



A Land of Ghosts: The Braided Lives of People and the Forest in Far Western Amazonia

David G. Campbell

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The western Amazon is the last frontier, as wild a west as Earth has ever known. For thirty years David G. Campbell has been exploring this lush wilderness, which contains more species than ever existed anywhere at any time in the four-billion-year history of life on our planet.

With great artistic flair, Campbell takes us with him as he travels to the town of Cruzeiro do Sul, 2,800 miles from the mouth of the Amazon. Here he collects three old friends: Arito, a caiman hunter turned paleontologist; Tarzan, a street urchin brought up in a bordello; and Pimentel, a master canoe pilot. They travel together even farther into the rainforest, set up camp, and survey every living woody plant in a land so rich that an area of less than fifty acres contains three times as many tree species as all of North America. Campbell knows the trees individually, has watched them grow from seedling to death. He also knows the people of the Amazon: the recently arrived colonists with their failing farms; the mixed-blood Caboclos, masters of hunting, fishing, and survival; and the refugee Native Americans. Campbell introduces us to two remarkable women, Dona Cabocla, a widow who raised six children on that lonely frontier, and Dona Ausira, A Nokini Native American who is the last speaker of her tribe's ages-old language. These people live in a land whose original inhabitants were wiped out by centuries of disease, slavery, and genocide, taking their traditions and languages with them -- a land of ghosts.

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