitted. The community's cultural practices seem to be gaining wider recognition, and this brought protective measures for its preservation. Yet, despite such measures, the potters express their fear regarding the continuation of their ceramic work, admitting that they have largely failed to attract the young generation of Itamatatiua to it.

While there are several reasons for this — the most influential probably being that although pottery has acquired great symbolic value inside and outside the community, it does not bring significant revenue to the potters, despite requiring a substantial commitment of time and effort — the problem presents itself as particularly salient for the makers. Their concern is not only associated with the fear of losing a long-established tradition — one that has indeed long been on the verge of extinction (cf. Gow 1999:231) — but also for the consequences given pottery's close relation with their struggle for land. In other words, the urgency regarding knowledge transmission and continuity for the potters of Itamatatiua lies in it being a key complement to their political cause.

The potters' fears are substantiated, when we consider Brazil's highly volatile and increasingly polarized political context. With a popular elected president who promised that when he was in power there would not be 'a centimetre demarcated for indigenous reserves or for *quilombolas*',[19] and with rates of violence against quilombo and indigenous communities, and deaths of their political leaders, steadily growing in recent years, the *quilombolas* of Itamatatiua understandably hesitate to express optimism about a swift resolution of their demand for land regularization (in process since 2012) and the acquisition of their collective titles. The potters, and other residents alike, realize that although pottery has been influential in calling attention to their community, it is not a sufficiently strong leverage to achieve land security. It continues to provide, however, an important starting point for negotiation and for raising pressing questions: How can Itamatatiua's ceramic production be considered 'national cultural heritage' while the land from which the clay is extracted is yet to be safeguarded and protected by the state (despite having acquired a legally protected status)? How can the *quilombolas* be assured of the continuation of their traditional practice, which the inscription in national heritage lists is supposed to prescribe, when they are uncertain about the future of their collective existence?

'They were seen', write Jean and John Comaroff about the San, 'and reciprocally were able to see themselves, as a named *people* with a "tradition and a way of life". In other words, a culture.' (2009:11). Although this strongly resonates with the experience of many Itamatatiuenses, the visibility their quilombo has gathered has not — at least, yet — been enough to bring the community the recognition it has been waiting for: that of land. Moreover, if being seen carries with it the transformative power of recognition, what does this imply for peoples who are not seen by those with the power to bring about changes that matter? If 'traditional' ceramic production is a badge of *quilombola* culture, what does that imply for quilombos that do not have a ceramic, or other recognizable, cultural tradition? Is the state, through mechanisms for the institutionalization of heritage, controlling 'authenticity' and, consequently, access to land rights?

For many, tokens of official recognition — such as the ones Itamatatiua has earned — are a positive indication of the state's valuation of Brazil's plural cultural landscape. For others, however, they also entail a degree of cultural appropriation by the state (see Fry 1977). For the latter, the state's formal acknowledgment of specific expressions as 'national heritage' has direct consequences for those groups whose cultural expressions do not fit the defined categories. For Neide, and Itamatatiua's potters, the 'master of popular culture' title is a positive recognition of the community's long ceramic tradition, and it is generally hoped that such recognitions will facilitate the granting of land titles for their quilombo. Others remain more sceptical and simply say that 'only time will tell' whether they will indeed expedite the process.

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19 The full speech, given at the Clube Hebráica in Rio de Janeiro in April 2017, is available online: www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPj4KyLw8Wc (accessed 3 February 2020).

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