Messages from the Meek: Dynamic Resistance at the Edge of Amazonian Colonization and Capitalism

https://www.e-ir.info/2022/04/24/messages-from-the-meek-dynamic-resistance-at-the-edge-of-amazonian-colonization-and-capitalism/

CHRISTIAN FERREIRA CREVELS, APR 24 2022

This is a pre-print excerpt from *Decolonizing Politics and Theories from the Abya Yala*. You can download the book free of charge from E-International Relations.

Three days remaining until the end of the year 1907, the newspaper *O Malho*, of the city of Rio de Janeiro, displayed under the title 'in the far north of Brazil', what seems to be the first photograph ever published of individuals of the Madihadeni Indigenous people. Those photographed (three men, six women and an infant), unsurprisingly, show some common native Amazonian dressing, such as headdresses, necklaces, small cotton skirts and bands tightly tied below the knees. They are all barefoot, have their hair trimmed the traditional old ways and are not covered with western clothes. Almost everything points towards a time where the relations between them and the surrounding society were few and sparse. They also carry long bows and arrows on full display, a fact that is commented right in the description of the picture: 'A group of Indians of the Jamamady tribe, of the Xeruan river, photographed at the Juruá river, at the *seringal* Manichy, by the amateur photographer Mr. Josué Nunes. They have their weapons of choice, including the *cabocla…* with the child to the side. Unfortunately, the civilization action of the *seringal* still permits the exhibition of pictures of such order' (O MALHO 1907).

The term *cabocla* is the feminine version of a *caboclo*, thus referring to an Indigenous woman. It is a way that Indigenous Peoples were historically called in Brazil, now outdated due to its pejorative weight and prejudice. Sometimes translated as a *rubber plantation*, a *seringal* is, nevertheless, not a plantation, but rather an extractive site located deep within the forest. Hardly structured, it consisted mostly of a series of trails connecting the trees of latex-producing *hevea brasiliensis* and a storage shed, the *barracão,* that doubled as a market store. The *seringal* wasthe center of rubber production in the Amazon in the early 20th century, during what is called 'the Amazonian rubber boom' (Weinstein 1983). At the time, the River Juruá was experiencing the intensification of traffic and rapid occupation of its margins following the pursuit of the so-called 'white gold' of the Amazon.

The geographical references and some additional historical documentation leave no doubt that those photographed are the ancestors of a group of the Madihadeni that today still populate the same river. A few years later, in 1920, the anthropologist Paul Rivet and the priest Constant Tastevin would also find the *Jamamady* in the same region and write about the fast development of the rubber endeavor (Rivet and Tastevin 1921, 463). At the time, it was not yet known that those people denominated themselves as Madihadeni, and it would take yet another half a century for the first ethnography about them to be written. The ethnonym *Jamamady* is still today directed to some groups of the region and was probably used in a broader fashion by the settlers that made contact with them (Crevels 2021).

Both the local lore and academic narrative frequently state that the settlers and merchants, entering and occupying the region almost exclusively through the main rivers, created a double migration movement among the different Indigenous groups that resided there. Some established (somewhat) peaceful commercial relations and were attracted to the margins of the bigger waterways. Others, less keen to relate and/or belligerent, fled upstream crossing the small riverbeds onto dry land and deep forests. The first ones, then, in contact, gave the generic denomination they used for the latter ones, themselves isolated. Some authors, both now and back then at the first

decades of the century, noticed that the ethnonym *Jamamadi* and its variances (*Jamamady, Iamamady,* and alike) seem to possibly derive from the terms of the Indigenous languages of the Arawa linguistic family for 'forest' (*zama* or *jama)* – and 'people' (*madi*). Therefore, it would mean something like 'forest people', or 'wild people'. This way, many groups were called indistinctly under the same name. The term signified less a distinct group than a specific disposition to (or not to) engage in relations with the extractive endeavors and/or the merchants that roamed the basins of the Purus River and Juruá River. On this distinction, during a huge, but disorganized, economical and colonial endeavor, the lack of intention to trade and to produce rubber by the part of some reluctant Indigenous groups took moral outlines: they were deemed as savages, aggressive, cannibals and so on. A whole sort of mystery, histories and descriptions was disseminated to convey the separation of the Indigenous peoples between the *meeks*: amicable dwellers of the rivers, willing to trade and to work; and the 'braves': violent residents of the dense forest and far creeks, obstacles to the full disclosure of the country and the development of the region (Taussig 1993).

The lexical use is, of course, not out of context. *'Brabo'*, a regional version of the word '*bravo',* can have its origins well translated as 'brave'. However, in the Amazon region and the context of the *aviamento*, the term came to be used also to refer to the rubber tappers in the very specific time when they had just arrived at the *seringal.* Most of the time migrants from the arid northeastern Brazil, strangers to the ways of the forest and the crafts of the duty, were considered in need to be 'tamed', *amansados.* Also, newcomers were often seen with cautious suspicion, as they were regarded as more prone to rebel than seasoned tappers.After some time getting acquainted with the ways of the rubber, and with a bigger debt accumulated, both moral and financial, the *seringueiros* would then be considered and referred to as now being 'meek', *mansos*: loyal to the system and the *patrão*, non-violent and hardworking rubber tappers.

In many ways, the colonization process of the Amazon that derived from the rubber boom and its main economic system, the *aviamento*, are regarded as truly violent, brutal or even sadistic. More so, it seems that there is a consensus that violence was an inherent and a structural part of it (Taussig 1993; Weinstein 1983; Soares 2017). As such, a whole poetic and semantic lexicon of violence and terror was devised within the system, closely related to the creation of debt and the enslaving of the native and migrant people. To Taussig, this configures a magical realism of terror that is, nonetheless, no less 'real' and essential to the organization of labor in the *seringal* (Taussig 1993, 88).

The practice of distinguishing Indigenous groups according to their stance in relation to society, as 'brave' or 'meek' is not a phenomenon exclusive to the Amazon region. On the contrary, it seems to be distributed throughout Brazilian history and territory. Furthermore, it is deeply rooted in the colonial process as it was not only the setting of a kind of cultural interpretation about the natives, but almost single-handedly ruled how Brazilian colonial society would deal with them in each kind of situation. The definition of some groups as 'isolated', 'pacific', 'brave', or 'meek' concretely guided official action, policies, as well as financed tutelage, persecutions, diasporas and even massacres, and still does (Oliveira 2016). There were two possible futures devised to Indigenous Peoples, each regarding how there were set in the two opposing definitions: to the meek, integralization (and so, disappearance amongst the general society); to the brave, war and decimation (Carneiro da Cunha 1992).

These processes, of course, were always guided in terms for the expansion of colonial power and, in the Amazon, the grasp of newly discovered resources and Indigenous workforce and their immersion into the functionality of capitalism. As Aníbal Quijano states, the main ways of control of labor in the expansion of capitalism, outside Europe and particularly in Latin America, were not free paid work, yet still in favor of the global capital. Thus, exploitation and domination were as much a colonial process as a capitalist one. For that, 'race' was one of the main frames of social dividing of work (Quijano 2000).

Back to the description under the old photograph, it is clear that the Madihadeni weapons (which are designed for hunting, by the way) are shown as a sign of the supposedly uncivilized state of savageness of those people, a flag of their bravery. There is no more information to be found concerning the photograph in that number of the newspaper, or the Indigenous, or even the Amazon in general, for that matter. The picture does not follow a report or an article, as it is displayed with no more explanation than the description reproduced above. It is presented somewhat like a novelty or curiosity fact, in contrast to the urban, *avant-garde* and modern concerns of Rio de Janeiro, the capital of Brazil at the time.

However, keen eyes and some familiarity with the descendants of the same people can unveil other clues that remain unspoken by, or unnoticed to, the editors. The small skirts used by the women are apparently made out of industrially woven cloth, instead of the dangling locks of wild cotton strings that would be traditional. The infant also seems shrouded in industrial cloth, as does one woman, only partially visible, who wears a long skirt. As described, they do wield their weapons, but not in an aggressive or menacing stance: they seem to display them. Uncommonly, two girls hold the arrows; one carrying a whole set, and the other just a single one. Those are masculine artifacts and belong certainly to the men with the bows. The Madihadeni hold deep concerns regarding the handling of weaponry by women, and fear that it might render the owner *zukherade,* non-lethal, when hunting. It is a belief shared by many other Indigenous peoples in the Amazon. This suggests that the photograph was, at some level, staged. At least, the display of weapons was possibly a demand of the very photographer, who claims attention to the stage of 'savageness' of his subjects. Further, it is mentioned that the encounter happened on the Juruá River's margins, thus necessarily involving some travel by the Indigenous that resided at a distance. It is impossible to know whether they got there by their own means or were taken there by the owner of the *seringal.* Likely, it was a trade visit, even if there is not a single merchandise visible. Also, there are no cargo baskets in the frame, even though they are always present on travels. The goods can be elsewhere, even at the canoe, ready for departure.

Either way, even if the newspaper uses its rhetoric to showcase those Indigenous in an untamed light, and so condemns the 'civilization action' as innocuous, the photograph and its characteristic details point towards the opposite: the existence of some commercial relationship between the settlers and the Madihadeni that was, if not pacific, cordial at the very least. As to this day, trading is regarded as one of the main forms of relation with alterity by the Madihadeni (Crevels 2021). In spite of the hunter's bows and arrows, the Madihadeni do have weapons for battle, the *uruvitha* (something in between a spear and a war club) but they do not wield them at the scene, attesting one more time they were not there for war.

Dealing with Braves: Shamans and Settlers

Conversely, in the worldview of the Madihadeni, the non-Indigenous settlers and merchants are the ones that seemed almost hopelessly 'wild': the *karivadeni*, as they call them, came as brute men traveling mostly without women or children in their loud barges, most constantly inebriated. They were capable of ruthless acts of violence and at that were very lethal with the power of their firearms. On the other hand, they also represented a whole new world of possibilities, with their fantastic merchandise, useful tools and all sorts of interesting new things.

Since their very first interactions, sometime during the last decades of the 19th century, until the 1960s, the Madihadeni only knew those involved with the extractive endeavor as the representatives of the surrounding society, be it the passing merchants, the settlers, or the infamous *patrões.* Because of such history, for everything that matters, the societal attributes of this segment became an interpretation model of *all* the non-Indigenous society, and for the Madihadeni it meant that to deal with modern western society was to deal with those settlers and their views of the world, thus heavily guided on the images of the 'meek' and the 'brave' that settlers carried. In other words, the definitions of 'meek' and 'brave' were made inescapable to deal with, from the perspective of the Indigenous peoples that they were projected upon.

The Madihadeni are actually composed of a set of groups that experienced contact with the surrounding society, each in their own situation, but whose histories are all fairly similar. Today, when they tell how they first met rubber tappers, they frequently do it focusing on key elements that are: the risk of attack from those people armed with superior weaponry; the possibilities of access of goods and merchandise; the attempts to control the situation by use of communication of non-violent intent (by the part of the Madihadeni); and the success of the negotiation consolidating a relationship of commerce and work, in the terms of the extractive industry:

When they (ancestors) were fishing, they heard the *karivadeni* at a distance and ran. They said: "there were *karivadeni* over there, that's why we came back". Others were thrilled: "Let's go! Let's see the *karivadeni*!". Kavazu, however, said that they shouldn't: "Don't do it, the *karivadeni* will kill us, they will shoot us. Don't you do it!". Then, the others got afraid.

Two nights afterwards, however, another woman, Kavarini, pleaded: “Let’s meet the *karivadeni.* Let’s buy food and merchandise from them!” and the others agreed. They traveled downstream, quite afraid, until they found one *karivadeni.* He had a gun and, when he saw them, started to load it. “Wait, wait, wait!” someone screamed: “Don’t shoot us! We are nice, nice people, don’t shoot!”. Then, he put the gun away and asked for their names and said: “I almost shot you, if you hadn’t said a thing, I would have fired at you!”. After he got to know them, he called them to see his house and his companions, a bit downstream, where he offered coffee and crackers. There they met some other *karivadeni*. They ate and then one of them said: “I came here looking for latex, if you want your things, your own coffee and merchandise, you can bring me latex, and you’ll have it”. So, they were thrilled when they traveled back home, bringing all the stuff along, they said to their relatives: “The *karivadeni* did not kill us. You can also go there and work for them, give them latex, and you will also have all those things for yourselves”, he said. (Field notes, 7 June 2016).

Thus, the non-Indigenous individuals they knew carried what were for the Madihadeni several of the attributes of a true (and, thus, dangerous) alterity: they had access to fantastic and otherwise unreachable goods; followed their own and somewhat inscrutable purposes and reasoning; and sustained an intimate and prowess relation with violence and lethality. For so, the merchants were seen as much alike the shamans, and such comparisons are frequently made up until this day. Both figures (the shamans and the merchants) live in the middle of the intertwined and opposite symbols of violence and abundance, danger and access. The association between them is vast and based on the myth of the shaman Tahama, who travels downstream and turns into a *karivadeni* merchant:

There was a very powerful *zuphinehe*, Tahama, whose guardian spirit gave him everything. Every day, the spirit gave food to all the village: manioc, coffee, meat. Everything the spirit would give, and everybody could eat without work. If the shaman wanted, he could choose a spot where a house would appear fully constructed by the morning; if he wanted to drink the juice of wild fruits, when everyone was asleep, the spirit would put a jar of juice in the middle of the village: by dawn, it was there. So, it was with everything.

One day, the shaman said to the others that he would make the engines for the canoes and left with his spirits and his kin. He said he would come back with big engines for boats. They left, with the spirits, and made the engines, and made other things as well. When they came back, they were already *karivadeni.* Before that, there were no *karivadeni*, only Madihadeni. It is said that, once the *karivadeni* got to the Xeruã river, another shaman said that those people were to be called *karivadeni,* and told the story of Tahama, because we did not know how to call them. (Field notes, 13 May 2015)

The daily relations with the *zuphinehedeni,* the shamans, and with the foreigner merchants both have risks involved, for which special care is seen as due. They are powerful and suspicious, capable of mislead and mischief, and possess weird motivations that are hard or impossible to predict or understand. It’s the desire of people whose interests are *different* in a radical way (Viveiros de Castro 2018), that resist the scrutiny. Memories of violent shamanic rampants are numerous, as they are felt as plagues and epidemic episodes. In part, the fragmentation of the Madihadeni in two groups residing in two different rivers is the result of a shamanic event of that sort. Also frequent are accounts on how easy the *karivadeni* resort to unmotivated aggression. It seems the shamans and the *karivadeni* could kill on frivolous disagreements – ‘shooting’ either their guns or spells.

The firearms of the non-Indigenous settlers and merchants are a dominant part of the Madihadeni imagination and memory concerning the first interactions. Especially, it is the central concern on how to avoid them. In spite of the primordial success in avoiding the lethal confrontation, the risk never fades completely, and there are several instances in history where it turned into reality. The assassination of an esteemed Madihadeni leader in 1983, is a bitter reminder of the lethal fury of *karivadeni.*

On the other hand, the western world, which the Madihadeni could partially access through their relations with the merchants and settlers of the Purus and Juruá basins, had things and goods that were unique to it, impossible to attain elsewhere or through other means. The power of mobility in a specific and restricted part of the cosmos defines what is foreign. The shamans have a special vessel *zarava*, which they use to travel to the sky *nemebakhu,* house of spirits and other beings with whom they realize their shamanic prowess. Also, in unimaginable ways, they can access

the underworld *namibupe*, and the interior of the water world *pashubudi,* equally communicating and negotiating with the beings that reside there. The shamans draw their powers from those spaces. The *karivadeni*, very much alike, have their barges and engines, airplanes, and automobiles – which they use to circulate throughout the cities where the goods and merchandise come from. In their own respective worlds, the *karivadeni* and the shamans have the knowledge and information necessary to act and to move, and those are somewhat unreachable to the common Madihadeni, or at the least very hard to obtain. In sum, they possess the capacity to communicate with the residents of foreign places (such as the knowledge of the Portuguese language or the spiritual etiquette); the knowledge of the way of the trade, bargain, and negotiation; or the capacity to recognize the risks involved in the interaction and how to avoid them. Such abilities set this special type of people apart from the others, conceding them power.

Trading: A Desirable Relation

Mythically, the classificatory association of the non-Indigenous people and the shamans is elaborated through the myth of Tahama, as shown above. However, it is necessary to state that the Madihadeni people regard more close attention to the figure of the *patrão*, the *boss*. The *patrão* can either bethe owner of the *seringal* or the seller of the merchandise for which the extractor production is delivered as trade. In other narratives, we see that after the shaman Tahama and its companions leave the company of the other Madihadeni and effectively move into a different *locus* in search of something inaccessible in any other way, who that returns is *karivadeni*, and more specifically a merchant *patrão,* with his motorboat loaded with goods for trading with the native production. The shaman even prepares those that stay, advising them to collect certain products of the forest while they wait for his return, in a manner very similar to the speech of the rubber tappers of the first contacts: 'cut latex, and I shall return with merchandise'. Without doubt, Tahama is a mythical adaptation posterior to the arrival of the extractive industry. The way that this narrative was constructed, and which setting is presented there, shows the interpretative effort of the Madihadeni and their conclusion about what to make sense out of the presence of the settlers and merchants.

At the same time, the myth presents the underlying association of shamanism and commerce. The activities of a shaman are considered his *work iburei*, and are negotiated with interested clients. The most common job of the shaman is to deal with illness: from the simpler to the most complex, all of the affections are in their realm of action because they are also seen as products of foreign shamanism. When someone falls ill, to receive treatment, payment is due. Such payment is said to be *manakuni,* a special concept that is translatable as *payment*, *money*, *dowry*, *vengeance*, and so on. The value of the *manakuni* varies from what it is assumed as mere cost price, like a small jar of ground tobacco powder *shina* aspirated by the shaman in any work; up to the most valuable items, such as hand-woven hammocks or expensive utilities bought in the cities, like televisions and radios. They say an envious shaman can spell someone or their children just to ask the object of desire as payment *manakuni* for their cure. In spite of what some religious missionaries wrote about the Madihadeni, their shamanism is profoundly commercial, for the shaman himself establishes constant trades and negotiations also with the spirits with which he deals daily.

Faced with the powers of dangerous alterity, be it the spirits, the shamans or the non-Indigenous settlers, the common Madihadeni have few strategies to mitigate the risks regarding them. The most important of them is to engage in trading, transforming potential aggressors into commercial allies.

The anthropologist Oiara Bonilla, who did extensive fieldwork with the Paumari of the Purus River, affirms that the commercial relationship is the most important model of what it is to relate in the Paumari cosmos, which is populated by entities engaged in never-ending trade and commerce, and where the Amazonian patronage political system transverses the limits interspecies. The Paumari people also dwell on the Purus River basin and share linguistic and cultural proximity with the Madihadeni. For them, several animals are themselves *patrões* that possess employees and clientele and maintain with them the type of relationship that humans do. As an example, the manatee is the *patrão* of the lakes and waters. Even predatory interactions, so significantly prototypical in Amazonian ethnology, are considered under the commercial lexicon by the Paumari: the catch of the huge *pirarucu* fish (*Arapaima gigas)* is described as being a trade act of fishing material from the fisher for woven mats of the *pirarucu* owner entity (Bonilla 2005, 51).

For the Madihadeni as well the commercial is the preferred relationship with alterity, although I have not seen such

sophisticated cosmological examples. The term that embodies those relations is, as mentioned, *manakuni*, used for a vast array of different cosmological situations, like for the Paumari. It invests the trading partners in a known and structured dialogue that is, as so, rather predictable. The establishment of a commercial relationship with foreigners is the first clue that it can be a tamable relation, and that is why the Madihadeni invest so much on it, since the very first contacts.

Pacifying Oneself and, thus, the Others: Relation as a Mean of Control

War as a symbolic framework of the relation with alterity has been, more than once, extensively studied through anthropological literature. In Brazilian ethnology, the case of the Tupinambá groups stands out, where war is deemed fundamental on the construction of sociality (Viveiros de Castro 2002). Likewise, contemporary situations have shown how warfare can take the form of new political configuration and communication in interethnic relations (Turner 1993).

The images (and self-images) of the 'Indigenous warrior' populate both the common imagination and spaces of interaction with Indigenous peoples. In contrast, the Madihadeni present themselves as being proudly *peaceful*, or even *meek bukherade.* In their pacifist presentation, the Madihadeni let it be known their aversion (and abandon) of warrior or violent dispositions that are considered by them as 'bad speech' *ima hirade*, either amongst themselves or in the relations with the *karivadeni.* They prefer otherwise the ways of commerce, of trade.

The proud pacifist stance was noticed by the ethnographies that studied with the Madihadeni. After the first Ph.D. thesis that took them into frame (Florido 2013), the general understanding of the ways the Madihadeni dealt with colonization developed from 'participation in the dynamics of the *seringal*' (Aparicio 2011, 117), to that of a 'movement of pacification perpetrated by merchants and missionaries' (Mendes and Aparicio 2016, 10). Nonetheless, it remains rather inadequate to understand the Indigenous stance as one of passive response. That would still be the reproduction of the *brabo* and the *manso,* in colonial terms. In such a way, the occurrence of a speech of self-presentation of the Madihadeni as *pacific* people turns into a conjunction of the categories, making the Madihadeni *pacifism* a *pacified* one: the discourse would be then a reproduction of an internalized prejudice. Such understanding is common when regarding the Indigenous peoples as victims of colonialism, but it is urgent to abandon it as it empties the active efforts of Indigenous peoples in controlling their own histories.

Much on the contrary, as we see in the native narratives, the Madihadeni positioning in a peaceful and trade-willing manner is a conscious act. To present themselves as *pacific*, *meek*, or *good people*, since the very beginning, is the stance chosen as the most adequate to deal with the perils of the *seringal*'s bosses, as such it is with the shamans. It is a means to convey the message they insistently deliver: 'you need not attack, we are harmless'. In such a way, they seek through communication and confirmation of themselves as *pacific* to induce in their listeners the very same 'pacifism' and willingness to trade and work together.

It is a powerful message, although a strange one. By means of it, the Madihadeni found a way of surviving menacing times and maintaining agency on their history as a group, even when dealing with dangerous colonial circumstances with a more powerful acquaintance. At the same time, the assumption of a peaceful stance derives from an etiquette of 'relations with the unknown alterity' in order to neutralize warlike, violent, or predatory potentialities of the encounter. It is an adjustment of a cosmological positioning of the part in interaction that happens beforehand. It is not only used for the surrounding society, but to other Indigenous groups as well, and even non-human entities.

Then again, that strategy has its historical referential framing. The Madihadeni do not say that they were always peaceful, but quite the opposite. They assure this disposition started after a time of widespread violence, war and shamanism, during which many people died and several groups perished altogether. Whether this time consists of a mythical or a chronological one is debatable, as so if it is related to the arrival of non-Indigenous people in their territory. Regardless, the Madihadeni concluded afterward about the antisocial consequences of violent conflict and its ultimate inefficacy. 'We are not violent, not anymore', they explain (Florido 2013, 131–132).

It is a strategy of resistance that regulates the conduct of an alterity by adjusting one's own behavior. To accomplish

it, of course, it is necessary to have as much knowledge about those others as possible. For that reason as well, it pays to remain near and familiar to them.

To *pacify* the non-Indigenous people is a rather common perspective and stance among several Indigenous peoples. In the book *Pacificando o Branco*, organized by Bruce Albert and Alcida Ramos (2002), a compendium of such experiences is well detailed for the Waiwai, Waiãpi, Yanomami, Tikuna, Baniwa, Wapichana, Macuxi and others. Its reading elucidates much of the Madihadeni case, particularly the descriptions of Catherine Howard on the domestication of merchandise. As mentioned, another case published elsewhere by Oiara Bonilla, regards the Paumari people (2005, 2007). For them, the perspective of a symbolic economy of predation (Viveiros de Castro 2002) is even more clear: they concern controlling the predator-like *patrões* by assuming themselves the position that evokes the familiarizing domestication, thus avoiding the dangerous condition of prey, and so negating the *patrão* the full condition of predator in what can be effectively described as a 'counter-domestication' (Bonilla 2007).

What distinguishes the Madihadeni case and sets it apart is how much the 'resistance' is based on the intensification of the relationship with the surrounding society; and how they managed their relative positioning by strategic thinking in the terms and concepts of the other, like the 'meek' and the 'brave'.

Conclusions: Cooperating to Resist?

Throughout its development, Anthropology has been concerned and sometimes struggled to make fair descriptions of the Indigenous societies when in interaction with the modern western world. Either by describing a very deterministic system of cultural and social responses to contact that strips the Indigenous peoples of any agency in their history; or, on the other hand, by vesting them in well-intentioned but romantic and incongruent voluntarism. Or yet by describing them as a sort of *negative* that is defined as the symmetrical opposite of modern society: almost an incarnation of the *anti-west* anxieties that, contradictory, belong to the very west itself. The images of the Amazonian Indigenous Peoples and their resistance strategies are, very often, victims of a process similar to that of *Orientalization*, especially as they are becoming increasingly renowned for their political agenda questioning the modern western ways (Ramos 2012).

For some time now, several Indigenous peoples have been at the vanguard of recent environmentalism. However, it is important to notice that this is not the case for all Amazonian Indigenous peoples. Neither their strategies in regards to the relationship with modern society is necessarily one of the two options: to oppose or to submit. A lot of the time, these societies had to devise clever and inventive ways to deal with and coexist with a colonial process without directly opposing it, but still managing to maintain their own sense of agency and control over their world.

The Madihadeni case in question serves as an example of resistance and maintenance of autonomy that involves the use of strategies of controlled cooperation to avoid retaliation and conflict, thus making further negotiations possible on the terms of the relationship. For it to be successful, the Madihadeni had to comply with some expectations of the setters, putting themselves under a foreign concept as *meek*, but in counterpart they managed to avoid being rendered to another conceptual position they have all reasons to fear: that of the victims, of the *prey*.

Even if the greater scheme of the colonial venture looks largely the same; in this situation, the detailing of the local history is crucial to an understanding of how those same colonial relations were given, and how the intersubjectivity of coloniality came to reach groups otherwise with great difference in ideology (Quijano, 2000). Concepts and ideas locally emergent like that of the *meek* and the *brave*, that implies little to nothing in the center of modern society and capitalism, control the conceptual framework by which whole histories are developed through its fringes.

References

Albert, Bruce, and Alcida Rita Ramos, eds. 2002. *Pacificando o Branco*: *cosmologias do contato no Norte-Amazônico*. São Paulo: Edit. UNESP: Official Press of the State.

Aparicio, Miguel. 2011. Panorama contemporâneo do Purus Indígena. In *Álbum Purus,* edited by Gilton Mendes.

Manaus: EDUA.

Bonilla, Oiara. 2005. O bom patrão e o inimigo voraz: predação e comércio na economia paumari. Mana. Estudos em Antropologia Social, n. 11(1): 41-46. Rio de Janeiro: National Museum, UFRJ.

Bonilla, Oiara. 2007. Des proies si désirables: soumission et prédation pour les Paumari d'Amazonie brésilienne. PhD diss., École des hautes études en sciences sociales – EHESS.

Crevels, Christian. 2021. Patrões selvagens: história e poética Madihadeni da alteridade. MA diss., Universidade Federal do Amazonas.

Florido, Marcelo. 2013. Os Deni do Cuniuá: Um estudo do parentesco. PhD diss., Universidade de São Paulo.

O Malho. Newspaper. Rio de Janeiro, 28 december 1907, year VI, N.276. Public Domain: Available archive of the Digital Library of Brazil, Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira in: http://bndigital.bn.gov.br/acervo-digital/O-malho/116300

Mendes, Gilton, and Miguel Aparicio, eds. 2016. *Redes Arawa: ensaios de etnologia do médio Purus.* Manaus: Edit. EDUA, 2016.

Oliveira, João Pacheco de. 2016. *O nascimento do Brasil e outros ensaios: "pacificação", regime tutelar e formação de alteridades.* Rio de Janeiro: Edit. Contra Capa.

Quijano, Aníbal. 2000. Colonialidad del Poder, Eurocentrismo y América Latina. *La Colonialidad del Saber: Eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales* edited by E. Lander. Buenos Aires: Perspectivas latinoamericanas. CLACSO.

Ramos, Alcida Rita. 2012. Indigenismo: um orientalismo americano. Anuário Antropológico, Brasília, v. 2011, n. 1, p. 27-48.

Rivet, Paul, and Constant Tastevin. 1921. Les tribus indiennes des bassins du Purús, du Juruá et des régions limitrophes. La Géographie XXXV, Société de Géographie. Paris.

Soares, Gabriel. 2017. Não existem cordas para nós: relações de produção e pertencimento dentro do sistema de aviamento na região do Médio Purus. MA diss., Universidade de Brasília.

Taussig, Michael. 1993. *Xamanismo, Colonialismo e o Homem Selvagem*: um estudo sobre o terror e a cura. Rio de Janeiro: Edit. Paz e Terra.

Turner, Terence. 1993. Imagens desafiantes: a apropriação Kaiapó do vídeo. Revista De Antropologia, 36.

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 2018. *Metafísicas canibais: Elementos para uma antropologia pós-estrutural*. São Paulo: Ubu Edit.

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 2002. *A inconstância da alma selvagem.* São Paulo: Edit. Cosac Naify.

Weinstein, Barbara. 1983. *The Amazon Rubber Boom 1850-1920.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

About the author:

Christian Crevels is a Brazilian anthropologist. He has been engaged in Indigenous causes and issues since 2010, especially regarding land and territory regulation and rights; interactions, prejudice and conflict among Indigenous

Peoples and national society; and colonial, economic and social history of Indigenous Peoples and settlers of the Amazon. Up to 2017, he worked with the Madihadeni – an Indigenous group. He earned his Master's thesis at the Universidade Federal do Amazonas, where he studied the history of Indigenous People from contrasting perspectives.