

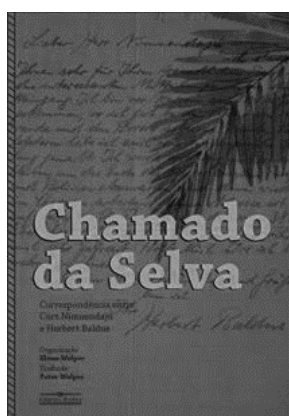
# The correspondence between Curt Nimuendajú and Herbert Baldus

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The ethnosociologist and founder of functionalism in the German ethnology, Richard Thurnwald(1869-1954) (see Melk-Koch, 1989; Haller, 2005, p.61; Rössler, 2007, p. 18f), who also included historic dimension and (ethno-) psychology in his research, was the teacher to many important Ethnologists, namely Herbert Baldus(1899-1970) and Emilio Willems(1905-1997). Both play an instrumental role in the sociology and ethnology of Brazil. Herbert Baldus who was awarded a doctorate by Richard Thurnwald in 1931 and was later banned in the “Third Reich” (see Willems, 1971;

Becher, 1972; Mühlmann, 1984; Riese, 1995, p. 211; Sampaio Silva, 2000; Passador, 2002), is considered to be the general agent in the institutionalization of ethnology in Brazil. In 1939 he started holding a chair in ethnology at the “Escola de Sociologia e Política” in São Paulo. In Germany, Brazil and the USA his fundamental trilogy “Bibliografia Crítica da.Etnologia Brasileira”, his monography about the “Tapirapé”, as well as his “Ensaio de Etnologia Brasileira”, (1954ff; Nimuendajús work in vol.1 on p. 484-1119) which he dedicated to the “grande conhecedor dos índios no Brasil Curt Nimuendajú”, are well known. Together with the social scientist Dr. Emilio Willems (1905-1997), a prominent figure in the USA and Brazil, who is also a German migrant, Baldus published a lesser known, useful lexicon, the “Dicionario de Etnologia e Sociologia” (São Paulo: Companhia

Editora Nacional, 1939; includes a photography by R. Thurnwald with a dedication to Baldus on p.4) (see also Corrêa, 1987, p.118-127).

It is thanks to the tiresome work in the archives by Dr. Elena Welper after the devastating fire in the Museu Nacional on the 8th of September 2018, that destroyed the entire valuable ethnological collections of Brazil, as well as the unpublished work by Curt Nimuendajús(1883-1945), that she was able to publish the correspondence between him and Herbert Baldus, which can be seen as a great merit. The correspondence offers an informative look into the state of ethnology and the indigenous people in the thirties and forties of the previous century. Who was Nimuendajú? “Nimuendajú was a giant in the periphery of the system of the world (at that time)” (Fausto, p.20). The social anthropologist Roberto DaMatta (\*1936) (p.13), who is called “sobrinho de Curt” by Apinavé, stresses his love towards the indigenous people of Brazil, which only slowly starts discovering his responsibility for these “others”. Nimuendajú’s innovative contribution to ethnosociology, ethnohistory (see Mapa Etnohistórico de Curt Nimuendajú. IBGE, 1981, with about 1400 ethnies and 973 titles in in the bibliography!), archaeology and ethnolinguistic of Brazil cannot be esteemed highly enough. He tirelessly lived in difficult tropical conditions for almost 40 years, from 1905-1945, with varying indigenous groups, mentioned in the correspondence such as Guarani, Kaingáng, Ofayé, Orti, Terena, Kaiguá, Tembê, Timbira, urubu, Juruna, Xipayá, Arara, Kayapó, Parintintin, Mura, Pirahã, Tora, Matanawi, Palikur, Munduruku, Baniwa, Wanãna, Tariãna, Tuka, Maku, Apinayé, Canela, Krikati, Krepúnkatéye, Pokópüe, Guajaj, Xerent, Kraho, Fulniô, Xucuru, Gamela, Patachó, Kamacã, Machacari, Botocudos, Gorotire, Tucuna (see Welper, 2002; Stubbe, 2007; Schröder, 2019) .

How can this correspondence be characterized? It is an asymmetrical communication between the “knowing” in the Brazilian periphery (Belém) and the “learning” academic in the Brazilian centre (São Paulo). There are in total 89 letters in Nimuendajú’s archive which are shown (which are partially inserted as copies of the originals in the texts). The correspondence starts on the 8th of March 1934 and ends on the 13th of August, 1945, four months prior to Nimuendajú’s unsettled death. It initially starts out in German but switches to Portuguese in March 1942, due to the fact that Brazil declares war on Germany and Italy on the 21st of August 1942 and the use of the German language is prohibited since it caused suspicion of espionage (see König, 2014). The global historic background for this correspondence is the rise of national-socialism and the Second World War (1939-1945). The topics of the letters are prominently ethnological questions (etnologia indígena, Ethnolinguistics) and the outcomes of research, as well as plans for field research and personal matters. Welper methodically underlines their “rescue ethnology” (p. 32) and Nimuendajú’s field research method of “going native”. Baldus, who so to speak discovered Nimuendajú’s for Brazil, is called the “amigo velho” (“senhor Doutor” from 1939 onwards).

It is an outstanding, well commentated and introductory, science historical, including a bibliography “keybook” that has been created, which is fundamental, for everyone who wants to occupy themselves more intensely with Brazilian ethnology and its history.