

# Destruction of tomb art for a vile price

## Destruição da arte tumular por um preço vil

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Tomb or funerary art stands for the respect given to an individual within the historical context; coupled with a great emotional burden, it must be preserved so that this affective legacy is revered.

Bronze is a metallic alloy basically composed of copper and tin, also containing some other chemical elements, and producing a fusion that increases the resistance of copper without altering its deformation capacity which allows the creation of art work. Such metallic alloy is so important that after the Neolithic, around 3300 B.C., it began the Bronze Age, period of civilization in which agricultural tools and weapons manufactured with this material helped human evolution.

Unfortunately, the copper present in bronze artifacts awakens the greed of vandals who, for a few pennies, destroy the memory of distinguished and beloved people. This is a revolting consequence caused by the negligence of those responsible for preserving the cultural heritage housed in cemeteries.

A search on electronic media showed that copper is the second only to nickel in value and there is a significant difference when considering aluminum. In the spring of 2021, nickel was quoted at R\$ 50.00/kg; pure copper, R\$ 46.00/kg; mixed copper, R\$ 43.00/kg; the aluminum can, R\$8.00/kg. Getting to know that there is a regular market for “mixed” copper, stimulating the pillage of necropolises, is outrageous.

Anyone who has visited the Santa Casa de Misericórdia in São Paulo, even without being an orthopedist, is impressed by the imposing Fernandinho Simonsen Pavilion, built with donations from his family. Inaugurated on June 19th, 1931, it is considered the shelter of the national Orthopedics' *alma mater*. The young Fernandinho died of peritonitis secondary to acute appendicitis and rests in tomb 15, block 49 of the Consolação Cemetery in São Paulo.

His gravestone, which received a plaque in recognition for its architectural and aesthetic importance, was barbarously vandalized.

The same visit to this necropolis showed that the resting place of Dr. João Alves de Lima (street 40, tomb 14), considered one of the pioneers of neurosurgery in the country, who published the first report of suturing a heart injury in Brazil, held at the Santa Casa de Misericórdia on 8/16/1905, was also destroyed and the bronze ornaments, including one especially dedicated to his eldest son, who tragically died while still in medical school, in May 1929, were stolen. The building of the Department of Surgery at Santa Casa de São Paulo was expanded thanks to the efforts of this surgeon, who raised funds for the adaptation of the hospital structure among prominent figures in São Paulo society and his own clientele. After years of conflict with the Clinical Director at the time, who only wanted to renovate the Department's basement, Dr. Alves de Lima, as he liked to be called, managed to build the upper floors, claiming that the growth should be done upwards, and that the wards needed sunlight. Those who knew this building before the current renovations used the room at the entrance to the second floor (DC-2) which in the 1980s was intended for dressing changes and some minor procedures, without imagining that it had been the operating room of the eminent surgeon; his complete biography should be read in the lapidary book of his favorite student, professor Alípio Corrêa Netto<sup>(1)</sup>, who succeeded him in the chair of Surgery at the newly created University of São Paulo after his premature death on 11/7/1934.

Considering a country not very fond of preserving history and its protagonists, the only action possible is to charge the responsible authorities in order to search for the receivers of the improperly stolen pieces and punish them according to the law, since such crime is provided for by our Penal Code (Article 180 of Decree Law no. 2,848 of December 7, 1940), in the attempt to stop the progressive degradation of our history.

Either the bronze plates or vases and tomb doors taken from various cemeteries are being replaced by clumsy pieces of granite, with no commercial value,

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but standardized, putting an end to the references that individualize each tomb and disparaging the memory of those who rest there.

## **Reference**

1. Corrêa Netto A. Um mestre da cirurgia. São Paulo: Mestre Jou; 1969. 276p.

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