

# The history of the Kalunga people: education and memory as mechanisms of resistance

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**ABSTRACT.** This article aims to discuss the history of the Kalunga people on the Riachão farm, in the municipality of Monte Alegre de Goiás, and to establish a reflection on the importance of its people, its culture, memory, the stories told at school as a maintenance mechanism. of the local culture, demonstrating the importance of writing and memory as a tool against forgetting. The work was carried out through a bibliographic review and participant observation in the community itself as well as in local schools. It is evident that the history of the Kalunga people took place with the historical process over two hundred years ago, being a people descended from black people who were enslaved. They live in the largest territory in Brazil, in the Chapada dos Veadeiros. In this context, the objective is to portray the history of a people of many struggles, traditions, challenges and overcoming, which has its own identity, with knowledge and practices, in the cultural tradition, beliefs and others that have been passed down from generation to generation. In this sense, the methodology will be the participant observation of the educational process regarding the process of memory reconstruction, as well as the suggestion of insertion in the specific disciplines of care for local memories, both individual and collective memory, as an educational tool against the death (oblivion).

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## INTRODUCTION

The Kalunga community, located in the municipality of Monte Alegre de Goiás, is a settlement originally formed by Black people who were enslaved and, fleeing captivity, organized themselves into small groups, thus originating the settlement now known as Quilombo Kalunga.

Regarding the geographical distribution of the Quilombola-Kalunga Communities, located in the municipality of Monte Alegre de Goiás, it is divided into fourteen micro-communities: Ursa, Boa Sorte, Bom Jardim, Faina, Curral da Taboca, Carolina, Contenda, Barra, Tinguizal, Riachão, Sucuri, Saco Grande, Areia, and São Pedro. These fourteen micro-communities are separated only by rivers and hills, forming part of the Quilombo Kalunga that is geographically located in the municipality of Monte Alegre de Goiás.

The Quilombo Kalunga originates from traditional peoples, descendants of Afro-Brazilian

quilombolas, who possess native knowledge and practices stemming from their social struggle in the historical context of Brazil and Africa. Thus, their culture is deeply rooted in both the universal and singular history of Brazil. Consequently, their social and daily practices are intensely governed by their cultural identity.

In this sense, the history of Quilombo Kalunga is part of the historical process of Brazil's formation, as at a certain point in human history, Africa and Brazil became intertwined, albeit in a painful manner, as this contact was established through the process of slavery. As a result, the history of Quilombo Kalunga holds significant importance, and recalling the technologies of our people constitutes a struggle against the erasure of memory. To keep the memory alive means action, struggle, and pro-life processes in the face of cultural annihilation and processes of death – forgetting. Knowing its history and cultural identity is knowing the history of Brazil and preserving the memory of this people's ancestry, which means staying alive – because to die is to be forgotten.

However, it is noted, through the accounts of the older residents of the Quilombo, that over the years, the knowledge and practices belonging to Quilombo Kalunga have been disappearing, mainly due to external influences, including the cultural industry, which has caused us several problems, such

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as the attempt at cultural homogenization, affecting the formation of our cultural identity. Additionally, influenced by the cultural industry's conception that happiness can be achieved through the consumption of goods and services, our young Kalunga people are leaving the Quilombo in search of new economic resources that align them with the lifestyle promoted by the cultural industry, widespread among the masses. It is clear that the community also desires consumption, like any other, but what is demonstrated here is that this is not wrong, as long as we do not forget our origins and do not lose sight of what is fundamental to us—the struggle for our identity. It is very good to have wings, but it is essential to have roots. The community wants what everyone wants, to have the right to economic goods, to consume what can alleviate our pains, to participate actively in cultural and economic processes like everyone else, but with a difference, to maintain and fight for the preservation of our historical base that has always been rooted in the struggle to exist. When speaking of the Kalunga community, I speak from the core of my origins, I am made of this same clay and from it, I nourish myself to form my life and analytical conceptions.

The most significant of these "problems" lies precisely in the memorial impasse. In other words, the attempt at innovation can lead to the death of memory, as the tendency is for the sources of ancestral memory to gradually fade away, resulting in an identity problem, that is, losing our own identity. For this reason, we assert the importance of memory as a mechanism that produces "life," reactivates the identity of "who we are" in the face of an imminent reality of cultural death.

According to Rodrigues (2022), memory is usually understood as selection, as it chooses events individually according to each person, while simultaneously assuming a collective dimension. Collective memory also consists of a field of dispute, being operated from a delimitation strategy, in which some memories are triggered, and others are silenced or unspoken. Also with Rodrigues (2022), memory is reconstructed at every moment, while the act of remembering is linked to individuality, which then establishes patterns of meaning production within a collectivity.

In this sense, collective memory refers to individual memory that, when distilled within a culture, has the power to soothe conflicts, restore ruins, minimize anxieties, silence pains, and resist death—forgetting. Memory, in this sense, has creative power, that is, it recreates the already lived and immortalizes it in the scope of the identity construction of a collectivity. It is necessary to know who we are and why we are what we are. This exercise is carried out by activating collective memory to later consolidate individual memory. If to die is to be

forgotten, the antidote against death is memory, first collective, then individual. Once activated, this memory recreates the collectivity by creating a sense of belonging and identity, "I am Kalunga" within well-defined boundaries of what my cultural construction says and what memory does not let me forget.

Starting from the premise that it is necessary to preserve our cultural identity, the school has a crucial role in conserving and rescuing local culture through the activation of collective memory. Since it (school) is considered a formative matrix with the function of mediating scientific and empirical knowledge through the systematization of knowledge.

Thus, this article focuses on the educational process, especially on the importance of memory as an element to maintain culture, emphasizing the need for the school to work on the stories told by the people as a tool for maintaining the culture and memory of Quilombo Kalunga, as a mechanism of resistance against death—forgetting. For this, we take as a definition of culture the concept defended by Geertz, who states that: "Culture is the very condition of existence of human beings, a product of actions through a continuous process, through which individuals give meaning to their actions. It occurs in the mediation of individuals' relationships with each other, in the production of meanings and significances." (Geertz as cited in Morgado, 2014).

To achieve the proposed objectives of this article, which are to demonstrate the culture, challenges, and overcoming of this community and its entanglement with memorial apparatuses, we use as methodology: bibliographic research, to support the historical process of the emergence of Quilombo Kalunga and to make our conceptions about the process of memory reconstruction, as well as the suggestion of insertion in specific subjects of the care for local memories, both individual and collective memory as an educational tool for the conservation of cultural identity, observing the educational process of local community schools.

It should be noted that the aim of this article is to emphasize the importance and appreciation of Quilombola Kalunga culture, which is made and remade through a memorial process that proposes to resist the cultural liquidity in which all collectives are immersed.

As mentioned earlier, the part of Quilombo Kalunga, located in the municipality of Monte Alegre de Goiás, is geographically distributed into fourteen micro-communities, however, in the writings of this article, our spatial focus corresponds to the "Riachão" community.

## A BRIEF CONTEXTUALIZATION OF QUILOMBO KALUNGA AND THE KALUNGA RIACHÃO COMMUNITY

Quilombo Kalunga is composed of an Afro-descendant population originating from people who were brought from different parts of the African continent and enslaved in Brazil during the colonial period, under the slavery system.

Although the slavery system officially ended in the mid-19th century, this population continues to be excluded from society even in the 21st century, with the majority of their rights being neglected by the current system. Examples of this include limited access to quality education, religious freedom, and political representation. Opportunities in the job market, the percentage of the incarcerated population, income distribution, and unequal housing conditions only emphasize this exclusion.

One of the biggest struggles of the Quilombolas Kalunga today is for public policies that guarantee their right to remain in their territory.

*The history of the Kalunga Territory is closely linked to the economic cycles of the northeastern region of Goiás, specifically the gold cycle, which in the 18th century brought enslaved labor from various parts of the country to the precarious mines of the region (Reis, 2022, p.22).*

The territory of the Historical Site that houses the Kalunga Cultural Heritage is extensive, encompassing various communities with their peculiarities, strong cultural traditions, and resilience over time, with their beliefs and practices. "The Kalunga is considered rich in diverse cultures and traditions such as dancing and singing Sussa<sup>1</sup>; wedding ceremonies by the fire, the use of homemade remedies, blessings, prayers, midwives, folias, among others" (Reis, 2022, p. 23).

The Quilombo Kalunga territory includes the Riachão Community. According to Souza (2014), "the Kalunga-Riachão Community is located in the municipality of Monte Alegre de Goiás, and Riachão comprises approximately fifty-six families" (p. 19). It is situated about 75 km from Monte Alegre de Goiás, with 39 km of dirt road and difficult access.

The community has a rich and distinct cultural heritage, where artistic and cultural expressions are part of daily life, primarily driven by religious manifestations. As Reis (2022) states, "the residents have devotions, religious festivals, with adoration and thanksgiving to some saint celebrated in the community as means of leisure and enjoyment" (p. 13). Using the thought of Miguel de Unamuno (1987), "ideas are had, beliefs are." It is noted that religious apparatuses are part of the "existence" of this

community, like so many others, with the major point being that faith in ancestry and the intertwining with various forms of beliefs end up blending into a varied religious apparatus. Within the formative framework of religious apparatuses, what exists profoundly is faith in the community itself, which, by mixing souls in things, things in souls, all mixed becomes a religious celebration proposing communal faith that, through memory, re-exists.

Through religious mechanisms, imagery and materiality are produced, forming an ideal identity of what the community truly is. From this, material artifacts are produced, creating a materialization of culture through artistic instruments. It is important to highlight that the artistic utensils (such as the box, cambito, and tambourine, which provide rhythm in the community's songs, Sussa, and curradeiras de folias) used by the residents are crafted by the Kalungas themselves, using their own and natural resources such as hides, bamboo reeds, seeds, among others.

Of the same level of importance as the handicrafts are the festivals dedicated to our deities. These are moments of great joy and satisfaction, where families come together, and our beliefs are manifested through prayers and dances. The seminal culture blends gods into things and things into gods, and everything mixed together becomes revelry, festivity, devotion, and litany.

When questioning most residents of Quilombo Kalunga about their religious affiliation, we often hear that they are "Catholic." However, due to external influences, other religious denominations, such as evangelical Christian institutions, have begun to appear in the communities. Nonetheless, the religious practices of the Quilombo still maintain their strongest influence from Catholicism.

*The Kalunga have strong beliefs and are devoted to divinity, as evidenced by their prayers, folias, and dances, especially the Sussa. These are moments of thanksgiving to the saints celebrated in the chapels, such as Our Lady of Abadia, Saint John the Baptist, Our Lady of Aparecida, Our Lady of Remedies, Saint Gonçalo, the Holy Spirit, and other saints celebrated in the Kalunga territory (Reis, 2022, p.24).*

Currently, with the arrival of transformations in cultural assets, mainly influenced by the advancement of digital technologies, the community residents strive against external interferences to maintain their cultural tradition, safeguarding their roots and their sense of belonging to quilombola culture. "These roots are expressed today through their cultural practices, skills and knowledge, beliefs,

<sup>1</sup> The Sussa dance has African origins and is considered sacred by the Kalunga people. It is preferably performed by women who, wearing colorful, full skirts made of chita fabric, execute spinning movements.

and other manifestations passed down through generations" (Reis, 2022, p.13).

However, it is important to highlight that, according to the residents' accounts, some aspects of the local culture are being lost over time, as traditions, rituals, customs, and native and cultural practices remain only in the memories of the elders and are not being learned by the young people. This issue underscores the need to develop mechanisms for the conservation and engagement of the younger generation in the cultural manifestations of the community.

This article is based on qualitative research methodology, which, according to Gil (2022), "qualitative analysis depends on many factors, such as the nature of the data collected, the sample size, the research instruments, and the theoretical assumptions guiding the investigation" (p. 133). However, one can "define this process as a sequence of activities that involves data reduction, data categorization, interpretation, and report writing" (Gil, 2022, p. 133). This approach necessitates the use of narrative texts, matrices, schemes, and other research mechanisms. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that:

*To do so, researchers should preferably adopt qualitative data collection techniques and also maintain a positive attitude of listening and empathy. This may involve living within the community, sharing their daily lives (Gil, 2022, p.151).*

Based on the premise that preserving the integrity of the social unit is crucial in determining the direction of our research, we used daily practice observation for data collection in the Kalunga quilombo of Monte Alegre de Goiás municipality, as well as accounts from residents of the Riachão Community.

To analyze the educational process concerning the re-establishment of collective memory through storytelling in schools, we start with the school activities in the local Kalunga schools.

Since qualitative research encompasses various techniques and methods tailored to specific research needs, we also employed literature review as a research source for this work. In general terms, 'literature review is developed based on previously elaborated material, consisting mainly of books and scientific articles' (Gil, 2022, p.44). The theoretical framework included reviews of literature published by community members themselves, including Lourdes Fernandes de Souza (2014) and Wagner Pereira Reis (2022), as well as external researchers who have studied our territory.

## TO KNOW THE KALUNGA QUILOMBO - RIACHÃO COMMUNITY

The Kalunga Riachão community is located in the municipality of Monte Alegre de Goiás. For many years, the community remained isolated due to its remote location, characteristic of refuge quilombo formation. As a result, the transmission of culture and tradition was passed down through generations via oral storytelling from father to son.

Spanning valleys, hills, and rivers, the entire area occupied by the Kalunga Quilombolas has been officially recognized as a Historical Site hosting Kalunga Cultural Heritage.

According to the State Legislative Assembly of Goiás, the area occupied by the Kalunga community has been recognized by the Government of Goiás since 1991 as a historical site housing Kalunga Cultural Heritage (Law No. 11,409 of January 21, 1991).

## HISTORICAL SITE - KALUNGA CULTURAL HERITAGE

Indeed, quilombola communities are social groups with a distinct ethnic and cultural identity, characterized by unique land occupation, social organization, productive methods, and religious practices. This identity sets them apart within society.

Among these communities are the Kalunga, located in the North Mesoregion of Goiás, in the municipalities of Cavalcante, Monte Alegre, and Teresina de Goiás. Numerically and historically, they rank among the largest in the country, occupying an area of 253.2 thousand hectares of Cerrado savannah, with an estimated population of 3,752 inhabitants according to 2004 data from 'Profile of Quilombola Communities: Alcântara, Ivapurunduva, and Kalunga' (Lima, 2013, p. 504).

This population consists of quilombolas, indigenous people, squatters, and landowners who settled in the region.

Due to their subjective relationship with the land, quilombola communities consider their territory as central to their identity. This sense of belonging has driven these communities to fight for their rights and the guarantee of their territories for centuries.

*According to Decree 4,887 of 2003, the Palmares Cultural Foundation (FCP) is responsible for certifying quilombo communities, while the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) issues definitive land titles to quilombo remnants. According to data from the Palmares Cultural Foundation (2008), the Federal Government identified 3,524 communities nationwide between 1995 and 2008, with 1,087 certifications*

*issued, benefiting 1,305 communities (Lima, 2013, p. 504).*

With regard to self-attribution criteria for being quilombola, the land rights struggle took on a new dimension and direction. It shifted from broader claims to more specific ones, transitioning from a broad struggle of black peasants to that of quilombo remnants.

*In 1991, the Kalunga territory was recognized by the Supplementary Law of the State of Goiás, number 11,409-91, which delimited the area as a historical site, providing exclusive land ownership to its inhabitants and authorizing expropriation and land titling in favor of the community. This was supported by studies and the creation of a map of the Kalunga region by the Kalunga People of the Earth Project team from the Federal University of Goiás, adopted by the now defunct IDAGO (Institute of Agrarian Development of Goiás), which sanctioned the first land titling for the Kalunga. It was later ratified by Supplementary Law 19/1995 (Baiocchi (2006) as cited in Lima (2013), p. 505).*

The changes surrounding the recognition and delimitation of Kalunga quilombo lands stem from initiatives by responsible authorities, largely influenced by the struggles of community members themselves. These are people who have undergone and continue to undergo a process of adaptation and historical documentation re-elaboration, with a clear objective: securing territorial ownership.

Currently, the federal regulation governing 'procedures for the identification, recognition, delimitation, demarcation, eviction, titling, and registration of quilombo community lands' is Decree 4,887, dated November 20, 2003 (Lima, 2013, p. 505).

As mentioned earlier, the federal regulation governing quilombo lands is Decree 4,887, dated November 20, 2003. According to Article 2 (Brazil, 2003):

*Article 2. Considered remnant communities of the quilombos, for purposes of this Decree, are the ethnic-racial groups, according to self-attribution criteria, with their own historical trajectory, endowed with specific territorial relations, with a presumption of black ancestry related to resistance to historical oppression suffered. See ADIN No. 3,239.*

*Paragraph 1. For the purposes of this Decree, the characterization of remnant*

*communities of the quilombos shall be attested to by the community itself.*

*Paragraph 2. The lands occupied by remnant communities of the quilombos are those used for the guarantee of their physical, social, economic, and cultural reproduction.*

*Paragraph 3. For the measurement and demarcation of lands, territoriality criteria indicated by remnant communities of the quilombos shall be taken into account, with the interested community being allowed to submit technical pieces for procedural instruction.*

The recognition and titling of lands occupied by remnant quilombo communities play a significant role in today's society, ensuring the preservation of cultural and historical values related to the contributions of black people in the formation of the Brazilian people."

## TERRITORY, CULTURAL IDENTITY, AND MEMORY

In Brazilian social formation, the conception that land should be treated as a commodity has become supreme. Overlaying this conception, quilombola communities 'establish a relationship with the land based on culture and ancestry, with the primary element affirming the right to land being the complex relationship between humans and the space they occupy' (Maia, 2022, p. 82). Quilombola communities maintain a relationship with the land primarily through its utilization, with reciprocal relationships within their living environment. 'Prevailing among them are cultivation methods based on the sociability of close family groups, marked by religious festivals, communal work, and various forms of mutual aid' (Maia, 2022, p. 82). In other words, the logic that establishes a relationship with the land in this community also transforms into a relationship with its people, where the concepts of life and work are anchored in a fundamental word - solidarity. In this sense, cultivation is generally carried out on small plots of land with the production of food designated for self-consumption. The existence of the Kalunga Riachão people, as well as the existence of the Kalunga Riachão community:

*[...] form a complex relationship, with the group's survival marked by unique ancestral and cultural relationships, where the maintenance of groups is crucial for the survival of these peoples and their cultures (Maia, 2022, p. 83).*

The Kalunga Riachão community has a rich and diverse culture, where cultural artistic manifestations are intertwined with daily life.

*The community communicates its culture through various forms, present in its values, visual language, painting, sculpture, handicrafts, and significant meanings that the community preserves, passing down these knowledge and cultural traits from generation to generation, with the primary focus on teaching so that these ensembles do not lose their stories (Reis, 2022, pp. 25-26).*

Thus, the cultural identity of the community is related to intrinsic aspects of the life and social reproduction of the local peoples, and collective memory has the duty to keep it alive, to revitalize it, first within the community and later inscribed in individual memory, reinforcing bonds of belonging.

In fact, each individual possesses an identity composed of concerns and affiliations. According to Rodrigues (2017), 'identities emerge from interactive processes that individuals experience in their everyday reality, consisting of real and symbolic exchanges' (p. 352). Thus, we can emphasize that individuals' identities result from historical constructions experienced throughout their lives, and it is these constructions that give meaning to their existential lives. People exist in the material realm due to their integration with the symbolic environment. If matter defines what we are, the symbolic environment defines how and why we are. Material life would have no meaning without the symbolic aspect, as this dimension constitutes not only the existential layers of communities but also their ethos.

As Rodrigues (2017) states about individuals' identities, 'it implies a sense of belonging to a particular ethnic, cultural, religious group, according to the perception of difference and similarity between 'ego' and 'alter,' between 'us' and 'others' (p. 352). In other words, individuals 'reproduce their identity through constant attachment to their past, whether mythological, historical, or primarily symbolic-religious' (Rodrigues, 2017, p. 353). Therefore, religious aspects assume enormous importance in the identity construction process:

*[...] all religion, all symbolic-religious universe, implies a specific mobilization of collective memory and its transmission and social reproduction. Religion is a way of socially constructing reality, a system of references to which social actors spontaneously turn to reflect the universe (social, cultural, and identity context) in which they live. And this social, cultural, religious universe reflects and materializes*

*in/on a heritage [...] (Rodrigues, 2017, p. 352).*

Thus, symbolic representations and behaviors, denominated by anthropologists, are reproduced and preserved through collective memory. As a result, collective memory and individuals' cultural identity maintain a reciprocal bond, given that memory can be understood as social and historical processes of expressions, narratives of significant events, co-existent events, among other aspects that serve as mechanisms of re(memorization), reinforcing and reproducing individuals' identity. Since identity reflects all the investment individuals make throughout their existence in memory construction.

In general, collective memory is grounded in the construction of a people's identity. Consequently, it invigorates the sense of identity belonging and subsequently ensures unity/cohesion and the uninterrupted historical narrative of individuals. According to Maurice Halbwachs (2006), memory is not only an individual phenomenon but is also shaped and influenced by shared experiences within a community. For the author, people do not remember events purely through their own individual memories; rather, the memory of an event is shaped through social connections and interactions with others belonging to the same group.

In this sense, collective memory, shared by the same specific social group, produces and nourishes individual memory through rituals, traditions, and historical narratives embedded in symbolic values handed down from ancestors to materialize in the present time, thus preserving the constitutive foundations of a given community. Collective memory tells us who we are and why we are what we are. Although collective memory is dynamic and subject to change over time, when it is produced, it is often reinterpreted and recontextualized by group members, but it does not lose its seminal character, namely its identity.

In these contexts of the reproduction of collective memory, aspects of adaptation of the community's cultural achievements in bygone times with their adaptation in contemporary daily life development are experienced. This factor creates an idea that things are in the midst of change. This is evident in the elders' speeches when referring to current festivities; it is common to hear that the festivity is dying, or rather, transforming.

Indeed, territoriality, cultural identity, and memory are aspects of social and existential life that are inseparable. These inseparable aspects are quite evident in Quilombo Kalunga and reinforced by the Kalunga schools.

The various narratives have shown that there is an idea that, in recent years, there has been a weakening of cultural practices in the Kalunga

Community - Fazenda Riachão, especially among young people influenced by media devices with the advent of digital technologies in the community. According to Fernandes (2023), 'Today, my daughter, these young people don't want to pray; they just want to stay on the internet playing games. When asked to learn prayers, they say they don't know, that it's something for the elderly.'

Faced with this fact, there is a noticeable mismatch in the continuity of Kalunga cultural knowledge and practices. The youth have the freedom to make their own choices, within which most of them, influenced by external cultural standards, do not want to participate or have any interest in learning these customs, part of the cultural tradition in which they live: prayers, festivities, 'Sussa', baptism, bonfire weddings, and other practices carried out by the elders. This fact has raised many concerns because the elders, the people who know and practice these traditions, are passing away. With time, this knowledge could disappear from the ancestral local culture. As Rosa (2023) states, 'In a few years, prayers and festivities will disappear; no one wants to learn these things. I wonder what they will do when the elders pass away. These young people don't want to learn anything.'

It is in this exposed context that the importance of local schools establishing, within their pedagogical proposals, the inclusion of this theme is justified. Education plays a fundamental role within the community.

To think about the specificity of the place is to think about education starting from it. In this sense, the school is an excellent tool for maintaining Kalunga culture. This culture should be understood as an integral part of the multiple interpretations of Afro-Brazilian heritage, the knowledge of which is essential for understanding Brazilian history, culture, and reality.

Driven by the question, 'how will education always resist the possibility of symbolic annihilation of culture?' In the pedagogical practices of the Quilombola Kalunga II State School, two pedagogical fronts were observed on the subject in question. The first one - studies and literacy that value local stories and culture, starting with literacy through community stories. Using storytelling as a teaching methodology within subjects such as religious education and art.



Figure 1. *Alfa Mais* Project Poster.

The aforementioned project aims to reduce incomplete literacy rates and insufficient literacy among children enrolled in public schools and ensure complete literacy for children at the right age, up to the 2nd year of Elementary School. One of its experiences addresses 'memories' of students and the community in which they are inserted. The pedagogical practices of those involved in the project emerge from the methodology of community storytelling as a mechanism of resistance against forgetting. Consequently, it contributes to the literacy and literacy process of the students. When the object of study is part of the student's context, the teaching and learning process becomes easier.

This brings us to the second noticeable pedagogical front in the teaching-learning process of the Quilombola Kalunga II State School, the conception that educational processes intertwined with the activation of collective memory contribute to resistance mechanisms. Resistance against the erasure and silencing of local culture - a remedy for forgetting, a mechanism of resistance against death - and the forgetting of culture.



Figure 2. Itinerant School Project (Festival of Saint Baptist of the Kalunga- Sucuri Community)

The Itinerant School Project takes place in June from the 20th to the 24th, during the celebration of the Kalunga-Sucuri Community. Essentially, during this period, students attend the festival, and to ensure they do not miss school, the school goes to them. How? The school engages in the formative processes of the festival and develops activities aimed at rescuing and preserving the practices and knowledge of the Kalunga Quilombo, through workshops on Sussa (a traditional dance), capoeira, thematic theatrical exhibitions, literary contests with Kalunga themes, among other actions. The relationship between the school and the community intensifies during these days.



Figure 3. I Kalunga Literary Contest

The Quilombola Kalunga II State School, as an educational institution, has as its primary role the expansion of its students' cultural, artistic, and intellectual repertoire, which makes it important and significant within society, contributing to their education.

Furthermore, the school cannot remain oblivious to the real world experienced culturally through the experiential mechanisms of its students, since formal education involves the materialization of culture. Meaningful knowledge is produced within cultural imagination, extracting reflective aspects from parts to the whole. In any case, the school needs to intertwine ancestral knowledge with new technologies and life interpretations to demonstrate that these elements are interconnected and form an identity framework. Therefore, the institution must be attentive to the affective aspects of the students, as these are fundamental conditions for participation, both in the learning process and in the formation of a spirit of solidarity and collaboration.



Figure 4. Braiding Workshop



Figure 5. Drum Production Workshop

According to the Political Pedagogical Plan (PPP) of the Quilombola Kalunga II State School (2023), the school is configured as the entity that, guided by the community, ensures that new generations have access to the cultural legacy of humanity. It is a geographical and historical space where education occurs intentionally, structured, systematized, and explicit. Here, knowledge is actively appropriated and constructed, imbued with criticality and innovation, contributing to cultural advancement and meeting the new needs of human beings.

In this context, all members, including the Kalunga II School itself, transform according to the concerns, perceptions, mediations, and advancements that occur at all times.





Figure 6. *Capoeira* Workshop



Figure 7. *Sussa* Workshop

In this sense, as a suggestion for curriculum disciplines that meet the specificities of the Quilombo Kalunga, our schools have the subject "Cultural Workshops" in elementary school and "Afro-Brazilian Culture" in high school. Both aim to help students understand their local reality within a global context. Moreover, they seek to integrate theoretical content about Kalunga culture with practical activities related to Kalunga knowledge and practices, aiming to preserve our culture and prevent it from being forgotten.

The Quilombola Kalunga II State School, being community-oriented, has the commitment to develop human beings by systematically and purposefully contributing to their education through the dissemination and production of socially valid knowledge. The close relationship with the community is pursued, taking into account its characteristics and the needs of the local community.

This commitment can be observed in the lines of the school's PPP, which seeks ways to meet the needs of Quilombola School Education, with a school calendar that respects the days considered "holy" in the community, including festivities for local saints, and important dates in the socio-cultural context.

Thinking about Quilombola School Education means thinking about a people with a specific culture deeply connected to the land and its production processes. Therefore, the PPP of Quilombola State School also proposes that the school calendar aligns with the community's agricultural calendar. During planting and harvesting seasons, families require students to be present, participating and contributing to the family's livelihood, as they understand and

recognize that these activities generate knowledge as important as the scientific knowledge acquired in the classroom.

As an activity to preserve Kalunga culture in the Riachão Quilombola community, there are initiatives led by local residents dedicated to the Kalunga way of life, their history, memory, and culture. For example, there is the "Museu Iáia Procópio," a social and community space where the school actively participates in activities held there. The museum activates the material memory of who we are and why we are what we are.



Figure 8. *Iáia Procópio* Museum

To die is to be forgotten, in this liquid world where socio-cultural relations are producing forgetfulness (death) of ancestral communities every day, resisting this through education becomes a possible way out to resist this death.

Constructing this proposal is an exercise in praxis, a practice whose essence and appearance are inseparable from the act of creating the necessary conditions for educators and students to build knowledge that integrates social and scientific knowledge. The synthesis of these two forms of knowledge is the formation of individuals who will not uproot themselves from their culture, from their history, but at the same time, forge the necessary conditions for a dialogue with themselves and with the world outside them." (Nunes, 2006, p.142).

Indeed, when a school is not adapted to the reality of its students—when it does not have as its mission and concept the preservation of the cultural identity of the individuals who are part of it, taking into account the environment in which it is inserted—it becomes a significant tool for transformation and loss of cultural identity for these individuals.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Discussing and documenting the historical construction of Quilombola Kalunga, as well as the knowledge and practices (cultural identity, territory,

memory, and cultural manifestations) of the Kalunga-Riachão Community, is of paramount importance for the community as a whole. The community is embedded within a system that is constantly evolving due to the modernization processes within contemporary society. As a participatory observer of this transformation, it can be affirmed that the community holds a significant cultural heritage that has been preserved through generations. However, the interaction with the external world has contributed to the transformation and modification of these practices and knowledge, primarily influenced by the influx of media culture that reaches the global population with increasing frequency.

Certain cultural aspects of the community reside solely in the memories of its elders, and preserving this knowledge requires tapping into their recollections, as stated by Rodrigues (2022), where collective memory activates the production and recollection of individual memories.

Indeed, when an ancestral member of our community passes away, a part of our history dies with them. We lose knowledge of our heritage when we fail to create measures for preserving our cultural identity. This work significantly contributes to the community by documenting Kalunga culture.

The methods and techniques used in the research facilitated interaction between community members and the researcher. Through bibliographic research, important milestones in the historical process of Quilombo Kalunga were identified. Furthermore, by observing the educational process in Kalunga schools, it was confirmed that schools are indeed concerned with developing actions aimed at conserving Kalunga culture. Evidence of this is seen in the proposed disciplines for implementation in the school curriculum. However, it is crucial that these projects evolve into an educational praxis that influences all areas of knowledge. In this regard, what we propose is for school actions to be intricately linked to the cultural reality of the community across all disciplines. There should be a "Kalunga mathematics," a "general history" that references the cultural reality of the community, and so forth. If the school embraces the goal of nurturing citizens who are conscious of their identity, then it becomes the most important tool for preserving traditional knowledge and immortalizing the sense of belonging within this community. This entails creating measures for a Quilombola School Education that caters to our specificities, with a school calendar and curriculum tailored to our cultural reality.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

The author(s) declare(s) no potential conflict of interest in connection with the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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