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Dead Dogs. Rethinking 'cruelty' on dogs in Amazonia

The seemingly cruel treatment of domestic dogs by many Amerindian peoples has always intrigued ethnologists and other agents working in indigenous villages. On the other hand, these animals introduced after contact are considered eminently useful as guardians or as hunting auxiliaries. I have suggested elsewhere that this treatment towards adult animals is connected to their life stage, which, as happens among humans, requires proper behavior by mature individuals able to take care of their own survival. Accordingly, part of canine behavior is considered antisocial and therefore inappropriate for mature beings, human or animal. In this communication, a contribution to Human-Animal Studies in Amerindian societies of the Amazon and based on my own fieldwork among the Karitiana of Rondônia, I try to offer a new interpretation of the phenomenon. Inspired by the recent review of animism by Belgian anthropologist István Praet, which looks at the radical and immeasurable difference between perspectives, insofar as what is 'animated' is not necessarily 'alive'. Given the widespread association between the domestic dog and the dead, I argue that violent actions directed at dogs can find an explanation in the reversal of perspectives.