

## CLAS Open Seminar

Monday 29 January - 5:15pm

SG1 Ground Floor, Alison Richard Building, 7 West Road, CB3 9DT

[Aparecida Vilaça](#) (CLAS Simón Bolívar Professor, Museu Nacional, UFRJ)

### **Pathways to Nature: Christianity and Schooling in Indigenous Amazonia**

Most of the literature on Christianity and contemporary "culture sensitive" schooling among Indigenous peoples take them as radically different processes, the first leading to the "loss of culture" and the second to its "recover". Through the analysis of the school production and the translation of Biblical texts by the Wari' Indigenous people (Amazonia, Brazil), we would like to show that their fundamentals are very similar. Both introduce to the Indigenous worlds a concept of nature as given, created by God or, as in science, by chemical and physical processes. Simultaneously nature's opposite is also introduced—a culture that excludes animals and subjects them.

**Aparecida Vilaça** has a PhD in Social Anthropology, Museu Nacional, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), 1996 and is a Collaborating Professor at the same institution. She is a researcher at the National Research Council (CNPq) and Rio de Janeiro State Research Foundation (FAPERJ).

Aparecida Vilaça was Global South Visiting Professor at the University of Princeton, 2023 and Tinker Professor at the University of Stanford, 2020. She has also been Visiting Professor at the Universities of Cambridge (UK), Bergen (Norway), the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales and École Pratique des Hautes Études (Paris) and the Universidad Autónoma de México.

Since 1986 she has worked among the Wari' Indigenous People in Southwestern Amazonia, Brazil. She has specialized in the study of socio-cultural changes among indigenous peoples, with an emphasis on conversion to Christianity and schooling. Her current research focuses on the school learning of science by Wari' children and young people, with the aim at understanding the equivocations produced in the encounter between different ontologies, especially regarding the idea of nature, mathematics and disease.

She recently became interested in fiction and essay writing. Her memoir entitled *Paletó and me. Memories of my indigenous father* (Stanford University Press, 2021) was awarded the Gold medal in creative nonfiction at the independent publisher book award and, in its Brazilian version, *Paletó e eu* (Todavia, 2018) first prize for essays, Casa de las Américas. She also co-authored, with Francisco Vilaça Gaspar, the short-stories book *Ficções Amazônicas* (Todavia 2022).

Among her academic books published in English are *Strange Enemies. Indigenous Agency and Scenes of Encounters in Amazonia* (Duke, 2010), *Praying and Preying. Christianity in Indigenous Amazonia* (California, 2016), *Of Jaguars and Butterflies. Metalogues on issues of Anthropology and Philosophy*, with Geoffrey Lloyd (Berghahn, 2023) and *Science in the Forest, Science in the Past* (co-edited with Geoffrey Lloyd (Hau-Chicago, 2020).