The Birth of Brazil: Discovery as Ideology

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Abstract

This paper examines the notion that Brazil was born out of a peaceful and loving encounter between the Portuguese colonists and the Amerindian natives. The paper begins with a brief look at the letter of discovery by Pero Vaz de Caminha: Carta a el-rei D. Manuel (1500). The letter is read here within the framework of accidental colonisation that defined the Portuguese presence in pre-colonial Brazil (1500-1530). This period of Brazilian history shares the same aura of peace and love attributed to the week of discovery, and together they have come to represent the innocent infancy of the Brazilian nation. The paper then examines the marriage of Caramuru and Paraguaçu -initially, symbol of the loving unity of Portugal and Brazil, and later symbol of the hybrid nature of the Brazilian nation. The paper ends with a brief reflection on the current representation(s) of the discovery of Brazil, in light of the recent commemoration of the 500 years of Brazil.