Amazon Peasant Societies in a Changing Environment

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Political Ecology, Invisibility and Modernity in the Rainforest

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To Guilherme M.M de La Penha,
in memoriam

Preface

I am delighted to be able to provide some comments on the English edition of this book, *Sociedades Caboclas Amazonicas: Modernidade e Invisibilidade*, originally published in Portuguese by Annablume Editora, with support from FAPESP (The State of São Paulo Research Foundation). The book presents a synthesis of the advances in understanding of *caboclos* in the past 20 years, and much of this material has not been available heretofore in English.

This book is appearing in English at a critical moment in the evolution of our understanding of caboclos. For one thing, this body of work has made it possible to get away from the earlier connotations of the term caboclo which was a demeaning term used always for someone below you, as noted by Wagley and Galvão in the 1950s. As research has accumulated, more and more scholars are opting for the use of the term *ribeirinho* instead. This is as it should be, as the term caboclo is in any number of ways intentionally ironic. Once in a conversation with a *colono* from the pre-Amazonia maranhense, he called me over and showed me his pig pen saying 'this is the cattle of the caboclo'. Not all caboclos have such a refined sense of irony, or perhaps they do and we have failed to take note of it.

I will not try to summarize the papers in the volume, as the excellent introduction to the volume does a superb job of doing so. Rather, I want to note what a remarkable shift this volume represents in the discourse on caboclos that preceded it. The understanding of caboclos from the 1950s to the 1980s was strongly driven by notions of cultural ecology (culture shaped by the way people organize to exploit resources), and by notions of syncretism (mixing up of cultures coming into contact). Then a more historical bent entered into the analysis, represented by various authors in this volume, who began to recover the complex interactions of native Amazonians in Directorate (state run) villages, and the subsequent economic conditions faced by these populations following the breakdown of the villages and a more isolated economic life. In the late 1980s and early 1990s came a more human ecological approach, that included bioanthropological, nutritional, and political economic approach that complexified the underlying bases for the way of life of caboclos. It is this direction which is most strongly represented in this book. Whereas before caboclo cultural explanations focused on their isolation, now the analysis

showed how connected they have been for a good part of the nineteenth and twentieth century to a global economy, and to regional patterns of economic inequality.

When I first went to the Amazon many decades ago, it was quickly clear to me that the Amazonian caboclos that I came across in new settlement projects along the Transamazon Highway were gifted resource managers. They had higher yields per unit of land and per unit of labor, they had better health, and they even took advantage of available capital and technology better than the allegedly more modern southerners who came to the area. They knew how to hunt, how to recognize the best soils for farming, and how to diversify their portfolio. They even led the way in investing their profits in nearby urban areas in the form of a house, a store, and education for their children—without abandoning their land or their knowledge. What was hard for me to understand at that time, was why so many other colonists, and government civil servants working in the area, could not see that. Even when I presented them with quantitative evidence for the higher performance of caboclos, technical personnel insisted that that could not be—and colonists dismissed caboclos as poor farmers who were more interested in hunting than cultivating their land.

Why this resistance? I have reflected on that over the years, and found that there are many reasons. It takes time for people to learn how to use the resources in a new environment (sometimes as long as one generation), and while a few individuals will reduce that period by borrowing from neighbors, most people resist learning from those whom they have placed in a socially inferior position (i.e. the caboclo). Even if people are willing to learn, it still takes time to learn something as complex as a full array of adaptive strategies to ecosystems as complex as those in Amazonia. People prefer to try what they know, rather than to change, and this attitude delays learning precise knowledge. If we add to environmental knowledge, the knowledge required to understand one's position vis-à-vis the regional political economy – such a task becomes fraught with huge challenges. This was further complicated by the shifts in social and economic relations that accompanied life in Amazonia following the developmentalist efforts that began in the late 1960s and which brought many different actors to the scene, who challenged the traditional political economic order, and attempted to restructure the relations of production.

Is it any wonder that the rural populations of Amazonia, whether caboclo, or immigrant, found themselves in ever more precarious situations—but also provided with some opportunities. As the papers in this volume indicate, one sees places in Amazonia where the health, nutrition, and economic conditions of caboclos have improved—but also too many where it has not. Whereas the market for açaí has exploded globally, local caboclos have not benefited as much as they should have every right to expect. Whereas Brazil now leads the world in beef exports, caboclos have not benefited. Whereas Brazil's soybeans keep growing in world market share, this mechanized crop has not benefited caboclos. In fact, the trickle down benefits of the development efforts of the

past 38 years in Amazonia have been miniscule, and people in Amazonia have not shared in whatever profits have been made—and the caboclo least of all among them.

This book points to the need to pay attention to the structural conditions, and the livelihoods, of people in Amazonia— particularly its forgotten rural populations and the marginalized populations in the growing cities. They are a rich resource of knowledge, energy, and appropriate development. They do not lack capacity or desire, they often lack opportunity. The development formulas imposed by outsiders benefit outsiders more often than not, and leave populations further impoverished. A start has to be education and health available to all—but an education that includes knowledge of Amazonia and its people and resources. This has to be an education that values what they know, and the conservation and sustainable use of the region. Without this foundation, development efforts will destroy rather than use and conserve Amazonia. This book offers an important scholarly basis for valuing the caboclo, and for addressing regional development, as if people mattered. I applaud the authors in this volume, for putting people first, and giving us deep understanding of the conditions faced by caboclos.

Terre Haute, IN Emilio Moran

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We would like to begin by expressing our gratitude to all the families and communities of Amazonia who have helped to make this book a reality. Without their collaboration, involvement and inspiring friendship this initiative would not have been possible. Our special thanks must go to our students and friends who have supported and helped in the long, and many times, tedious process of editing in Brazil: Aglair Ruivo, Nelson Novaes, Henrique Ataíde, Eloise Tonial, Maissa Bakri, Natasha Navazinas and Carolina Taqueda. The immeasurable support of the Department of Genetics and Evolutionary Biology, of the Institute of Biosciences, and the 'Pró-Reitoria de Pesquisa', both of the University of São Paulo, was vital to the realization of the workshop from which this book is derived. To the Foundation for the Support of Research of the State of São Paulo (FAPESP) we owe a large part of the funding for the workshop in June 2002, as well as for the publication of the Brazilian edition of the book. To Emilio Moran, of Indiana University, for having played a fundamental role in the formation of the first generation of Brazilian anthropologists and ecologists dedicated to the study of the riverine populations of the Amazon. In Scotland at the University of St Andrews, Lisa Smith prepared the English language manuscript for publication and Graeme Sandeman designed the map. The translation of the Portuguese originals was made possible by a 'Primer Premio Annual' (2007) de Artículos de Investigación en temas de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional (SAN) from the Iniciativa América Latina y Caribe sin Hambre and the Red de Investigación y Capacitación en Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

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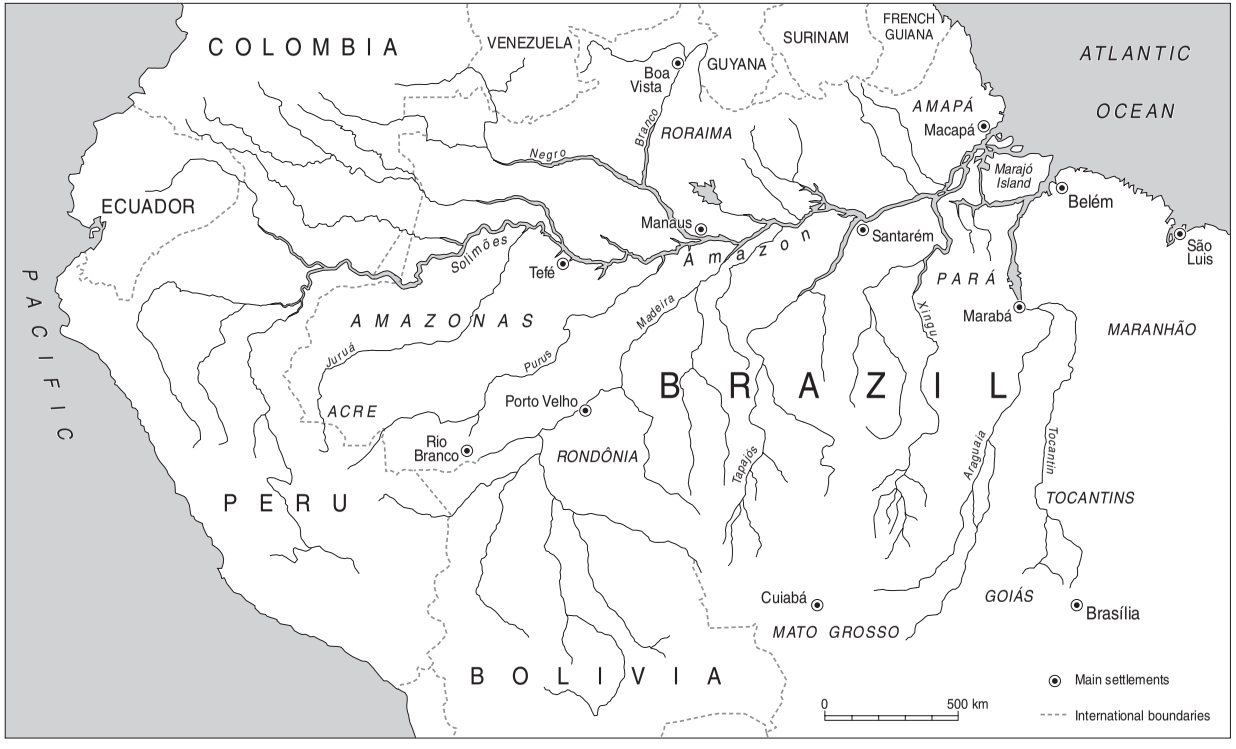
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VENEZUELA
SURINAM
FRENCH GUIANA
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Boa Vista
GUYANA
AMAPÁ
Macapá
Branco
RORAIMA
Negro
Marajó Island
ECUADOR
Belém
Manaus
Santarém
São Luis
Solimões
Tefé
Amazon
PARÁ
Xingu
Marabá
MARANHÃO
AMAZONAS
Madeira
Juruá
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RONDÔNIA
Tapajós
Araguaia
Tocantins
TOCANTINS
PACIFIC
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Cuiabá
GOIÁS
Brasília
MATO GROSSO
BOLIVIA
0
500 km
Main settlements
International boundaries

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Introduction

Cristina Adams, Rui Murrieta and Walter Neves

Abstract Amazonia's contemporary "non-urban" societies can be divided, by and large, into three groups: on the one hand, Amerindian societies and "traditional" or historical peasants (*caboclos*), originated from the Amazonian region's colonial incorporation; and, on the other, the neo-peasants who, from the mid-1970s on, have migrated into the region as part of governmental territorial occupation policies. Despite the great differences between them, these societies hold in common a relative socio-political "invisibility". The Amerindian' invisibility results from the fact that they are absorbed into the representation of the Amazon as a tropical ecosystem, a kind of super-nature; the historical peasants or *Caboclos* are "invisible", in their turn, because they represent the failure of past national integration efforts; and, finally, the neo-peasants, for they are excluded from the developmentist agendas both of the extractive and agribusiness sectors.

Keywords Caboclo identity · Amazonian anthropology · History · Environment

The Amazon has traditionally been portrayed as a tropical forest of continental dimensions or as the territory of the archetypal 'primitive other' (Slater, 1996). Fundamentally, it is pictured as a natural domain in which the social is an invader (Nugent, 1993). There is a clear asymmetry between the social system and the natural system, with the former subordinate to the latter. This view of the Amazon as an essentially natural domain is based on two basic presuppositions about Amazonian societies. The first is that during the dissolution of the indigenous societies and the emergence of the caboclo, nature was the only factor that remained a constant. The second refers to the connections between pre and post-colonial indigenous social structures and supposedly limiting environmental factors. In other words, despite strong evidence of the existence of complex societies in the pre-colonial period (Roosevelt, 1989, 1994; Porro, 1996; Neves, 2000; Heckenberger et al., 2003; Hornborg, 2005), the current state of these groups is always seen as being limited by natural rather than historical factors (Harris, 1998a; Nugent, 1993; Pace, 1998).

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Contemporary 'non-urban' Amazonian societies can be broadly divided into indigenous societies; 'traditional' or historical peasant societies (caboclos), the fruit of colonial incorporation of the Amazonian region; and the neo-peasantry that has been migrating into the region since the 1970s in the wake of government policies to colonize Amazonia (Browder & Godfrey, 1997; Bunker, 1984, 1985; Moran, 1981; Nugent, 1993). Despite the considerable differences between these societies, they share the same relative socio-political invisibility. The Indians, because they are steeped in the representation of the Amazon as a tropical ecosystem; the historical peasantry, because they represent the failed efforts of the past at national integration; and the neo-peasantry because they are excluded from the developmentalist project of highly capitalized extractivist industries (Nugent, 1997).

The historical peasant societies, the focus of this book, occupy a problematic place within both the conceptual framework of anthropology and studies of Amazonian development. For anthropology, caboclo societies are the direct antagonists of indigenous societies, veritable spearheads of colonialism and, later, of national society (Brondízio & Siqueira, 1997; Bunker, 1984; Galvão, 1955; Lima, 1992; Murrieta, 2000; Parker, 1985a; Ross, 1978; Wagley, 1955). In a region characterized by so many 'genuine others', but particularly the archetype of the 'noble savage' (Nugent, 1993; Slater, 1996; Viveiros de Castro, 1996) caboclo societies fall outside the theoretical framework of anthropology (Nugent, 1993). On the rare occasions in which the caboclo is actually portrayed, it is usually as an 'inauthentic or pathological' other who cannot serve as an object of anthropological analysis as the very existence of caboclo society subverts the formal distinction between other and observer. The caboclos are, according to the representation, 'falsified others', not only because they derive from European conquest as opposed to the 'local societies', but also because their very existence attests to the pernicious influence of 'civilization' (Nugent, 1993).

However, the 'original others' against which the caboclos are so unfavorably compared are themselves the result of historical processes of colonization (Balée, 1993; Moreira Neto, 1988; Porro, 1996; Viveiros de Castro, 1996). Indeed, the continuity that exists between the indigenous and caboclo identities is much more complex than normally considered. It involves the indigenous societies, the objects of a dramatic conquest, and the emergence of an Amazonian peasantry, fruit of the former's deterioration (Leonardi, 1999; Nugent, 1993; Parker, 1985a, 1985b). Even the more recent process of the incorporation of north-eastern Brazilian immigrants into Amazonian societies has not always been peaceful and has involved exchanges, abandonments, migrations, adaptations, innovations, inventions and various forms of reciprocal acculturation (Cunha & Almeida, 2002; Leonardi, 1999; Moreira Neto, 1988; Nugent, 1993; Oliveira Filho, 1979; Parker, 1995b; Santos, 1980; Weinstein, 1993; Wagley, 1955).

Another aspect rarely considered in the related literature is that of the Brazilian racial ideology. Few writers (Figueiredo, 1999; Lima, 1992; Motta-Maués, 1989) have considered the question of caboclo ethnic and cultural

identity within the broader context, showing how their invisibility can, in part, be explained by the debate on miscegenation which preoccupied Brazilian intellectuals at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. The fact that they did not inhabit the southeast of Brazil, where the immigration policies might have enjoyed some success in 'whitening' the mestizo population, basically disqualified the caboclos from the process of racial purification (Nugent, 1993). Furthermore, little effort has been made to understand and bring to light the role played by the Amazonian intellectual elite and the modernist movement in constructing the imagery of contemporary Amazonian cultural 'types' (Figueiredo, 1998, 1999). As such, the social invisibility that characterizes caboclo societies also manifests itself in the negligence of academics to the contribution Amazonians themselves have made to this process (Figueiredo, 1998, 1999).

The virtual invisibility of Amazonian caboclo societies can also be partly explained by their diverse and non-specialized lifestyles. Their resource base consists of the forest and a river system characterized as homogeneous in certain scales of scientific representation (humid tropics, *várzea* [floodplain] and terra firme [uplands]), but which actually harbors a vast array of largely misunderstood heterogeneities (Fraxe, 2004; Murrieta, 2000; Murrieta, Dufour, & Siqueira, 1999; Nugent, 1993, 1994; Raffles & WinklerPrins, 2003; Raffles, 2001; WinklerPrins, 2001, 2002). In addition, many of the resources necessary to peasant reproduction are not traditionally valued by economists (forest, alluvial soil, rivers), thus pushing the caboclo economy to the margins of technocratic, capital-driven 'economic development'. For the developmentalists, caboclo producers belong to an essentially informal economy, where the sectorial activity and class boundaries are not clearly demarcated (Bunker, 1984; Fraxe, 2000; Nugent, 2003; Pace, 1998; Parker, 1985a). Even the rural/urban distinction within caboclo societies themselves is somewhat blurred, as has been discussed recently concerning other rural Brazilian societies (Abramovay, 2003; Browder & Godfrey, 1997; Cleary, 1993; Fraxe, 2000; Nugent, 2003).

Caboclo Identity

The formation of the caboclo identity resides within processes defined more by externalities (global economic transformations) than by local cultural continuities (Leonardi, 1999; Nugent, 1993). The context of violence and domination in which their identity was forged has made the caboclos define themselves in opposition to powerful outsiders (Harris, 1999; Slater, 1997). According to Harris (1999), as they live by a short-term logic and far from the urban centers of power, caboclos combine opposition and indifference in their relationship with the local elite, hoping to avoid or at least diminish domination through an apparently anarchic social life. The fact that the caboclo societies, unlike the peasant societies with which anthropology traditionally deals, have no clear

pre-capitalist antecedents (if we chose to disregard their indigenous origins as a continuity) makes a historical approach even more difficult (Nugent, 1993, 1997).

The complexity of the situation has been further aggravated by the drastic changes of the last thirty years in Amazonia. A proliferation of class distinctions, the strangulation of the political structure of patronage by the expansion of the capital, the growth of the urban contingent of the caboclo population, the impact of the transport network and increased deforestation are just some of the phenomena observed in recent times. Recognizing the significance of caboclo societies requires that they be considered as *societies* within this context of historical change, and therefore subject to the same dynamic which has incorporated other 'peripheries' of the domain of capitalist politico-economic systems (Brondízio & Siqueira, 1997; Murrieta et al., 1992; Pace, 1998; Schmink, 2003).

The inclusion of caboclos within anthropological discourse has proved somewhat ambiguous: on one hand, the growing legitimacy of the environmentalist/ecological argument (Murrieta, 2000; Nugent, 1993) has seen their insertion in such issues as the use and management of resources within the context of a highly fetishized Amazon ('lungs of the earth', 'genetic bank', 'wellspring of potential miracle drugs', 'air-conditioner of the planet'), while, on the other, caboclo societies continue to be portrayed in a negative light. From the anthropological perspective on indigenous populations, caboclos represent at once the 'left-overs' of degraded indigenous societies and an immediate threat (land invasions) to those Indian societies that managed to make it through the catastrophe of colonization. Nationally, the caboclo represents an unfinished project of the creation of a Brazilian culture that broke with its European, African and Indigenous antecedents (Motta-Maués, 1989; Nugent, 1993, 1997).

Theoretical Lines in the Study of Caboclo Societies

For the majority of contemporary academics, the cornerstone in the anthropological study of caboclo societies continues to be the work of Charles Wagley and Eduardo Galvão. These studies, given their American origin, clearly descend from 'culturalist' studies, Boasian historical particularism and the cultural ecology of Julian Stewart. However, little attention is paid to the local output by such scholars as José Veríssimo and Dalcídio Jurandir, among others, who greatly influenced this supposedly spontaneous generation of professional academics (Bezerra Neto, 2002; Figueiredo, 1998, 1999). These writers were pioneers in casting the mould of the regional literature and declared proponents of studying modern Amazonian identity; yet they have been made invisible by other forms of imperialism, namely scholarly.

Originating from and influenced by Stewardian cultural ecology and the Boasian culturalism of Charles Wagely and Eduardo Galvão, there is a whole cast of foreign and national researchers who have devoted themselves to studying caboclo societies, such as Emilio Moran, Lourdes Furtado, Eugene Parker,

Eric Ross, Richard Pace, Angélica Motta-Maués and Heraldo Maués[1]. The ecological vein of this lineage produced some of the markedly ecologically deterministic and ahistorical hypotheses that dominated academic output for over two decades (Harris, 1998a; Neves, 1991; Nugent, 1993). In the critical appraisal of European and Brazilian authors, this first generation of American anthropologists and their Brazilian pupils who wrote about caboclos upheld a functionalist notion of culture, portraying caboclo society as a 'model' under which the rural populations of the Amazon basin have been catalogued ever since. This view contradicted the idea of a historical identity, which was materially produced and connected to externalities (Harris, 1998a; Murrieta, 2000; Nugent, 1993, 1997; Pace, 1998).

In the 1970s, the work of Emilio Moran (1974), despite also emphasizing environmental limitations just like his antecedents, diverged from this approach by considering the caboclo social system to be the most important factor in the environmental and socio-political context of the post-colonial Amazon. For Moran (1974), the caboclo was a cultural 'type' that emerged as a result of the 'tupinization' of the Iberian and local non-Tupi cultures. Though 'tupinization' would imply a historical process, Moran does not propose any causal explanation for the occurrence of change and therefore no theory of socio-economic transformation (Harris, 1998a: 89).

Despite their obvious evolutionist and ecological inspiration, researchers like Eugene Parker express a more embracing recognition of the importance of history in the formation of the caboclo societies. Instead of Moran's 'tupinization' (1974), Parker uses the term 'caboclization' to refer to the events and conditions that destroyed a large portion of the Amerindian societies, transformed those that were left, and spawned the emergence and consolidation of caboclo culture in the nineteenth century Amazon. Perhaps a happy medium between the works of these two authors would be that of Ross (1978). This author has best delineated the set of different historical and environmental factors that influenced the formation of the contemporary aspects of the historical Amazonian peasantry (Harris, 1998a).

In general, for the American anthropologists of this first period, caboclo culture was consolidated in the twentieth century, largely in the form of family units living on the river floodplains and on the banks of other waterways and lakes, practicing smallholder family agriculture allied with fishing and hunting. Nevertheless, once this way of life became established, the impression was that the system crystallized within an ahistorical reality cut off from external pressures (Harris, 1998a).

After this first phase of studies on Amazonian caboclos, other lines of enquiry began to emerge in American anthropology, such as political ecology and institutional analysis, which sought to approach the rural smallholder

[1] Angélica Motta-Maués and Heraldo Maués are the authors of the two most important anthropological studies of caboclo societies in Portuguese from the last decade of the twentieth century (Motta-Maués, 1993; Maués, 1995).

(whether Indian, caboclo or migrant settler) as an active agent capable of taking decisions and changing his situation in a dynamic way (Bunker, 1984; Chibnik, 1994; Pace, 1998; Schmink, 1985). In addition, theories of cultural and human ecology were revised to adopt social, economic and political contexts in their analyses, which now included caboclo societies. The initial attempts at the cultural typification of the caboclo were replaced by approaches that looked to understand the way these Amazonian populations use the land and its natural resources, and how this relates with political and environmental questions of management (Castro, 1999; Chibnik, 1994; Futemma, 2000; Furtado, 1993; Lima, 1992; McGrath, Calabria, Amaral, Futemma, & Castro, 1993a; McGrath, Castro, Futema, Amaral, & Calabria, 1993b; McGrath, Castro, Câmara, & Futemma,1999).

Another branch of ecological studies that has been recruiting a growing number of sympathizers is historical ecology (Balée, 1995, 1998; Crumley, 1994). This line, represented by the works of William Balée, among the indigenous groups (1992, 1993, 1995, 1998), and Hugh Raffles among caboclos (Raffles, 2001; Raffles & WinklerPrins, 2003), stresses the adoption of a historical approach with a view to moving beyond the debate on the reification of limiting environmental factors and landscape homogenization.

In Britain, on the other hand, a group of academics heavily influenced by social theory, particularly a British version of structural Marxism, has been leveling deeply incisive criticism against the American academic tradition on the Amazon. Chief amongst these are Mark Harris (1996, 1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2001), David Cleary (1993) and, especially, Stephen Nugent (1993, 1994, 1997)[2]. The Amazon that interests the British anthropologists is inter-connected by trade, credit, migration, exchanges, conflict, the search for commodities, and an enormous group of people engaged in the informal economy and therefore beyond the reach of the state (Harris, 1998a).

Meanwhile, a whole new generation of Brazilian researchers has developed its own scholarly trajectory in relation to these two academic traditions. Among its members we can see, besides a visible interest in environmental and microeconomic problems, a clear manifestation of concern with the interactions between these local levels and the wider political and economic context that has enveloped the region for the last 500 years. Comprising this generation are those that emphasize management practices and land tenure and identify the caboclos as agricultural/rural producers (Adams, Murrieta, & Sanches, 2005; Brondízio & Siqueira, 1997; Fraxe, 2004), those who adopt the analytical lens of political ecology and institutional analysis (Castro, 1999; Futemma, 2000; Lima, 1992; Murrieta et al, 1999; Siqueira, 1997; Winkler-Prins, 2001, 2002), those who concentrate on the socio-economic and political identity of the caboclo (Alencar, 1994; Cunha, 2001, 2002; Furtado, 1993;

[2] Though American, Stephen Bunker (1984) could also be considered within this school.

Furtado & Quaresma, 2002; Lima, 1992, 1999; Lima & Alencar, 2000; Lima & Pozzobon, 2001; McGrath et al., 1993a; 1993b; Simonian, 1995), those who focus on processes related to daily practices and subjacent cultural motivations (Murrieta, 2000, 2001a, 2001b; Harris, 2001), those that accentuate the biological patterns present in the processes of change caboclo populations have been going through (Adams, 2002; Silva, 1995; Silva & Eckhardt, 1994; Silva, Crews, & Neves,1995; Siqueira, 1997) and, lastly, those who verticalize the functionalist ecological models under the orientation of behavioral ecology (Begossi, 2004)[3].

Though largely ignored, the works of such historians as Barbara Weinstein (1993), Warren Dean (1987), Roberto Santos (1980), Vicente Salles (1971) and Arthur César Ferreira Reis (1953) are enormously important in this new context. From different perspectives, these writers have sought to describe and analyze the set of factors that have molded the 'profile' of the historical Amazonian peasantry. More recently, another new generation of researchers has successfully managed to reconcile different hypotheses and theoretical perspectives from Europe and North America in an interesting criticism that underscores the factual and interpretational lacunas that need to be filled (Bezerra Neto, 2002; Bezerra Neto & Guzmán, 2002[4]; Figueiredo, 1993, 1998, 1999; Gondim, 1994; Guzmán, 1997, 1998; Meira, 1993, 2006).

The convergence of these different intellectual approaches and traditions, not to mention personal experiences, upon a single 'object', namely the historical or caboclo peasantry, creates a unique opportunity to produce new questions, exchanges and syntheses. Expanding our interpretation of caboclo societies in this way, beyond a folk culture model or 'pristine' systems of intervention in the environment, we can produce a general framework for explaining and interpreting the coalition of historical forces and their contribution to the Amazonian social reality. In this manner, the definition of caboclo will neither exclude nor simplify the ambiguity and complexity that pervade it, nor naively seek to divorce the historical Amazon from the Amazon of western expansionism and all the resistance, tensions and negotiations that go with it.

Based on these presuppositions, in the year 2000 Cristina Adams (School of the Arts, Sciences and Humanities/University of São Paulo, Brazil) and Mark Harris (University of St Andrews, UK) proposed holding a discussion forum

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[3] In this volume organized by Alpina Begossi, she and her collaborators conduct comparative analyses between the caiçara and caboclo populations. Various dimensions of the ecological and socio-economic systems of these groups are approached, though the authors proceed with what is basically varying degrees of a functionalist ecological analysis.

[4] In this work, Bezerra Neto and Guzmán present the ideas of various Amazonian historians of the new generation. Despite the disparities in academic quality among the articles themselves, this is without doubt a praiseworthy initiative in presenting the state-of-the-art of Amazonian historiography.

with the small (but growing) group of researchers dedicated to the study of caboclo societies. The main goal of the meeting was to review critically the anthropological production on these societies and to discuss the general state of the research and the possibility of drawing up a new agenda for work on the theme at the turn of the millennium. Adams and Harris' intention was to assemble a group small enough for the discussions to be productive, but large enough to cover all the existing approaches in the human sciences and related areas.

The idea materialized in 2002 with the event 'Amazonian Caboclo Societies: Modernity and Invisibility', held at the Biosciences Institute of the University of São Paulo (USP). The event was divided into two parts: a closed workshop with specially invited researchers, and two days of open lectures at which some of the material discussed was presented to the general public. Organized by Cristina Adams, Rui Murrieta and Walter Neves, the event was made possible by funding from Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo – Fapesp (the São Paulo Foundation for Research Support) and the Research Rectory at USP.

The papers presented at the workshop 'Amazonian Caboclo Societies: Modernity and Invisibility' are collected in this book and represent the diversity of new approaches to the study of caboclo societies.

Summary of the Book

The first chapter in this volume, which opens the section Identity, History and Society, is 'Utopias and Dystopias on the Amazonian Social Landscape', by Stephen Nugent. The author begins his chapter by drawing attention to the invisibility of these societies in the anthropological literature of the 1960s and 70s. For Nugent, the invisibility of caboclo societies (historical peasantry, to use his terminology) in that period is a result of four factors: the idealization of the Amazonian landscape as pure nature; the fact that the historical peasants never adopted plantation agriculture; the nature of the Amazonian frontier; and, last but by no means least, the fact that caboclo agrarian systems are neo-colonial 'experiments' largely based on foreign involvement. In relation to a central point visited to a lesser or greater extent in most of the articles in this volume, Nugent devotes the closing pages of his chapter to discussing the ahistoricity that typifies much of the anthropological production on Amazonian societies. Nugent seems to entertain no doubts that the main 'villain' behind the Amazonist tradition is the ideological naturalization of the view that the human populations that inhabit the region are victims. In other words, the anthropological literature on the historical Amazonian peasantry inherited the same bias extensively applied to the local indigenous populations: the search for a 'natural society', practically untouched by the political economy, whose structure, social organization and subsistence strategy ought to reflect, first and

foremost, the environmental factors specific to the surroundings, no matter how limiting they may be.

As part of the section 'Identity, History and Society', William Balée shows the influence of colonization and penetration by the European system of finance and commerce on changes in the native vocabulary, and, subsequently, the knowledge of the Amazonian landscape and associated biota. The author concerns himself in particular with the case of cocoa and the way its denominations and conceptions gradually transformed in the indigenous languages thanks to the importance of the commodity on the export agenda of the eighteenth century. In reality, Balée shows us that the socio-environmental context in which the caboclo and indigenous societies formed is highly complex, thus reminding us of the importance of the historical aspect in our analysis of both.

Décio Guzmán's chapter analyzes the process of miscegenation on the Rio Negro during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. After presenting some background to the components in this miscegenation (the Indian, European and African), the author focuses on the issue of the inter-racial marriage policies decreed by the Portuguese Crown as one element in a package of projects geared towards exploiting the human resources of Portuguese America. Like Nugent, Guzmán holds that one of the biggest impediments to advances in the study of Amazonian caboclo societies is the belief that they somehow correspond to the Stewardian ideal of the 'natural population', that is, to independent, self-reproducing and self-regulating systems. This conception has hindered a more accurate understanding of these societies as the product of historical transformations involving internal and external tensions.

Though Mark Harris' chapter, 'Ambivalent Present: an Amazonian way of being in time', does not formally figure as a historical analysis, it presents undeniable affinities with the two previous contributions (particularly for its deconstructivist vocation). Harris' core argument is that the caboclos are modern because of their constant renewal of the past in the present, a strategy that has granted them enormous reproductive success (socially and biologically) and which has been critical to their adjustment to unstable economic and political conditions and the background of general socio-cultural collapse. For the author, resilience and flexibility are the key traits of the riverine peoples. Throughout the text, Harris dialogues, sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly, with two earlier ways of referring to the origination of these populations: Parker's process of 'caboclization', formulated in the mid 1980s, and Nugent's Boom-Bust theory from the early 1990s. For the author, by imposing categories and abstract concepts with a view to constructing collective entities like a caboclo 'culture' or 'identity', we end up losing the richness of the subject of study, namely the heterogeneity, ambivalence, ideology of 'mixing' and 'openness' to the new, that emerge from the analysis of specific biographies in their respective socio-economic contexts. Harris argues that these riverine societies can be characterized by their ongoing capacity to negotiate the

conditions of the *present*. Scant attention is given to preserving the past, whether materially or ideologically speaking. 'Riverine' identity is the product of what these people are in the present, and is in contrast to what they were in the recent past.

With the article 'Traditional peoples: introduction to the political ecology critique of a Notion', Henyo Barretto Filho opens the section 'Sustainability and Development Policies' by discussing the controversial matter of whether or not traditional populations (including various categories of 'caboclo') should remain in conservation units. Following this idea, Barretto Filho presents and discusses an issue that is fundamental in this context: how does one define and characterize 'traditional peoples'? In the specific case of the Amazon, indigenous and caboclo populations are usually classified in this category because, on one hand, their cultivation practices do not hamper the proper functioning of the regenerative system of the tropical rainforest, and, on the other, because the impact of their economic activities are no worse than small-scale, short-lived and infrequent natural disturbances. Barretto Filho vehemently questions these aphorisms, reminding us that a large portion of the Amazonian forest of today can be seen as an immense 'cultural forest', to use the term introduced to ecological anthropology by William Balée at the end of the 1980s. If human populations that inhabited the Amazon before the arrival of the Europeans managed to alter the hylea (dense tropical forest) so extensively, albeit largely positively (using biodiversity as their assessment criteria), can we really say with any certainty that the environmental impact of these populations is as slight as commonly stated? For the author, there is no precise way to conceptualize the category 'traditional peoples', much less formulate a scientific response to the question of whether human presence should be allowed in environmentally protected areas. It is, he says, a matter of 'an ideological construct whose power resides precisely in the general nature of its meaning and fluctuating use'. Furthermore, by branding these groups traditional and betting on their non-monetary strategies for economic subsistence as the passport to the future survival of humanity (in terms of biodiversity), do we not risk turning them into hostages of an ahistorical definition, galvanizing the potential processes of socio-cultural change to which they are entitled? Emphasizing the spatial over the temporal, Barretto Filho concludes by suggesting that we substitute the term 'traditional population' for 'resident population' in discussions on the permanence (or not) of human populations in protected areas, thus defending the inclusion of all 'traditional' and 'modern' peoples that are, in this context, struggling to survive and reproduce.

Next in this section, Deborah de Magalhães Lima analyzes the economy of the domestic units of the Mamirauá Sustainable Development Reserve in the Upper Amazon, not with the aim of assessing or perhaps even legitimizing traditional strategies for the use of local natural resources as self-sustainable, but with a view to discussing the concept of self-sustainable development against the socio-economic background that emerges from her analysis. Firstly, she discusses the conceptual fuzziness that surrounds the expression

'sustainable development', defending the idea that environmentally protected areas could help clear up this vagueness, as they are being constructed empirically and without pre-defined models or schema. After a detailed presentation of the volumes and composition of the incomes of various communities and settlements within the geographical perimeters of the Mamirauá reserve, based on studies conducted in 1991 and 1994/95, the author demonstrates the enormous variability in incomes both within and among the riverine communities of the Upper Amazon floodplains, whose production is organized around the ideal of the economically autonomous household. The author argues that the bonds of kith and kin are just as crucial to the survival of these populations as the natural resources on which they depend. To support this contention, the author presents valuable data for the Mamirauá reserve, collated under a rigorous research plan, and compares it with data from other caboclo societies, particularly from the Lower Amazon and Amazon Estuary. When taken together, these studies, which cover a considerable area of the Amazon from the Upper Solimões River to its mouth reveal that the annual income of the riverine domestic units varies from five hundred to three thousand dollars, with those of Mamirauá much closer to the lower end of the scale. For Lima, the most palpable effect of the environmental conditions at Mamirauá on the local populations is their constant sense of risk and incessant search for better living conditions. In this context, the emphasis of Amazonian development projects place on environmental variables might stimulate the low levels of production and consumption of the so-called traditional populations, but not question the social inequality represented by the unsustainable levels of consumption in other sectors of society, if not entire societies. As such, the author contends that sustainable development rests, albeit inexplicitly, on social inequality.

Fábio de Castro's chapter provides a thorough analysis of the diversity of economic strategies among the riverine domestic units (or family units, as de Castro prefers) of the Lower Amazon River, units that depend on the floodplain resources for their survival. The empirical data used in the analysis was collated using *Censos Estatísticos Comunitários* (CEC) [Community Statistical Censuses], a participatory methodology based on community meetings, for 8,570 domestic units across 172 communities in the focus region. The economic strategies of the population of the Lower Amazon floodplain basically combine four main activities: fishing, agriculture, cattle raising, and paid labor and pensions from the state. While fishing is the core commercial activity of these communities, agriculture is more important to their subsistence. The best part of de Castro's article is devoted to analyzing the combinations of these four activities in different communities, and from domestic unit to domestic unit within the same community, to ascertain what factors influence most in the distinct combinations of these four economic pillars. The author shows that the importance of each of these economic activities varies widely in terms of local production repertoires, generating a great deal of heterogeneity among and within these communities. One way or another, in both cases, the determinants

that carry the most weight in these variations are the economic ends of the activity, the structure of each family unit and the level of access to resources. The socio-economic panorama that emerges from this exercise is one of enormous heterogeneity as opposed to the homogeneity suggested by various authors, such as Lourdes Furtado (1993).

Eduardo Brondízio opens the section 'Resource Management' with the article 'Agricultural Intensification, Economic Identity and Invisibility among Amazonian Rural Smallholders: a comparative perspective on caboclos and settlers'. The focus of his contribution is to demonstrate the erroneous interpretation that prevails concerning the agricultural production systems of the Amazonian rural smallholder, especially when analyzed through the lens of intensification, and of how this equivocal judgment stems from a depreciative view of these social groups and their contributions to the regional economy. Both patterns of land use – caboclo and settler – are often based on the coexistence of intensive and extensive activities that together minimize risk and ensure the consolidation of the rural properties, as well as their expansion of the market-oriented activities. Brondízio also argues that, whether caboclos or settlers, the smallholders are actively engaged in the regional economy, they respond rapidly to market incentives, and that the commercial movement engendered regionally by their production is highly significant. The author suggests the term 'small producers' be used to refer to these populations, as proposed by Robert Netting in Europe, as a replacement for 'peasants', which carries pejorative connotations. According to Brondízio, the adoption of the term 'small producers' would go a long way toward creating a more positive socio-economic identity for these populations. In short, all of the empirical and conceptual material presented in the article is rallied to this central argument: that redefining the identity of these Amazonian populations as small rural producers would be a significant step toward overcoming the prejudices incorporated into regional and national society (and that includes the national and international development agencies and academia itself).

In the article 'Use and Access to Forest Resources: the caboclos of the Lower Amazon and their socio-cultural attributes', Célia Futemma further contributes to the issue of the use of natural resources by riverine populations, presenting what she calls an institutional analysis of the access to, and use of, forest resources by the Patos riverine community in the Lower Amazon. Futemma pays particular attention to the role social networks, particularly those of kith and kin, play in the provision of access to floodplain and upland resources. Another core aspect of the author's analysis is the flexible role of formal land ownership (not shared by all of the domestic units of the community) in enabling access of all – to varying degrees, depending on social bonds – to the resources vital to the material survival of the Patos residents. The author concludes that the formal rules of the state (which designed and promoted the agrarian reform implanted in the area) have been overlain by a system of informal local rules for access to and use of forest resources designed to