Middle Atlantic Review of Latin American Studies, 2019
Vol. 3, No. 1, 110-112

Book Review

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Laura Zanotti. 2016. *Radical Territories in the Brazilian Amazon: The Kayapó's Fight for Just Livelihoods*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

The "radical territories" invoked in the book's title refers neither to the famed dualistic village morphologies that fascinated generations of structuralists nor the metric partitioning of land by the Brazilian State. The "territory" of Laura Zanotti's book *Radical Territories in the Brazilian Amazon* is above all a political and moral field, a range of located strategies used by the Kayapó of Central Brazil to achieve a "good life" and an intimate relation to their lived environment.

The Kayapó are no strangers to the international stage. Since the mid-1980s, they have become one of the world's most visible icons of the conservation movement by self-consciously adapting local indigenous values to the discourse and imagery of global environmentalism. Rallying an assortment of conservation groups, anthropologists, rock stars, and purveyors of lifestyle products, Kayapó leaders gained important victories against large-scale mining, energy, and agricultural interests threatening their lands.

Radical Territories in the Brazilian Amazon charts the more everyday forms of "Kayapó resistance" in the past decade. Zanotti argues that the Kayapó selectively employ several economic strategies in a way that reduces risk and dependency: swidden horticulture for subsistence (chapter 3), experimentation with nontimber forest projects for market (chapter 4), and selective alliances with conservation NGOs (chapter 5). Swidden gardens allow for the concomitance of a number of plant species, and Zanotti points to the intimate knowledge of the landscape, soil composition, and planting techniques needed for the individual cultivation of the swidden's plants. Moreover, swidden horticulture provides a reliable base for the Kayapó to experiment with more volatile regional and international markets for seasonal fruits and Brazil nuts. Combining these strategies, she argues, offers alternatives to the more corrosive effects of wage-labor and developmentalism and allows the Kayapó to achieve a "self-determination that acknowledge[s] and honor[s] indigenous ways of being in the world" (11).

The book's insights on Kayapó ecology fit loosely with its candidly activist tone. Zanotti joins a long line of anthropologists and activists, who in an effort to encourage more sustainable uses of

DOI: 10.23870/marlas.245

resources against the pernicious influences of large-scale development, call attention to the importance of indigenous environmental strategies. I am certainly sympathetic to this aim. Unfortunately, Zanotti's commitment to "Kayapó resistance" succumbs to what Sherry Ortner (1995) has called "ethnographic refusal," the reluctance by politically committed anthropologists to "write thickly" about their subjects' own political attitudes. The breadth of Kayapó strategies discussed in the book seems unduly truncated to those that garner the author's sympathy. The pairing of swidden horticulture and the sale of artisanal forest foods does seem to give them a degree of insulation from intensive development, but as Zanotti admits, Kayapó experimentation with nontimber forest projects has had mixed results. What happens when these forays into niche markets occasionally fail? While it is noted in passing that the village of A'Ukre has engaged in the illegal logging of mahogany and gold-mining, these activities are never included in the range of strategies used by the Kayapó to achieve that elastic goal of self-determination. And as other anthropologists have noted (Fisher 2000; Conklin and Graham 1995), Amerindian leaders, the Kayapó included, have appealed to principles of self-determination to publicly defend their community's episodic concessions to mining and timber interests in the face of environmentalist opposition. Nor are we given an account of how or why the Kayapó of A'Ukre have largely cut ties with mining interests while Xikrin-Kayapó continue to retain them (Fisher 2000).

Readers encounter the Kayapó political attitudes through the author's individual conversations with her consultants, which are typically pared down to short quotations about their land and livelihoods. It is unclear, however, whether such quotations should be taken as straightforward factual accounts, the voicing of environmental discourse, or something else entirely. At no point in the book do we hear what the Kayapó have to say to each other when discussing these strategies of self-determination. We are therefore left with the misleading impression that politics is something the Kayapó do only with outsiders; it is not something they do among themselves. Yet surely the Kayapó have their own politics, and given the focus on the agonistic tenor of village politics by other Kayapó ethnographers (Turner 1979; Fisher 2000), we might wonder how the local politics of Kayapó villages relates to more visible activism based on claims of identity, land, resistance, etc. How do Kayapó leaders translate the "off-stage" concerns of the community into the "on-stage" demands of environmental activism? How are the economic strategies employed by the Kayapó (commonly directed by Kayapó women) dependent on the success of these translations (mostly executed by young male leaders), and vice-versa?

I do not think mentioning these points of tension bolsters the position of armchair critics who would paint the Kayapó as failed environmental stewards. The political successes of the Kayapó are undeniable. A more nuanced and critical account of Kayapó politics would show the difficulties overcome in the hard-won achievements of the past decades and the difficulties they and other native peoples still face. This is clearly something inspiring broad interest among a variety of stakeholders. In her ethnography of the land conflict in southern Brazil, the anthropologist LaShandra Sullivan (2013) recounts a conversation she had with two Kaiowá-Guarani leaders, Gordinho and José, who unfavorably compared the efficacy of their own political organizations to those of the Kayapó: "They stated that the Kaiowá-Guaraní were a *povo fraco* (weak people), unlike the Kayapó, who are far fewer

MARLAS 3(1), 2019, DOI: 10.23870/marlas.245

in number, but much stronger, he said. José said that a Kayapó leader told this to him directly once. Or rather asked him, 'why are you (the Guaranís) so many but so weak?' I asked José why they were a weak people and what that meant anyway. Gordinho said that they were not united. They are very divided" (Sullivan 2013, 186–187). An ethnographic account that would give life to the self-understandings of Kayapó political ecology and their political unions and divisions would be of interest to all those who continue to watch with admiration their struggles for just livelihoods.

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