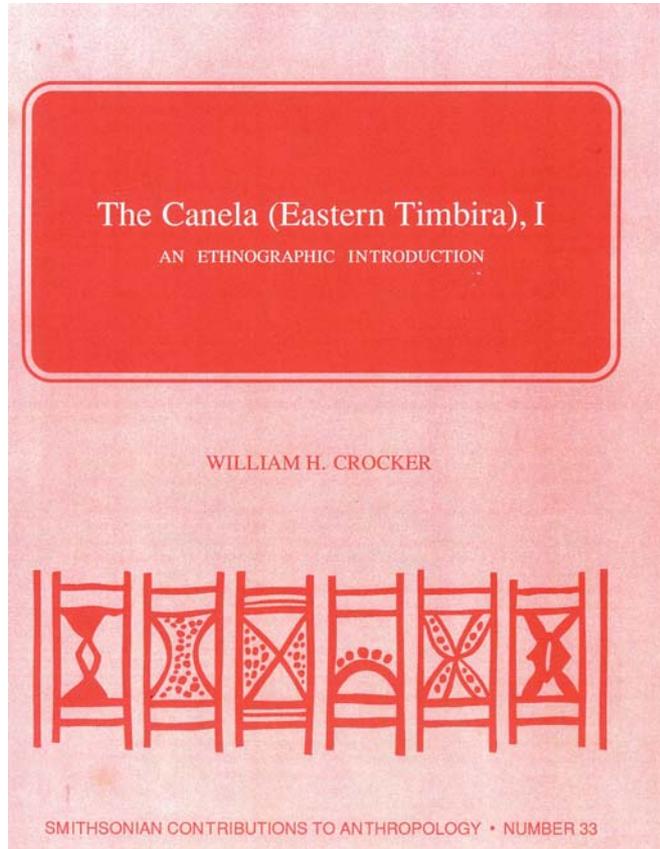


Book of The Century



William H. Crocker (1990). *The Canela (Eastern Timbira), I. An Ethnographic Introduction*. Smithsonian Contributions To Anthropology. Number 33. Smithsonian Institutional Press, Washington, D.C.

<http://www.mnh.si.edu/anthro/canela/>

"With the publication of this monograph, the Canela become one of the best known aboriginal societies of lowland South America. If Crocker does provide us with the additional monographs in his planned series, the Canela will become one of the best known cultures of the so-called primitive world." (p xiv, Charles Wagley). The additional commentary focuses on infant-child care, sexual customs and the peaceful, nonviolent character of the matrilineal Canela culture

Additional Commentary

"An infant lives at the breast of its mother. In the late 1950s infants were rarely put down except to clean them. Whenever a baby cried it was given a breast on which to suck. It was believed that infants and babies should not cry very much, and that the moment any baby did, it should be pacified, or distracted. A breast was the usual means. The four or five women in a household took care of each other's babies and almost always more than one of them could furnish milk (p. 158).

"One of the oldest Canela men, Khapo who was in his early 80s in the late 1950s, reported that, in earlier times, weaning occasionally took place as late as 3 to 4 years? (p159).

"In a society where frequent extramarital sexual relations were the custom and where the purpose of certain festival acts was to help young women become accustomed to multiple sexual relations with men, sex training of the very young and of adolescents must be especially interesting and unusually important to them (p.161)

"In babies and young children masturbation is strictly disapproved of and not allowed" (p.161).

"Canela socialization is mild in disciplining children; but opposite-sex sibling sex play is one of the two occurrences about which they are quite nonpermissive, although never cruel or abusive" (p.162)

An adolescent male has his first sexual experience at about age 13 with a woman considerably older than himself who want to initiate her young classificatory spouse, or who might simply like the young fellow" (p.164).

"By the time she is 6 years old, a little girl is closely segregated from boys and has to stay near her female relatives, especially her mother, doing small tasks. The feared potential danger is that a gang of little boys might catch and experiment sexually with her, it was said. (p.164).

Before serving as a girl associate or participating in the various semipublic extramarital situations, a girl learns to be sexually generous through individual experiences. The man who takes her virginity is her husband by definition, if he has fathered no children in an already existing marriage. He remains her husband unless his kin pays for him to leave her. (p.164) .

"By 12 or 14, if not earlier, a girl becomes a girl associate to a men's society, during which time of service she becomes accustomed to group sexual relations with men, depending on the character of the society into which she is inducted." (p.165).

"Socialization largely prevents Canela individuals from being aggressive in tribal life. (p.165).

"Aggression between women rarely occurs" (p.165).

"Second only to cross-sex sibling sex play, the worst possible behavior male research assistant could imagine was fighting between their sons. Fighting between boys is simply not permitted. (p165).

"The taboos against boys or adolescents fighting are so strong and effective that such offences may not have taken place at a serious level during the 22 years I was there...The fights reported occurred only between drunk adult men". (p165).