TIT FOR TAT - AN AXE FOR A MACHETE
A CASE REPORT

Dr. Memchoubi Ph., Senior Tutor
Dr. Supriya Keisham, Post-graduate Student
Dr. H.Nabachandra, Professor
Department of Forensic Medicine, Regional Institute of Medical Sciences, Imphal.

ABSTRACT
A case where both the victim and the assailant are killed on the same day is not common. In this paper, a case is reported where the victim is killed first by the assailant and then the assailant is killed by an angry mob on the same day. The violent nature of the crime, the weapons used and the motives are highlighted here.

KEYWORDS: Double Homicide, Chop wounds, Machete, Axe in-situ.

INTRODUCTION
Homicidal wounds are usually multiple in numbers, deep and dangerous in character and are frequently situated over the head, neck, chest and abdomen [1]. The nature of these injuries depends upon the nature of the weapon and is frequently associated with defence wounds [2].

A machete is a big heavy carving knife, almost as big as a sword, but broader and heavier. An axe is a heavy weapon with a blade and a long handle. Both weapons were used in this case of double homicide. The axe was found in-situ on the body and the nature of the chop wounds agree with the weapons of causation. Insanity and revenge as motives are also highlighted.

CASE REPORT
On 26/07/04, two cases were registered in an Imphal P.S. under consecutive FIR’s. The first case stated that a 65 yr old man had been killed by an insane person who had just come out of jail, using a machete. The incident occurred in the house of the victim. Multiple chop wounds were found on the head and face, size ranging from 6.5 cm x 1.5 cm to 14 cm x 2 cm, all brain deep with beveled margins and almost parallel to each other. There were also defence wounds in the form of bruises and cuts, on the outer aspect of both forearms. The nature of the injuries supported the allegation that they were caused by a machete. The death was opined to be due to laceration of the brain and fracture of the skull and homicidal in nature.

The second FIR stated that the assailant had been killed on the same day by an angry mob in retaliation, using an axe and other blunt objects. On autopsy, the body was weighing 63 kg with a stature of 5’3”, of medium built and fair nutrition. Wearing apparel consisted of a blood-stained loin cloth only.

Rigor mortis was present all over the body. Post mortem staining was present on the back and fixed. One axe(8.2”x 2.5” blade x 36” handle) was found in-situ over the face and the bridge of the nose embedded up to the hilt, with dry stains of blood running across the face, chest, hands and right thigh. Bleeding was seen from the mouth, nose and ears.

External injuries consisted of
1. A chop wound 7 cm x 2 cm x brain deep (axe in-situ is removed) obliquely placed with bruised margins, over the face, around the bridge of nose with fracture of frontal, nasal, and maxillary bones.
2. Multiple lacerated wounds size ranging from 1.5 cm x 0.5 cm x bone deep to 7 cm x 1 cm x scalp deep, with red margins on various parts of the head.

3. Multiple abrasions, contusions and cuts, size ranging from 1 cm x 0.5 cm to 8 cm x 2 cm on the limbs, chest and back.

   Internally all the skull bones were fractured and meninges and brain were lacerated at various places. Stomach was empty.

   The death was opined to be due to injury to the brain resulting from multiple blunt force injuries on the head and chop wound on the face, homicidal in nature.

   Photograph 2 - Chop wound on face after removal of axe

**DISCUSSION**

A homicide is defined as willful killing of one human being by another where motives are usually violent altercation, sudden provocation, self defence, revenge, retaliation, alcoholism, gang related, sex related, drug related, insanity etc. [3]

In this case report, the first victim was killed using a machete but the assailant was an insane person who had been jailed for assaulting his own daughter-in-law with a similar weapon and he had no known grudge against the present victim. So, insanity as a cause of homicide is evident here. The weapon and the multiple natures of the injuries indicate a sudden impulsive murder.

   The mob retaliated in anger and used an axe in the heat of the moment. The axe found in-situ in the wound is rare and is an interesting and confirmative finding of the cause and circumstances of the death.

   Multiple injuries varying in type and location on various parts of the second body indicate multiple assailants namely the mob.

   Broken portion of the weapon of offence, if present inside the wound will give a strong indication of homicide and identification of the weapon of offence. Multiple severe wounds suggest homicide. [4]

   The interesting aspect of this case is the “tit for tat” nature of the circumstances surrounding a double homicide. It can however be concluded that an “axe for a machete” is in fact a shocking example of the extent that even sane people can be propelled by anger to take the law into their own hands.

**REFERENCES**