Between Mission, Myths and Tradition.
The Production of Texts by and about the Macuxi in Contemporary Brazil

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Abstract
This text examines the production of the collection Makuxi Panton – Histórias Makuxi published by Consolata missionaries in Roraima, Brazil, in the late 1980s. The aim is to understand how missionary choices in favour of some concepts made it possible to develop a model of missionary action based on what they called the ‘commitment to the cause of indigenous peoples.’ Such ‘commitment’ aimed at preserving ‘indigenous culture’, demarcating indigenous lands, and securing rights considered to be fundamental. The concept of ‘culture’ – which supposedly both established a dialogue with anthropology, the discipline considered to be authorized to describe ‘cultures’, and was incorporated into theological discourse – is the main concept analyzed. The resulting new model of action for building relations between missionaries and indigenous people will also be discussed. Emphasis will be given to the production of shared codes by the agents of the missionary encounter. In this encounter, the code ‘culture’ guides a number of practices related in particular to issues concerning ethnic identity and land rights claims.

Résumé
Cet article examine la production de la collection Makuxi Panton – Histórias Makuxi publiée par les missionnaires de la Consolata à Roraima, Brésil, à la fin des années 1980. Il cherche à comprendre comment le choix fait par les missionnaires en faveur de certains concepts a permis le développement d’un modèle d’action basé sur ce qu’ils appelèrent « l’engagement en faveur de la cause des indigènes ». Un tel engagement avait pour but la préservation de la « culture indigène », la délimitation de terres indigènes et l’obtention de droits fondamentaux. Le texte se penche principalement sur le concept de « culture » présenté par les missionnaires à la fois comme établissant un dialogue avec l’anthropologie (la discipline autorisée à décrire les « cultures ») et

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comme partie intégrante du discours théologique. On analysera aussi le nouveau modèle d’action pour l’établissement de relations entre missionnaires et population indigènes. Une attention particulière sera portée à la production de codes communs par les agents de la rencontre missionnaire. Dans cette rencontre, le code « culture » oriente un grand nombre de pratiques, en particulier en relation à l’identité ethnique et le droit foncier.

**Keywords**

Macuxi, religious mission, mediation, intercultural relations, culture, anthropology

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**Introduction**

The three-volume collection entitled *Makuxi Panton – Histórias Makuxi* [*Makuxi Histories*] was published by the diocese of Roraima in 1988 and 1989. In the presentation of the two first volumes, the teachers of the Indigenous School of Maturuca, Sobral André, Abel Tobias, and Inácio de Brito wrote the following:

We, Makuxi Indian teachers,
after a long way towards Education
teaching the white culture imposed by the Government,
have concluded that all that is DE-INDIANIZATION
and consequently MARGINALIZATION of Indian Peoples.
Yet we know that Education begins in the family
and Indian Education is despised by the whites,
but it is, in fact, just like any other Education.
We have our TRADITIONS:
Myths, Medicine, Histories, Crafts, and many other things.
In the first place comes our LANGUAGE,
our wise old Indians have taught us all we know
and we are proud of teaching it to our young Indians,
not only in theory, but in practice,
where we have the example of the Indigenous School MIRIKIO MAKUXI
at the Maloca of Maturuca, which has just begun.
We have been supported by the tuxaus, by the Indigenous Regional Council,
by the Indigenous Territorial Council – CINTER,2
and by the Indigenous Communities.
We preserve our CULTURE
because we are a People that is capable of perfecting

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2) The CINTER (Indigenous Council for the Territory of Roraima) became the CIR (Indigenous Council of Roraima) after the Territory of Roraima became a State.