

Resisting Bolsonaro: The Mobilization of the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro to Defend Their Territory and Collective Projects

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Abstract

The main objective of this article is to examine the political mobilization of the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro (southern Bahia) during the presidential term of Jair Messias Bolsonaro (2019-2022). In a context of grave rights violations, the Indigenous movement emerged as one of the main forces of resistance to Bolsonarismo. Through an analysis of the strategies developed in Serra do Padeiro, we take five key episodes as starting points: the uncovering of a targeted plan to exterminate Indigenous leaders, an attempt to build a resort on Tupinambá territory, setbacks in the demarcation procedures for the Tupinambá de Olivença Indigenous Territory, mobilization of repressive forces against protective measures adopted in Serra do Padeiro during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the granting of an eviction order against the Tupinambá. Through a detailed examination of a specific case, we seek to contribute to the production on forms of collective action carried out by Indigenous peoples.

Keywords: Indigenous mobilization; Bolsonarismo; Tupinambá; land retakings; conflict.

Resistindo a Bolsonaro: a mobilização dos Tupinambá da Serra do Padeiro na defesa de seu território e projetos coletivos

Resumo

Examinar a mobilização dos Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro (sul da Bahia) durante o mandato presidencial de Jair Messias Bolsonaro (2019-2022) é o principal objetivo deste artigo. Em um contexto de graves violações de direitos, o movimento indígena emergiu como uma das principais forças de resistência ao bolsonarismo. Aqui, partimos de cinco episódios-chave para analisar as estratégias desenvolvidas na Serra do Padeiro: o desvelamento de um plano para assassinar lideranças indígenas, a tentativa de construção de um *resort* no território tupinambá, retrocessos no procedimento de demarcação da Terra Indígena Tupinambá de Olivença, a mobilização de forças repressivas contra medidas protetivas adotadas na Serra do Padeiro face a pandemia de Covid-19 e a concessão de uma liminar em ação de reintegração de posse contra os Tupinambá. Por meio da consideração detida de um caso específico, esperamos contribuir com a produção analítica sobre formas de ação coletiva levadas a cabo por povos indígenas.

Palavras-chave: Mobilização indígena; Bolsonarismo; Tupinambá; retomadas de terras; conflito.

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“Bolsonaro gained leverage by saying that he would not demarcate an inch of Indigenous land, that he would move forward with mining projects on Indigenous lands and arming society to attack those who occupy the land – and, once again, kill us (our translation)”. In an interview given in January 2023 shortly after Jair Messias Bolsonaro’s presidential term (2019-2022)², Chief Babau (Rosivaldo Ferreira da Silva), the main political leader among the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro in southern Bahia, used these terms to analyze the rise of the far-right leader. “The agenda of his campaign was to take away constitutional rights from Indigenous peoples, rights which should never have been taken away. Once elected, he put this agenda into practice immediately. He was supposed to leave the presidency as a prisoner because these are deadly crimes against democracy and against the existence of various peoples. It is a genocidal project. Bolsonaro is a pawn in a genocidal project.”

The main objective of this article is to examine the political mobilization in Serra do Padeiro during Bolsonaro’s term. The period was characterized by numerous attacks on the rights of this community, facilitated by the federal government through direct action or omission. In navigating these turbulent waters, what strategies did the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro devise to protect themselves and defend their territory? How did they resist harmful measures by the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches and other actions that aimed to undermine their rights? A close examination of these issues proposes even more questions. Is it possible to identify changes in the dynamics of collective action in recent years? What interpretations circulated in the village regarding the situation, and how do they fit into deeper historical and cosmological frameworks?

The Serra do Padeiro village is located in the Tupinambá de Olivença Indigenous Territory, which covers approximately 47,000 hectares in the municipalities of Buerarema, Ilhéus, São José da Vitória and Una, and encompasses one of the few remaining areas of Atlantic Forest in the state. A census carried out in Serra do Padeiro in 2016 counted 483 Indigenous people (Alarcon 2022)³. Since 2004, the village has been deeply engaged in carrying out direct actions to recover the territory, known as *retomadas de terras* (land retakings).

¹ This article was produced as part of the project “Resisting Bolsonaro: The Mobilization of the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro to Defend Their Territory and Collective Projects amid Violations of Rights and Anti-Indigenous Policies,” coordinated by Daniela Fernandes Alarcon and Glicéria Jesus da Silva. It was selected by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for the first edition of their Engaged Research Grant, with the four authors of this article composing the team that developed research between 2022 and 2023, supported by the Associação dos Índios Tupinambá da Serra do Padeiro (AITSP, Association of Tupinambá Indians of Serra do Padeiro). A preliminary summary of the attacks on the Tupinambá during the period was published in Alarcon (2023). Some of the arguments discussed in depth here were initially explored in research developed with funding from the Mellon Foundation (Just Futures Initiative Grant N-2009-09221), through the project “Dispossessions in the Americas: The Extraction of Bodies, Land, and Heritage from la Conquista to the Present,” administered by the University of Pennsylvania, coordinated by Tulia G. Falsetti and co-coordinated by Margaret Bruchac, Ricardo Castillo-Neyra, Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, Michael Hanchard, Jonathan D. Katz, Richard M. Leventhal and Michael Z. Levy. The authors are grateful for their support. We also thank Ryan B. Morrison, for the translation.

² Elected by the far-right Social Liberal Party (PSL), Bolsonaro ended up without a party for half his term, from November 2019 until November 2021 when he joined the Liberal Party (PL).

³ Data from the Special Secretariat for Indigenous Health of the Ministry of Health (Sesai/MS) relating to the IT in 2019 indicated a total indigenous population of 5,038 people.

The objective is to reverse a long process of dispossession – intensified from the end of the nineteenth century with the expansion of cocoa farming and tourism – which triggered an acute diaspora. The administrative procedure for demarcating the Indigenous Territory which began in 2004 has not yet been completed. Despite the sluggishness of land regularization, which renders Indigenous possession precarious, the socioeconomic and political transformations resulting from territorial recovery and the reversal of the diaspora are profound, so much so that at times they can be difficult to measure⁴.

Having regained around 5,000 hectares of land, with the completion of ninety-five land retaking actions, the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro are in possession of approximately 70% of the area of the village⁵. The recently mentioned census found that 321 Indigenous people lived in retaken lands and 162 on smallholdings. The fact that approximately two-thirds of the Indigenous population of Serra do Padeiro were living on recovered estates and among those living on smallholdings, many were developing their economic activities on retaken land highlights the relevance of the process of territorial recovery for the contemporary existence of the group. Due to the successful struggle for land, Serra do Padeiro became a preferred target for anti-Indigenous sectors, with recurring episodes of police brutality, mobilization of paramilitary groups and criminalization of leaders, among other widely documented phenomena.

In the next section, we will present a brief general characterization of the Bolsonaro period with regards to the violation of Indigenous rights, at the same time inscribing the term within a structural framework of violence against Indigenous peoples and illuminating its specificities. Thereafter, taking the 2018 and 2022 presidential elections as frames of reference, we will focus on five key episodes of the conflict with regards to the Tupinambá de Olivença Indigenous Territory: the uncovering of a targeted plan to exterminate Indigenous leaders, an attempt to build a resort on Tupinambá territory, setbacks in the demarcation procedures, mobilization of repressive forces against protective measures adopted in Serra do Padeiro during the Covid-19 pandemic and the granting of an eviction order against the Tupinambá. In addressing these events, we do not intend to chronologically outline the violations and focus on the actions of state representatives and sectors opposed to the rights of the Tupinambá. Instead, the processes discussed here are treated as starting points for exploring the political strategies engendered in Serra do Padeiro, to be described and analyzed in the subsequent section.

Before proceeding, a brief theoretical and methodological note. The research that gave rise to this article combines ethnographic work and archival research, aimed at producing a detailed analysis of contemporary mobilization in Serra do Padeiro. The research was conducted by a team composed of three Indigenous researchers and one non-Indigenous researcher, the latter an anthropologist who carries out research in Serra do Padeiro focused on socio-territorial dynamics and collective action, examining mechanisms of dispossession historically employed against the Tupinambá, as well as the strategies they have developed to defend their territory and realize their collective projects. This research has been carried out in close collaboration with Indigenous leaders, within a framework engaged in the defense of Tupinambá rights. These guidelines also inform this present article, which, by contributing to a more accurate understanding of Indigenous forms of action, seeks to offer a scientifically-based counterpoint for a setting still characterized by the devastating social effects of more than half a decade of anti-Indigenous policies, combined with powerful discriminatory rhetoric.

In the first months of 2023, we conducted intensive field research, carrying out team meetings, informal conversations, and structured and semi-structured interviews with individuals involved in different ways in Tupinambá mobilization. Archival research, in turn, was mostly carried out during 2022 and the first

4 For a detailed discussion of the process of territorialization and territorial recovery underway in Serra do Padeiro, see, among other works, Alarcon (2019, 2022).

5 The village covers around 8,500 hectares, including inhabited areas, farmland and forests. Before the first land retakings, the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro were in possession of approximately 10% of the area, restricted to around forty smallholdings that they had maintained over the generations, most of which were twenty hectares or less.

half of 2023. Focusing in particular on documentary sources produced during the Bolsonaro administration and stored in public and private archives, we systematized a wide range of documents prepared by the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro, their legal representatives and allies; other segments of the Indigenous movement and civil entities; and public authorities at the municipal, state and federal levels. In addition, we compiled journalistic articles published in Brazil and abroad.

We paid special attention to the minutes of the regular and special meetings held between 2018 and 2022 by the Association of Tupinambá Indians of Serra do Padeiro (AITSP), the main organizational body of the village⁶. This valuable material captures shared political perceptions as the events analyzed in this article unfolded, and contains details of actions taken by the Tupinambá in response to these same events. Other sources worth highlighting include those contained in the administrative legal proceedings for demarcating the Tupinambá de Olivença Indigenous Territory, to which we had full access for the purposes of this research and contributed decisively to the reconstruction of government actions related to land regularization and the rights of the Tupinambá more broadly⁷. While focusing, as mentioned, on documentation produced in recent years, we were also able to draw on a broader archive of documents compiled over the past fifteen years, within the frameworks of research developed by the first author of this article.

Undoing Policies for Indigenous Peoples

Considering the centrality of the conquest and territorial invasion in the constitution of the Brazilian nation-state, which is characterized by the persistence of colonial power, Cruz (2022) proposes the notion of an “Indigenous history of suffering,” marked by “white lethality”. It is in this sense, he argues, that violations of Indigenous rights should not be analyzed as isolated events, but rather as an “expression of a structured web for the obliteration of Indigenous existence,” which has a territorial dimension as its common axis and entangles Indigenous collectives in its structure, even in the most favorable of circumstances (Cruz 2022: 27, our translation).

In an analysis focused on the so-called “redemocratization,” Souza Lima and Oliveira (2022) argue that the bloody battle to destroy Indigenous territorial rights, intensified at present, may be clearly perceived throughout the entire period. Since the promulgation of the Federal Constitution of 1988, there have been numerous attempts to undermine the guarantees provided therein. During the Constituent Assembly, great efforts were made through legal and illegal means to block the inclusion of Indigenous rights in the Brazilian Magna Carta. Even during the four previous presidential terms of the Workers’ Party (PT), that is, the administrations of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) and Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016), policies guided by a hegemonic vision of “development” and “economic growth” led to “a brutal and violent advance on their [Indigenous] lands” (Souza Lima and Oliveira 2022: 66, our translation). With regards to the context focused on here, the administrative legal proceedings for demarcating the Tupinambá de Olivença Indigenous Territory – initiated in 2004 as we have seen – spanned four PT presidential terms without reaching a conclusion.

It should be noted that the Tupinambá case does not deviate from the norm. In August 2016, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, then United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, after a mission to Brazil which took place in March of that year and which included a visit to Serra do Padeiro, warned of an “extremely worrying regression in the protection of Indigenous peoples’ rights” (Tauli-Corpuz 2016: 19). It is undeniable, however, that the previously existing tensions became even more acute after Rousseff’s impeachment in 2016. Analyzing the rise of Michel Temer (Brazilian Democratic Movement - MDB) to the

⁶ For more information on AITSP, see Alarcon (2022). Regarding the period considered here, attendance records at meetings are poor, and are absent from most minutes. Considering the available data, attendance ranged from seventy-two to 156 people.

⁷ File No. 08620.001523/2008-43, to which the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples granted us access (Protocol No. 15001.000196/2023-02).

national presidency, a position he held until 2018, Carneiro da Cunha argues that a “new level of violence was then established in rural Brazil,” in the context of “a political crisis without precedent,” with a strong predominance of a ruralist front oriented towards the dissolution of the rights of Indigenous and quilombola peoples, other traditional peoples and communities, and peasants in general (Carneiro da Cunha et al. 2017: 405-406, our translation).

During Lula’s terms, Congress held a series of Parliamentary Inquiry Committees (CPIs) targeting agrarian reform and the mobilization of landless workers. Beginning in 2010, according to Terena and Vieira (2021: 112, our translation), “the strength of the Indigenous movement, land retakings and the advance (albeit weak) of the demarcation of traditional lands” has diverted the focus of ruralists. On November 10, 2015, a CPI was established allegedly “aiming at investigating the actions of the National Indigenous Peoples Foundation (FUNAI) and the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) in the demarcation of Indigenous and quilombola lands.” In August 2016, the CPI concluded with the expiration of its timeline after having been extended twice, without producing a final report. Also, from 2015 and 2016 in the state Legislative Assembly of Mato Grosso do Sul, the so-called “CIMI CPI” was carried out, to investigate the participation of the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI) – a branch of the Catholic church, widely recognized for its defense of Indigenous rights – in “incitement” and feasibility of land retaking actions in the state.

On May 2, 2017, during the Temer administration, the second FUNAI-INCRA CPI, which had been instated on October 25 of the previous year, approved its final report (Brasil, Câmara dos Deputados, Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito destinada a investigar fatos relativos à Fundação Nacional do Índio (FUNAI) e ao Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária (INCRA) nos termos que especifica, 2017). The main purpose of the two incarnations of the CPI was to promote administrative changes that would make the land regularization of Indigenous and quilombola territories unfeasible and block agrarian reform. The first version of the report called for the abolition of FUNAI. With a substantial chapter on the Indigenous context of southern Bahia, analyzed in Alarcon (2018), the document requested the indictment of sixteen people involved in the Tupinambá case, including Babau; Chief Jamapoty (Maria Valdelice de Jesus) who lives in the Itapoan village in the coastal region of the Indigenous Territory; the anthropologist Susana de Matos Dores Viegas, responsible for the official studies for the demarcation of the Tupinambá de Olivença Indigenous Territory; and the first author of this article. As Terena and Vieira (2021: 142, our translation) have concluded, even though the CPI did not have the power to propose criminal actions or carry out convictions and the requests for indictments were not met, it contributed to consolidating “a criminalizing narrative about the actions of organizations that are part of the field of defense and implementation of public policies related to Indigenous territorial rights.”

Taking stock of the threats to Indigenous peoples perpetrated by the three branches of government during the Temer government, Amado (2018: 179, our translation) highlights the fact that interests contrary to the guarantee of Indigenous territorial rights “were articulated and took root in the structures of the Brazilian State.” After a visit to Brazil in November 2018, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the Organization of American States (OAS) expressed strong concern: “They face not only threats of invasion of their territories by non-indigenous individuals, but also major challenges with respect to the titling and protection of their lands. More often than not, indigenous peoples and communities lack the State protection they need” (Organization of American States, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2021: 29).

The anti-Indigenous agenda set in motion by Temer intensified under Bolsonaro, intertwined with the dismantling of environmental policies, both of which reached unprecedented levels since the last dictatorship (1964-1985). The effects of these policies during this more recent period were only stymied due to the actions of the Indigenous movement, including forms of strategic litigation. In the most well-known of these cases, the Action for Noncompliance with a Fundamental Precept (ADPF) No. 709 which aimed to protect the lives of Indigenous peoples in the face of the complete inadequacy of the government’s response to the Covid-19

pandemic, the country's highest court admitted the active legitimacy of the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB) to file actions of this nature, constituting a historic milestone (Terena 2022). In August 2021, APIB presented a communiqué to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague (Netherlands), denouncing Bolsonaro for crimes against humanity and genocide (Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil 2021).

A study by APIB and Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI)⁸ detailing eleven situations of criminalization including the Tupinambá case, found an increase in the vulnerability of Indigenous peoples under Bolsonaro's administration, which acted to "undermine the legal protection of their rights, fueling hatred and racist discourse and supporting vested interests, from private investments to fundamentalist missionaries" (Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil and Indigenous Peoples Rights International 2021: 11, our translation). Along with the Executive branch, the Legislative branch represented another locus of intense attacks on Indigenous rights. As Batista, Jucá and Guetta (2023: 77, our translation) indicate, the legislature of the period, led by the Parliamentary Front for Agriculture (FPA), known as the "ruralist caucus,"⁹ processed a large volume of proposals that "flexibilize, revoke or distort the legislation" to safeguard Indigenous rights – using as a standard the "violations of due legislative process."

Marcelo Augusto Xavier da Silva, FUNAI's president from July 19, 2019 to December 29, 2022, played a prominent role in the destruction of policies for Indigenous peoples. He acted as a "consultant" in the FUNAI-INCRA 2 CPI, invited by the ruralist caucus. In this role, he participated in an investigation in Serra do Padeiro in 2016. A Chief of the Federal Police with strong ties to agribusiness and a history of accusations of Indigenous rights violations, Xavier became known for criminalizing leaders, persecuting and harassing civil servants, severely dismantling FUNAI, and adopting measures that were contrary to Indigenous rights, as widely reported. On his first day in office, through Provisional Measure (MP) No. 870/2019, he attempted to take away from FUNAI the role of demarcating Indigenous Territories, and transfer the agency to fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights, headed by Damares Alves, accused of serious violations of Indigenous rights.

Although Bolsonaro's plans did not come to fruition due to intense mobilization to the contrary, his administration found ways to subvert FUNAI's work. Under Xavier, the aim was to promote what he called the "new FUNAI," "based on a tripod of promoting 'legal security,' 'pacification of conflicts' and 'Indigenous dignity and autonomy,' which translates, nonetheless, into putting the institution to work to weaken Indigenous territorial guarantees and open up Indigenous Territories to economic exploitation by third parties" (Indigenistas Associados and Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos 2022: 23, our translation).

On May 21, 2021, Xavier requested that the Federal Police open an investigation against Ciro de Lopes e Barbuda, a lawyer working at FUNAI, due to the issuance of a legal opinion in favor of the Tupinambá (Brasil, Ministério da Justiça, Fundação Nacional do Índio, Presidência 2021 *apud* Brasil, Ministério Público Federal, Procuradoria da República no Distrito Federal, Décimo Ofício 2022)¹⁰. According to the then head of FUNAI, Lopes e Barbuda had engaged in condoning criminal behavior by "defending Indigenous land retaking, thus non-complying with legal provisions" (Sassine 2021, our translation). Welcomed by representatives of agribusiness ("Ruralistas saem" 2021), the initiative ended up producing an official slander complaint filed against Xavier by the Public Prosecutor's Office on May 18, 2022 (Brasil, Ministério Público Federal,

8 Entity founded by Tauli-Corpuz and Joan Carling, the latter of whom was part of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

9 Terena and Vieira (2021: 102, 100, our translation) define the FPA, created in 2002, as "an instance of supra-partisan organization of ruralism in the National Congress," understanding the latter as a "political movement of organization and institutionalization of the interests of fractions of the agrarian ruling class in Brazil," associated with "an institutional political project to make the demarcation of Indigenous lands unfeasible and reaffirm the hegemony and absolute nature of private property in the countryside."

10 Brasil. Ministério da Justiça. Fundação Nacional do Índio. Presidência. 2021. Ofício nº 815/2021/PRES/FUNAI. Brasília, DF. In response to the request made by Xavier, who attacked Lopes and Barbuda after the preparation of Information No. 00042/2021/COAF/PFE-FUNAI-PGU/PGF/AGU, the Federal Police opened Police Inquiry (IP) No. 1062242-60.2021.4.01.3400-PJE/TRF1.

Procuradoria da República no Distrito Federal, Décimo Ofício 2022)¹¹. In May 2023, Xavier was indicted by the Federal Police for acting carelessly and taking risks that may have resulted in the homicides of Indigenous rights specialist Bruno Pereira and journalist Dom Phillips, murdered in June 2022 in the Javari Valley in Amazonas state. Four years earlier, Phillips had published an article in *The Guardian* expressing concerns about Xavier's appointment (Phillips 2019).

In Babau's assessment, Xavier was appointed to FUNAI for it to be "completely dismantled," preventing employees dedicated to their duties in defense of Indigenous rights from performing their work, and appointing co-opted Indigenous functionaries, neo-Pentecostal evangelical leaders and military personnel. The head of FUNAI, Babau observed, acted to impose bureaucratic obstacles to normal operations concerning the fulfilment of Indigenous rights, publishing internal regulations that made it impossible, among other actions, for employees to quickly access Indigenous areas to verify complaints, especially invasions, and mediate conflicts. "When he does this, it's the same as saying [to anti-Indigenous sectors]: 'I'm blocking FUNAI employees so that you can invade Indigenous lands.'" In addition to Xavier, Babau pointed out, Bolsonaro used other actors in his attack on Indigenous rights, including Sergio Moro, who headed the Ministry of Justice and Public Security from 2019 to 2020, and Augusto Aras, who was appointed Attorney General of the Republic in 2019. Throughout Bolsonaro's term, Babau and other leaders dedicated themselves to closely observing the tactics of Bolsonarismo, trying to understand them and even anticipate them with the aim of outlining strategies, as it will be clear through closer examination of AITSP's minutes.

It is important to highlight that, although there is a certain profusion of descriptions and analyses of policies for Indigenous peoples and violations of Indigenous rights under Bolsonaro, an extensive archaeology of the matter, based on an analysis of more specific cases, has yet to be rendered. An ethnography of the administrative processes that were handled at the time, for example, could be a particularly suitable way of achieving this objective. It has not been our purpose in this section to advance a comprehensive and systematic characterization of the period, but to outline a broad framework, incorporating information directly related to Serra do Padeiro whenever possible, to offer basic necessary instruments for navigating the arguments that follow.

Attacks on Serra do Padeiro

Today, it is well documented that the 2018 electoral cycle, beginning with the campaign phase, was characterized by widespread threats against Indigenous peoples and invasions of territories. Identifying Bolsonaro as a legitimate representative of their aspirations, sectors mobilizing against the demarcation of the Tupinambá de Olivença Indigenous Territory enthusiastically supported his candidacy. A four-page electoral booklet that circulated in the 2022 election titled "Alerting the People of Buerarema", established the connection between the mobilization against Tupinambá rights and support for Bolsonaro, who appeared smiling on the back cover. Referring to the "sacred right to property" and "the criminal Babau and his gang," among other factors that should be considered by voters, the pamphlet urges: "For all these reasons, do not vote for candidates linked to the PT."

Buerarema has crystallized over the last four electoral processes as one of the most visible anti-PT bastions in Bahia. In 2013, the municipal headquarters, which is about sixteen kilometers from Serra do Padeiro, was the epicenter of a noisy offensive against the land retakings, which included the destruction of official vehicles, the burning of Indigenous homes located in the urban area, invasions of public buildings, threats and beatings.

¹¹ The complaint was filed under Criminal Investigation Procedure (PIC) No. 1.16.000.003292/2021-50.

In the 2014 elections, Buerarema was the only municipality in Bahia where Rousseff lost in the first round¹². This led the town to be profiled in the *Folha de S.Paulo*, in a piece which openly associated the result with the demarcation of the Indigenous Territory (Bittencourt 2014). The results gain even more relevance when compared to those of 2006, when Buerarema favored Lula in both rounds, with a significant margin¹³. The rejection of the PT, particularly acute in Buerarema, is also visible in the other municipalities in the region.

In urban centers around the village, Bolsonaro's victory was celebrated with fireworks and other public demonstrations. Of the six municipalities in Bahia that elected him in the first round in 2018, five are in the south or far south ("Mapa da apuração" 2018a) where the largest Indigenous Territories in the state are located, inhabited by the Tupinambá, Pataxó Hãhãhã and Pataxó. These municipalities include Buerarema and Itabuna. The latter, located northwest of the Indigenous Territory, is one of the main regional centers in southern Bahia. In the second round, the number of Bahian municipalities in which the far-right won fell to four; Buerarema remained on the list ("Mapa da apuração" 2018b)¹⁴. In 2022, Bolsonaro's advantage in the municipality, in both rounds, was even greater than in the previous election cycle, consolidating the trend pointed out here, a backdrop to the episodes focused on in this article¹⁵.

At the end of January 2019, only a few weeks after Bolsonaro took office, a plan of extermination targeting leaders from Serra do Padeiro was made public. Uncovered by the Indigenous community itself, the scheme was reported in *Folha de S.Paulo* and *Mongabay*, the latter a news outlet focused on socio-environmental concerns (Valente 2019; Branford and Torres 2019). Testimonies and audiovisual evidence gathered by the Tupinambá, with the help of non-Indigenous supporters, suggested the involvement of farmers and hotel businessmen in the plan, as well as agents of the civil and military police and other public officials. Outlined in meetings in the city of Itabuna, the attack was directed at five main targets, all of whom are relatives of Babau, including two of his nieces who are authors of this article: Jéssica Silva de Quadros, pregnant at the time, and Sthefany Ferreira da Silva, then still a teenager. Although it is not possible to draw direct connections between the plan of extermination and Bolsonaro's victory, in the political climate that prevailed in the country at the time, episodes of open violence became more frequent. In other words, Bolsonaro's virulent far-right rhetoric had quickly produced concrete effects.

In October 2019, Gilson Machado Neto, president of the Brazilian Institute of Tourism (EMBRATUR), was accused of lobbying in favor of the Portuguese Vila Galé group¹⁶, which, through its company Vila Galé Brasil - Atividades Hoteleiras Ltda., planned to build a resort in a mangrove area in part of the Tupinambá de Olivença Indigenous Territory in the municipality of Una. The case came to light when *The Intercept Brasil* (Audi 2019) published a letter sent by Machado Neto to the then president of FUNAI, dated July 26 of that year, which reads: "Embratur hereby expresses its interest in ending the demarcation process of Tupinambá de Olivença Indigenous lands," thus removing the legal obstacles to the installation of Vila Galé Costa do Cacau (Brasil, Instituto Brasileiro de Turismo 2019, our translation). "This is an area with exceptional potential for tourism development, and the Government of the State of Bahia and the Municipal Government of Una have even signed an intentions agreement with the Vila Galé Group, with an investment of over R\$200,000,000.00 [...]."

12 In the first round, Rousseff received only 25.74% of votes, compared to 66.63% for Aécio Neves (Brazilian Social Democracy Party - PSDB). In the second round, votes were 30.80% and 69.20%, respectively (Brasil, Tribunal Superior Eleitoral 2014a, 2014b).

13 Lula and Geraldo Alckmin (the PSDB candidate) obtained, respectively, 52.33% and 40.24% of the votes in the first round, and, in the second, 63.85% and 36.14% (Brasil, Tribunal Superior Eleitoral 2006a, 2006b).

14 In the first round in Buerarema, Bolsonaro obtained 46.46% of the votes and Fernando Haddad (PT), 36.71%; in the second round, respectively, 55.26% and 44.74% (Mapa 2018a, 2018b). In Itabuna, the result in the first round was 40.62% for Bolsonaro and 36.57% for Haddad, while in the second round, Haddad obtained 51.31% of the votes and Bolsonaro, 48.69%.

15 In the first round, Bolsonaro obtained 53.37% of the votes and Lula, 38.95%, while in the second round, the results were, respectively, 59.64% and 40.36% (Brasil, Tribunal Superior Eleitoral 2022a, 2022b).

16 According to the description on the group's website, Vila Galé - Sociedade de Empreendimentos Turísticos S.A., established in 1986, owns 31 hotels in Portugal and ten in Brazil. Jorge Afonso Campos Rebelo de Almeida is the group's president and founder.

On August 27, 2019, the mayor of Una, Tiago Birschner (Progressive Party - PP), wrote to Sergio Moro, then Minister of Justice, requesting the demarcation case be shelved (Una, Prefeitura Municipal, Gabinete do Prefeito 2019). In the document, the mayor advocates for the hotel company and defends the applicability of environmental licensing at the municipal level – even if the project fits into the category requiring federal licensing. Without any mention of the Indigenous Territory, on December 4, 2018, the Municipal Secretariat for Economic Development, Agriculture and Environment of Una had granted Vila Galé a preliminary environmental license (Una, Prefeitura Municipal, Secretaria Municipal de Desenvolvimento Econômico, Agricultura e Meio Ambiente 2018). The overlap with the Indigenous Territory would only be brought up for debate in a statement to FUNAI made by the Bahia Institute of the Environment and Water Resources (INEMA), a state-level body, on February 21, 2019 (Bahia, Instituto do Meio Ambiente e Recursos Hídricos, Coordenação de Turismo e Urbanismo 2019).

The area in question neighbors the Una Biological Reserve, created in 1980 and expanded in 2007, and the Serra das Lontras National Park, established in 2010. The region is crucial for environmental conservation and for the Tupinambá to carry out their way of life. Crabbing and gathering of other species represent practices that date back to the ancestors of Indigenous communities in the area. Furthermore, if the resort were to come to fruition, it would be located approximately five kilometers from the Lagoa do Mabaço on the southern border of the Indigenous Territory, whose two bodies of water are important symbolic sites for the Tupinambá. It is worth noting that for years, families in the region faced pressure from tourism and attempts to fence them in as a result of a luxury hotel that had as a partner Armínio Fraga Neto, former president of the Central Bank of Brazil (Alarcon 2019).

In a statement from November 18, 2019, Vila Galé declared to the Portuguese press that it had given up on the project, in the wake of intense Tupinambá mobilization (Martins 2019b, Vila Galé 2019)¹⁷. Their retreat from the project, however, was accompanied by statements questioning the territorial rights of the Tupinambá and even denials of their Indigenous identity. In an interview given weeks before the withdrawal, Jorge Afonso Campos Rebelo de Almeida, president and founder of the Vila Galé Group, declared: “If I were in his [Bolsonaro’s] place, I would say that Indigenous people, who are in various parts of the country, have the right to be *integrated* into Brazilian society. We are not going to create autonomous islands [...]. At most, if it were in the middle of the Amazon, somewhere that had no contact with the outside world, it could still make sense. Now, on the southern coast of Bahia [...], talking about an Indigenous reserve is ludicrous, to say the least” (Gomes 2019, our translation and emphasis). On October 6, 2023, in a special session of the Legislative Assembly of Bahia, Almeida received the title of Bahian Citizen, as proposed by state deputy Eduardo Salles (PP), unanimously approved by the sixty-three members of the house (Bahia, Assembleia Legislativa da Bahia 2023)¹⁸. It is worth noting that “to support initiatives that help to encourage social welfare and nature preservation” and “to adopt economically viable and socially fair processes” are among the hotel chain’s “commitments,” as presented on its website¹⁹.

While the Tupinambá were still celebrating their victory in the battle with the Portuguese group, on January 28, 2020, covert government actions aimed at dismantling their rights were revealed by the press (Valente 2020). On December 30, 2019, the Vice-Minister of Justice, instead of moving forward with the final stages of the demarcation procedures for the Tupinambá de Olivença Indigenous Territory, in accordance with its legal responsibilities, returned it to FUNAI, following the recommendation of its legal consultants (Brasil, Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública, Secretaria Executiva 2019b). This was an *en bloc* return, affecting

¹⁷ The statement in its entirety can be read in Leal (2019).

¹⁸ A recording of the session is available at: <https://indigenous.youtube.com/watch?v=CWO1X8-R3Gc>.

¹⁹ “About Vila Galé”. Available at: <https://www.vilagale.com/en/group/about-vila-gale>.

seventeen Indigenous Territories. The decision was based on a non-statutory regulation approved during the Temer administration by the Attorney General's Office, dated July 19, 2017.

This regulation determined compliance with the 2009 Supreme Court's ruling on Petition (PET) No. 3,388 referring to the Raposa Serra do Sul Indigenous Territory, in Roraima state, and imposed the "timeframe" thesis²⁰ for all ongoing demarcation procedures, even though, at that time, the Supreme Court's judgment in Extraordinary Appeal of Generally Binding Precedent (RE) No. 1,017,365, which analyzed the validity of the thesis, had not yet been handed down. The clear aim was to impose an understanding on a matter still under consideration by the Judiciary via an Executive action. The judgment was handed down on September 21, 2023, with the rejection of the thesis.

Attempts to delay or completely suspend the demarcation process for the Tupinambá de Olivença Indigenous Territory have been recurrent. In 2014, for example, the then Minister of Justice, José Eduardo Cardozo, set the course of action back in response to a direct request from the Association of Small Farmers, Business Owners and Residents in the Alleged Area Affected by the Demarcation of Indigenous Lands of Ilhéus, Una and Buerarema (Brasil, Ministério da Justiça, Gabinete do Ministro 2014; Associação dos Pequenos Agricultores, Empresários e Residentes na Pretensa Área Atingida pela Demarcação de Terra Indígena de Ilhéus, Uma [sic] e Buerarema 2013). The previous year, the group had filed a preventive writ of mandamus, requesting an end to the demarcation, under the allegation of procedural defects²¹. On April 5, 2016, the judge presiding over the case, Napoleão Nunes Maia Filho from the Superior Court of Justice, granted the requested preliminary injunction (Brasil, Superior Tribunal de Justiça 2016). Allegedly in defense of the "procedural fairness necessary for the demarcation process" (our translation), he reviewed a decision he himself had issued on December 11, 2013, which had denied the request for a preliminary injunction (Brasil, Superior Tribunal de Justiça 2013). With the new decision, the process was paralyzed for just over five months, until September 14 of the same year when the judges of the Superior Court unanimously overturned the preliminary injunction (Brasil, Procuradoria-Geral da República 2016).

Turning to more recent events, it should be noted that just over four months before the case was returned to FUNAI at the end of 2019, the Ministry of Justice advisory team underscored that the procedural aspects of the demarcation process were legally compliant: "The analysis of the objections to the demarcation presented by affected parties was not accompanied by any evidence capable of reversing the course of the procedure in question, nor were any technical or administrative flaws or failures identified" (Brasil, Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública, Secretaria Executiva 2019a, our translation). In addition, the document reported that the legal aspects of the case had been endorsed by FUNAI's legal team, which led its president to submit the case to the Ministry of Justice, to follow its course

After being sent back to FUNAI, the case remained frozen for three years, even though on May 6, 2020, in the context of Extraordinary Appeal No. 1,017,365, Justice Edson Facchin had provisionally suspended all effects of the Attorney General's Office regulation issued in 2017 (Brasil, Supremo Tribunal Federal 2021b). It is worth noting that, before the case returned to FUNAI, the agency had already proven the continuity of the Tupinambá occupation of the land throughout time, rendering this setback in the procedure baseless even in a scenario recognizing the validity of the "timeframe" thesis (Brasil, Ministério da Justiça, Fundação Nacional do Índio, Coordenação de Delimitação e Análise 2018). Finally, in March 2023, the process moved forward once again²² and, on May 25, the president of FUNAI forwarded it to the recently created Ministry of

20 The unconstitutional "timeframe" thesis states that, to have their territories demarcated, Indigenous peoples must prove that they were either in possession of these specific areas on October 5, 1988, when the Federal Constitution was promulgated, or in litigation for dispossession at the time.

21 Case No. 041083486.2013.3.00.0000.

22 On March 24, FUNAI's General Coordinator for Identification and Delimitation certified the technical integrity of the process and the absence of administrative impediments for its continuation (Brasil, Ministério dos Povos Indígenas, Fundação Nacional dos Povos Indígenas, Diretoria de Proteção Territorial, Coordenação-Geral de Identificação e Delimitação 2023), a decision approved by the Director of Territorial Protection four days later (Brasil,

Indigenous Peoples for the following stages (Brasil, Ministério dos Povos Indígenas, Fundação Nacional dos Povos Indígenas, Presidência 2023). However, on June 19th, by the force of Law No. 14,600, the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples lost the authority to issue declaratory ordinances in demarcation processes. As a result, on September 29, the case was forwarded to the Ministry of Justice, once again responsible for the next step in the land title regularization of the Indigenous Territory (Brasil, Ministério dos Povos Indígenas, Gabinete da Ministra 2023).

While the process laid dormant, the Covid-19 pandemic arrived in Brazil; in its wake, tensions in the territory intensified once again. On March 23, 2020, the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro established sanitary control barriers on two main roads cutting through the village²³. Working together with non-indigenous smallholders, they installed a traffic control system on highway BA-669 and a total blockade of highway BA-668. As is well known, Indigenous peoples throughout the country have resorted to initiatives of this nature in order to protect themselves. Together with their neighbors, the Tupinambá created security protocols for the movement of people and cargo, consisting of eleven measures established by consensus.

On March 30, however, civil and military police from Buerarema traveled to the BA-668 and, according to reports, made threats and fired shots. The following day, Mayor Vinicius Ibrann Dantas Andrade Oliveira (Democrats - DEM) sent an official letter to the Secretariat of Infrastructure of the Government of the State of Bahia requesting the reopening of the roadway that had been “blocked by the so-called ‘Indians’” (Buerarema, Prefeitura Municipal 2020). On April 3, police officers once again arrived at the blockage. Nonetheless, official complaints filed by the Tupinambá with the Governor’s Office put an end to the harassment. On the fourteenth, by decision of the Tupinambá and their non-Indigenous neighbors, the total blockade of highway BA-668 was replaced with a checkpoint. On June 4, the barriers were dismantled in favor of other strategies.

The last episode we will focus on took place on March 30, 2021, when Federal Judge Wilton Sobrinho da Silva from Itabuna ordered the issuance of a judicial eviction order against the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro (Brasil, Subseção Judiciária de Itabuna-BA, 1ª Vara Federal Cível e Criminal da SSJ de Itabuna-BA 2021)²⁴. The decision favored businessman José Ferreira de Almeida Matos, who in 2013 had filed a possessory action with a request for a preliminary injunction against the federal government, FUNAI and the Tupinambá (Matos 2013). In the request, he claimed ownership of approximately thirty-three hectares and possession of around fifty hectares on state lands in Arataca, Bahia. However, the Tupinambá de Olivença Indigenous Territory does not overlap with Arataca and Tupinambá are not occupying areas in this municipality. Although the inconsistencies in the possessory action have been repeatedly underscored, the proceedings have motivated, since 2015, attempts to evict the Tupinambá from an area effectively in their possession, retaken on August 11, 2013, in the municipalities of Una and São José da Vitória.

The ruling issued by Silva violated a decision made by Justice Facchin on May 6, 2020, suspending all eviction orders against Indigenous groups until the handing down of RE No. 1,017,365 or the end of the pandemic, whichever occurred after (Brasil, Supremo Tribunal Federal 2021b). On April 23, the eviction order was suspended by Justice Rosa Weber, who granted a preliminary injunction in a complaint filed by the Federal Public Defender’s Office (Brasil, Supremo Tribunal Federal 2021a; Brasil, Defensoria Pública da União, Gabinete do Defensor Regional de Direitos Humanos na Bahia 2021).

Ministério dos Povos Indígenas, Fundação Nacional dos Povos Indígenas, Diretoria de Proteção Territorial 2023a). On May 23, after FUNAI’s legal team reanalyzed the legal aspects, which we will not detail here, the Director of Territorial Protection recommended sending the case to the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples (Brasil, Ministério dos Povos Indígenas, Fundação Nacional dos Povos Indígenas, Diretoria de Proteção Territorial 2023b).

23 For a detailed analysis of Serra do Padeiro’s response to the pandemic, see Alarcon and Silva (2022).

24 Case No. 0003915-29.2013.4.01.3301 (Possessory action with request for preliminary injunction). As far as we know, this was the second time during the pandemic that a judge ordered the eviction of an Indigenous group in the state of Bahia; the previous year, the target were the Pataxó of the Ponta Grande Indigenous Territory (located in Porto Seguro and Santa Cruz Cabrália).

The facts presented here show that the attacks against Serra do Padeiro during the Bolsonaro period began quickly, even before the far right's presidential victory, and intensified during the first month of Bolsonaro's term. The Tupinambá swiftly noted the rapidity with which the situation had deteriorated. At a regular AITSP meeting on December 2, 2018, as the minutes show us, predictions were made regarding the political landscape that would emerge following the election. The first balance recorded in minutes "regarding the consequences already brought on at the beginning of the term" dates to February 17, 2019. Reviewing all the meeting records in chronological order reveals their perception of a crescendo. After almost a year of Bolsonaro's government and in the wake of the Vila Galé case, the minutes on November 26, 2019 indicate: "Babau recommends that everybody prepares for more difficult times." In the same vein, on January 5, 2020, the records predict "a year with few open doors." Less than a month later, the setback in the demarcation process would be publicized. Monitoring the situation closely and sharing assessments as events unfolded, the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro devised effective strategies to protect themselves, as we will see in the next section.

"No one has ever governed, nor will ever govern the Tupinambá"

Even before Rousseff's impeachment, Bolsonaro's election or the pandemic, the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro had known that difficult times laid ahead. Informed by prophecies and warnings brought by the *encantados*, non-human entities, they had been preparing for contexts of instability and deterioration of living conditions²⁵. On January 19, 2019, the village sent a powerful letter to Brazilian public actors and supranational organs, signed by Lírio (Rosemiro Ferreira da Silva), the shaman of Serra do Padeiro, and Babau²⁶. Written at the request of the *encantados*, the missive was distributed on the main date of the village's political and religious calendar, the feast of Saint Sebastian, when predictions for the coming year are shared and the main collective strategies to be adopted are agreed upon. With translations in English and French and reproduced in the press, the letter publicized the Serra do Padeiro's position.

"In his campaign, Bolsonaro constantly attacked Indigenous communities, treating us in a hostile manner and stating that, from the beginning of his term, not one centimeter of land would be demarcated for Indigenous peoples," the document states. "After the election, he began to fulfill his promises through provisional measures and presidential decrees, repealing Indigenous rights that had been acquired over years of struggle." This is followed by a historical account of five centuries from the village's perspective, outlining their determination to never leave the territory under any circumstances. "Know this: no one has ever governed, nor will ever govern the Tupinambá of the Serra do Padeiro. [...] With this new letter²⁷, we, Tupinambá from Serra do Padeiro, want to inform the Brazilian and international authorities that we do not agree with the attitude of the new president," the text continues, alluding to the anti-Indigenous measures that he had already tried to implement in that short period of time.

Through daily and special actions, the village remained deeply mobilized during the period under analysis – from deliberations during the highly-attended AITSP monthly meetings to the interpretation of dreams, and proposals for legal actions to interactions with deceased relatives revealing themselves at crucial moments in the struggle. A careful reading of the AITSP minutes exposes both political assessments of the Bolsonaro government, in particular Babau's analyses, which were described in greater detail, and some of the main strategies adopted by the village. This context reveals the crucial nature of the material and organizational

25 For an analysis of these prophecies, see Alarcon e Silva (2022).

26 The letter, which can be read in Holanda (2019), was addressed directly to José Antonio Dias Toffoli, president of the Supreme Court and the National Council of Justice; Raquel Dodge, Attorney General of the Republic; Eunício Oliveira, president of the Federal Senate; Rodrigo Maia, president of the Chamber of Deputies; João Cravinho, ambassador of the European Union in Brazil; Tauli-Corpuz; and Luis Almagro, Secretary General of the OAS.

27 Allusion to the letter from Serra do Padeiro dated May 15, 2016, denouncing the preliminary decision of Nunes Maia Filho that suspended the demarcation procedure of the Indigenous Territory.

gains amassed by the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro over the last two decades – with the decisive advances of territorial recovery which expanded land ownership and economic income, thus destabilizing asymmetrical power relations – combined to the community’s creativity and openness to experiment with political avenues previously underexplored by the group.

Observing the Tupinambá response to the unmasking of the previously mentioned plan of extermination represents an opportunity to emphasize the abilities to building alliances not only of the Indigenous leaders, but of the village as a whole. The first revelations about the plan were transmitted to the Tupinambá by non-Indigenous actors from neighboring cities who had access to spaces dominated by members of the local elite and closed off to members of the Indigenous community. Maintaining friendly relations with peasants, merchants, a small number of council people and other actors, while at the same time striving to build a solid reputation as an organized, hard-working and trustworthy community, the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro value these networks of local relationships as an important defense mechanism (Alarcon 2022).

It should also be mentioned that Lírio is considered a powerful religious leader, sought out not only by Indigenous people, but by a wide range of individuals, thus forming lasting bonds of trust. Some non-Indigenous people have even undergone processes of ritual initiation with the shaman, forming a single religious community. On the other hand, in the context of the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro Indigenous State School – which serves non-Indigenous students and families, many of whom are landless rural workers, seasonal workers, sharecroppers and others – daily coexistence also strengthens relationships between different segments within local society. These and other interactions have helped to dispel stereotypes about the Tupinambá that have circulated even among working-class individuals (Quadros 2016). While it is true that Bolsonaro’s election has shaken or put an end to some local relationships, it has not completely undermined them, and the Indigenous efforts to cultivate alliances in this region are noteworthy.

It was through the context of these relationships that the Tupinambá received not only the initial warning about the plan of extermination, but also evidence – including video footage and witness statements²⁸ – which equipped them with materials to file complaints with the press, civil society organizations, and public authorities at the state, federal, and supranational levels. Between January 31 and February 15, 2019, Babau carried out missions in Salvador (Bahia) and Brasília (Federal District), meeting with representatives of the state government, notably in the area of public safety; the Program for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Communicators, and Environmentalists; the Public Attorney’s Office; CIMI; and the Brazilian Office of the European Union, among others. Preparations for these trips began as soon as the plan was exposed. As the AITSP meeting minutes from January 17, 2019 show, on that date Babau informed those present about the measures that were being taken to facilitate his visit to Brasília. Reports on agreed upon measures while in the nation’s capital would be shared in subsequent meetings on February 3 and March 3.

With regards to filing complaints with the government, particularly in a case in which state agents are implicated, it is worth considering the protocols for these types of relations outlined by the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro in the context of the struggle for land. If, as we have indicated, numerous violations against this community have been committed by the government itself, the state certainly should not be seen as a homogeneous body. To cite just one example, sectors of the Public Attorney’s Office have been vocal in defending the rights of the Tupinambá – to the point that the final report of the CPI FUNAI-IN CRA 2 initially proposed the indictment of federal prosecutors in Ilhéus for alleged misconduct²⁹. Over the years, the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro have succeeded in establishing important tactical alliances with state agents, which, among other effects, have contributed to the legitimization of land retakings.

28 To ensure the safety of the Tupinambá and the non-Indigenous actors who aided them on this occasion, we will not provide details on other aspects of the revelations and allegations.

29 The report would later be amended, leaving out the prosecutors’ requests for indictment.

It should not be forgotten, however, that the ascendance of the extreme right to the federal government has raised concerns, for example, regarding the legal defense of the community, in which FUNAI's legal team have traditionally played a prominent role. Indeed, due to intense criminalization of their political leaders, the community has also retained a private attorney for the past two decades, whose fees are paid by the AITSP through a collective fund supplied in part by profits made through agricultural work. Under Bolsonaro, however, the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro have come to feel greater dependency on this attorney. To deal with both the setback in the demarcation process and the eviction order, they filed a lawsuit and have sought the legal assistance of APIB. In the AITSP minutes from January 5, 2020, the relationship between financial autonomy and a capacity for legal defense is made explicit: "The important thing is to protect our territory. If FUNAI is not at the forefront of the situation in the retaken areas [acting legally in possessory actions], we here in the community [will be there]. But, for that to take place, we must have cash in hand to protect ourselves by our own means."

As we have seen, the Vila Galé group's plans would only become more well known in October 2019. Still, by the time of Babau's missions in the first half of the year, the village already possessed preliminary information about the case, as documented in meeting agendas. For example, in an event held in Brasília on February 14 coordinated by the Deputy Attorney General of the Republic Antônio Carlos Bigonha, with the presence of a representative of the Program for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, those present discussed the attempt to build the resort and the plan of extermination (Ministério Público Federal, Sexta Câmara de Coordenação e Revisão 2019). Likewise on the fourteenth, in a letter to the Program for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and the Brazilian Committee of Human Rights Defenders, the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro requested protective measures (Quadros 2019a).

Two other communiqués in the same vein had been sent on February 13, the day before. The first, an open letter signed by twenty-five researchers from different disciplinary areas and academic affiliations who worked with the Tupinambá, including one of the authors of this article, demanded an "urgent investigation of the threats and plans of extermination against members of the Tupinambá people, with accountability for all those involved," as well as "the immediate adoption of effective protective measures for the Indigenous actors."³⁰ In turn, APIB and the Indian Law Resource Center³¹ sent Paulo Abrão, the then Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), briefs with information supplementing the oral remarks made at a hearing during the 171st Regular Period of Sessions of the IACHR, which took place from February 7 to 16 in Bolivia, where the Tupinambá case was mentioned (Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil and Indian Law Resource Center 2019). Finally, on February 25, the Association of Lawyers for Rural Workers in the State of Bahia (AATR) sent a letter about the case to Tauli-Corpuz and Michel Forst, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders (Associação de Advogados de Trabalhadores Rurais no Estado da Bahia 2019).

This brief overview provides an idea of the wide range of local and extra-local relationships in which the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro engage, like what occurred in the second half of 2019, when the Vila Galé case reached the international press and the Portuguese Parliament, among other spaces. An understanding that the cultivation of these relationships creates far-reaching alliances, constituting an important form of defense, also appears in AITSP minutes. At the December 2, 2018 meeting Babau established a connection between the development of academic research focused on the village and an increase in the group's visibility. In this sense, he urged those present to welcome researchers who sought them out, provided that these types of activity help reveal positive aspects of the village to wider society, acting against the dissemination of distorted

³⁰ Published in Portuguese, English, Spanish and French, the letter can be read in Carvalho (2019).

³¹ Legal advisory and strategic litigation entity composed of Indigenous lawyers based in the United States and founded in 1978.

images and false information associated with attempts to criminalize them. By way of their struggle and with the participation of diverse supporters, he emphasized, Serra do Padeiro became widely recognized, even on the international stage.

As we have seen, reports on the plan of extermination were published in *Folha de S.Paulo* and *Mongabay*, both containing interviews with Babau. Also, as part of the effort to confront this plan by making it visible – and therefore costly for its perpetrators –, Indigenous leaders participated in filming a video condemning the plan titled *Tupinambá – Pelo Direito de Viver (Tupinambá – For the Right to Live)*³². Produced by CIMI and the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), also a branch of the Catholic church, the video was released on the internet on March 11, 2019, with subtitles in English, Spanish, French and German. There were even plans to publish an article in *The Guardian*, which ultimately did not materialize. The testimony given to the newspaper by one of the people involved, Jéssica Quadros, provides evidence of the analyses rendered by the Tupinambá throughout the course of events. First, she established a direct link between the incitement to violence by then president and the threats: “Bolsonaro’s prejudiced and violent speech directly affects us. His words have reinforced the hatred that some people have for us. [...] Bolsonaro needs to keep his mouth shut” (Quadros 2019b, our translation). Later, she pointed out a more subtle layer regarding the failure of the plan: “The encantados won’t let anything happen to us. We end up finding out and the plan ends up falling apart before it can happen, they really won’t let any of this happen. If it weren’t for them, I don’t know what would have become of us.” In the same vein, at an AITSP meeting on September 14 of that year, Babau stressed that the strength of Serra do Padeiro in the resistance against Bolsonaro came from the encantados.

Consequently, when we point out the role of relationships in outlining the strategies of the Tupinambá, we certainly must not limit ourselves to the realm of human relationships. Cultivating their connections with the encantados on a daily basis, the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro depend on the actions of these entities. In the analysis of our interlocutors, the protection of the village during the pandemic was guaranteed not only by the sanitary barriers and other measures adopted by the Indigenous community, but, above all, by the stirring of cosmological connections to spiritually isolate human bodies and the village. It is worth mentioning that relationships with the deceased also enter the equation. In this regard, Alarcon (2022) analyzed an episode of conflict that occurred in 2016 on the coastal strip of the Indigenous Territory when two deceased relatives emerged through physical spirit possession, to help the living in direct action against mining activities in their territory – among them, João de Nô (João Ferreira da Silva, c. 1905-1981), the shaman’s father and considered the village’s first religious leader. Under Bolsonaro, in 2021, João de Nô materialized once again. Before that, as far as memory can recall, he had only appeared once, in 1982, at the deathbed of his daughter. It is noteworthy that the village’s most prominent ancestor was present twice in five years, after a lapse of more than thirty years. It appears that the gravity of the situation made him feel it necessary to communicate directly with his relatives on both occasions, instructing them on new strategies.

Returning to the Vila Galé case, attention should also be paid to Serra do Padeiro’s organizing with other Tupinambá villages, the broader Indigenous movement and other mobilized social segments. On June 16, 2019, Babau took advantage of a special inaugural meeting of the recently elected AITSP new board to provide feedback on mobilizations with two fishing associations representing populations that would also be affected. As reported in the minutes from July 7, an expanded meeting was held on the same day in the Tupinambá village of Mamão involving several leaders, as well as representatives of CIMI, to outline plans of action against the project. On October 29th, APIB requested the Attorney General’s Office to open a public civil inquiry (ICP)

32 Tupinambá – For the Right to Live. Screenplay: Daniela Alarcon and Thomas Bauer. Photography, sound and editing: Thomas Bauer. Produced by the Indigenous Missionary Council and the Pastoral Land Commission. Brazil, 2019, 8’55. Available at: <https://cimi.org.br/2019/03/tupinamba-pelo-direito-de-viver/>. Accessed on: March 11, 2019.

to investigate possible administrative impropriety at FUNAI and to propose a public civil action (ACP) against the president of EMBRATUR (Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil 2019).

As far as the resort is concerned, an expansion of the scope of Tupinambá mobilization and building a case with greater visibility are both clearly visible. The Bolsonaro period marked the beginning of direct participation of the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro in international missions for political advocacy. The first of these was in 2019, when Glicéria Jesus da Silva, one of the authors of this article, spoke at the 40th session of the UN Human Rights Council, in Geneva, Switzerland. In the same year, she represented APIB in public hearings during the 172nd Period of Sessions of the IACHR in Kingston, Jamaica. It is worth noting that, in recent years, Glicéria has also come to be recognized as a leading Indigenous artist in Brazil – to cite one example, she was the first artist named in the country's official representation at the 60th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale, in 2024. Her inclusion in this circuit and in debates on processes for the restitution of Indigenous artifacts still held in museums abroad has taken her to many other destinations, also serving as a stage for interventions in favor of Tupinambá rights.

It should be added that the nationality of the Vila Galé group contributed to attracting public attention in Portugal, further stimulated by the direct action of Susana Viegas – as we have seen, responsible for studies for the demarcation of the Indigenous Territory –, a professor at the University of Lisbon. In addition to giving interviews to major Portuguese media outlets such as *Expresso* and the Lusa news agency³³, she took up measures with the Portuguese Parliament, where the case became a priority for MP José Soeiro (Left Bloc - BE) and other members of the same faction. Furthermore, working together with the first author of this article, Viegas acted to circulate a joint petition proposed by the Brazilian Anthropology Association (ABA) and the Portuguese Anthropology Association (APA)³⁴. These and other actions brought visibility to the case in civil society, both in Brazil and in Portugal, which led to the Vila Galé group's social networks being flooded with messages in opposition to the resort. The fact that the hotel group concluded that it was unfeasible to move forward with the project, due to the risk of permanent damage to its public image, demonstrates the effectiveness of this course of action.

In Serra do Padeiro, it is believed that recovery of the territory and its care represent an obligation, determined by the encantados. As owners of the land, the encantados demand that the Tupinambá defend the territory, while protecting and strengthening them in an intimate relationship charged with political and cosmological ramifications. It is in this sense that it can be stated that the Tupinambá resistance to Bolsonarismo, beyond the obvious and more immediate goal of ensuring the continuity of the community over time, derives from profound justifications and as indicated, benefits from knowledge and tactics that emanate from non-human entities and the deceased. The assemblage of examples of actions taken within the framework of the attacks described here demonstrates how, using contextual and supplemental strategies, the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro have found effective ways to defend their village, rooted in their territory, articulated within the Indigenous movement, and connected to the encantados and their ancestors.

Final considerations

Our work is part of a broader effort to analyzing the actions of Indigenous peoples as historical subjects, focusing on everyday aspects of political mobilization, the incessant work of building social collectives, and the ways in which the strategies they engender are anchored in deeper cosmological perspectives.

³³ For an example, see Martins (2019a).

³⁴ The petition, addressed to the Ministry of Justice and the Vila Galé group, was released on October 31, 2019, and signed by more than 88,000 individuals. See: <https://www.change.org/p/ministerio-da-justica-brasil-pelo-cancelamento-de-projeto-hoteleiro-no-territorio-tupinamba-2951fed5-9091-4402-8e-2c-b664fo16b9ac>.

In recent decades, this research trend has strengthened, directly influenced by the agenda established by Indigenous peoples themselves, their intellectuals, and the Indigenous movement. Although Indigenous peoples in Brazil have forged varied strategies to confront genocide and colonial power since the Portuguese invasion, for a long time, the agency and creativity of these subjects received little academic attention (Monteiro 2012).

This distortion is even more evident in certain contexts, including the Northeast, due to a supposed absence or low intensity of cultural contrasts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, due to the earlier date of non-Indigenous intrusions (Pacheco de Oliveira 1998; Carvalho and Reesink 2018). The marginalization of Indigenous peoples in the Northeast within the field of Anthropology began to lessen in the 1970s, though a more pronounced rupture did not occur until the 1990s. As Pacheco de Oliveira (2018: 7) highlights in commentary on recent research carried out in the Northeast and other regions of the country related to processes of Indigenous territorialization and mobilization, when we understand that “it is the mobilized indigenous communities that delimit and enforce respect for their territories,” we have the opportunity to reveal not only circumscribed land struggle processes, but also “indigenous conceptions of time, person and the nature of the world, the construction of new sagas and utopias [...].”

Based on a detailed examination of the responses of the Tupinambá of Serra do Padeiro to violence, our purpose is to contribute to the production on forms of contemporary political action rendered by Indigenous peoples in Brazil, forming a politically and academically relevant research agenda not only for this specific group. Among other aspects, we seek to demonstrate how Tupinambá mobilization is a dynamic process within which strategies are transformed daily, informed by both profound and circumstantial motivations, inseparable from their ongoing struggles for territorial recovery.

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