

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

ISSN: 2572-3626

Volume 11
Issue 1 *Volume 11, Issue 1*

Article 8

6-2013

Tradición, Escritura y Patrimonialización. Anne-Gaël Bilhaut and Silvia Macedo, editors. Quito, Ecuador. Abya-Yala. 2012.

Natalia Buitron Arias

London School of Economics and Political Science, nb668@cam.ac.uk

Grégory Deshoullière

LAS-EHESS, Paris, gregory.deshoulliere@college-de-france.fr

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti>



Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Buitron Arias, Natalia and Deshoullière, Grégory (2013). "Tradición, Escritura y Patrimonialización. Anne-Gaël Bilhaut and Silvia Macedo, editors. Quito, Ecuador. Abya-Yala. 2012.", *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America*: Vol. 11: Iss. 1, Article 8, 110-113.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70845/2572-3626.1165>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol11/iss1/8>

This Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Trinity. It has been accepted for inclusion in Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Trinity. For more information, please contact jcostanz@trinity.edu.

***Tradición, Escritura y Patrimonialización.* Anne-Gaël Bilhaut and Silvia Macedo, editors. Quito, Ecuador. Abya-Yala. 2012.**

ISBN: 978-9942-09-108-6, 137pp.

<http://www.abiyayala.org>

Natalia Buitrón,

London School of Economics

n.buitron-arias@lse.ac.uk

Grégory Deshoullière,

LAS-EHESS, Paris

gregory.deshoulliere@college-de-france.fr

Tradición, Escritura y Patrimonialización sets out to explore the relationship between writing and patrimonialization in Amerindian societies, a theme originally proposed by the editors at the 53rd International Congress of Americanists in Mexico (2009). The book arrives in a timely moment, when elevating local tradition to universal cultural heritage through national and international schemes has become as much a coveted political commodity as it has become a fashionable approach to the construction of plurinational states in South America. Likewise, patrimonialization is often a reality anthropologists witness and get involved in as indigenous peoples strive to increase control over the diffusion of their cultural productions.

The ambiguity between the making and granting of intangible cultural heritage status through writing is a phenomenon only partly scrutinised by the volume. However, each chapter of this collection singularly paves the way to a better understanding of the phenomenon by providing the reader with insightful perspectives of the local processes which have underlain and surrounded patrimonialization in different places of South America at specific times. This collection of four articles links together contemporary indigenous literatures, collaborative processes of cultural recovery, and enduring multifaceted identity politics to produce what can be considered as their common focus: the exploration of indigenous people's creative involvement with writing in their claim for many forms of recognition.

Creative involvement with writing becomes the primary subject of reflection in Mataliwa Kulijaman's chapter, a testimony of the challenging experience of writing a book after the encounter with the ethnolinguist Eliane Camargo, with whom he also writes this chapter. The French-Wayana book *Kaptëlo: L'origine du ciel de case et du roseau à flèches chez les Wayana*, co-authored in 2007 with Camargo is, as Kulijaman explains, was a project through which he aimed to transmit traditional Wayana and Apalaï stories in a written format that would engage young Wayana readers while simultaneously appealing to a wider non-Wayana audience. In the account, the author struggles to transform "pedacitos de papel" (p.36) into a package of narratives, iconographies and anthropological insights that anthropologists can recognise as a book. In this regard, his testimony is a fitting illustration of what the editors denounce in the introduction as the breach between literacy, as it is normally understood in Amazonian bilingual schools, and the set of skills required for crafting an intellectual project such as the one Kulijaman embarks on. In this process of becoming an author, we can perceive

the tension between Kulijaman's personal itinerary and the idea of collective ownership that patrimonialization entails; in this case regarding the *maluwana*, (wooden painted disks traditionally placed in communal houses). Through a revindication of intellectual property that enables the author to decry what the Wayana see as abusive commercialisation of traditional designs, Kulijaman demarcates the frontiers between the authentic and spurious *maluwana* (to the discredit of Teko's appropriations). While the readers may consider for themselves the import of these considerations for the understanding of interethnic relationships and mutual borrowings in the region, one may be left with the desire to hear more of the authors' own analysis on such thorny matters.

A graphic illustration of the complex arrangements and compromises generated through collaborative literary projects is presented Gabriela Zamorano Villareal's chapter on audiovisual indigenous productions in Bolivia. Analysing the changes in political stands adopted by the first pro-indigenous cinematographic agency in Bolivia over a decade (1996-2006), Zamorano follows the cinematic crew in its transactions with indigenous broadcasters and local communities. The author shows that neither the composition of collective scripts attentive to people's recall of oral tales, nor their highly conscious technological rendering *in situ*, put a definitive end to the elusive search for an indigenous narrative form or its faithful transference to the audiovisual format. Zamorano challenges the view that there may be a unique indigenous form of narrating and convincingly shows that the question of whether it is possible to translate indigenous perspectives to audiovisual language is not necessarily resolved by upholding a categorical dichotomy between western and indigenous visions (p.119). Contrary to this premise, which is often the starting point of politicians and cinematic practitioners in Bolivia, the ethnography of this extended local engagement with new media (scripts, documentaries, fiction etc.) shows that *indigenous* is a redefined and negotiated notion produced at every narrative instance through aesthetic adjustments and conscious decisions in a highly charged political context. Equally rich is one of the chapter's conclusions on the implicit assumptions of the decolonising project. This conclusion asserts that there is a risk of purifying the object of diversity under construction when it is elevated to the status of canon or patrimony. The author tellingly shows, for instance, how daily episodes of indigenous life, such as watching North American and Asian action movies, are only incorporated in the videos when depicting acculturation.

The reflection upon a potential indigenous form of narrative which cohabits with new media of expression is taken up by the Mapuche contemporary poets, as revealed by the chapter of Loriane Fauvet. One of the assets of this chapter are the interviews in which we hear the indigenous authors theorise on their poetry and build bridges between "the monument of oratory art" of the Mapuche (p. 88) and its infusion in poetry or what the poet Elicura Chihuailaf calls "oralitura" (p. 82). A combination of alphabets, the use of neologisms and mixing of Spanish and Mapuche, as well as the recitation of poems, are all relevant in the forging of a new genre. As Fauvet points out, Mapuche writers never use "patrimony" to define either oral tradition or their poetry (p.89), but refer to memory instead, and it is clear that such a memory is dynamic for them. It would have therefore been enlightening if the author had delved further into the voice of memory that Mapuche poets are trying to evoke through what the author calls "hybrid literature," instead of trying to interrogate their engagement with a revindicative kind of poetry in terms of patrimonialization. Similarly, the content of the phenomenon under analysis is so rich that some potential questions are left unexplored. One such question comes to mind after reading Graciela Hunao's revelatory analogies such as "la primera escuela de mi raza es el fogón, en medio de la ruka donde arde la historia de mi pueblo" (p.93). We could not help seeing how this resonates with similar expressions used in other places in native South America. Reminiscent of the similitude between learning by the fire and present-day schools are expressions suggesting that the elder is a living encyclopaedia or, as in this chapter, "the monument of oratory". What are the underlying assumptions regarding knowledge and its transmission and what are the institutional experiences that have made such analogies meaningful and recurrent in present-day claims for patrimonialization in South America?

A chapter that moves institutions to the core of its argument is Neumann's analysis of the Guaraní "conquest of writing" within the Jesuit and colonial regimes in Paraguay in the 17th and 18th centuries. In this historically engaging chapter Neumann analyses the conquest of the alphabet by the Guaraní people living in Jesuit reductions, showing how their mastery of literacy moved from one attached to an oral discourse of Catholic descent to the composition of official documents. Neumann discusses how some Guaraní began to exercise greater political agency through the ability of communicating in the same registers the colonisers used within their hierarchies. The command of epistles, minutes and memoranda enabled the Guaraní leadership to relegate the Jesuits to spiritual government and take over from them the political intermediation with the colonial administration. Neumann argues that the command of these new instruments functioned as an element of solidarity, reinforcing social relations through the circulation of information among rebellious Guaraní while providing them with a way to register events judged crucial by them. The author sees the latter as enabling the rearrangement of collective memory and organisation, a process which then results in the achievement of a new form of temporality (p.61). It is this last argument that could be explored in more detail by anthropologists who are not specialists of colonial history but are interested in the subject. They are, for instance, likely to benefit from more Guaraní written examples of the time. In any case, the history of Guaraní reductions makes a singular contribution to the study of appropriations and uses of alphabetic writing by Amerindians.

Finally, this collection deserves what its editors hoped for: to be a springboard for future research that will further the development of a strong conceptual framework for the analysis of the multiple relationships between patrimonialization and writing. As a stimulus for further developments, we do lament, however, the absence of the editors' ethnographic experience among the Wayapi and Zapara, which inspired much of the thought preceding this publication, as Macedo and Bilhaut explain in the introduction (p.17). These particular ethnographic situations could have introduced the reader to two institutions of crucial significance for the understanding of patrimonialization: UNESCO and the school. It is especially from the latter, as Bruna Franchetto reminds readers in her brief epilogue (p. 131), that many of the themes under analysis originate.

Overall, this collection develops numerous perspectives that problematize the intersection between traditions, writing and cultural heritage which Americanists will appreciate and policy makers and activists would benefit from reading.