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Trigger elements of psychosocial trauma: an analysis of the Marambaia Quilombo

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Abstract

This article investigates the historical factors that contribute to the development of psychosocial trauma in the Marambaia Quilombo, located in Sepetiba Bay, in the municipality of Mangaratiba, Rio de Janeiro. The study addresses the tensions between the quilombola community and the Brazilian Navy, resulting from rights violations and the military occupation of the territory. Drawing on the works of Ignacio Martín-Baró, the analysis highlights violence, social polarization, and institutionalized lies as key elements triggering psychosocial trauma. The methodology included a literature review and document analysis related to the history of Marambaia. The results indicate that the context of prolonged oppression has produced deep psychosocial impacts on the community. It is concluded that the case of Marambaia broadens the understanding of psychosocial trauma by incorporating specific elements of racism and the shortcomings of reparation policies.

Keywords: Human rights; Mental health; Psychosocial trauma; Quilombola Communities; Violence.

Ignacio Martín-Baró's contributions are of profound importance for analyzing the reality of Latin American peoples. His career, marked by engagement in social struggles against all forms of oppression and exploitation, forms the backdrop for his theoretical contributions, which challenge hegemonic practices in psychology and provide a new conception of mental health.

The notion of Psychosocial Trauma (PST) – still little explored in psychological literature – emerges from the author's studies on the psychosocial effects of war and political violence during the civil-military dictatorships in various Latin American countries. It is important to emphasize that, although "trauma" carries different meanings in traditional psychology and psychoanalysis, the concept of PST, for Martín-Baró, reveals a deep connection with the political and social context. The use of the term "psychosocial" underscores the link between the traumatic experience and its triggering elements, such as prolonged exposure to situations of violence (Martín-Baró, 2017a).

Although the notion of PST was developed within a context of explicit dictatorship and civil war, it remains valid for analyzing various situations that continue to affect marginalized populations around the world – particularly in Latin America – who face violence, social inequality, and the erosion of rights (Euzébios Filho, 2023). This study seeks to contribute to the expansion of Martín-Baró's formulations on psychosocial trauma, based on the case of the Marambaia Quilombo. In doing so, it also aims to deepen the understanding of the psychosocial dimensions of violence against traditional communities.

The decision to focus on this community is grounded in the authors' participation, between 2022 and 2024, in the Outreach Project "Toward a Broader Notion of the Right to Quilombola Territory", associated with the School of Social Work at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Since 2022, the project has carried out advisory, experiential, and educational activities in human rights through regular visits to the Marambaia Quilombo.

The Community of Remnants of the Quilombo of Marambaia Island – or simply Marambaia Quilombo – is located on Marambaia Island, Rio de Janeiro. The island, geographically characterized as a sandbank, has a history of occupation and continuous residence dating back at least to the 19th century, when it served as a clandestine landing port for Africans. During this period, Joaquim José de Souza Breves used Marambaia Island to receive enslaved Africans arriving from the continent (Arruti, 2003; Moraes, 2014). In the post-abolition period, the territory underwent several changes in ownership, while the quilombola community maintained possession through continued occupation. Two key moments stand out: the period of operation of the Darcy Vargas School and the arrival of the Brazilian Navy, which remains on the territory to this day.

Revisiting the quilombo's history is essential for understanding its current conflicts and for exploring the issue of TPS within the community, given that transgenerationality a characteristic of TPS that reveals its effects are transmitted to the generations following those who directly suffered political violence and sequentiality of trauma a characteristic that points to the fact that TPS results from a historical process in which different traumatic experiences accumulate in sequence, making the process of traumatization more complex are fundamental aspects in characterizing psychosocial traumatization (Gonçalves, 2017).

Following the periodization commonly used by quilombolas themselves, this study adopts the framework proposed by Mota (2001) to briefly describe the processes and changes in living conditions on the island. It is common among the islanders of Marambaia to refer to three distinct periods: "the time of Breves", "the time of the School", and "the time of the Navy". The "time of Breves" corresponds to the period of slavery, when the island functioned as a clandestine port for the disembarkation of Africans. The "time of the School" refers to the Darcy Vargas Fishing School, established on the island in 1939 during the Getúlio Vargas government, which operated until the 1970s. The "time of the Navy" denotes the period beginning with the arrival of the military in 1971 and extending to the present day. Each period, which will be explored in detail, is characterized by distinct living conditions for the quilombola population and different levels of conflict. Currently, part of the island is a territory under shared ownership between the Federal Union – administered by the Brazilian Navy and classified as being of military interest – and the institution representing the local quilombola residents, the *Associação dos Remanescentes Quilombolas da Ilha da Marambaia* (ARQIMAR, Association of Quilombola Remnants of Marambaia Island) (Lopes, 2017; Yabeta & Gomes, 2013).

This study builds on the hypothesis – previously discussed in collective works (Boechat et al., 2024) – that the historically persistent tensions between the quilombola community and the

Brazilian Navy, along with the continued obstruction of rights within the territory, have generated a series of impacts that produce PST, resulting in both individual and collective effects within the community.

This article seeks to analyze and identify the historical processes that contribute to the development of PST in the Marambaia Quilombo, highlighting the triad of triggering elements described by Martín-Baró: social polarization, violence, and institutionalized lies. As the purpose of this work is not to mechanically transpose Martín-Baró's analysis to the context of the Quilombo, it is necessary to advance the understanding of the processes and elements that historically contribute to the consolidation of PST, considering the particularities imposed by this context. Using Martín-Baró's theoretical framework as a starting point, this study seeks to expand upon his formulations by incorporating the historical particularities of Brazil's racial and social formation, as well as the specific history of the Marambaia Quilombo. Because this case is shaped by distinct circumstances, it may not exhibit the same characteristics observed in other contexts – such as the Salvadoran civil war – and may instead reveal additional elements that extend beyond the triad proposed by Martín-Baró.

Method

To carry out this study, we conducted a literature review and analysis of works concerning the quilombola community of Marambaia Island, as well as the writings of Ignacio Martín-Baró related to the concept of PST. Initially, a mapping of the author's works that address PST (Martín-Baró, 1997, 2003a, 2003b, 2017a, 2017b) was conducted, based on the materials available in the *Colección Digital Ignacio Martín-Baró* of the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas, in addition to contributions from other scholars who have further developed the concept (Euzébios Filho, 2023; Moreira & Guzzo, 2015; Martins & Lacerda, 2014). To understand the history of the community and the forms of violence it has suffered, reports, articles, theses, and dissertations dealing with the history, memory, and legal issues of the Marambaia Quilombo were consulted (Arruti, 2003; Lopes, 2010, 2017; Moraes, 2014; Mota, 2001; Yabeta & Gomes, 2013).

This study also draws on data and information from the report "Current Scenario of Rights Violations and Public Policies in the Quilombola Community of Marambaia Island (RJ)", produced by the executive team of the outreach project "Toward an Expanded Notion of the Right to Quilombola Territory". For the preparation of this document, the project partnered with the Ignacio Martín-Baró Popular Outreach Group (an outreach initiative of the Institute of Psychology at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, linked to the Research and Outreach Center on Societal Projects, Education, and the Agrarian Issue in Brazilian Social Formation at the Fluminense Federal University) and the Luísa Mahin Popular Legal Advisory Center (a project affiliated with the National Faculty of Law at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro). This psychosocial and economic report aimed to collect data on the current state of rights violations and the limited access to public policies in the quilombola territory of Marambaia Island, within the context of the petition submitted to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in Case No. 14,969 (Quilombola Community of Marambaia Island/RJ vs. Brazil). The report draws connections to the notion of PST and, consequently, calls for reparations for the community.

Beyond the evident relationship between the reflections presented here and Martín-Baró's theoretical framework, the analyses are also grounded in historical-dialectical materialism and the historical-cultural approach. These perspectives stem from the analysis and understanding of the

formation of individuals through their relationship with the world, their history, and their culture – as beings constituted in and through the relations they establish with social reality (Messias et al., 2025).

The results and discussion are organized into two topics. The first presents the Marambaia Island quilombola community and its history – from the period of Breves to the present. The second topic offers a brief review of Martín-Baró's concept of PST, focusing on its triad of triggering elements (violence, institutionalized lies, and social polarization), and subsequently expands upon his framework in light of the specific characteristics observed in the case of the Marambaia Quilombo.

Marambaia Quilombo: The Time of Breves, the Time of the School, and the Time of the Navy

The quilombola territory of Marambaia Island is located at the tip of the Marambaia sandbank, in Sepetiba Bay, on the southern coast of the state of Rio de Janeiro, in the municipality of Mangaratiba. The island has a history of occupation and continuous residence dating back at least to the 19th century. As previously described, the analysis of the processes and conflicts within the territory will be based on the periodization proposed by Mota (2001), which follows expressions commonly used by the quilombola residents themselves. Therefore, for didactic purposes, the descriptive sections of the “time of Breves,” the “time of the School,” and the “time of the Navy” are presented below.

“The time of Breves”

The “time of Breves” corresponds to the period of slavery, when the island served as a clandestine port for the disembarkation of Africans. Joaquim de Souza Breves, one of the largest slave traders of the time, owned the island and used it to receive people forcibly brought from Africa. It served as a place of transit before they were distributed to coffee plantations throughout the region. These individuals were kept on the island for physical recovery – a practice cynically referred to as the period of “fattening and resale” (Arruti, 2003; Moraes, 2014).

After 1850, the disembarkation of Africans on Brazilian shores was deemed a criminal act, following the enactment of Law No. 581 (Brasil, 1850) – known as the Eusébio de Queirós Law – which sought to suppress the illegal slave trade. Despite this prohibition, Breves continued to operate as one of the country's major slave traffickers. In his research, Moraes (2014) identified at least two cases involving the apprehension of Africans suspected of having recently disembarked on the island. It is important to emphasize that this documentation – referring to the apprehension of Africans who were sent to the General Audit Office of the Navy – was largely ignored by the authorities during the official process of recognizing the community as a quilombo remnant.

Another research that contributed to the study of the political, social, and legal history of Marambaia Island and its quilombola community is the Technical and Scientific Report on the Remaining Quilombo Community of Marambaia Island, Municipality of Mangaratiba (RJ) (Arruti, 2003). This work has been the subject of dispute regarding the struggles over the memory of territorial occupation, as it provides evidence for reconstructing the ways of life that took shape on the island after the abolition of slavery.

According to the report, and based on the collective memory of the community, after abolition, Commander Joaquim Breves allegedly went personally to Marambaia and informally donated the island to the families of formerly enslaved people who continued to live there, developing

autonomous survival strategies through practices such as fishing and agriculture. As Gusmão (2001) points out, this practice was common in history, as many Black communities emerged from the occupation of vacant lands immediately following abolition.

The community's way of life and living conditions in the post-abolition period were marked by greater autonomy for the formerly enslaved population and their descendants. However, this way of life was soon interrupted by conflicts surrounding the occupation of the territory by the Brazilian state. In 1910, the daily life of the people of Marambaia would once again be altered by the intervention of representatives of the federal government. After acquiring the property from Breves's widow in 1905, the federal government began exercising ownership rights over the sandbank (Arruti, 2003).

“The time of the School”

The “time of the School” refers to the Darcy Vargas Fishing School, established on the island in 1939 during the Getúlio Vargas government, which operated until the 1970s. The establishment of the school, which marked the beginning of a period of major transformations in the island's way of life, resulted from the donation of Marambaia Island to the Cristo Redentor Foundation, which was responsible for constructing the institution. Pavilions were built, including a church, hospital, pharmacy, school, laundry, bakery, and ice factory. The project was later expanded to include horticultural and livestock production, with the goal of reducing food costs for the workers – who numbered around 150 in 1940 (Arruti, 2003).

During this period, island residents – descendants of enslaved people – integrated with the island's new inhabitants, being absorbed both as laborers in less qualified positions and as students at the school (Arruti, 2003; Mota, 2001). According to Lopes (2010), the islanders' collective memory identifies this period as highly favorable, as they gained access to public services that had previously been unavailable. Later, the arrival of the Navy and the closure of the school represented an abrupt transformation in the islanders' way of life.

“The time of the Navy”

During the 1970s, amid the business-military dictatorship (Dreifuss, 1981), the trajectory of the Marambaia Island quilombola community was profoundly shaped by the expansion of agrarian capitalism in rural Brazil, through conservative modernization policies that consolidated the “depeasantization” of rural spaces in the country (Moreira, 1990, p. 79). Regarding Black territories located within military areas during that period:

Despite their condition as public lands [...], they can be analyzed within the agrarian context of the 1970s. This is because they were not entirely excluded from the conservative modernization policies (Delgado, [20--]) that took hold in the countryside during that period. Although they were not transformed into monocultural agricultural territories, they were still drawn into the dynamics that displaced and subjugated peasants, *caíças*, and quilombolas, among others, in the name of expanding agricultural frontiers across the national territory, major infrastructure projects, and the dynamic of separating rural populations from their main means of production – land. (Lopes, 2025, p. 85, own translation)

The “time of the Navy” refers to the period beginning with the arrival of the military in 1971 – during Brazil's business-military dictatorship – marked by the Navy's assumption of administrative control over Marambaia Island and, in 1981, the establishment of the *Centro de*

Adestramento Militar da Ilha da Marambaia (Cadim, Marambaia Island Military Training Center), extending to the present day. The transformation brought about by the arrival of the military can be associated with the beginning of the contemporary conflict between residents and the Brazilian Navy over the territory.

In the Marambaia Dossier, organized by Arruti (2003), the arrival of the military is identified as the start of a period of specific restrictions imposed on the islanders, representing a significant change in their relationship with the island's administration – which had previously been overseen by the Darcy Vargas Fishing School. As Lopes (2010, p. 69, own translation) describes:

Upon arriving on Marambaia Island, the Brazilian Navy took possession not only of the Marambaia property, but also of the beaches, the water springs, the forests, the fauna, the flora, and, ultimately, the people and the history of the island. One example of this is the ruins of the old slave quarters, which were adapted to serve as a hotel for visitors to the Island, especially those invited by members of higher hierarchical posts.

In the 1990s, tensions between the islanders and the Brazilian Navy intensified when the Federal Court of Rio de Janeiro issued a series of eviction orders aimed at expelling Marambaia residents – a process mediated by the judiciary. According to Mota (2001), this marked the beginning of the conflict between the residents and the Navy. The lengthy process of social and legal recognition of the quilombola community is described by Lopes (2010). According to the author, the shift in this scenario occurred when the islanders organized to defend themselves legally, petitioning the Palmares Cultural Foundation for official recognition of Marambaia Island as quilombola territory and that the Federal Government cease the evictions. As a result, a member of the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office intervened in the conflict, filing a *Ação Civil Pública* (Public Civil Action) to require the Military Command to halt any measures aimed at expelling the islanders. One of the arguments presented in this action was the existence of evidence suggesting that the Marambaia Island community was composed of quilombo descendants.

As in other remaining quilombo communities in Brazil, the struggle for recognition of the Marambaia Island community as a quilombo remnant involves a field of disputes and tensions surrounding issues such as land access, public policy, and the recognition of identity. Since the 1970s, the island has been considered a military area (of national security or military interest) and has housed the Cadim. Tensions around the recognition process involve “disputes over occupation of the region, means of subsistence (farming, fishing, housing), and disputes over the recognition of an identity” (Lopes, 2010, p. 23, own translation). Amid this ongoing conflict, ARQIMAR – founded on January 19, 2003 – has served as a key vehicle for community organization and resistance. Since its creation, the association has fought to ensure residents' permanence, land possession, and the recognition of the community as a quilombo remnant. It is important to note that ARQIMAR was not the first community and political organization formed among quilombolas in resistance to evictions. However, difficulties in the emergence of leadership during the process and the difficulty of maintaining collective organization – due to the constant threat of expulsion – undermined earlier efforts.

Currently, part of Marambaia Island is federal property, administered by the Brazilian Navy and considered of military interest. The other part belongs to the association representing the quilombola residents of the region. In 2014, after roughly 40 years (1971-2014) of resisting successive efforts by the Federal Government to make the island an area of exclusive military use, the community was officially recognized and registered as a quilombo remnant territory. This outcome resulted from negotiations mediated by the Federal Prosecutor's Office through a *Termo de Ajustamento de*

Conduta (TAC, Conduct Adjustment Agreement). The TAC established the limits of land occupation between the Brazilian Navy and the quilombola community, as well as rules for coexistence in shared spaces throughout Marambaia Island. It is important to emphasize that after the TAC was signed between the Federal Government and ARQIMAR, all judicial repossession actions that had threatened the residents and their families with expulsion were dismissed – one of the community's conditions for signing the agreement (Lopes, 2017).

However, even after the TAC, residents of the Marambaia Quilombo continue to be affected by the ongoing military presence, facing challenges such as the lack of public transportation, racism, loss of territorial rights, and the deterioration of agricultural and fishing activities, along with difficulties in accessing healthcare, education, and sanitation services. It is also important to highlight the attempts to erode the quilombola community's memory and identity during the period of military occupation. Since the arrival of the Navy, Marambaia's residents have lived under a new social dynamic filled with restrictions, manifested in systematic attempts to expel the quilombola community from the island – whether through direct conflict or through the obstruction of access to rights.

One of the main issues concerns transportation, as access to rights and public policies in the region is hindered by the lack of regular public transportation for the community. The existing transportation, publicly funded, primarily serves the needs of the Brazilian Navy and only secondarily those of the quilombola residents. Moreover, the Navy-provided vessel docks far from some beaches – often requiring an hour or more of walking or hiking – which further limits accessibility and mobility. The transportation issue poses an obstacle even to accessing other fundamental rights, such as education, healthcare, employment, and food security.

Another critical issue concerns housing. According to the titling agreement, the quilombola residential areas were divided into “islands,” meaning circumscribed areas that do not necessarily connect with one another. This fragmentation hinders both agriculture and the expansion of housing. Furthermore, housing for the quilombola population has never benefited from any form of state housing policy.

Triggering Elements of Psychosocial Trauma

Psychosocial Trauma (PST) is a term developed by Ignacio Martín-Baró in the context of the Salvadoran civil war, particularly during the 1980s. The concept contributes to understanding the psychosocial impacts observed in contexts of war and intense political violence.

The concept of PST is intrinsically linked to the author's conception of mental health. Surpassing the traditional medical model of understanding mental health, Martín-Baró (2017b) proposes that it should be analyzed as a problem of social, interpersonal, and intergroup relations – one capable of generating crises not only in individuals but also in communities, institutions, or even entire societies. For the author, mental health is not limited to the “satisfactory functioning” of the individual, but rather constitutes a fundamental feature of human relations – shared by members of a given society or group – that defines the possibilities for humanization.

Through the concept of PST, Martín-Baró highlighted how events such as wars, political oppression, violence, and social injustice can cause deep harm to the mental health of individuals and communities. In this way, the author distances himself from the conception of individual trauma found in hegemonic psychology and traditional psychoanalysis, establishing new epistemological and ontological foundations for understanding trauma (Moreira & Guzzo, 2015). When formulating

this concept, Martín-Baró (2003a) emphasizes the need to transcend the medical view of trauma as a physical injury in an isolated individual, as well as to overcome the notion of psychic trauma as a strictly intrapsychic phenomenon. Although he acknowledges the importance of the subjective dimension in individual suffering, the author underscores that the fundamental origins of this trauma are social.

To further refine this definition, Euzébio Filho (2023) distinguishes PST from collective trauma. Unlike traditional conceptions in psychology, PST is not reduced to the notion of small groups or the mere sum of individuals, but represents a specific feature inscribed in a particular mode of social organization. Trauma, therefore, should not be understood as a phenomenon that affects all individuals within a given group in a homogeneous or uniform manner. As Euzébio Filho (2023, p. 24, own translation) highlights: “Indeed, the term psychosocial seems more appropriate, as it stems from a dialectical understanding of the psychological phenomenon, which rejects the notion of the collective as homogeneity, on one hand, or as a tangle of individual differences, on the other.”

Trauma thus has a dialectical character, indicating not only its social genesis but also its relational nature within the specific context in which the individual is inserted. This means that trauma must be understood through the interaction between the individual and society. It cannot be said that certain social situations will universally cause trauma, nor that certain individuals will be immune to it. Exceptional situations may lead a community either toward deterioration or toward strengthening and overcoming adversity.

Martín-Baró (2017a, 2017b) developed the concept of PST by identifying three triggering elements: violence, institutionalized lies, and social polarization. Although interrelated, these elements can be analyzed separately for didactic purposes. First, violence, for Martín-Baró, is always political, constituting a historical process, since “the violent act is carried out by the human being, whose nature is historical and, therefore, open to diverse and contradictory possibilities” (Martins & Lacerda, 2014, p. 576, own translation). In his work, the author frequently emphasizes the ideological and structural foundations of violence, referring to it as political violence.

From this perspective, violence is defined as the excessive use of force – physical or symbolic – against something or someone, distinguishing it from mere aggression. While aggression implies an intention to cause harm (Martín-Baró, 2012), violence can manifest independently of direct intent, as in social structures that impose oppressive conditions. Physical, psychological, symbolic, and state violence represent different expressions of political violence.

Social polarization, another element of PST, creates a climate conducive to confrontation through the negative characterization of the “other.” It is a psychosocial process that reduces positions on any given issue to two opposing and mutually exclusive poles within a social context. The effectiveness of violence is amplified by institutionalized lies, defined by Martín-Baró (1975) as the systematic concealment of reality through disqualifying discourses, creating official versions that distort, omit, or falsify crucial aspects of reality.

Although Martín-Baró formulated the concept of PST within the specific context of dictatorship and civil war, Euzébio Filho (2023) demonstrates its relevance for understanding contemporary conflicts – particularly in Latin America, marked by persistent human rights violations, militarization, segregation, and structural inequality. Following previous studies (Boechat et al., 2024), this work was grounded in the hypothesis that the historical tensions between the Quilombola community and the Navy, combined with the systematic obstruction of rights within the territory, have generated impacts characteristic of PST, with both individual and collective consequences. To test this hypothesis, it is necessary to analyze how the case of the Marambaia Quilombo relates

to the triad of PST-triggering elements: violence, institutionalized lies, and social polarization. It is important to consider the factors of transgenerationality and sequentiality of trauma (Gonçalves, 2017), which require a comprehensive historical analysis of the island.

Political violence currently manifests in the material hardships faced by the Quilombola community: lack of access to basic services such as drinking water, adequate transportation, healthcare, sanitation, and education, as well as restrictions imposed by the Navy on the construction and renovation of housing. The scarcity of educational resources – particularly the absence of secondary schools – limits the prospects of children and adolescents. The lack of local economic opportunities, resulting from the absence of reparative policies, forces residents to migrate in search of work, weakening community cohesion. These conditions amount to systematic human rights violations on the island³.

The absence of public transportation on the island constitutes a daily experience of humiliation for residents who, under military hierarchy rules, must wear “appropriate” clothing and always board and disembark last. Moreover, the irregularity of the transport service hinders access to employment and educational opportunities outside the territory.

The territory has one preschool and elementary school, located within the Cadim (a military area), which serves the local population. However, the absence of high school classes on the island forces young people to commute to the mainland, leading many to migrate permanently – further weakening the Quilombola community’s cohesion.

Throughout the military occupation, various forms of violence have been recorded: 1) intentional deterioration of agricultural and fishing activities by the Navy (Arruti, 2003); 2) arbitrary use of force and physical violence against residents (Arruti, 2003); and 3) training exercises with live ammunition on beaches, with reports of “stray bullets” striking and damaging homes (Lopes, 2010).

Symbolic and subjective violence manifests in attempts to erase Quilombola memory, culture, and identity. A striking example of this reality is the conversion of the remaining *senzala* (slave quarters) from the Breves period – with its original stone walls – into a transit lodging for military personnel. Despite the relative security afforded by the recognition of the area as Quilombola territory and by the TAC, residents face daily conflicts arising from the ongoing military occupation. Other traumatic episodes remain vivid in community memory:

One account comes from the early 1970s, regarding the death of an elderly woman who tried to stand between a young soldier and the coconut tree in her backyard, which she was fond of. Faced with her firm resistance, the soldier pushed her violently while hurling insults and immediately cut down the family’s coconut tree. A few days later, in a state of depression in which the old woman no longer ate or spoke with her neighbors, she passed away. (Arruti, 2003, p. 142, own translation)

The institutionalized lies – the cornerstone of political violence – is clearly manifested in the island’s history, particularly in the Navy’s narrative, which, through its official channels, portrays a more recent occupation of the territory and emphasizes that the residents have a “very mixed origin,” thereby obscuring the island’s enslaved past (Lopes, 2010). In place of the memory of the slave trade, the Navy constructed a narrative that celebrates the success of the Eusébio de Queirós Law and the end of illegal disembarkations after 1850 – a strategy aimed at delegitimizing the islanders’ collective memory of Marambaia’s slaveholding past. Strategically, the military institution omits its historical role in repressing the illegal trafficking of Africans and even questions the involvement of

³ Information from the socioeconomic and psychosocial report “Current Scenario of Rights Violations and Public Policies in the Quilombola Community of Marambaia Island (RJ)”, produced in 2022 by the Outreach Project “Toward an Expanded Notion of the Right to Quilombola Territory”.

Commander Joaquim José de Souza Breves in this illicit activity (Moraes, 2014). Much of the legal conflict over the recognition of the community as a remnant Quilombo stems from this concealment.

This tension becomes evident in the “Marambaia Project”, a report commissioned by the Navy from the Biological Anthropology Laboratory of the State University of Rio de Janeiro, which expresses opposition to the official recognition of the territory as Quilombola land. Environmentalist arguments are also mobilized within this strategy of delegitimization: the community, which since its origins has developed sustainable fishing and farming practices, is systematically accused of environmental degradation. In an opinion piece published in *O Globo*, Maia (2007) suggested that the Armed Forces are the true agents responsible for preserving the island, while Quilombola recognition would represent an “ecological disaster.” Referring to the residents as “hypothetical descendents of Quilombolas,” the then-mayor of Rio de Janeiro characterized the recognition process as a historical mistake.

Although social polarization is less evident in direct empirical terms in the context of the Marambaia Quilombo, it manifests structurally through discursive constructions that antagonize the Quilombola community – particularly by portraying them as “land invaders” or “obstacles to development.” This narrative, amplified during legal actions for land repossession (Lopes, 2010), fits within Martín-Baró’s (2017a) concept of social polarization as a psychosocial process that reduces complex conflicts to an exclusionary dichotomy, legitimizing institutional violence against marginalized groups.

In Brazil, this dynamic is reinforced by stigmatizing public discourse – such as that of former president Jair Bolsonaro, who repeatedly described Quilombolas as “obstacles” to progress or as “privileged” people occupying land illegally – a rhetoric similar to that used against unhoused populations and recipients of social welfare programs such as *Bolsa Família*. This public demonization not only intensifies social hostility but also undermines the legitimacy of Quilombola demands, consolidating a scenario in which institutional violence (such as evictions and military restrictions) becomes normalized.

Thus, polarization in the Marambaia Quilombo is not limited to localized conflicts but is part of a broader national pattern of political and racial antagonism, in which traditional communities are systematically positioned as “the other” to be controlled or eliminated. According to Martín-Baró (2003a), this logic operates as a mechanism of domination that justifies oppression, feeding into PST through the fracturing of the community fabric and the denial of its historical dignity.

It is possible to establish correlations – while respecting contextual particularities – between the PST-triggering elements described by Martín-Baró and the history of the Marambaia Quilombo. However, phenomena can also be observed that transcend the author’s formulations, whose objective was never to prescribe a rigid model but to provide a foundation for historical and dialectical analysis. Since the objective of this study is not to mechanically apply the theoretical framework, Martín-Baró’s contributions were taken as a point of departure to expand upon his formulation. In this sense, two crucial elements were identified for understanding PST in this specific context: structural racism and the absence of psychosocial reparation policies.

Racism must be understood, beyond individual prejudice, as a structure that organizes the objective conditions of precarity and degradation to which the community is subjected (Moura, 1994). Racial discrimination, as an expression of Brazilian racism, limits equal access to services and opportunities. More fundamentally, when historically analyzing a rural Black community, it becomes evident how the racist logic structures its social position of precarity.

Brazil's social formation, marked by centuries of colonization and enslavement of Black populations, reveals the continuity of structural racism even after the abolition of slavery. As Corato (2020, p. 49, own translation) highlights:

A key historical milestone was the first *Lei de Terras* (Land Law), enacted in 1850, which defined land as a commodity that could be purchased by anyone able to pay for it. This strategy was crucial for maintaining concentrated wealth and ensuring the success of the elite, as when slavery was abolished in 1888, there was no agrarian reform and no reparations were made for the newly freed population.

It is essential to recognize that the foundations of capitalist development were already being consolidated in that historical period. After abolition, legislative and tariff measures that promoted the marginalization of the Black population intensified, explaining the scarcity of social and economic reparation policies for this group – now the majority among the poorer strata of Brazilian society.

According to Fernandes (1971), a singular feature of Brazilian racism lies in the continuous maintenance, reproduction, and deepening of the racial concentration of income, prestige, and power. On Marambaia Island, these racist expressions manifest both in the state's omission in formulating adequate public policies and in the actions of the judiciary. As Lopes (2017) demonstrates, it is significant that the military occupation of the island was consolidated during the business–military dictatorship (1964–1985), renewing forms of domination in rural Black territories and evidencing the expansion of capitalism in Brazil's agrarian space.

In his analyses of Brazilian social formation and the racial issue, Moura (1988) highlights the persistence of the slaveholding structure after 1888, with the maintenance and refinement of domination mechanisms. For the author, racism – including, in this context, the offensive against Quilombola communities – constitutes a fundamental element of dependent Brazilian capitalism in its new phase. This perspective allows for understanding the subordinate position of traditional communities as mere objects of state public policies, perpetuating the deprivation of basic rights and the consequent process of psychosocial traumatization.

The absence of psychosocial reparation policies is consolidated as a structural element in the triggering of PST on Marambaia Island. The state's omission in recognizing and repairing the historical violations of human rights – such as territorial expropriation, military violence, and cultural erasure – not only perpetuates collective pain but also reinforces a cycle of revictimization. Gonçalves (2017) highlights that the lack of reparation transforms isolated traumas into a cumulative chain of suffering, in which new violations overlap unhealed wounds, deepening the emotional and social destabilization of the community.

Overcoming this legacy requires a model of comprehensive reparation that includes both material measures (such as land restitution and access to basic services) and symbolic ones (such as public acknowledgment of violations and the valuing of Quilombola memory). This approach must consider multiple levels of psychosocial impact: individual (anxiety, depression), collective (disruption of community bonds), and transgenerational (transmission of trauma to future generations). Ignoring these dimensions means reproducing the very logic of oppression that sustains PST, rendering any effective process of healing and justice unfeasible.

Conclusion

The Marambaia Quilombo has a history marked by resistance to systematic political violence and the obstruction of rights. This work highlights the different historical periods, conflicts,

tensions, and transformations in the community's ways of life and living conditions, emphasizing the aspects of transgenerationality and sequentiality of trauma associated with expressions of violence in each temporal context.

Psychosocial trauma does not correspond to an isolated event but, as Euzébio Filho (2023, p. 25, own translation) puts it, constitutes "a prolongation of psychosocial harm produced by the prevailing social and economic system," or more precisely, "the result of a mode of sociability that produces constant violence, social polarization, fear, and repression." It develops most fully in contexts that combine three interrelated elements: violence, social polarization, and institutionalized lies. This article demonstrates how processes identified in the history of the Marambaia Quilombo correspond to the elements described in the work of Martín-Baró as potential triggers of PST. The violations and obstructions of rights experienced by the Quilombola community, as described above, constitute situations of clear political violence.

Two additional elements were also identified – structural racism and the absence of reparation policies – specific to Brazil's social formation and to the particular history of this quilombo. In addition to broadening the understanding of PST, the study corroborates the hypothesis that the persistent tensions between the Quilombola community and the Navy, together with the sequential obstruction of rights in the territory, generated impacts characteristic of PST.

It is necessary to problematize the use of the term "triggering elements" employed in this text. The expression may suggest a fragmented interpretation of these factors. It should be emphasized that these elements are distinguished didactically for the sake of expository organization but must be understood as profoundly interconnected. Their coextensivity is particularly notable – for instance, racism, identified as a triggering element, simultaneously constitutes the ideological foundation of political violence.

The study's limitations become evident when examining the individual and collective harm experienced by the community as a result of the analyzed impacts, as well as the possible forms of reparative intervention. Future research should collect primary data to identify the individual and collective psychosocial damage associated with PST and to investigate possibilities for community-level reparation. There is also a need for studies that explore more deeply the community's resistance strategies within the scope of Quilombola memory and identity.

Psychosocial traumatization in traditional communities remains a phenomenon whose effects have not been sufficiently recognized. As these communities organize in the struggle for their rights, the psychosocial dimensions of these processes gain greater visibility. Psychology can make a significant contribution by demonstrating how these phenomena take shape and by showing that, beyond the individual dimension, collective processes of traumatization – threatening the very existence and continuity of these communities – are at play.

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Contributors

M. F. RODRIGUES conducted the investigation and drafted the original manuscript, being primarily responsible for the fieldwork and the initial preparation of the text. F. M. BOECHAT contributed significantly to the methodology and theoretical framework, providing the conceptual and analytical foundation of the research. A. C. LOPES was responsible for securing the resources that made the investigation possible and for revising the manuscript, ensuring the cohesion and adequacy of the final text.