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Radical Territories in the Brazilian Amazon: The Kayapó's Fight for Just Livelihoods by Laura Zanotti

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Radical Territories in the Brazilian Amazon: The Kayapó's Fight for Just Livelihoods by Laura Zanotti, University of Arizona Press, 2016. 282 pp., notes, references, index.

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Radical Territories in the Brazilian Amazon: The Kayapó's Fight for Just Livelihoods develops a fertile dialogue among three important traditions of Amazonian studies: amerindian ethnology, political ecology, and anthropology of science. The book develops from a foundation of an ethnography of the relations established between the Mebêngôkre (Kayapó)—an indigenous group that lives in the southeast of Brazilian Amazon—and other collectives with whom they have maintained contact in the last thirty years: ecologists, biologists, anthropologists, environmentalists, indigenists, miners, and extractivists. *Radical Territories* brings together dense descriptions of practices and local knowledge on the one hand, and, on the other, a broader perspective of regional history and international debates. Zanotti provides an overview of the processes of making indigeneity, conservation, and sustainable development in the Amazon. Concepts such as cosmology, cosmography, and territoriality, put in to action in specific ethnographic contexts, underpin her theoretical contribution.

Following a general presentation of the themes she looks to develop, Zanotti introduces her ethnographic scope through an outlook on the historical processes of Mebêngôkre territoriality construction—in conflict or association with other territorialities—placing, side by side, the mythical narratives told by the natives from A'Ukre village and the historiographic reports associated with the successive points of contact between whites and Indians in the Brazilian Amazon. In the second chapter, through a dense discussion of the Kayapó ethnology, Zanotti explores the role of ceremonial life in the process of *becoming* Mebêngôkre, taking into account native concepts that reveal the indigenous point of view on what it means to live a *mejcumrei* or “good life” in Kayapó communities. In the third and fourth chapters, she covers essential aspects of Mebêngôkre life, such as women's work in the fields with swidden cultivation and foraging activities, everyday *places* that constitute (re)production of life at the local level, as well as knowledge and sociability circulation. In the fifth chapter, after presenting a brief history of the *Pinkaití Project*, Zanotti presents a *graphic anthropology*¹ regarding the relations between researchers and communities, with an emphasis on the circulation and exchange of knowledge between these entities.

Throughout the book, Zanotti reveals a deep ethnographic sensibility, writing detailed descriptions of the village daily life whose literary quality is renowned. Her thick narrative engages with themes concerning Kayapó ethnology—such as the circulation of material and immaterial goods among different collectives which make up Mebêngôkre society—in relation with the predation of knowledge and artifacts stemming from outside. At several points in *Radical Territories*, Zanotti notes the epistemological effect of the association between a collaborative anthropology based on an intense (co)existence with Kayapó people from A'Ukre village and a dialogue (sometimes exhaustive) with different theoretical traditions, mainly in the chapters dedicated to describing important aspects of the village's daily life, such as the agricultural fields and trails in the forest that compose Mebêngôkre ontology. Zanotti, by demonstrating that, in this case, anthropological theory emerged from her *practical learning of menire aĩbo kukradjà* (women knowledge) combined with a review of different theoretical traditions, she ends up producing a dialogue between the Mebêngôkre and anthropological knowledge practices.

As a researcher of the interscientific networks in Brazilian Amazon, I could not fail to notice that the Zanotti's considerations of exchanges established between biologists and Mebêngôkre at A'Ukre village represent a genuine contribution in a research area still in its infancy. In particular, the stories about knowledge exchange and nomination–adoption practices involving researchers and indigenous families, as well as the immersion of the former in the village's ceremonial life, provide an important contribution to an aspect of

research on the Amazon which has not been fully analyzed by ethnology: the predation inherent in the relationship between researchers in natural and human sciences and local communities in Amazon. By focusing on the informal aspects of this relationship, Zanotti writes an ethnography that works to overcome the Great Division between the “modern sciences” and “indigenous traditional knowledge.”

The controversial aspects covered in the book do merit commentary. Its critique of the use of *hybridity* to address the interscientific relations between researchers and Mebêngôkres reflects a concern to take into account the most recent contributions of Jê indigenous ethnology, which largely points to the existence of a Kayapó *predation economy* that emphasizes the constant inclusion of exogenous elements in the culture of these indigenous peoples. On the other hand, the association Zanotti tries to establish between the ethnography of indigenous practices and knowledge and imported notions of international social movements, such as Slow Food and NTFPs (mentioned in the third and fourth chapters, respectively) is not clear. Similarly vague is the criticism of *Amerindian perspectivism* based on the Kayapó’s ceremonial life, derived from Terence Turner’s analysis; it seems to disregard important aspects of the relationship among people, animals, and fish, especially in the Mebêngôkre’s fishing and hunting contexts—activities hegemonically exercised by men and not addressed in the book.

Whether or not one shares the theoretical outlook of Zanotti, *Radical Territories* is essential reading for researchers in Amerindian ethnology (in particular Jê ethnology), science and technology studies, and political ecology. The book enters a discussion with other works on common research issues, such as: *Rain Forest Exchanges* (Fisher 2000); *Amazonia* (Little 2001); *Brazil’s Indians and the Onslaught of Civilization* (Rabben 2004); and *Conhecimentos Tradicionais para o Século XXI* (Little 2010). Like Zanotti, these authors seek to put in relation the theoretical insights of indigenous ethnology and political ecology, producing a diversified overview of the relations between the indigenous peoples and other collectives that compose Amazonian sociotechnical networks.

Notes

¹ The narrative style of the Zanotti speaks to the notion of “graphic anthropology” proposed by Ingold (2011).

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