



Mysteries of the Jaguar Shamans of the Northwest Amazon

Robin M. Wright

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Mysteries of the Jaguar Shamans of the Northwest Amazon tells the life story of Mandu da Silva, the last living jaguar shaman among the Baniwa people in the Northwest Amazon. In this original and engaging work, Robin M. Wright, who has known and worked with Silva for more than thirty years, weaves the story of Silva's life together with the Baniwas' broader society, history, mythology, cosmology, and jaguar shaman traditions. The jaguar shamans are key players in what Wright calls "a nexus of religious power and knowledge" in which healers, sorcerers, priestly chanters, and dance leaders exercise complementary functions that link living specialists with the deities and great spirits of the cosmos. Exploring in depth the apprenticeship of the shaman, Wright shows how jaguar shamans seek the knowledge and power of the deities through several stages of instruction and practice.

This volume, the first study to map the sacred geography ("mythscape") of the northern Arawak-speaking people of the Northwest Amazon, demonstrates the direct connections between petroglyphs and other inscriptions and Baniwa sacred narratives as a whole. In eloquent and inviting analytic prose, Wright links biographic and ethnographic elements in elevating anthropological writing to a new standard of theoretically aware storytelling and analytic power.

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