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Povos Indígenas no Brasil

Fonte: Boston Globe

Class.: 99

Data: 07/02/73

Pg.: 53

Civilization greets lost tribe of Amazons with a giant hug

Reuter

BRASILIA — A Brazilian anthropologist has become the first white man to meet the fierce giant warriors of a legendary lost Amazon tribe.

In a historic encounter Sunday, Claudio Villas Boas met the giant Indians of the Kreen-Akrore tribe, some over 6-foot-6, at his jungle camp by the Peixoto de Azevedo River in northern Mato Grosso State.

The warriors, feared by neighboring tribes for their use of clubs to crush the skulls of enemies in battle, handed over gifts of arrows and bows and were given steel axes, knives and kettles by Villas Boas.

News of the meeting reached the Indian Foundation headquarters here Monday.

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Villas Boas and his brother, Orlando, Brazil's foremost Indian experts, have waited more than a year near the Kreen-Akrore villages to make contact with one of the last, lost Brazilian tribes.

By radio, Claudio told what happened on Sunday when some 30 warriors walked into his camp. The warriors' heads were shaved, and black paint was daubed on their naked bodies.

The anthropologist walked out of the camp and embraced the giant tribesmen one by one. Then came the exchange of gifts.

After jabbering excitedly in an unknown language, the warriors slipped back into the jungle, but reappeared Monday for a few minutes and exchanged gifts again.

Known for decades as the mysterious giants of the Amazon, the Kreen-Akrore women, who are the same size as their men, are also famous for their prowess in battle. One leg-

endary Kreen-Akrore woman is credited with smashing the skulls of four enemy warriors before another 15 overpowered and killed her.

The Villas Boas brothers' expedition into the unknown Cachimbo forests in search of the elusive tribe was filmed in color and telecast in the United States over the Public Broadcast Service on Jan. 8.

The brothers have been exploring the Amazon for more than 25 years, opening up vast tracts of the region.

They are responsible for setting up Xingu National Park, a huge reserve in Brazil's geographical center where 15 Indian tribes live. Entrance is forbidden to outsiders, and native culture and economy are the basis of life.

At the start of their quest, the Kreen-Akrore had killed an English explorer. The brothers hoped to win the Indians' confidence and friendship and relocate them in the Xingu reserve.