Ethnographic Case Study

Vitaliy

Institutional Affiliation(s)

Author Note

Ethnographic Study

Culture can be studied through various ways and earlier anthropologists used an armchair anthropology approach in conducting research which resulted in biased results (Tubelle, McIlwraith, & Brown, 2017). Armchair means looking at something from a distant place. Ethnocentrism is a superiority complex of the mind and believing that own way of doing the thing is right and this has resulted in biased researches mostly in the past. The author of Lorena Kenny has tried to eliminate the ethnocentric approach in doing research by living with the population of her research study. Language is the most important aspect of any culture and with fading language, culture also loses its identity (Tubelle, McIlwraith, & Brown, 2017). Mary Lorena Kenny has tried to write for the people living in poverty and people who are being deprived of their rights (Kenny, 2018). This research is a study of Quilombolas, who were once used to slaves and after the abolition of slavery some 125 years ago, regarded as a freeman. The author has thoroughly investigated the challenges faced by that specific group of inscribed black settlements. According to the research study, more than four thousand quilombolas live in Brazil (Kenny, 2018). These people face many challenges in the 21st century despite having a free people status and entitlement of land by the inclusion of a clause in the 1988 constitution of Brazil.

The main theme of the research study is to identify whether Quilombolas have a real culture or not. In black settlements culture is dominated by the ancient practices they have been doing from past so many years. A lack of ancient practices makes ones position weaker. The same has happened with quilombolas over time as they lack practices of dance, art and aerobatics usually practised by ancient blacks. Quilombola also need a federal recognition of their status as only quilombola are entitled to have land and with changes, quilombolas have been neglected of their right granted in 1988 and social, political and racial segregation is taking pace supported by the majority.

The roots of slavery have been discussed in the introduction of the book. Since slavery ended some 125 years ago but the after impacts of slavery still exists in many parts of the world where colonialism and slavery were practised. Brazil is one of those Countries which imported a major chunk of 5 million slaves and among them were the quilombolas. They later gained the freedom and to ease the pain quilombolas faced during slavery and colonialism, they were granted land entitlement under the inclusion of a clause in the 1988 constitution as reparation. This reparation has been highly opposed by the elite and powerful.

The opposition to quilombolas land policy is opposed by almost every powerful institution of the country as this land policy would affect multinational companies, government development projects, agriculturalists and the elites. The problem is further worsened by the interference of other countries like the US, which got special permission from the government of Brazil. Negligence of the government to implement quilombolas land policy is a constant threat to the quilombola community as they already face lots of challenges and there is a constant threat to their existence. The focus of the research is to know how groups overtime has disappeared and how to determine the merits and demerits of a culture. The researcher himself has visited the communities of quilombolas to investigate how these people live. Quilombolas are a unique community of black people and every black person is not land entitled and to eligible for land entitlement, a person must need a federal recognition

## Research Question

The author’s main research question was to explore a specific type of African slaves known as quilombolas in the twenty-first century. There are some characteristics associated with Afro-Brazilian communities like the traditions they have been following for so many years. The authenticity to be recognized were merely based on the practices of those communities like some were associated with dance and art. Some of the communities practised martial arts, dance and aerobatics and the absence of these practices could result in a weak position.

In the case of quilombolas, the common and dominating practices of the blacks were missing and the author wanted to investigate what consequences do quilombolas face in the new era after freedom from slavery. The author wants to investigate how different cultures have disappeared and have been assimilated. It is also the aim of the study to identify what is fake and what is real culture and how it is practised

### **Theoretical issue**

Quilombolas are decedents of quilombola and their legitimacy and authenticity are questioned in the 21st century. Quilombolas find it hard to prove themselves and are being an object of exploitation and their rights are being neglected as they need federal approval to be eligible for certain privileges available to them. The author wants to investigate the challenges faced by quilombolas as a community and culture and whether an ancient practice should be a pre-requisite of a culture or not.

#### Difficulties faced by the author

Quilombolas were a community living very far from urban centres in the remote hilly areas of Brazil where accessibility for the author was an issue in conducting research. Those areas have been the target of natural disasters like droughts and despite being free from slavery they faced the harshness of the environment. As the author wanted to investigate the mentioned questions above in the research question section, it was not easy for him to complete it and come to a conclusion in a short span of time and it took 12 years for the author to comprehend his research. Since the writer was a white woman, it was hard to initiate interactions with the quilombolas as they were not accustomed to the beliefs of differences between black and white people. The interaction between white people and quilombola were very rare and that had certainly been a problem for the author to get in close interaction with quilombolas. The author not only had the issue of communication but there were also certain risks because of her identity as she were a white foreigner woman working on long-term research.

The duration of her stay could have generated suspicion among authorities and local people. She also faced the challenges of criticism from locals and authorities, suspicion of her stay motive and fearful interactions with people so it was not easy for a woman to get adjusted to a new unwelcoming environment. She also met with harsh rumours of being a sex trafficking agent and people hesitated to get involved in the interaction with her. She was also being rumoured as a CIA or FBI agent or could be involved in drug trafficking. She faced severe criticisms which could have resulted in unsuccessful research as people were being cautious of her in the initial days as she was thought to child and organ trafficker working for western countries. She was believed to be working to fulfil the organ demands of patients in the west and infertile families in Europe and the U.S.

##### **Field Methods in collecting data**

It was long-term research so the author needed to build good relations with the people. She participates in local events, gathering to observe their behaviour and patterns, collected data by communicating with women in the area. Formal questionnaires were never used in the research to collect data. The author has also used her camera occasionally to film and photogram for research purpose with due permission from the participants. The methods used were traditionally used by ethnographers to have a long term contract with people that is why the author embraced the life of the people of her study and got into every kind of activity that could build trust and friendship with local people.

The study took nearly twelve years for the author to complete which included occasional visits to the study area and a full year of stay in the area during 2007-2008. The author has also been engaged in the study with the help of electronic sources like Skype, WhatsApp and numerous other sources which the author has used in the twelve years duration to complete her study

**References**

Kenny, M. L. (2018). *Deeply Rooted in the Present.* University of Toronto Press.

Tubelle, L., McIlwraith, T., & Brown, N. (2017). *Perspectives: An Open Invitation to Cultural Anthropology.* American Anthropological Association.