



Sebastian Jobs, Gesa Mackenthun (eds.)

Agents of Transculturation

Border-Crossers, Mediators, Go-Betweens

Agents of Transculturation

Cultural Encounters and the Discourses of Scholarship

Edited by
Gesa Mackenthun

Volume 6

This series seeks to stimulate fresh and critical perspectives on the interpretation of phenomena of cultural contact in both transhistorical and transdisciplinary ways. It brings together the research results of the graduate school „Cultural Encounters and the Discourses of Scholarship,“ located at Rostock University and sponsored by the German Research Foundation (DFG). One of the concerns of the volumes published in this series is to test and explore contemporary theoretical concepts and analytical tools used for the study of intercultural relations, from antiquity to the present. Aware of significant recent changes in the ways in which other cultures are represented, and „culture“ as such is defined and described, the series seeks to promote a dialogical over a monological theoretical paradigm and advocates approaches to the study of cultural alterity that are conscious of the representational character of our knowledge about other cultures. It wants to strengthen a recognition of the interdependencies between the production of knowledge about unfamiliar peoples and societies in various scholarly disciplines and ideologies of nationality, empire, and globalization. In critically investigating the analytical potential of postcolonial key terms such as „hybridity,“ „contact zone,“ and „transculturation,“ the series contributes to international scholarly debates in various fields oriented at finding more balanced and reciprocal ways of studying and writing about intercultural relations both past and present.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A “Tropical Papageno”: Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roberto Ipureu in Mato Grosso, Brazil

LUCIANA MARTINS

In 1935, the twenty-six-year-old Claude Lévi-Strauss, accompanied by his wife Dina, traveled to Mato Grosso in Brazil. Their purpose was to visit the Kadiwéu and Bororo Indians and to collect ethnographic objects for the Musée de l’Homme, scheduled to open in 1937 (Lévi-Strauss, *Saudades* 69; Wilcken 59; Passetti, *Lévi-Strauss* 59). As is well known, Claude Lévi-Strauss went to Brazil as part of a group of French academics in order to help establish the University of São Paulo.¹ His specific role was to teach sociology at the University, though he also hoped to develop his interest in anthropology by studying the Indians on the outskirts of the city on the weekends. However, by 1935 there were actually very few Indians left around São Paulo. The frontier region of Mato Grosso was far more promising: and so it was there that the Lévi-Strausses made their ethnographic debut as part of their Brazilian summer vacation of 1935–1936.

During this short but apparently remarkable fieldtrip (it lasted just four months), the couple, in the company of their French friend René Silz, were kept busy collecting artifacts, taking photographs, and shooting film.² Claude Lévi-Strauss’s reflections on the trip, published more than forty years later in his introduction to the third volume of *Enciclopédia Bororo*, is worth quoting here in full:

It is true that that brief encounter has marked the whole of my career, given that no beginner could have dreamed of a more exciting contact with an indigenous culture than that the Kejara village offered me in 1935: a nearly untouched material culture, an intensive ceremonial activity during both day and night, inhabitants occupied in making and displaying fantastic adornments, all contributed to awake in the visitor the sense of richness, complexity and grandeur of one of the last of the South American societies in which traditional customs and beliefs had still maintained their exuberance.

- 1 For a recent account of Claude Lévi-Strauss’s work in Brazil, see Wilcken, esp. chapter 2.
- 2 The trip took place between November 1935 and March 1936. They stayed in the Bororo village from January to February 1936 (Lévi-Strauss, “Contribution”).

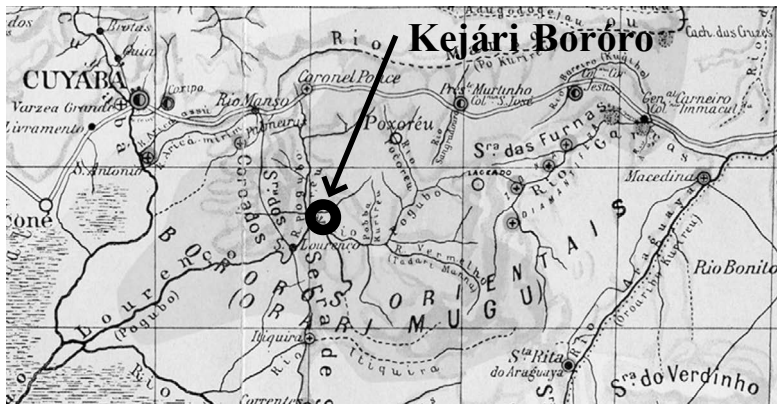
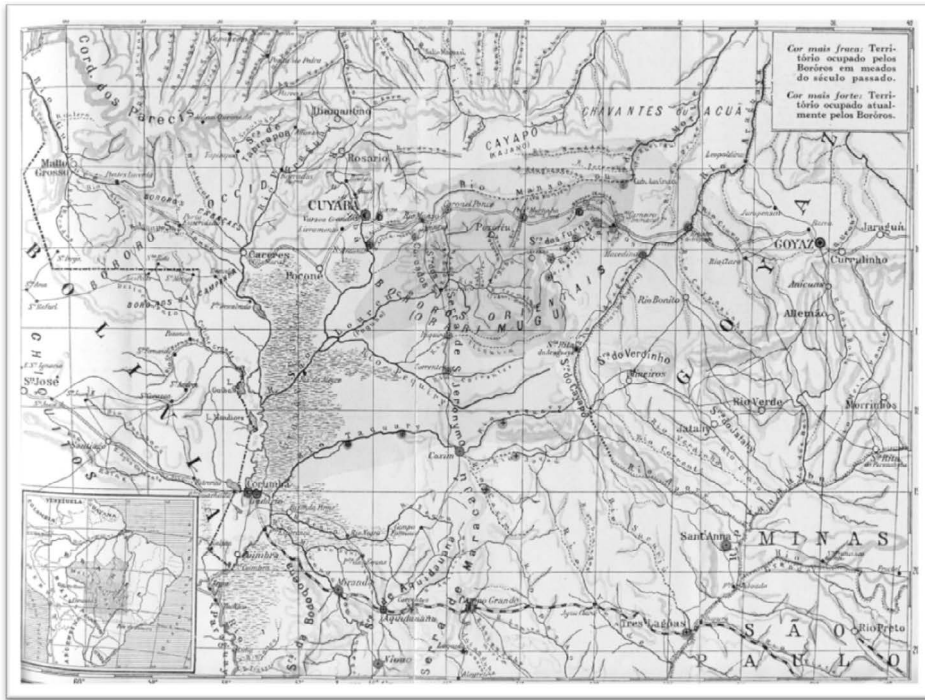


Figure 1: Localization of the Village Kejári Boróro in Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil. (Source: Colbacchini and Albisetti, *Os Boróros Orientais*; Barros and Bordignon, “Jarudóri”)

The Bororo offered me not only the contemplation of a wonderful spectacle. The entirety of my theoretical thinking, the way it has developed in the last thirty years, maintains the crux of what I seemed to have understood amongst them: the extent to which a human society could attempt to unify in a vast system – social and logical at the same time – the whole of the relations among their own members and those relations they keep, as a group, with the natural species and the world that surrounds them. (Lévi-Strauss, “Apresentação,” my translation).

It is useful to locate the scene of Lévi-Strauss’s epiphany a little more precisely. In the 1930s, Mato Grosso was a frontier region on the periphery of a consolidating nation-state and a rapidly developing market economy. The region was marked by violent conflict between incomers and indigenous groups – the Bororo in particular – over land and labor. The concurrent, albeit often contradictory, actions of government officials, missionaries, and settlers in the region were part of a broader frontier dynamic at work (Langfur 880). Lévi-Strauss actually encountered the Bororo in the village of “Kejara,” namely the village of Kejári Boróro, on the banks of Vermelho River, a settlement that no longer exists (Figure 1; Viertler, *As Aldeias* 20–21; Viertler, “Quadro”). Described by the Salesian missionaries César Albisetti and Angelo Jayme Venturelli as groups that “escape any control, living independently in small nuclei on the banks of Vermelho River,” these Bororo Indians were certainly accustomed to having contact with ‘civilized’ peoples (Vol. I: 293): their isolation was effectively a voluntary act of independence.

In his bestseller, *Tristes tropiques*, first published in 1955, Lévi-Strauss recalls his travels to Brazil in the 1930s. In this book, he singles out a particular Bororo man, pictured in a photograph in ceremonial dress and gazing directly at the camera, who was his interpreter and “best informant.” He is described as “a wonderful guide to Bororo sociology” (Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes tropiques* 216–17). In this essay, the iconic status of Lévi-Strauss’s guide is situated in the context of the history of the occupation of Bororo territory as well as other reports by earlier travelers, anthropologists, and missionaries of encounters with the Bororo, shedding light on the ways in which the ‘isolated primitive’ is constructed by the modern anthropological gaze. In gathering these pieces of information, we may also glimpse how a particular Bororo individual gained access to self-representation and cultural authority within this singular situation of cross-cultural contact.

Modernizing Central Brazil

The photograph of the Lévi-Strausses’ “wonderful guide” first appeared in a short article Claude published in São Paulo soon after returning from the 1936 fieldtrip (Figure 2). In this article, entitled “The vastest horizons of the world,” Lévi-Strauss vividly describes his astonishment when confronted with the wide landscapes of Mato Grosso, which he readily associated with times past; indigenous peoples are imagined here as survivors of a “fabulous age,” evoking the eighteenth-century idyll of the noble savage:

Here, the roles of sky and land are inverted. Over the milky green of the fields the clouds create, incessantly, the most lavish constructions. The sky is the region of shapes and volumes: the land has the idleness of the beginnings of Creation.

These indigenous peoples, who still live in the concave of the plateau, are they truly the last survivors of a fabulous age? Covered with the shimmering feathers of forest birds, painted bright red from the feet to the top of their heads, and with the body sumptuously adorned with the white fluff of the parrot, they evoke, to those who ignore their misery and slow extinction, eighteenth-century idylls. In an environment of such impressive and austere size, what a surprise to stumble upon the ‘Papageno’ from the Magic Flute, with such touching solitude. (Lévi-Strauss “Os mais vastos” 69, my translation.)

For Lévi-Strauss, the figure of the “tropical Papageno” combines the solitude of the Brazilian landscape with the melancholy of Western culture (Passeti, “Papagenos tropicais” 112). However, the actual history of the occupation of this region tells a less romantic tale. As Renate Brigitte Viertler has shown, the ‘Bororo’ of twentieth-century ethnography were a rather heterogeneous group that had “established a *modus vivendi* with the nineteenth-century’s colonial world” (*As aldeias* 20). Viertler and others have critically examined the written accounts produced by missionaries, military officers, settlers, and ethnographers in order to reach a better understanding of the process of interethnic contact in the region. They have concluded that the various indigenous groups, confronted with the agents of colonization, were effectively faced with three choices, that is, to: (1) search for an independent life, detached as much as possible from any colonial contact; (2) establish an alliance with the colonials, whether the military or settlers; or (3) make their homes under the protection of the missionary system.³

One of the essential characteristics of the social organization of the Bororo Indians was their dispersion and intensive spatial mobility; they gathered only for special rituals, such as funeral ceremonies, going their different ways after the event’s conclusion. Historically, the Bororo people spread across an extensive area, from the western frontier with Bolivia to the banks of the River Araguaia in the east, from the sources of the Paraguay and Cuiabá Rivers, along the Rio das Mortes in the north to the headwaters of the Miranda, Taquari, Coxim e Aquidauana in the south (Barros and Bordignon 65–97).⁴ In addition to the Bororo, from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries this region of Mato Grosso was sparsely occupied by farmers, cattle ranchers, and declining numbers of miners.⁵ Its strategic vulnerability became evident in the aftermath of the Paraguayan War (1864–70), which led the monarchy to extend the reach of the Brazilian telegraph system to the states in the interior.

3 In addition to Viertler, *As aldeias*, see Viertler, *A duras penas*; Montero; Langfur; Vangelista, *Politica Tribale*; and Novaes.

4 I am indebted to Mario Bordignon for providing me with a copy of this document.

5 In the early nineteenth century, there were two main Bororo groups in the Mato Grosso region: the western Bororo (‘Cabaçais’, or ‘da Campanha’), who occupied the lands in the Brazilian and Bolivian frontiers; and the eastern Bororo (‘Coroados’, or the ancient ‘Porruados’), spread around the São Lourenço River and along the ‘royal road’, south of Rio das Mortes. Viertler, *A duras penas*, 38 and Vangelista *Politica Tribale*, 21.



Figure 2: *The 'Tropical Papageno'* (Source: Lévi-Strauss' "Os mais vastos horizontes do mundo," 1936)

In 1889–92, under the new republican government, a telegraph line linking Cuiabá with the rest of the nation was established. Its route included three hundred sixty miles across the backlands, where the Bororo lived. Assigned to work on this project was the young military engineer, Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondon, a native of Mato Grosso who himself claimed Terena and Bororo ancestors. In 1900, the federal government appointed Rondon commander of a military commission charged with building a main north-south telegraph line between Cuiabá and Corumbá. By mid-1902, two intersecting lines had been cut through the heart of Bororo territory: the initial line, running east-west with the border between Bolivia and Paraguay. Between 1900 and 1906, the commission built sixteen telegraph stations and thirty-two bridges, exploring around twenty-five hundred miles of the territory of Mato Grosso and mapping much of the state's holdings (Diacon, *Stringing* 16–7; Langfur 883; Maciel 95–177). While conducting his work in the region, Rondon established a collaborative rapport with the Bororo, offering them food and other gifts in exchange for their assistance (Langfur 887). In 1910, Rondon became the first director of the Indian Protection Service – a federal agency entrusted with protecting indigenous survivors – and devised a plan inspired by the positivist doctrine for Indian-white relations in Brazil in the belief that he could 'protect' the indigenes through a policy of pacification through acculturation.⁶ Though the documentation of this process was une-

6 For a comprehensive account of the controversy over Rondon's work, see Diakon, "Cândido."

ven, there is evidence that by 1915 Rondon had already demarcated three indigenous protection areas in the region: Poboré or Tadarimana, between the Vermelho River and Jorigi Creek; Teresa Cristina, at the São Lourenço valley; and São João do Jarudóri, along the Vermelho River and north up to Serra do Paraíso (Urquiza; Barros and Bordignon 165).

Rondon's attitude toward the Bororo was markedly different from that of settlers in central and eastern Mato Grosso, which historically had been the scene of violent confrontations. In the early 1820s, for example, a six-year battle against the western Bororo on the eastern side of the Paraguay River, led by João Carlos Pereira Leite, an influential landowner and military officer, left four hundred fifty Bororo dead and fifty imprisoned. These prisoners, who were later deemed to be 'pacified', were used as a labor force on Leite's own farm.⁷ In the late nineteenth century, the provincial government of Mato Grosso had made an attempt to integrate the Bororo into the regional economy, founding two military settlements: Teresa Cristina, at the confluence of the Rivers Prata and São Lourenço, and Santa Isabel, between the São Lourenço and Piqueri Rivers. Lacking an effective integrative model, the settlements degenerated rapidly: drunkenness, sex, and violence between indigenous peoples and soldiers led to further clashes (Montero 53; Vangelista, *Política* 19–60). As Hal Langfur argues, in the light of their continuing conflicts with both settlers and soldiers, an alliance with Rondon might well have seemed attractive to the Bororo (886). However, in accelerating the incorporation of the frontier regions, the telegraph project ended up attracting further settlers, intensifying violent engagements with the indigenous peoples. It also exposed the Bororo to contagious diseases, which claimed many lives (Langfur 885).

Brazil's increasing participation in the expanding world trade as a supplier of agricultural products meant the extension of the export industry into lands located deeper in the interior – a process accelerated by foreign investment from Argentina, Belgium, Britain, France, and the United States. From 1889 to 1917, Mato Grosso became firmly lodged in the world market, participating in the rubber boom and expanding its cattle-ranching interests. In the 1920s, the exploitation of diamond mines also attracted migrants from the northeast of Brazil, who settled in the lands of the São João de Jarudóri reserve (98–166). The cattle expansion took place on the savannah plains of southern Mato Grosso, covering an area of about 135,330 square miles, where a relatively mild climate, plentiful water sources, and reputedly unlimited natural rolling grasslands made it an attractive area for ranching. With the construction of the ill-fated Madeira-Mamoré railroad in the rubber-tapping region (1913), and the Northwest Railroad connecting southern Mato Grosso with São Paulo (1912–1914), transport costs for the frontier's products were lowered, benefitting both the rubber and cattle sectors (Hardman). From 1918 to 1937, with the end of the First World War and the rub-

7 As stated by the French artist Hercules Florence (whose drawings are discussed in the following section), in his description of the process of 'pacifying' the Bororo.

ber bust, Mato Grosso's export markets and capital sources underwent significant decline. Nonetheless, through new railroad links and improvements in live cattle shipment, the state's economy became increasingly tied to coastal markets (Frank; Wilcox).

The economic integration of the region with both national and international markets generated new strife with indigenous peoples, as landowners sought more and more land and labor. The testimony of Richard Warde illustrates this well. Employed by Murdo Mackenzie, general manager of the Brazil Land, Cattle, and Packing Company, Warde traveled 1,350 miles across the southern Mato Grosso region in 1912–13 in order to determine a new route for marketing cattle and *charque* (jerked beef). In his report on this expedition, he mentions that he had two men with him, "both real men, one a Cuyabano, the other a Bororo [sic] Indian, always cheerful, ready to do anything or go anywhere" (16). It is likely that it was through the latter that Warde learned something about the Bororo's "curious" customs – in particular, their method of treating their dead and "their liking for white-skin men": "If you fight" – writes Warde – "they kill you and give your head to their kids to use as a target for practicing to throw with a spear" (16). It is worth noting that the Brazil Land, Cattle, and Packing Company was owned by the US entrepreneur Percival Farquhar, already a major foreign investor backed by French and British capital, who sought to take advantage of cheap land and government initiatives in the region. In addition to the seven hundred sixty thousand hectares of the Descalvados Ranch, where jerked beef and hide operations had already been established by an Argentine businessman as early as 1873–74, Farquhar bought another four hundred eighty thousand hectares of land from local ranchers, anticipating the impact of the construction of the Northwest Railroad (Wilcox 371–72). The Descalvados Ranch was the one from which ex-President Theodore Roosevelt started off his own celebrated journey into the interior to explore the Rio da Dúvida in 1914, guided by Rondon (Wenworth 9).

In the opening decades of the twentieth century, international capital was thus a major factor in the economic exploitation of the southern Mato Grosso and somewhat instrumental in opening it up for explorers. At a provincial level, it became clear to state legislators that the modernity associated with the telegraph lines, the railway, and the expansion of export-oriented agriculture demanded the training of the indigenous peoples' bodies and minds. This training aimed to 'integrate' them into the new national order in an attempt to end ongoing hostilities between Bororo and settlers. To accomplish this, in 1894 the Salesian missionaries were invited by the provincial government to branch out their activities into Mato Grosso. Having arrived in Brazil in 1883 with the consent of the Brazilian Emperor, the Salesian congregation had first settled in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, founding schools devoted to moral instruction and training. In Mato Grosso, the missions – referred to by the Salesians as "agricultural settlements" – intended to offer the indigenous people a "well equipped agricultural school that made labour on the land the centre of their autonomy and prosperity, in addition

to nurturing their bodies and souls” (Montero 52). The Salesians were committed to a markedly civilizing ethos, in which Catholic principles were associated with the advantages of industrial society. The agricultural settlements were thus modeled on scientific principles of productivity and the most advanced technology available.

After a series of early setbacks, the first Salesian colony in Mato Grosso was founded in 1902. Named Colônia do Sagrado Coração de Jesus, it was located in Tachos, a settlement along the telegraph line on the right bank of the Barreiro River, two hundred sixty miles east of the capital of Cuiabá.⁸ It took the Bororo eight months to make contact with the mission and another three to settle there; as the mission’s director Father Balzola would later learn, they had kept their distance in order to observe the missionaries’ actions, and eventually visited the mission to decide whether to annihilate them or let them remain (Novaes 75; Langfur 887). The missionaries offered protection from rival indigenous groups and ‘civilized’ settlers, as well as providing material goods and improved health care.

In 1905, a new settlement was established on the River das Garças, named Colônia Imaculada (this was closed in 1918); it was followed a year later by the founding of a third colony on a farm on the Sangradouro River, named São José. This last colony attracted several Bororo from the São Lourenço and Vermelho Rivers, along with a number of families transferred from the colony of Sagrado Coração de Jesus. The missionaries were keen to announce the success of their work to supporters and potential supporters in the major urban centers, and raise money there to continue and broaden their activities. In the wake of the Rio de Janeiro Exposition of 1908 to celebrate the centennial of the opening of Brazilian ports to international trade, twenty-one Bororo members of a band at the Sagrado Coração de Jesus colony were sent to perform in Rio de Janeiro (Novaes 87). This practice was not unusual among missionaries: in 1898, Father Balzola had traveled to Italy with three Bororo men, and introduced them to the Pope and the Brazilian president Campos Sales, who was then visiting Rome (Figure 3). In Turin, apparently responding to a provocation by local youths, the Bororo visitors removed their Western clothing and, in a symbolic declaration of war on the locals, seized indigenous arms on display at the Dom Bosco Museum of Natural History.⁹ Far from being simply a colorful digression in the history of missionary effort, this episode reveals much about the Bororo’s strategy in dealing with missionary civilizing efforts. As Sylvia Caiuby Novaes aptly puts it:

As long as obedience did not challenge their own convictions, the Bororo agreed, for example, to attend mass, but did not eliminate their own chants and rituals: they accepted the medicine dispensed by the priests, but did not forgo the *bari* [shaman] or their beliefs in the *bope*

8 In the late 1920s, due to the depletion of its natural resources, this mission was transferred to the locality of Meruri, where it remains to the present day.

9 For an insightful account of the Bororo travel to Italy in 1898, see Vangelista, *Politica* 69–79 and Vangelista, “Tre giovani.”

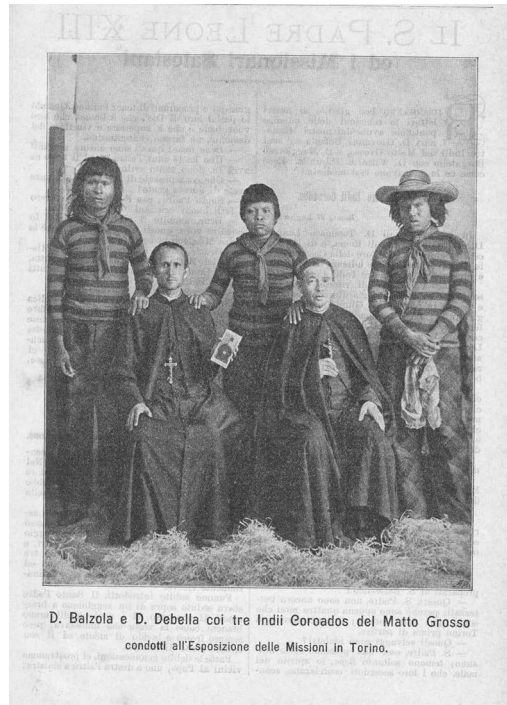


Figure 3.

Anon, "D. Balzola e D. Debella coi tre Indii Coroados del Matto Grosso condotti all'Esposizione delle Missioni di Torino" ["Father Balzola and Father Debella with the three Coroado Indians from Mato Grosso taken to the Turin Missionary Exhibition"]. (Source: *Bollettino Salesiano* 22 Sep 1898).

[evil spirits]; they took Christian names, but did not stop using their Indian ones. (85)

Rather than simply conforming to what the missionaries expected of them, the Bororo were constantly evaluating the costs and benefits of their actions, assessing the extent to which their acquiescence could jeopardize the most characteristic values of their own culture. This episode also sheds light on the different values attributed to 'ethnic' objects: while for the Salesians the items on display were intended as documents of a barbarous, savage past, which their mission was destined to eliminate, for the Bororo they were useful weapons within easy reach, ready to be employed in a threatening situation.

In sum, the strategic conduct of the Bororo was the result of decades of complex, more or less violent, interethnic encounters with those who sought in one way or another to subdue them. Recent scholarship has revealed numerous examples of Bororo adaptation to change, including attempts to engage with and participate in new forms of economic and social life. Their representation as 'isolated primitives', as Langfur points out (897), not only served the interests of those engaged in removing them from the land but was also "reproduced by an otherwise erudite ethnographic literature" (896–97).

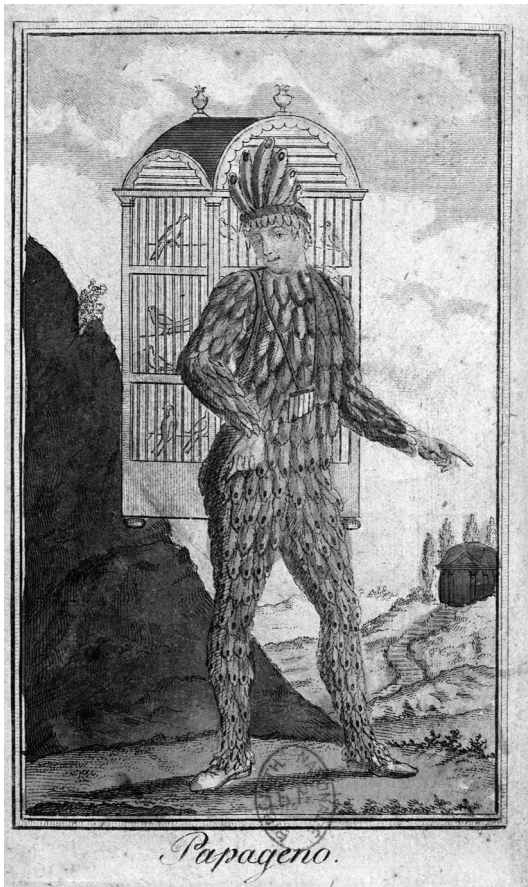


Fig. 4:
*Papageno the bird-catcher, from
 'The Magic Flute' by Wolfgang
 Amadeus Mozart (1756–91); coloured
 engraving, Italian School (eighteenth
 century). (Source: Bibliothèque de
 l'Opéra Garnier, Archives Charmet,
 Paris)*

In this context, by evoking the figure of Papageno, Lévi-Strauss seems to be quite consciously turning a blind eye to the Bororo's recent history. As musicologist Rose Rosengard Subotnik remarks, in *The Magic Flute*, Papageno “is presented as existing outside of real time; his time is that of nature in its eternal aspect” (5); indeed, Papageno hardly distinguishes between nature and culture. As personified by Emanuel Schikaneder in the first libretto of *The Magic Flute* in 1791 (Figure 4), Papageno's body, covered with colorful feathers and adorned with a feather crown, represents a mixture of man and animal, a foil to the ideal embodiment of the Enlightenment (Bahr 250). Recalling sixteenth- and seventeenth-century allegorical depictions of America (Polleroß), its ‘ethnographic’ rendering also reflects the growing interest in exotic peoples in the wake of late eighteenth-century “spirit of curiosity” in Austria (Robertson 140). In other words, the visualization of the Bororo as ‘isolated primitives’ itself had a history.

Envisioning the Bororo: a Brief Genealogy

Among the visual records of European expeditions to Mato Grosso before the late nineteenth century, the sketches by the French artists Aimé-Adrien Taunay and Hercules Florence stand out. Accompanying Baron von Langsdorff's expedition to the interior of Brazil in 1825, Taunay and Florence employed their brush and pencil to capture moments of indigenous life and its physical appearance, much as the naturalists sought to evoke the forms of plants and animals.¹⁰

The son of the well-known French painter Nicolas-Antoine Taunay, twenty-two-year-old Aimé-Adrien already had considerable experience in scientific observation, having joined Louis de Freycinet's expedition to the Pacific as assistant draughtsman from 1818 to 1820 (Costa, Diener and Strauss 13–14; Belluzzo 124–37; Costa). A perceptive artist, Taunay depicted scenes of the everyday life of the western Bororo in the village of Pau-Seco, between the Paraguay and Jaurú Rivers: people returning from hunting, listening to a storyteller's account of a jaguar hunt, performing daily activities. He also recorded a visit the Bororo paid to him and the botanist Ludwig Riedel in the house they occupied in Vila Bela, near Pau-Seco. In this watercolor sketch, Taunay conveys the encounter as a sociable affair in which four Bororo adults and one child exchange information with the two Europeans. Another portrait of a Bororo couple with a child testifies to Taunay's attention to detail: here he meticulously depicts their body painting and ornaments as well as their postures (Figure 5). Taunay clearly establishes a familiarity with the people he portrays. In the sketch of the interior of a Bororo hut (Figure 6), native buttocks in the foreground are displayed to the viewer, indicating a certain intimacy and prefiguring the voyeurism that would later be part of ethnographic displays of native villages in world fairs (Rony).

While Taunay's artistic sketches vividly delineate Bororo life and customs, Florence's pencil drawings work as auxiliary illustrations to his written descriptions, which he himself called "portraits" (Florence 244). More accomplished as a topographical artist than an ethnographic observer, Florence nevertheless produced drawings that reflect detailed scrutiny of figures through frontal views and profiles. Seeking to give his portrayals a visual 'objectivity', Florence detaches the bodies of the natives from their surroundings, as if they were specimens of natural history. His preoccupation with the objective rendition of visual phenomena eventually resulted in his claim to have been the first photographer in Brazil (Kossov, *Hercule*).

The work of these early traveling artists provides an important context for the development of later visual technologies, including photography and film, not least because it reflected a commitment to the methodology of typification. As

10 Langsdorff initially hired the Bavarian Johann Moritz Rugendas as the expedition's artist in 1822. However, after their relationship deteriorated, Rugendas left for Europe at the beginning of 1825, taking with him most of the drawings he had made in Brazil (Costa, Diener and Strauss 13).

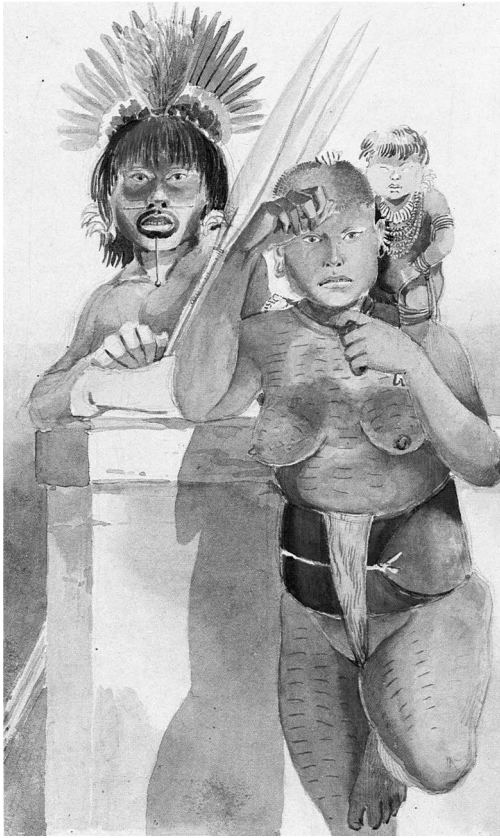


Figure 5:
Aimé-Adrien Taunay, "Femme et homme Bororós" ["Bororo man and woman"], December 1827. (Source: Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg)



Figure 6: *Aimé-Adrien Taunay, "Intérieur d'une hutte des Indiens Bororós" ["Interior of a Bororo Indian hut"]*. (Source: Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg)

far as the Bororo were concerned, ethnographic image making had a long history well before the arrival of adventurers and anthropologists in the 1930s. In 1899, for example, the German ethnographer Karl von den Steinen reproduced Hercules Florence's drawings in the journal *Globus* (Steinen, "Indianerskizzen"). Steinen's own work on the Bororo would eventually have an enduring impact on the discipline of anthropology, as we shall see below.

In his article, Steinen compares and contrasts Florence's drawings with his own photographs of the eastern Bororo taken about sixty years later. Florence's representations were undeniably more reliable than others produced in the period. The French artist Jean-Baptiste Debret, in his *Voyage Pittoresque* (1835), for instance, depicts a Bororo head as just one among several indigenous 'types'. Debret's representations of indigenous peoples have often been criticized for being secondhand, using images produced by fellow travelers for inspiration or perusing the ethnographic collections of Brazil's Royal Museum of Natural History (later National Museum), since he never traveled further than the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro (Bandeira and Lago 49–51; Lima 252–64).

Fifty years after Debret, the most renowned photographer of nineteenth-century Brazil, Marc Ferrez, would follow the genre of the picturesque travel album in producing staged portraits of slaves and indigenous peoples as 'types' for the international market, where exotic figures were in demand (Dobal; Kossoy *Dicionário* 134–39).¹¹ Having visited the ethnographic displays of the 1882 Brazilian Anthropological Exhibition at the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro, Ferrez was likely to have been aware of interest in images of indigenous peoples from the interior of Brazil (Lucidio 33–34).¹² In this context, it is telling that the authorship of a photograph of a Bororo group, generally attributed to Ferrez, has recently been challenged (Domingos). The Moreira Salles Institute in Rio de Janeiro holds the glass plate negative, which belongs to the Gilberto Ferrez collection, where it is catalogued as being by Marc Ferrez, c. 1880 (Figure 7; *O Brasil* 232). However, the National Library has a nearly identical copy of the photograph, this time dated 1894, with the caption "Bororós em Rio Verde de Goyaz. Severino Photographo" (Figure 8). An itinerant photographer and salesman, José Severino Soares traveled across Minas Gerais, Goiás, and Mato Grosso, leaving a considerable photographic record of these regions, and it is known that in the late 1880s a Bororo group still wandered across the territories of eastern Mato Grosso and Goiás (Kosoy, *Dicionário* 298; Lucidio 34). Conversely, there is no evidence of Marc Ferrez ever visiting Goiás. Like his predecessor Debret, Ferrez was an avid collector of Brazilian imagery. Unable to capture the subject with his own camera, it is likely that Ferrez acquired the image from Soares, presumably for a price.

11 I would like to thank Susana Dobal for sending me a copy of this article.

12 For a detailed analysis of the Brazilian Anthropological Exhibition of 1882, see Andermann 128–70; Sánchez and Niño.

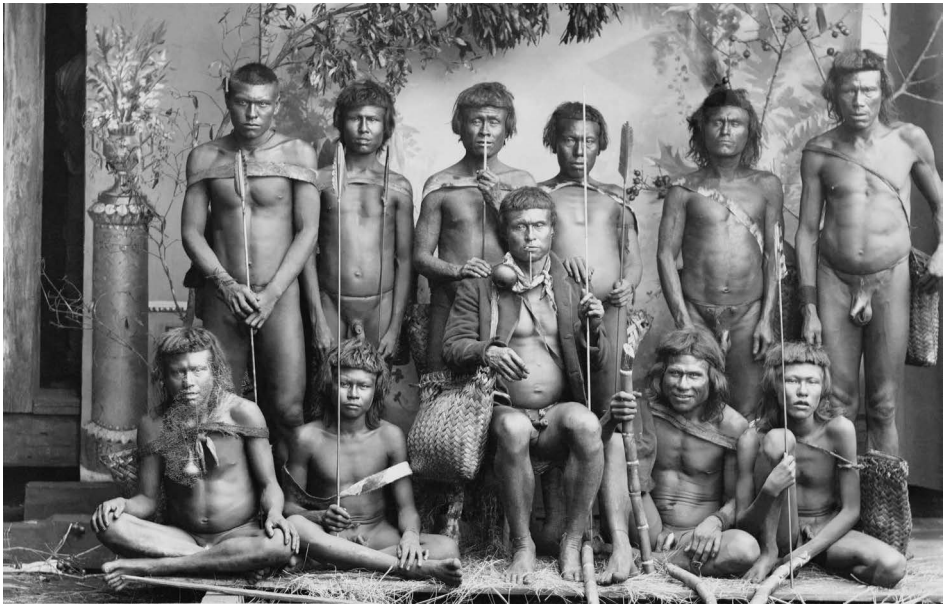


Figure 7: Marc Ferrez (?), *Índios Bororo*, c. 1880, Goiás. (Source: Gilberto Ferrez Collection, Instituto Moreira Salles, Rio de Janeiro)



Figure 8: José Severino Soares, "*Bororós em Rio Verde de Goyaz*" [*Bororos in Rio Verde, Goiás*], 1894. (Source: Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro)

Leaving the question of authorship aside, a comparison between these two images highlights the artificiality of their composition: posing in front of a painted backdrop of 'forest' scenery (a classical column to the left, with added palm leaves), the naked Bororo, wearing a few adornments, are represented as utterly uncivilized. The figure in the center, very likely the 'chief', is the only one wearing a jacket, perhaps denoting his leading role in dealings with the 'civilized'. Moreover, the mounting of the photograph held by the National Library shows an attempt to erase what Susana Dobal identifies as the 'noise' of nineteenth-century photography, that is, a trace left by the photographer of his own intervention – the view of the studio behind the backdrop on the left-hand side, which remains visible in the version of the scene purported to have been authored by Marc Ferrez (Dobal 67–86). Nevertheless, exposing the naked bodies of the Bororo, these photographs clearly cater to the popular, commercial taste for the exotic.

The first modern, 'scientific' anthropological study of the Bororo was contained in Karl von den Steinen's 1894 volume *Unter den Naturvölkern Zentral-Brasiliens* (*Among the Primitive Peoples of Central Brazil*), which included photographs and measurements taken by Paul Ehrenreich, and engravings based on drawings by Karl's cousin Wilhelm von den Steinen and finished by the illustrator Johannes Gehrts. While the photographs following the anthropometric model suggest 'scientific' rigor, showing frontal and profile images of the indigenous people, the carefully composed engravings, depicting scenes of the Bororo daily life and customs, were designed to attract a larger viewership.¹³ However, the frontispiece photograph of a Bororo chief, fully ornamented, but with his penis clearly visible, proved to be controversial (Figure 9; Steinen, *Unter den Naturvölkern*, plate I). As Andrew Zimmerman points out, Steinen was criticized for the inclusion of this photograph, which was deemed obscene, and it was excised from the popular edition of the book, which was published in 1897 (Zimmerman 174; Hermannstädter). Be that as it may, addressing his readers in the preface to this latter volume, Steinen is keen to differentiate the anthropological way of seeing from the pornographic, advising them to "learn to grasp the naked body anthropologically and culture-historically, as in art they had learned to enjoy it aesthetically" (Steinen viii, quoted in Zimmerman 174).¹⁴ Resorting to modernist formal theories of art (Torgovnick 116), Steinen invokes the value of what Johannes Fabian calls the "contemplative stance" in ethnographic discourse, which freezes the natives as if in a *tableau vivant* (67). In order to scientifically scrutinize other, 'primitive' cultures, the anthropological gaze required a disembodied observer. As Glenn Penny asserts, "professionalization is never limited to technical training; it also includes behavior" (252).¹⁵

13 For a study of the illustrations in Karl von den Steinen's publications on his Brazilian travels, see Löschner.

14 "[ich wünsche im Gegenteil,] dass jeder denkende Mensch den nackten Körper wie in der Kunst ästhetisch genießen, so in der Wissenschaft anthropologisch und kulturgeschichtlich begreifen lerne."

15 I thank Andrew Zimmermann for drawing my attention to this article.



Figure 9:
*Karl von den Steinen, "Bororó
 Häuptling" ["Bororo Chief"].*
 (Source: Frontispice, *Unter den
 Naturvölkern Zentral Brasiliens*, 1894)

Steinen's eyes and body were certainly disciplined. Having studied medicine in Zurich, Bonn, and Strasbourg, followed by further specialization in psychiatry in Vienna and Berlin, the twenty-four-year-old Steinen had departed in 1879 for a voyage around the world. His travels took him from the United States, Cuba, and Mexico, to the Pacific islands, China, Japan, India, and Egypt. It was Polynesia, however, that would have a lasting impact on Steinen's career (Thieme). In Hawaii he was introduced to the basics of anthropology by Adolf Bastian (Hemming), and in the Marquesas he encountered a place where "men and nature are consonant in beauty and happiness as anywhere else in the world," as he would later put it (Steinen, quoted in Thieme 42; my translation). In 1897, a year after writing the preface to the popular edition of his Bororo book, Steinen spent nine months in the Marquesas. During this trip, he studied the naked bodies of the islanders in detail, the result of which (more than twenty years later) would be a volume devoted solely to the art of tattooing, the first of his encyclopedic three-volume work on Marquesan art (Ulrich von den Steinen). This volume is illustrated with explicit photographs of tattooed, naked bodies, whose forms are emphasized by their contrast with the blank surroundings. In addition, punctiliously engraved line drawings, accompanied by a list of symbols, trans-

form the islanders' bodies into diagrammatic figures, maplike supporters of symbolic images. These bodies are treated here just as any other ethnographic artifact; indeed, in some of the illustrations they are supplemented with wooden limbs carved with the tattoos. These extraordinary illustrations of the Marquesan islanders surely deserve further critical attention in their own right: what is relevant for this chapter is what they reveal about the anthropological way of seeing that Steinen advocated.¹⁶

In 1887, under the influence of Adolf Bastian's evolutionary ideas (Ulrich von den Steinen 5–45) Steinen had visited Mato Grosso, in search of primitive indigenes. He found some of these 'primitives' in the military colony of Teresa Cristina, which in 1888 was already in decay. Highlighting the degenerate state in which he had found the 'catechized' Bororo, his account is mostly concerned with a description of the 'original' Bororo culture, understood as essentially prehistorical (Steinen, first edition 441–67; Viertler "Karl von den Steinen"). Establishing the contours of a markedly apolitical science, in his neglect of processes of cultural and political change, Steinen was already delimiting the division between colonial politics and the discipline of anthropology. This would later generate heated debates at the Sixteenth International Congress of Americanists in Vienna in 1908, framed by Vojtech Fric's accusations of German colonists' abuses of indigenous peoples in Southern Brazil (Penny 273–76).¹⁷

Nevertheless, it was Steinen's *Unter den Naturvölkern Zentral Brasiliens* (1894) that would define the 'primitive' mind of the Bororo as an exemplary object of knowledge for modern ethnography and anthropology, establishing a tradition of inquiry that culminated in the influential work of Claude Lévi-Strauss. In particular, Steinen's claim that "the Bororos boast of themselves that they are red parrots (Araras)" (first edition 512) instigated a lively discussion in both anthropology and philosophical hermeneutics. As Jonathan Smith shows in a fascinating paper entitled "I am a Parrot (Red)," published in the journal *History of Religions* in 1972, Steinen's suggestion that the Bororo cannot distinguish between animals and men became an exemplary illustration of the alleged inability of primitive man to make proper distinctions between nature and culture. It also signals the identification of distinctions between 'us' and 'them' that became a constitutive part of the modernist enterprise. Thus, the figure of the "tropical Papageno" evoked by Lévi-Strauss fits well within this nascent, modern discourse of primitivism. Before and after Lévi-Strauss, many notable scholars – including James Frazer, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, and Clifford Geertz – joined this long-running debate. As Smith concludes:

16 Although Alfred Gell has relied extensively on Steinen's diagrams to conduct a formal analysis of motifs in Marquesan tattooing, little critical work on Steinen's drawings has been conducted within anglophone scholarship (perhaps because so far it has not been translated into English).

17 In 1905, Fric also undertook fieldwork among the Bororo in Teresa Cristina and Kejari villages; his study of the Bororo, coauthored with Paul Radin, starts with a description of the conflicts in the region (Fric and Radin).

We have been engaged in tracing the history of an error – no less revealing for being a mistake. In the history of interpretation of the Bororo, there has been a noticeable shift from *surface* to *depth*, from the placing of the Bororo within a contextless catalogue of illustrations of a *general* theory of primitive mentality to a depth analysis of the underlying principles of a *particular* culture. In this process, the statement ‘I am a parrot’, has shifted from being an absurdity to be explained away or a puzzle to a serious statement, the truth of which might be empathetically entertained by a non-Bororo [...]. The statement, ‘I am a parrot’, has come to be seen as revealing a truth rather than being the result of a peculiar process of thought. By utilizing terminology such as ‘mode’ or ‘symbolic’, it has been possible to affirm both the humanness and the parrotness of the Bororo without allowing one to subsume the other. (408)¹⁸

Smith’s study of the Bororo and the red parrot leads in many different directions. For my purposes it draws attention to the specificity of an anthropology such as that of Steinen, which is very much concerned with surface appearances. Moreover, it points to the emergence of the epistemological link between the ‘primitive’ world and ‘otherness’ that became such a powerful fixture of Western modernity (Barkan and Bush 2–3).

Locating the Guide

On January 21, 1937, an exhibition of the “results” of Claude and Dina’s ethnographic mission, entitled *Indiens du Matto-Grosso*, and organized by the Musée de l’Homme, opened at the Gazzette des Beaux-arts gallery in Paris. Among the eighty-four objects displayed, there were twenty-two from the Kadiwéu, sixty from the Bororo, and two from the Guarani, including drawings of facial paintings made by the Kadiwéu women, penis sheaths (in which Lévi-Strauss was particularly interested, reproducing images of them in several publications), baskets, hammocks, vases, toys, and colorful feathered adornments (one of which had been acquired in exchange for a gun after week-long negotiations, according to Lévi-Strauss), with their uses dutifully described in the exhibition catalogue (*Indiens*; Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes*, chapter 22; Lopez). The exhibition received a “polite appraisal,” as Lévi-Strauss reported much later (Lévi-Strauss and Eribon 21).¹⁹ On the catalogue’s front cover was the same photograph of the “tropical Papageno” that first appeared in the short article mentioned earlier that Lévi-Strauss published in Brazil in 1936.

18 For a further discussion of this sentence, see Turner.

19 On the list of Bororo objects amassed by Dina and Claude for the Musée de l’Homme, Claude remarks that “les ouvrages des Bororo ne son guère faits pour les musées” (the Bororo artifacts are not made for museums), since the natural resins decompose upon the action of insecticides and disinfectants (Dreyfus and Lévi-Strauss).

The cover of a French edition of *Tristes tropiques*, first published in 1955, was illustrated with the portrait of an unnamed indigenous Nambikwara. In this best-seller, Lévi-Strauss recalls his travels to Brazil more than fifteen years earlier, including his return to the country's backlands to visit the Nambikwara, enabled by the success of the fruits of his first fieldtrip.²⁰ As he explains with gentle irony:

One year after my visit to the Bororo, all the required conditions for turning me into a fully fledged anthropologist had been fulfilled. Lévy-Bruhl, Mauss and Rivet had given me their retrospective blessing; my collections had been exhibited in a gallery in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré; I had delivered lectures and written articles. Thanks to Henri Laugier, who was in charge of the department of scientific research, then in its early stages, I obtained an adequate subsidy for a more ambitious undertaking. (249)

As if anticipating criticism, however, Lévi-Strauss begins *Tristes tropiques* vehemently expressing his distaste for travelers and explorers who assembled "lantern-slides and motion pictures" to illustrate their eyewitness accounts in popular lectures (18). Less concerned with the popularity or otherwise of travel accounts, the philosopher Jean Maugué, who accompanied Lévi-Strauss on a short trip to the interior of Brazil in 1937, singles out the remarkably sad image of the Nambikwara on the cover, "who seems crucified by this reversed cross" (123–24, my translation).²¹ For him, this image communicated the very essence of the fate of the Brazilian Indians, although, as he points out, if Lévi-Strauss does acknowledge such melancholy in the title of his work, he goes no further than that.

Even so, it was the photograph of the "tropical Papageno" that would become ubiquitous in Lévi-Strauss's oeuvre: having also appeared in an article on the social organization of the Bororo in the *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* in 1936 (Planche X C), over the caption "Indien Ciba Cera en costume de fête" ("Ciba Cera Indian in party dress"), the same photograph was later reprinted in *Tristes tropiques*, and in his even more nostalgic work, *Saudades do Brasil: A Photographic Memoir* (94–95), first published in 1994, which also includes a less impressive full-body photograph of the same man (97). As Lévi-Strauss would report in *Tristes tropiques*, this "interpreter and chief informant," who "was to prove a wonderful guide to Bororo sociology," told him that he had been raised by missionaries and claimed to have been taken to Rome to be presented to the Pope (216–17).²²

The "tropical Papageno" may have been a figment of Lévi-Strauss's imagination, but his Bororo guide most certainly was not. Herbert Baldus, the Ger-

20 Luiz de Castro Faria, who as a representative of the Museu Nacional accompanied Lévi-Strauss during his second fieldtrip, provides an alternative account of this expedition.

21 "cette figure d'Indien qui semble crucifiée par cette croix renversée".

22 This photograph has also been recently reproduced on the cover of the DVD collection entitled *Le siècle de Claude Lévi-Strauss*, by Jean-Claude Bringuier and Marcelo Fortaleza Flores.



Figure 10:
 Herbert Baldus, "Eastern
 Bororo: my interpreter in
 Tori-paru, Roberto Ipureu, and
 a boy from the same village."
 (Source: *Ensaio de Etnologia
 Brasileira* (1937), Plate 24)

man-Brazilian anthropologist who played an important role in the development of anthropological research in Brazil, establishing the foundations for the study of cultural change in Indian societies in contact situations, had relied on the very same man as an interpreter while visiting the Tori Paru village in 1935 (former Teresa Cristina colony; Viertler, *As aldeias* 20). In Baldus's *Ensaio de etnologia brasileira* (*Essays on Brazilian ethnology*), first published in 1937, there is a photo of the interpreter, identified there as Roberto Ipureu (Figure 10; plate 24). Assuming a less imposing, 'ethnic' attitude than in Lévi-Strauss's 1936 photograph (see Figure 2 above), this time he is portrayed more as a mediator between the two cultures than as the authentic primitive: arms akimbo, wearing a checkered shirt, he also sports a feather headdress. According to the Salesians, Roberto Ipureu was called *Pore Gudawu* by the Bororo, or "Spirit Found under the Rapids" (Albisetti and Venturelli, vol. II: 1256). Although deemed to be a "good member" of the musical group at the Mission of Tachos, his behavior did not leave a good impression among the missionaries: he resisted conforming to their rules, which led him to leave the Mission and settle in the villages of the Pogubo (Vermelho River) region, in the area around the São Lourenço River (Albisetti and Venturelli, vol. II: 1256).

Contrary to Lévi-Strauss's account, the Salesians were adamant that Roberto Ipureu had never set foot outside Brazil, perhaps not even outside Mato Grosso. In their comprehensive *Enciclopédia Bororo*, Albisetti and Venturelli suggest that Ipureu had simply appropriated the story of the nobler Akirio Bororo Kejewu, known as Tiago Marques Aipoburéu, who indeed had visited France and Italy in 1913 and worked as an 'informant' for the Salesians for many years (Vol. II: 1256–57).²³ They claimed that Ipureu's deceptions were no secret in his community, and may have been responsible for his later violent death; believing himself to be superior to his companions because of his rapport with the white men, Ipureu's behavior became unbearable to them, and they ended up throwing a pestle at his head, breaking his skull (Vol. II 1257). The line between informant and informer was a perilous one.

Rather than interpreting Ipureu's deception as evidence of either his bad character or of his unreliability as a credible informant, we should instead consider it in the context of the longer history of cross-cultural contact. As a "performative primitive," to use Amy Staples's expression (211), Roberto Ipureu was ready to impersonate Aipoburéu the character of his more famous fellow for the inquisitive anthropologist. He was well aware of the cultural capital to be traded in the field of modern anthropological enquiry. Lévi-Strauss, on his part, preoccupied with gathering all the available data about Bororo culture he could within the short period of his visit to the Kejári village, was pleased to find such an obliging interviewee, writing down in his notebook without hesitation all the information provided by Ipureu (Ipureu even performed the role of a rather unskilled weaver in the film *A vida de uma aldeia Bororo*; Figure 11). If Lévi-Strauss ever realized the dubious quality of his informant's data, he never admitted it. Furthermore, for the construction of his structuralist theory, which used the Bororo material for broader speculations on the epistemological basis of human cultural phenomena, the understanding of the behavior of a simple individual within specific historical circumstances had little significance (Viertler, *As aldeias* 27).

Saudades do Brasil, first published in 1994, includes one hundred eighty photographs taken during his travels to Brazil (only seventeen of which had been previously published). In this work, Lévi-Strauss reveals himself through the other; his attraction to the naked bodies of the indigenous people is here much in evidence.²⁴ As Jay Prosser points out, the "photographic proximity to his subjects revealed in these images undermines his theory's insistence that he viewed from afar" (73). The intimate photographs, excluded from his previous work, reveal

23 Aipobureu's lineage was said to be traced to the ruling elite of the Bororo chiefdom (Baldus 165). For a critical analysis of the life of Tiago Marques Aipobureu, see Fernandes.

24 The nakedness of some of the Brazilian Indians whom Lévi-Strauss encountered in his Brazilian travels is described in some detail in *Tristes tropiques*. In a letter to Mário de Andrade from the field, for example, Lévi-Strauss mentions the 'nudité la plus agressive' (the most aggressive nakedness) of the Nambikwara: Claude Lévi-Strauss to Mário de Andrade, Jan. 1936, Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros (IEB) archives.



Figure 11: Dina and Claude Lévi-Strauss, ‘A Tecelagem’ [‘Weaving’], still from *A vida de uma aldeia Bororo*. 1935. Acervo Histórico da Discoteca Oneyda Alvarenga, Centro Cultural São Paulo.

a different aspect of anthropological vision: an embodied view in place of the mind’s eye.

Furnished with a Leica and an “oval-shaped miniature 8mm filming camera,” Dina and Claude Lévi-Strauss took numerous photographs and shot a few films during their fieldtrip into the Brazilian interior (Lévi-Strauss, *Saudades do Brasil* 22). While Dina found filming easier than photographing because of the fixed exposure of the film camera, Claude was less enthusiastic about its benefits for anthropological research (Dina Lévi-Strauss 25). “I hardly ever used it,” he would report sixty years later, “feeling guilty if I kept my eye glued to the viewfinder instead of observing and trying to understand what was going on around me” (Lévi-Strauss, *Saudades do Brasil* 22).²⁵ His impatience with the process of filming suggests that the majority of the footage for the films of their fieldtrip, now held by the Centro Cultural de São Paulo, was either produced by Dina or, more likely, by René Silz.²⁶ The flickering images produced with the handheld camera show an array of life scenes and close-up shots that evoke a rather anxious

25 Lévi-Strauss repeats this statement in the film by Marcelo Fortaleza Flores, *Auprès de l’Amazonie: le parcours de Claude Lévi-Strauss* (2008).

26 The collection of the Discoteca Oneyda Alvarenga, Centro Cultural São Paulo, holds the following titles: *Os trabalhos de gado no curral de uma fazenda do sul de Mato Grosso*; *Aldeia de Nalike I*; *Aldeia de Nalike II*; *A vida de uma aldeia Bororo*; and *Cerimonias funerais entre os índios Bororo*.

attempt at 'data gathering'. The focusing on hands at work – weaving, playing, clay modeling – goes in tandem with Dina's advice to anthropological fieldworkers that in collecting data for the study of techniques, "the hands of a potter shaping a block of clay are many times more instructive than a full body portrait of the same person" (Dina Lévi-Strauss 29).

The Lévi-Strausses' films concentrate most exclusively on observing people as if they were just carrying on their daily activities with no interference from the camera apparatus or the researchers behind it.²⁷ Although on a few brief occasions there are glimpses of the observers in action, it appears their aim was to reproduce, without mediation, the indigenous culture (Pinney 76). However, in portraying the 'primitive other' through the emblematic activities of their daily lives – such as ritual dances and making fires – scientific filming practices share with popular ones an essentialized idea of the 'primitive', detached from historical time (Staples 200–03). Claude's impatience with the business of filming, getting in the way of his own attempts to record what was going on around him, reveals a further epistemic standpoint, in which the researcher's personal encounter "is posited as a sort of pure channel through which ethnography passes into ethnology and anthropology," as Fabian puts it (67). It also exemplifies Christopher Pinney's contention that the anthropologist takes into his own person the functions of a strip of film: "having been prepared to receive and record messages in negative form during a moment of exposure in 'the field', [the anthropologist] is able, after suitable processing, to present them in a 'positive' state in an ethnographic monograph" (82). In the process, the historical and geographical particularities of the place where the cross-cultural encounter happened are gradually left behind. Likewise, the iconic photograph of the local informant – or better, its simulacrum – becomes an authentication of the fieldwork, validating the anthropologists' experience of having 'been there'.

The Bororo Visual Economy

In 1949, the American world traveler and filmmaker Lewis Cotlow was in Mato Grosso shooting footage for 'first contact' scenes with the Bororo for his expeditionary film *Jungle Headhunters*, which was released in the United States in 1950 (Figure 12). As Amy Staples has pointed out, Cotlow's inspiration to film what he called these 'curious giants' originated from his knowledge of the photographs taken by Rondon in the wake of his earlier expedition with Theodore Roosevelt (205). Comparing and contrasting Cotlow's film and book, *Amazon Head-Hunters* (1953), Staples demonstrates the ways in which the film's image of the Bororo as cultural isolates is disrupted by the literary account, providing "insights into the networks of government sponsorship, cinematic representation, and transnational

27 For a comparison of the films about Bororo funeral rituals by Luiz Thomas Reis, Aloha Baker, the Lévi-Strauss couple, and others, see Cunha.



Figure 12:
*Lewis Cotlow discusses the
 filming of a funerary dance with
 an unidentified Bororo elder
 in the Mato Grosso region of
 Brazil, 1949. (Source: Museum
 of Natural History and Science,
 Cincinnati Museum Center)*

exchange with which the Bororo were becoming actively engaged” (208). Traveling filmmakers like Cotlow, she concludes, were “early pioneers in the representation and commodification of ‘performative primitives’, forging the tourist circuits, networks, and exchange relations in which global cultures are now thoroughly mediated” (215).²⁸

However, it is possible to exaggerate the novelty of this process. Photographic and cinematic practices in mid-twentieth-century Mato Grosso were part of a much longer history of colonial contact, image making, and circulation that dates back at least to the early nineteenth century. Throughout the period, travelers, missionaries, governmental officials, and anthropologists advancing into the region brought with them not only notebooks, bibles, telegraphic lines, and trinkets for exchange of information, but also sketchbooks, cameras, and film equipment. Over the decades, the exchange of visual images became part and parcel of the Bororo Indians’ barter with the ‘civilized’. Enmeshed in a global visual economy, the Bororo became rather active participants in the making of their own image as isolated primitives.

28 Significantly, in 1990 a bequest from the estate of Lewis Cotlow to George Washington University in Washington DC created the Lewis N. Cotlow Fund, which has supported over one hundred fifty anthropological research projects by George Washington students in nearly fifty countries.



Figure 13:
 Diorama entitled
 "Bororo body paint-
 ing", Museu de
 História do Pantanal,
 Corumbá, 2011.
 (photo by the author)

Recent work bridging the supposedly binary divides between myth and history, myth and truth, and myth and knowledge, provides us with alternative ways of understanding the Bororo beyond the enduring image of the 'noble savage'. Gordon Brotherston's study of a painted jaguar skin collected by the Austrian naturalist Johann Natterer in the early nineteenth century is just one fascinating example of a new anthropology that refuses to understand the native 'other' as belonging to a premodern era ("The Legible Jaguar" and "Native Numeracy").²⁹ Within the artifact lies a visual language that reveals the Bororo's sophisticated understanding of the night sky, of mathematics, and astronomy.

In this chapter, I have offered another kind of 'revisionist' perspective, revisiting constructions of the Bororo as isolated primitives, as exemplified in the Lévi-Strausses' academic work. For those who imagine this trope as a thing of the past, the Museu de História do Pantanal in Corumbá provides an intriguing counterpoint. In 2007, a new diorama entitled "Pintura corporal Bororo" ("Bororo body painting") was put on display (Figure 13). Recalling nineteenth-century exhibits, it shows five plaster models of Bororo Indians: a couple on the left; in the center, a grandmother sitting on the ground telling stories to her grandchild; and a hunter on the right. In the background, a forest landscape sets the scene. As an explanatory museum label states, the painting and models were made by the artist Filipeli and sculptress Alejandra Conte, while two Bororo men from the Centro de Cultura Bororo in Meruri, Agostinho Eibajiwu and Leonida Akiri Ekureudo,

²⁹ See also Fabian, *Space-Time*. On the discussion about the split between myth and history, see Hill. For a critique of the sharp divide between nature and culture in modern anthropology, see Latour.

were commissioned by the museum to undertake the body painting, which “represents, simultaneously, the vision by nineteenth-century naturalists and by the twentieth-first century Bororo Indians.”³⁰ The ‘event’ of the painting was also registered by the Bororo filmmaker Paulinho Eceræ Kadojeba, from the same cultural center. As the museum’s architect Nivaldo Vitorino elucidates, the Bororo Indians were invited to contribute their own knowledge of cultural heritage and natural pigments in order to provide an image of body painting that was “closer to the truth” than that depicted in an early nineteenth-century sketch by Aimé-Adrien Taunay, which was in fact the original inspiration for the diorama. Given that the Bororo Indians are still fighting to secure rights to their land in Brazil today, this symbolic gesture reminds us that the visualization of the Bororo as essentialized primitives is – and perhaps has always been – the result of a collaborative venture between ‘civilized’ observers and those Bororo Indians who, like the “tropical Papageno” Roberto Ipureu, are inclined to act as mediators between the two cultures.

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30 See the sequence of the diorama construction on the MUHPAN Making off and MUHPAN websites.

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