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## Transformando os Deuses. Os múltiplos sentidos da conversão entre os povos indígenas no Brasil

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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

has done a great service towards filling this huge gap. In *Transformando os Deuses* (*Transforming the Gods*) he has assembled a brilliant collection of essays by fifteen of the best anthropologists currently active in Brazil.

The scene is set by a survey and tables of the present-day scene, by Marina Kahn of the admirably efficient Social-Environmental Institute (ISA). Catholics are just in a majority, led by the Conselho Indigenista Missionário (CIMI) with four hundred missionary operatives in 112 teams. CIMI represents the more radical side of the Catholics: it led the fundamental change of attitude in the 1970s, away from conservative conversion to emphasis on nonreligious aid and community enterprise. The best missionaries started the empowerment of indigenous people to help themselves, in a movement that has achieved such impressive results in recent decades. Catholic missionary orders are still active: Salesians in Mato Grosso and in the upper Rio Negro; Consolata in Roraima; Jesuits of Operation Anchieta (Opan) on the upper Tapajós; Franciscans among the Mundurukú and Tiriyo; Dominicans on the Araguaia. Additionally, regular diocesan clergy support many indigenous people, particularly those on the Solimões River, and in the Javari Valley and parts of Acre, in southern and northeastern Brazil, in Amapá and elsewhere.

Protestants are far more diverse. Lutheran, Anglican and Methodist churches work with sixty-one indigenous peoples. These missionaries tend to be moderate and now often cooperate with Catholics in organizing indigenous assemblies or fighting for land rights. By contrast, what Kahn calls “missions of faith” still see their objective as conversion by preaching the Gospel to unenlightened peoples. The New Tribes Mission is steadily increasing its operations, to five hundred missionaries at 52 posts, the Summer Institute of Linguistics is in 44 villages, Evangelical Mission of Amazonia in 14, and there are various other sects. Pentecostals of the Assembly of God are with fifteen peoples, Seventh-Day Adventists with eight; and there are non-Christian Bahai, Santa Cruz Brotherhood, and others. The SIL does good linguistic work in transcribing native tongues, which helps modern attempts to teach Indian children in their own languages.

Each paper in *Transformando os Deuses* offers a case study of tribal reactions to the missionary experience. Some peoples were totally converted to fundamentalist Protestantism. Robin Wright tells how the charismatic but fanatical Sophie Muller dominated peoples of the Içana in northwest Brazil in the 1950s, but they “lapsed” after she was expelled. Aparecida Vilaça tells a similar story of conversion and later abrupt rejection of Christianity by the Wari of Rondônia. The New Tribes Mission cracked Wai Wai resistance by converting its young chief Ewká, who became so committed that he led expeditions to bring the “word of the lord” to isolated groups—the only time this has happened in Brazilian history. The Seventh-Day Adventists introduced strict morality and Orwellian thought control among the Taurepáng in the extreme north of Roraima. Dominique Gallois and Luis Grupioni use

the New Tribes Mission's internal documents to present a damning picture of its violent methods, particularly with recently contacted peoples such as the Zo'é.

Claudia Menezes, Silvia Caiuby Novaes and Aloísio Cabalzar describe Salesians' tactics among the Xavante, Bororo and Tukano, as well as some indigenous artifices to retain their previous cultures. There are also studies of operations by Jesuits, Franciscans, and regular Catholic clergy competing with Protestants for the souls of the Karipuna in northern Amapá.

These fascinating essays can tackle only a few of the missionary endeavours throughout Brazil during the past half-century. The book is reasonably objective, avoiding the sometimes sanctimonious and self-congratulatory style of the missionaries themselves, or the invective of their opponents such as Norman Lewis. It is essential reading because it breaks new ground in examining this influence that is so important to the indigenous peoples of Brazil.

*Consuming Grief: Compassionate Cannibalism in an Amazonian Society.*  
Beth A. Conklin. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001. xxxi + 285 pp.,  
appendices, notes, references, index. \$50.00 (cloth), \$22.95 (paper). ISBN  
0-292-071232-4, ISBN 0-292-071236-7. [utexas.edu/utpress]

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Beth Conklin turns the traditional academic debate regarding anthropophagy on its head in this highly readable and theoretically sophisticated book. The idea that certain societies practiced cannibalism in recent history, and in some places may continue to do so, is an uncomfortable and frequently challenged fact. Consequently, much of the debate involving cannibalism addresses whether or not it ever existed as an acceptable social behavior, or assumes that it could only have arisen as a consequence of a strong functional imperative. In contrast, Conklin avoids sensationalism and overgeneralization in her intimate and detailed cultural relativist account of funerary cannibalism among the Wari' of the Brazilian Amazon, who practiced cannibalism into the 1960s. In *Consuming Grief*, she addresses traditional academic concerns regarding the social motivations for cannibalism from the ethnographically informed position that in the case of the Wari', cannibalism makes sense. She rigorously demonstrates that Wari' cannibalism was a