



The Last Cannibals: A South American Oral History

Ellen B. Basso

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An especially comprehensive study of Brazilian Amazonian Indian history, *The Last Cannibals* is the first attempt to understand, through indigenous discourse, the emergence of Upper Xingú society. Drawing on oral documents recorded directly from the native language, Ellen Basso transcribes and analyzes nine traditional Kalapalo stories to offer important insights into Kalapalo historical knowledge and the performance of historical narratives within their nonliterate society.

This engaging book challenges the familiar view of biography as a strictly Western literary form. Of special interest are biographies of powerful warriors whose actions led to the emergence of a more recent social order based on restrained behaviors from an earlier time when people were said to be fierce and violent.

From these stories, Basso explores how the Kalapalo remember and understand their past and what specific linguistic, psychological, and ideological materials they employ to construct their historical consciousness. Her book will be important reading in anthropology, folklore, linguistics, and South American studies.

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