

Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America

ISSN: 2572-3626 (online)

Volume 1

Issue 1 *Special Issue: Politics and Religion in Amazonia*

Article 12

June 2003

Pacificando o branco. Cosmologias do contato no Norte-Amazônico

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Recommended Citation

Hemming, John (2003). "Pacificando o branco. Cosmologias do contato no Norte-Amazônico," *Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 12.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol1/iss1/12>

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thus an important theoretical statement that cannot be ignored. This book brings the study of indigenous Amazonian gender into the twenty-first century. It will be essential reading for anyone interested in gender in Amazonia.

Pacificando o branco. Cosmologias do contato no Norte-Amazônico. Bruce Albert and Alcida Rita Ramos, editors. São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 2002. 532 pp., maps, plates. R\$110.00 (cloth). ISBN 85-7139-355-9. [www.editoraunesp.com.br]

JOHN HEMMING
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All study of contact between Western society and indigenous peoples suffers from the fact that the colonial invaders have writing whereas American Indians do not. The literature of the contact frontier in Brazil is almost entirely in Portuguese, English or other European languages. On the rare occasions when indigenous views are recorded, the speakers suffer from imperfect command of Portuguese. More seriously, the authors of such studies—however sympathetic and well trained they may be—inevitably have difficulty in penetrating the very different native values and mind-sets.

This book is a long-awaited attempt to rectify this imbalance. The title, *Pacifying the White Man*, refers to the many instances when indigenous peoples believe that it is *they* who have pacified (the discredited old word for “contacted”) the aggressive agents of our society. Both editors have gained a profound understanding of Yanomami language and thinking. They restrict the geographical remit of the book to the north and west of Amazonia—an arc from Acre to the Rio Negro, Roraima and Brazilian Guiana north of the Amazon, with incursions into Colombia and French Guyane.

The French anthropologist Bruce Albert is a close friend of Davi Kopenawa, the shaman who has been projected as the international spokesman of the Yanomami. Davi Kopenawa’s identification of gold excavated from the earth by *garimpeiro* prospectors with malignant spirits and vapours that could devastate all humanity makes this one of the most important papers in this book.

The editors have grouped their seventeen chapters into four sections. “Trade Goods, Words and Diseases” includes a paper by Catherine Howard on how the Waiwai “domesticate” some manufactured goods into their own idiom, and one by Dominique Buchillet on how the Desana of the Upper Rio Negro try to explain the advent of white men and the terrible increase in malaria. A section called “Alternatives and Ethnicity” contains Albert’s paper as well as studies of how the Matis of the Javari valley and Waiãmpi of French Guyane and of Brazilian Guiana redefine their identities to come to terms

with contact. “Rites and Resistance” shows how the Ticuna of the Solimões turned to a messianic *caboclo* for salvation. It contains work by Stephen Baines on Waimiri-Atroari shamans’ interpretations of their violent contact, and a fascinating paper by Cecília McCallum on how Kaxinawá have “Incas” (inspired from nearby Peru) in their mythology and attribute some of these creators’ behaviour to the whites. Lastly, the section “Cosmologies and Histories” has Márnio Teixeira Pinto on how Arara legend hated Kayapó more than whites and had to keep changing as the tribe dealt with ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Brazilians. Robin Wright and Janet Chernela tell how white men were incorporated into the mythology of the Baniwa and Arapaço of the Upper Rio Negro, and other chapters describe similar manifestations among the Macuxi and Wapixana of Roraima.

The essays in this book vary widely in style, purpose and historical time frames. A number have been published elsewhere. Some variation is inevitable, given the differences in reactions by indigenous peoples spread over such a wide area and faced with such diverse contact situations. There are also the difficulties of extracting these narratives from their native informants. But the aim of viewing contact from the indigenous side is a worthy one that has rarely been attempted. This is therefore an important book, containing some fine interpretations of the thinking of indigenous South American Peoples. I hope that it will lead to many more such studies, not least for other parts of Brazil.

Transformando os Deuses. Os múltiplos sentidos da conversão entre os povos indígenas no Brasil. Robin M. Wright, editor. Campinas, SP (Brazil): Editora da Unicamp, 1999. 547 pp. R\$45.00 (paper). ISBN 85-268-0451-0. [www.editora.unicamp.br]

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In 1910 General Cândido Rondon created the Indian Protection Service (SPI) of Brazil as a lay service. The Catholic missionary orders, which had controlled “catechism” of indigenous peoples since the sixteenth century, fought a rearguard action to stop or stifle the new Service, but in vain. Rondon would be dismayed to learn that, ninety years later, missionaries in Brazil are more numerous and vigorous than ever, whereas his SPI was disbanded in disgrace in 1967, and its successor FUNAI is limping into the twenty-first century shorn of prestige and powers.

Despite their prevalence and importance to so many tribes, missionary activity has been surprisingly neglected by the academic world. Robin Wright