



***The diaspora of the Xavantes of Marãiwatsédé:
Colonization and indigenous genocide in modern times.***

**Claudia Regina Plens¹
Camila Diogo de Souza²
Ivan Roksandic³
Katarzyna Górka⁴
Mirjana Roksandic⁵**

¹ Department of History. Laboratório de Estudos Arqueológicos, (LEA), Universidade Federal de São Paulo (UNIFESP). Grupo de Pesquisa CNPq: Núcleo de Ensino e Pesquisa em Arqueologia e Antropologia Forense (NEPAAF) LEA/UNIFESP

² Department of History. Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF), RJ. Grupo de Pesquisa CNPq: Núcleo de Ensino e Pesquisa em Arqueologia e Antropologia Forense (NEPAAF) LEA/UNIFESP

³ Department of Anthropology, University of Winnipeg, Canada

⁴ Department of Anthropology, Hirsfeld Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapy, Polish Academy of Sciences

⁵ Department of Anthropology, University of Winnipeg, Canada

INTRODUCTION

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, some indigenous societies managed to remain isolated in the western territory of Brazil. However, the acceleration of the socio-economic processes characterized by new political conjectures from the Military Dictatorship (1964-1985) was the last straw to deeply impact the traditional societies of this region. The aim of this research is to document and investigate the process of violence suffered by the indigenous group, Xavantes of Marãiwatsédé, during the Military Dictatorship in Brazil that culminated in their genocide and forced relocation by excavating, recording and carefully examining a mass grave of the Xavante Marãiwatsédé community located in São Marcos, Mato Grosso, Brazil (Fig. 1). We intend to demonstrate the scale of victimization and examine the motives of the Dictatorship in the context of economic growth and development, bringing to light the use of violence by military forces as a means of social and cultural coercion.

This research is part of a project approved by the *Trans-Atlantic Platform for Social Innovation* - an international agreement between Brazil, Canada and Poland with a joint grant from:

- São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP),
- The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)
- The National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR - Poland).

The research will be developed at the Laboratory of Archaeological Studies (LEA), Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP), as a pioneer project of the Teaching and Research and Center of Forensic Archaeology and Anthropology (NEPAAF).

The support received from the HHRRC/AAFS will improve the institutional infrastructure for forensic science through acquiring necessary equipment such as computers, microscope, 3D scanner, and improving LEA facilities.



Fig 1. Map of Brazil with marked Xavante territory (red square) and the location of the Marãiwatsédé community (red dot).

MATERIALS, METHODS AND OBJECTIVES

MULTI- AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

Identifying, locating, delimiting, recording and excavating the Xavante mass grave

Forensic
Archaeology

Identifying and understanding the biological profile of the victims in order to contribute to the improvement of the health and social conditions of the community and the preservation of their culture

Forensic
Anthropology

Collecting narratives of the Xavante elders in order to understand, expose and elucidate the violence used by military forces in territorial appropriation and expulsion

Linguistics

Documentary
research

Collecting data from an unpublished ICRC documents in order to analyze social and biocultural conditions and the territory occupation of the Xavante communities during the Dictatorship period

MAIN OBJECTIVES:

- Identify and analyze patterns of violence against the Xavante Marãiwatsédé community;
- Provide information and data about indigenous physical, social, cultural and moral violence and crimes of the Brazilian State against the indigenous groups during the Military Dictatorship;
- Create ante-mortem and post-mortem digital databases including all data gathered during the interviews and the osteological analyses;
- Analyze the process of violence and concealment of deaths by the State to infer possible similar patterns that may have occurred with other indigenous groups or other minority segments of society at the same time;
- Elaborate a final report that could be used by the Xavante community when applying to the International Court of Human Rights against the Brazilian State.

EXPECTED RESULTS



Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the onset of the project initially planned for 2020. Systematic and carefully controlled excavations and recording of the evidence in a forensic scenario *in situ*, as well as a direct contact with the indigenous community are crucial to conduct the planned analyses. Therefore, the realization of the project had to be postponed.

We expect to identify patterns of violence suffered by the Xavante Marãiwatsédé community, providing essential information and data that will be used for understanding the biological profile of this group in order to contribute to the improvement of their health and social conditions. The results of the proposal will also enable to reconstruct and preserve their history, culture, memory, and identity. It will also bring an important contribution to the promotion and visibility of their current needs and rights.

This research has the potential to spark future investigations on indigenous physical, social, cultural and moral violence and crimes of the Brazilian State against these groups during the period of the Military Dictatorship.

The support from HHRRC/AAFS for this research will improve the institutional infrastructure for forensic sciences at the LEA (UNIFESP), and consequently will help to consolidate the academic contributions to Human Rights and Brazilian society in general.

REFERENCES

- ATALAY S. Share(ing) the benefits of anthropological research. *Am Anthropol*114:144-6, 2012
- AZEVEDO D. *A única luta que se perde é aquela que se abandona. Etnografia entre familiares de mortos e desaparecidos políticos*. PhD [dissertation]. Campinas, Brazil: Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, University of Campinas; 2017.
- BEAUDRY M, PARNO T, editors. *Archaeologies of mobility and movement*. New York: Springer; 2013.
- BOWSER, B. J. & ZEDEÑO, M. N. (eds.) *The Archaeology of Meaningful Places*. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 2009.
- BURENHULT, N. & STEPHEN C.L. 2008. *Language and landscape: A cross-linguistic perspective*. *Language Sciences* 30 (2-3), p. 135-150.
- COMISSÃO NACIONAL DA VERDADE. *Relatório da Comissão Nacional da Verdade*. Brasília: CNV, 2014. 1996 p., v. 3 – *Mortos e desaparecidos políticos*.
- COMISSÃO DE FAMILIARES DE MORTOS E DESAPARECIDOS POLÍTICO; INSTITUTO DE ESTUDOS SOBRE A VIOLÊNCIA DO ESTADO. *Dossiê ditadura: Mortos e desaparecidos políticos no Brasil (1964-1985)*. São Paulo: Imprensa oficial; 2009.
- COMRIE, Bernard & SMITH, Norval. *The Lingua Descriptive Studies Questionnaire*, Max Planck Institute, Jena, Germany, 1977.
- CONSELHO INDIGENISTA MISSIONÁRIO. *Relatório – Violência contra os povos indígenas no Brasil – Dados de 2016*. Conselho Indigenista Missionário; 2016. https://www.cimi.org.br/pub/relatorio/Relatorio-violencia-contra-povos-indigenas_2016-Cimi.pdf
- Van DYKE, Ruth M. & ALCOCK, Susan E. (eds.). *Archaeologies of Memory*, Malden, Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.
- HANKS, Patrick. *Lexical analysis: Norms and exploitations*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press; 2013.
- KRIPKE, Saul A. Naming and necessity. In Donald Davidson and Gilbert Harman (eds.), *Semantics of natural language*. Dordrecht: Reidel; p. 253-355, 1972.
- MAYBURY-LEWIS D. *A Sociedade Xavante*. Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Francisco Alves; 1984.
- OPERAÇÃO AMAZÔNIA NATIVA (OPAN). *Relatório sobre violações dos direitos humanos: O caso dos Xavante de Marãiwatsédé*. Presented to Grupo Temático “Violação de direitos relacionados à luta pela terra”, da Comissão Nacional da Verdade; 2013.
- ROWLANDS, Michael. The role of memory in the transmission of culture. *World Archaeology*, vol. 25, no. 2, p. 141-171, 1993.
- ROKSANDIC, Ivan. The Role of the Nicaraguan Rise in the Early Peopling of the Greater Antilles. In: *Cuban Archaeology in the Caribbean*, ed. I. Roksandic. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, p. 7-17, 2016.
- SILVA, FA; NOELLI, FS. Arqueologia e Linguística: construindo as trajetórias histórico-culturais dos povos Tupi. *Crítica e Sociedade. Revista de Cultura Política*, vol.7, no.1, 2017.
- TriCouncil (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC). Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Tri-council policy statement: ethical conduct for research involving humans, Interagency Secretariat on Research Ethics. Ottawa. 2014.
- VALENTE R. *Os fuzis e as flechas. História de sangue e resistência indígena na ditadura*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras; 2017. Coleção Arquivos da Repressão no Brasil.
- WILLIAMS, Howard (ed.). *Archaeologies of Remembrance. Death and memory in past societies*. New York, Boston: Kluwer Academic / Plenum Publishers, 2003.

Acknowledgements and financial support

