

'Love of War' and 'Fierce Tigresses': Statius, Lucan and Anchieta's *De Gestis Mendi de Saa*

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ABSTRACT

José de Anchieta's *De Gestis Mendi de Saa* (probably the first epic poem written in America) focuses on the deeds of Mem de Sá, third governor-general of Brazil, and depicts the cultural clash between the Indians and the Portuguese. This paper is concerned with the ways in which Anchieta's image of the natives draws on two Latin epic motifs (*belli amor*, 'love of war', and *immanes tigres*, 'fierce tigresses'), especially by discussing his reuse of material from Lucan's *Civil War* and Statius' *Thebaid*. These motifs are used to criticise the Indians' domestic wars and cannibalism. However, I argue that Anchieta's political reservations about the nature of the Portuguese war against the Indians have led him subtly to hint at a kind of hidden cannibalism on the part of the Portuguese.