



A87 Forensic Anthropology: A View of Brazil

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will be familiar with the work, resources, training, educational requirements, research advances, and legal grounds of forensic anthropology in Brazil and, more deeply, in the state of Minas Gerais.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by highlighting the work of forensic anthropologists outside the United States, especially by emphasizing the performance of Brazilian professionals and how they balance demands and resources. This presentation will also help create a channel for professionals to discuss and debate the successes, challenges, and possible solutions for maintaining the high standards of the field worldwide.

Brazil is one of the most violent countries in the world. The challenges Brazilian forensic scientists and, specially, forensic anthropologists struggle with are substantial. It is reasonable that the forensic community shall look at those who dare to face this reality daily, with diligence, dedication, and devotion.

The Brazilian Penal Process Code limits forensic investigation of crimes to official experts. Of those, primarily official medicolegal experts and dental experts work in the forensic anthropology services. Although there are other fields of knowledge and graduations that could apply to the service, such as biology, physical anthropology, and archaeology, those are more active as academic researchers, museums curators, and university professors.

Regardless of their degree, there is mandatory training for forensic science in Brazil, which varies from state to state. Further dissimilarities, comprising financial and material resources, income, and workplace, can be seen between the states. Situated in the capital, as a branch of the Legal Medical Institute, the Forensic Anthropology Laboratory of Minas Gerais (LAF) was founded in the 1980s. It comprises a multidisciplinary team of eleven experts, composed of eight medicolegal experts and three dentistry experts. The LAF's greatest challenge is to deal with casuistic and complex murder cases, such as microwave-processed bodies and aircraft accidents. The work is always interdisciplinary, and complementary resources such as anatomopathological exams, digital radiographic exams, computerized tomography, DNA tests, and toxicological screen are available.

The peculiarities of medicolegal examinations of human remains in advanced states of putrefaction, notably skeletonized corpses and charred bodies, shifted a growing scientific evolution, and LAF sought help from literature and scientific journals to keep the procedures up to date. Scientific productions and developments in Brazil take place primarily at universities, where the research funds and incentives are concentrated. There are post-graduation programs in forensic science, in addition to forensic anthropology and archeology centers, which have taken place in this century.

There are seven identified osteological collections in the country, mainly housed in universities, pointing to advances in the field of forensic anthropology and other associated forensic science disciplines.¹ These modern, documented skeletal reference collections provide access to osteological laboratory research for forensic scientists to conduct innovative interdisciplinary research. Recently, the creation of the Brazilian Association of Forensic Anthropology (ABRAF) propitiated interactions between the existing experts in the nation and abroad in annual scientific meetings.²

Brazil has vast research and outreach potential for the medicolegal and forensic science communities. It is important that researchers are aware of the available resources that can assist the evolution of the biological profile, taphonomy, and human identification in the forensic context.

Reference(s):

1. Cunha, Eugênia et al. 2018. The Brazilian Identified Human Osteological Collections. *Forensic Science International*. 289: 449.e1-449.e6 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forsciint.2018.05.040>.
2. ABRAF, Brazilian Association of Forensic Anthropology. Accessed July 25, 2018. <http://antropologiaforense.org.br>.

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