



Physical Anthropology Section – 2007

H89 Forensic Anthropology Investigation of Human Rights Violations in the Ixil and Ixcán areas of Guatemala

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After attending this presentation, attendees will learn about the results obtained by the Centre for Forensic Analysis and Applied Sciences (CAFCA) from their investigations during the last five years as well as patterns of human rights violations during the armed conflict in the two areas of Guatemala as it relates to perpetrator, sex, and age of victims, and types of perimortem trauma.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by demonstrating a first effort to organize and analyze the data that has been collected by one of the Guatemalan teams (CAFCA) and to give emphasis to the need for further studies as a means to understand the magnitude of the events that occurred as well as provide elements for comparative studies in other countries that face a similar context.

Guatemala lived through one of the most violent armed conflicts in Latin America (1960-1996). During the 1980s, the strategies created by the State were aimed to terrorize the civilian population. The result of these strategies was widely recorded by two historical investigation projects in 1998 and 1999. Both reports recorded a huge number of witness and survivor testimonies and documented the human rights violations with a historical and memory recovery perspective.

Between 1992 and 2005 four forensic anthropology teams carried out approximately 600 exhumations, recovering and analyzing an average of 4,000 skeletons.¹ The Guatemalan teams have provided a number of additional findings and have been able to document cases that were not reported to either of the investigation teams mentioned above.

The analyses of the data that have been collected through the years offers a tool for understanding the magnitude of the violent events that occurred in the country and facilitates classification of events for further research. It might also provide elements for comparative studies since other nations have experienced or are at the moment going through similar socio-political situations.

This presentation will show the results of the systematization and analysis of the data collected by one of the forensic anthropology teams, the Centre for Forensic Analysis and Applied Sciences (CAFCA). The focal areas of this research are the forensic investigations carried out in the Ixil (northwest highlands) and Ixcán (north lowlands) areas of Guatemala. Patterning in the human rights violations that occurred during the armed conflict are presented in terms of perpetrator, sex and age of victims, and types of perimortem traumata. This research is based both on eyewitness interviews and on the evidence that has been collected by CAFCA's team between the years 2000 and 2005.

Reference:

- ¹ Information from FAFG, CAFCA, ODHAG-EAF and Forensic Anthropology Team of the El Quiché Diocese.

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