

Reply to Schröder. – Peter Schröder’s review of my book, “Brazil’s Indians and the Onslaught of Civilization,” is unfair, insulting, and wrong in so many ways that I cannot remain silent (*Anthropos* 101.2006: 318–319).

First he accuses me of not consulting important specialists on the Kayapó such as Gustaaf Verswijver and William Fisher, whose names and works I cited in the book’s bibliography. He says I consulted “few sources,” but the 18-page bibliography lists hundreds of sources, so I can only conclude he didn’t read it. Taking single sentences out of context, he claims my chapter-long interpretations and analyses are “simplistic, schematic, and superficial.” I would use exactly those words to characterize his objections.

He castigates me for “serious” factual errors but makes numerous errors himself. The Villas Boas brothers did establish the Xingu Indigenous Park, as their book, “A Marcha para o Oeste” (listed in the bibliography), and many other reliable sources have amply documented. Indeed, they are nationally and internationally renowned for this achievement. They set up the Xingu Park to protect 17 different indigenous groups, some of whom, such as the Panará, the Villas Boas brothers resettled there under Brazilian government auspices.

Despite what Mr. Schröder says, private individuals can effectively overturn indigenous demarcations by obtaining an injunction from a federal judge, even when the president has signed the demarcation order. According to Amnesty International, this is exactly what happened to the Guarani of Nanderu Marangatu, Mato Grosso do Sul, in December 2005, when federal police evicted them from their demarcated territory nine months *after* President Lula da Silva signed the demarcation. As of April 2006 the Guarani were still camped by the side of the highway, asking for international help to return to their land. I urge Mr. Schröder and other anthropologists to write to the Brazilian government about the plight of the Guarani and other endangered indigenous groups. (For more information and addresses of Brazilian authorities, see Amnesty International’s Urgent Action Appeal 178/05 of 16 December 2005.)

Unfortunately, demarcation does *not* guarantee exclusive use and control of indigenous land to indigenous people. The Brazilian Constitution does not give them full control over products extracted from underground, such as gold, diamonds, and other minerals. That is why I used the word “preferential” to describe the legal extent of their land rights. Mr. Schröder should read articles about the complexities of demarcation law in “Povos Indígenas no Brasil, 1996–2000” (Ricardo 2000), also

cited in my bibliography. But the sad fact is that where the rule of law is precarious, decrees and constitutional provisions have little positive effect on the difficult reality that Brazil’s indigenous peoples must confront every day.

Some of Mr. Schröder’s more intemperate criticisms seem based on his misinterpretations of English language usage. For example, he says, “Important specialists about the Xucuru and Pataxó Hã-Hã-Hãe are ignored so that Rabben could declare that ‘a few years ago, they were said to be extinct’ . . . On the contrary, the Xucuru never were declared extinct . . .” In English, “said” and “declared” do not always mean the same thing, and native speakers understand the difference between these two words. In this context, “said to be” means the Xucuru were reputed to be extinct, *not* that the government officially declared them extinct.

I learned about the Northeastern indigenous groups by visiting and talking to them and by consulting Brazilian and other specialists (cited in the bibliography) who apparently do not agree with Mr. Schröder. There is plenty of room for debate on many issues in the book, and disagreement with his opinions does not mean that my interpretations or analyses are wrong.

Mr. Schröder does not seem to understand that the statement, “The Xucuru people of Northeastern Brazil have come back from the dead,” is figurative, not “a kind of funny irony.” His imperfect command of English is also evident in various awkward phrases and sentences in the review, but I will refrain from embarrassing him by pointing out his linguistic errors. Thus, I am treating Mr. Schröder much more kindly, civilly, and collegially than he treated me.

Finally, Mr. Schröder ends his review with a patronizing characterization of the book as a “good introduction . . . for laypersons and for some undergraduate lessons” and slightly calls my work *bonitinho*. (Brazilians might call his tone *chato*, *grosso*, or *mal-educado*.) The entire review is suffused with very unattractive academic snobbery.

I purposely wrote the book for a broad audience of laypeople, students, scholars, and activists, and the first edition sold out as a result of being widely assigned to undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the United States and other countries. A young activist told me she had decided to work professionally on indigenous issues after reading “Brazil’s Indians and the Onslaught of Civilization.” To me, her response is much more significant than Mr. Schröder’s ill-considered diatribe. Might he be envious of the book’s success?

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