

# AFRORIGENS

**AFRORIGENS INSTITUTE**

**PRESS AND COMMUNITY INFORMATION BULLETIN**

Date: December 18th, 2023

## **UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES ARE LOCATED AND REGISTERED IN IPHAN**

Archaeologists from the AfrOrigens Institute located, in the first week of December 2023, two archaeological sites formed by the remains of sunken vessels, near the mouth of the Bracuí River, in Angra dos Reis, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

These sites, formed by the remains of shipwrecks, were duly registered on the Archaeological Site Registry platform of the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN) as the archaeological sites “Bracuí 1” and “Bracuí 2”, and with this they are now protected by Federal Legislation - Law No. 3,924, of July 26, 1961, as Union assets.

The AfrOrigens Institute is now preparing to, starting next year, systematically study these sites through the implementation of an excavation and archaeological recording methodology, seeking to catalog more data that corroborate the identification of archaeological sites and their participation in activities linked to the transatlantic trafficking of Africans to the region.

One of the sites had been indicated by the oral tradition of the afrodescendant quilombola community Santa Rita do Bracuí, and on this occasion its location was indicated in collaboration with fishermen from the region, who had known the location of the shipwreck for many decades and mentioned that the site had already been victimized some time ago by processes of looting by local divers.

The second archaeological site was located using sonographic images and is buried in the seabed of the Bracuí cove.

Only systematic underwater archaeological studies will be able to confirm whether one of them corresponds to the Camargo slave ship, originated in the United States, that brought enslaved Africans from Mozambique, whose identification and study is the main objective of this project. The shipwreck occurred in 1852 on purpose, as a strategy to conceal the clandestine activity of the transatlantic trafficking of Africans, after the disembarkation at the mouth of the Bracuí River of approximately 500 enslaved people from Mozambique.

The archaeological and historical research work initiative has the support and collaboration of the international network Slave Wrecks Project, headquartered and coordinated by the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture with the George Washington University, the Universidade Federal Fluminense,

the Universidade Federal de Sergipe, and the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, in partnership with the remaining quilombola community Santa Rita do Bracuí.

## THE AFRORIGENS INSTITUTE

AfrOrigens is a large Archaeology project about the African Diaspora in Brazil.

For hundreds of years, millions of Africans were enslaved and forcibly brought to Brazil on different types of ships, in an inhumane way to serve as labor in the work that formed the wealth of this nation. This story is still very little known.

This ambitious research project seeks answers to questions that are still silenced and, with this, aims to bring knowledge about Atlantic travel to the general public, in Brazil and abroad. Some of the wrecks of these slave ships represent the materiality and proof of these crimes against humanity.

Many Quilombos, especially those located on the coast of Rio de Janeiro, are closely linked to these ships of death. With their memories, stories and struggles for recognition and land titling, they are a fundamental part of our research and future projects.

The data obtained by AfrOrigens will be made available for use by other institutions, such as the Truth Commission on Black Slavery in Brazil.

The AfrOrigens Institute is a project to map the materiality linked to diasporic events of the transatlantic trafficking of Africans and, consequently, is linked to studies and political agendas for the identification, recognition and reparation of crimes against humanity.

Understanding Archaeology as an activity that constitutes a political action, reverberating in transformations in the present, we seek to develop archaeological research on slave ships in partnership with quilombola communities, striving for the collective and democratic construction of knowledge, through the protagonism of the social agents involved and of the permanent dialogue of knowledge, through the integration of its cultural references (all its manifestations) and its political dimensions and contexts of meaning.

When developing projects with this theme in Brazil, we established a discussion forum between researchers who work on the topic of the African Diaspora in Brazil and around the world, with an emphasis on the theoretical and methodological aspects of the investigations carried out, detailing specific particularities of the archaeological sites formed. by remains of sunken slave vessels and their historical, social and political contexts.

In addition to aspects relating to archaeological interpretations, the aim is to disseminate the knowledge produced to the general public, as well as discuss the possibility of musealizing the cultural assets studied, for in situ underwater tourism, or allowing, through systematic documentation carried out, the virtual reconstruction of the remains of these vessels for visitors who do not dive. The aim is to publicize and involve the general public with the Underwater Cultural Heritage arising from the African Diaspora.

Our objective is to encourage the social use of underwater cultural heritage and its sustainability, considering the participation and involvement of local traditional communities, so that they find affinities and identities with these heritages and with the archaeological research carried out on them. The participation of communities in the project and its developments could open new paths of sustainability, such as the provision of services at archaeological sites, in research and preservation, or in the development of actions linked to community-based tourism, giving visibility to its history and its fight for rights and recognition.

## **INSTITUTE PARTNERS**

Quilombo Santa Rita do Bracuí

Laboratório de Arqueologia de Ambientes Aquáticos – Universidade Federal de Sergipe

Laboratório de História Oral e Imagem – Universidade Federal Fluminense

Aventuras Produções e Edições Educativas Ltda.

Projeto Passados Presente - UFF, UNIRIO, UFRJ, Center for Latin American Studies CLAS  
PITTSBURGH

The Slave Wrecks Project

Smithsonian Institution National Museum of African American History and Culture

The George Washington University

Núcleo de Estudos de Cultura Material – Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro

IMAS – Instituto de Memória e Ação Social

## **SUPPORTERS**

NAUI – National Association of Underwater Instructors

Aquamaster Diving Center

Marina Porto Frade

The Explorers Club

Witness.org

Contacts via the institute's website: [www.afrorigens.com.br](http://www.afrorigens.com.br)