



THE AMAZON CABOCLO: AN INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

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The past twenty years have witnessed a truly remarkable surge of research activities focused upon the Brazilian Amazon (Amazonia). In large part, this surge in research has been prompted by profound concern about the fate of Amazon ecosystems and human populations threatened by economic development programs and policies of the Brazilian government. Government development initiatives, principal among which were road-building, small-farmer colonization, large-scale cattle ranching, export agriculture, timbering, and mining, began in earnest in the mid-1960s but were predicated upon very limited knowledge of the physical and human environments of Amazonia.

The scale and rapidity of development efforts combined with the paucity of knowledge about the region set off a scramble among researchers to collect information to study the potential impacts that development schemes could have upon the human populations of Amazonia as well as the

physical environment. These efforts have resulted in impressive contributions to our understanding of Amerindian populations and their knowledge systems. This had led to a general recognition that Amerindian populations constitute crucial information resources with respect to the organization and function of the physical environment, and the methods and techniques of resource exploitation and generation (NAS 1982:4). A second principal thrust of social science inquiry in Amazonia has been the study of colonization and migration processes that were set in motion by the development fever that swept Brazil in the late 1960s and during the 1970s. Here, interest was centered upon the success and/or failure of migrants newly arrived in the region in both formal and spontaneous colonization activities.

All the interest and efforts of the past twenty years notwithstanding, there has persisted a remarkable lacuna in the social science research agenda; a key human population of the Brazilian Amazon has been virtually ignored: the Amazon caboclo. This neglect is all the more extraordinary in that caboclo culture has been described as the "most important human adaptive system found in the region" (Moran 1974:136). Eric Ross (1978:216) has argued that caboclos have been the principal cultural representatives of the region since the early 19th century. Such claims may seem overdrawn until it is realized that caboclos have been the principal inhabitants of non-urban Amazonia both in terms of their numbers and the types of environments they occupy. They are found in more kinds of macro and micro-environments than intact Amerindian populations who since the mid-18th century have been forced to take refuge in, or to remain within, remote upland areas beyond the reach of development forces. Caboclos, at center stage in the human theatre of Amazonia, constitute a vital storehouse of knowledge regarding adaptive strategies employed in response to the complex and heterogeneous ecology of the region. This is important not only because of the wide range of micro-environments they exploit but also because they are often the only inhabitants of specific types of environments (e.g., the várzea, or floodplain). To a very great extent, caboclos have been neglected because there persists a general lack of knowledge concerning their origins in Amazonia as well as an insufficient understanding of

their present role and function within the region: these two factors are, of course, intimately linked together.

#### The Amazon Caboclo: Definition as a Function of Origin

The term "caboclo" itself contributes to much of the confusion surrounding this population in Amazonia. Colloquially defined and translated as "rural backwoodsman", "caboclo" has been used to embrace any individual or population that pursues the rural life. However, the formal definition of the term is bound up with the relationship between Europeans and Amerindians. The first entry for caboclo in several dictionaries states that caboclos are civilized Brazilian Indians of pure blood. Almost all dictionaries include as the first or second "sense" of the term "caboclo" a Brazilian half-breed of Indian and European parentage. Smith's discussion (1946:797) of the evolution of the term supports this interpretation by noting that it was first used to describe domesticated Indians and eventually became used to refer to the offspring of Amerindian-European parents. Smith also observed that the term appeared to be applied, in 1946, to any lower-class rural dweller. More interesting, Ferreira (1971) has suggested that the origin of the word is found in the Tupi expression "kari'boka" which effectively translates as "children of the white men" (who mated with Tupi women). Although this etymology remains conjectural, it is interesting to note that the Tupi Indians occupied virtually all of the Brazilian coast at the time of European contact. Moreover, they were present in the lower Amazon valley and "seemed to be moving inland up the Amazon mainstream at the time of the arrival of the Europeans" (Wagley 1974:40). Leaving aside the question of the specific etymology of the term "caboclo", what is important to recognize is that caboclos, properly speaking, are the product of the detribalization of Amerindians and of Amerindian-European intermarriages. While the term caboclo can be fairly applied to individuals (and populations) elsewhere in Brazil, the utility of this descriptive label outside Amazonia has been lost over time as the great majority of these individuals and their communities have become fully absorbed within the national economy and culture--in these areas, the colloquial definition of backwoodsman is appropriately utilized to embrace the collective rural population irrespective of origins. It is

in the Amazon region that caboclos achieved their greatest cultural expression and who remain to this day a discreet human population.

In Amazonia, caboclos are a mixed-blood group resulting from the intermarriage of Amerinds with early Portuguese settlers and, later, with Northeasterners of African descent who moved into the region in the mid-18th century and during the Rubber Boom of the late 19th century. African influence, however, was largely restricted to Maranhão and northeastern Pará, and to the urban environments of the region (Salles 1971). In the context of the region's history, caboclos are the indigenous, rural inhabitants of Amazonia who, for the most part, reside in small communities within riverine environs using Amerindian technologies in subsistence activities. In describing caboclos as the indigenous, rural population of Amazonia, the intent is to distinguish them from the indigenous, tribal population of the region, the Amerindians. Indigenous is employed here because caboclos are directly linked historically, culturally, and biologically to the Amerindian populations that occupied lowland Amazonia at the time of European contact; in effect, the "first caboclos" were the culturally disenfranchised survivors of the (predominantly) floodplain Amerindian populations that were destroyed by the Portuguese (see Parker, this volume). These first caboclos, including their mixed-blood offspring, began, without benefit of script or history, the slow and difficult process of forging a new pattern, a new context, for existence in Amazonia. Their former socio-cultural identity destroyed, many abandoned the mission-Directorate village system (aldeiamento) to begin life anew in small, isolated settlements--many were only collections of a few families. In post-Directorate Amazonia, the nuclear family became the principal institution around which caboclo social and economic life was constructed; this was in sharp contrast to the communal existence and elaborate kinship system that had prevailed in the past. Aldeias, despite reduced populations, served as nexuses for the scattered and isolated nascent caboclo hamlets. Indeed, a majority of the original aldeias still exist today, a number of which are the sedes (seats) of municípios (counties). During the Directorate as well as the years immediately following its end (1799), a number of Portuguese settlers took up residence in mission

villages and it was there that they were first absorbed into the emergent caboclo culture.

The consistent, if not always intended, focus of the regional economy upon the extraction of natural resources (esp. forest products) has served to reinforce the dispersed pattern of small communities that characterizes contemporary caboclo settlement. Furthermore, the desultory history of the region's economy and its general boom-bust cycle have militated against further articulation of caboclo social existence (Ross 1978; Weinstein, this volume).

The admixture of Amerindian, Portuguese, and African populations was not one of equal measures and the product, caboclo culture, did not, and does not, constitute a balanced mixture of the three "ingredients". The rainforest-riverine environment of Amazonia was the crucible within which the Portuguese and African factors were subordinated to the logic of Amerindian adaptive strategies. With regard to economic strategies, resource perceptions, and resource management techniques, the Amerindian factor proved decisive. This of course only reflects the obvious: Amerindian knowledge of the physical environment was crucial to survival in non-urban Amazonia. The explanation for the continued dominance within contemporary caboclo society of subsistence economies predicated upon Amerindian adaptive strategies, and the pattern of small, rural settlements can be traced to two factors: (1) the aftermath of the Directorate and the response of the "first caboclos" and (2) the persistence of an extractive-based economy in which knowledge of the resource base of the natural environment was of extreme importance. These two factors are linked together in that the impressionistic outlines of caboclo society in the early 1800s became transfixed in the ensuing years in part as a consequence of the regional economy. Caboclo culture can thus be seen to have developed as a specific adaptation to post-contact conditions in the rainforest-riverine environment of the region (Moran 1974:137) and reflects the persistent social and economic isolation of the Amazon (Parker 1981:119-126; Wagley 1976).

In discussing Amazon caboclo culture, Moran used the term caboclo "to refer to a cultural type rather than to the fact, or degree, of racial mixture" (1974:136). The contributions to this volume are in agreement with this usage.

However, while the degree of racial mixture in contemporary caboclo culture may be generally unimportant, the degree of "population integrity" is of major importance. In the foregoing discussion, it was suggested that the first caboclos were detribalized Amerindians and mixed-blood offspring who resided in small communities and hamlets in rural Amazonia. The question, then, is to what extent have there been additional infusions of extra-regional peoples into rural caboclo society since the early 1800s?

### The Caboclo Population

In the years between 1800 and 1835 (the beginning of the Cabanagem Revolt), the region experienced little in-migration; it was quite probable that the mounting tensions and economic disarray that preceded the Revolt served to dissuade potential migrants.

As Robin Anderson shows (this volume), the Cabanagem Revolt had a devastating impact upon the region, particularly within Pará. Nearly 25 percent of the total regional population of 130,000 may have lost their lives from the fighting. Out-migration took place, particularly from Belém, in response to the hostilities. As Anderson's essay demonstrates, the Cabanagem Revolt served to further instantiate caboclo culture in Amazonia. Indeed, in the aftermath of the Revolt, and with the region's economic infrastructure in shambles, it was probably the case that many additional Portuguese colonists were forced to adopt caboclo lifestyles to survive, deserting the urban environments for interior communities. It would thus appear that during the first half of the 19th century the region experienced very little population increase resulting from in-migration. During this critical formative period, caboclo society grew and developed from within.

It was the Rubber Boom (1870-1910) that had the greatest impact upon rural Amazonian demography. Although migrants began to move into the region in the 1850-1875 period, it was the post-1877 period that saw their numbers increase dramatically. The droughts of the Northeast and the booming rubber economy prompted thousands of "nordestinos" to move to Amazonia each year: between 1890 and 1920, the Amazon population tripled

(Weinstein, this volume). A large number of the nordestinos were absorbed into existing caboclo communities but it was also true that a significant proportion worked rubber stands in remote areas and/or were in situations in which they had few opportunities for interaction with caboclos--as Weinstein notes, it was this group that suffered the most under the rubber regime. Following the collapse of the rubber economy in 1910-11, a very large percentage of those who abandoned the interior for the towns and cities of the region were the nordestinos of this latter group; they quickly became part of the underclass that has been a permanent feature of urban Amazonia. Those nordestinos who remained in the interior undoubtedly made the transition to caboclo culture easily. (A substantial number of other nordestinos returned to the Northeast.) Moran noted that the combination of subsistence requirements in the rainforest, and the socio-economic isolation inherent in the regional economy, led to the "abandonment of non-Amerindian ways within one generation" (1974:137). While it is difficult to gauge the influence that nordestinos (in terms of African cultural patterns) had upon existing caboclo culture, the general evidence is that it was most pronounced in, and largely restricted to, northeastern Pará, western Maranhão, and urban environments (most notably Belém) where large concentrations of nordestinos facilitated the retention of cultural patterns over time (see Elisabethsky and Setzer, this volume).

There was one additional impact that the Rubber Boom had upon Amazonian demography. Substantial numbers of Portuguese settlers and town dwellers, lured by the prospects for rubber, moved into the interior. Many were eventually absorbed into caboclo communities and culture when the economy collapsed.

In the years between 1910 and 1950, migration into Amazonia was modest. Each episode of drought in the Northeast would prompt a number of nordestinos to undertake the trip to the region. But on the whole, the combination of a stagnant economy in Amazonia and the burgeoning economy in the south of Brazil were sufficient to deflect attention away from the region. It was only in the mid-1950s that we see migration pick up as people began to move into the southern and eastern margins of Amazonia--N. Goiás, Mato Grosso, and western Maranhão

(Mougeot 1985:62). There was virtually no penetration of rural, central Amazonia before the 1960s. The completion of the Belém-Brasília highway provided the first real land route into the region and it was along this avenue that migrants moved. The Transamazon highway begun in 1971 to connect the Northeast with Amazonia served as a second migration route.

Development initiatives coupled with an ambitious road building program since the mid-1960s have resulted in a dramatic increase in the regional population as migrants have been lured to the Great Frontier (Sawyer 1984). However, this surge of migrants has impacted most significantly in those areas where road-building has taken place (Kleinpenning and Volbeda 1985). As will be discussed below, these migrant/colonist populations have had little association with caboclo communities and culture that have remained outside the economic-pioneer frontier which has been so closely tied to the road-expansion program.

Between 1800 and 1985, the only significant direct infusion of new peoples into Amazon caboclo society occurred when nordestinos moved into the region during the Rubber Boom. Those that remained in rural Amazonia were quickly absorbed into caboclo culture. Even in the post-1960 period, during which the regional population has soared, caboclo society has remained largely unaffected by new entrants into their communities and territories from other parts of Brazil because most of these communities were beyond the economic/pioneer frontiers.

The caboclo population of Amazonia constitutes a coherent indigenous population in the rural environment that has experienced only one significant infusion of "new blood" -- the nordestino. The very nature of the rubber economy itself provided the impetus for nordestinos to adopt caboclo cultural patterns. It would appear, then, that the development of Amazon caboclo culture has been accomplished to a very great extent by the descendents of the first caboclos and that the caboclo population has retained a considerable measure of its original integrity to a very great degree.

### The Portuguese Factor

The influence of Iberian cultural patterns upon caboclo society is most pronounced in terms of language and religion. Almost without exception, the language of Amazon caboclos is Portuguese. Their religion is essentially a folk Catholicism, although Protestantism has been recently gaining ground. In those communities formally incorporated into the political structure, the basic institutional arrangements (e.g., leadership and justice) are similar to Brazilian society in general. Galvão (1952:167-168) argued that despite the strengths of Amerindian elements in Amazon caboclo culture, it is primarily Iberian in form and content. He noted that Amazon caboclo societies are not distinguished from the national society in the same way as are cultures described as "Recent Indian" in Central and South America. The cultural differences that distinguish the "white, westernized ladinos" from the "Indians or mestizos" in such areas do not exist in Amazonia, according to Galvão. Although Galvão does not elaborate upon what these "cultural differences" are, it might be reasonable to presume that he had in mind such things as language, religion, and kinship. If this is the case, Galvão, in a general way, is correct: in these contexts, the Amazon caboclo is not dramatically different from the rest of Brazilian society. However, the congruence in these cultural features is linked to the nature of Amerindian societies at the beginning of the 17th century and to the nature of Portuguese colonial rule.

The Amazon region of Brazil did not possess the linguistic and sociopolitical unity that prevailed in Central America (especially Mexico) and highland South America (Sawyer 1979). Amerindian societies in lowland Amazonia were extremely diverse in terms of language, economics, and culture. It is true that várzea societies were large, well-organized chiefdoms but they were much less complex and extensive than those found in Peru and Mexico. In any event, they were the first Amerindian societies to succumb to Portuguese slavers. The Portuguese wreaked havoc among the indigenous societies they encountered and the survivors lost their culture, language, and territory. Caboclo culture thus has no antecedents in a particular Amerindian population, culture, or territory; rather, the early caboclo population was a mixture of the remnants of

many different tribes that had been culturally and linguistically distinct.

The Jesuit mission-Portuguese Directorate village systems, the cradle of caboclo society, completed the detribalization process set in motion by the slavers. In order to cope with diverse mission populations, the Jesuits introduced and promoted a língua geral, a modified Tupi, which remained, for almost 200 years, the regional language despite strenuous efforts by the Portuguese to impose their language on the populace. Bates (1863) and other 19th century travellers in Amazonia attest to the pervasiveness of língua geral at mid-century. The effect of this "tupinization" of Amerindian-caboclo cultures can be seen today throughout rural Amazonia. It is common among caboclos to use aboriginal names for places, plants, and animals that derive from língua geral (Galvão 1952; Wagley 1967). Moran (1974:139) suggested that the tupinization of Iberian and non-Tupian cultures "laid the basis of caboclo culture in the Amazon during the Colonial period." His inclusion of Iberian culture in the tupinization process is particularly significant and is based upon the fact that settlers in rural Amazonia had to come to grips with existence in the rainforest. In short, they had to learn from the Amerindian "what to eat, how to hunt, fish, row, and cultivate the basic staples from a forest-river environment"--in this process, and through the use of língua geral, the Portuguese settler "unconsciously began to incorporate Indian thought patterns" (1974:137). Moran's observations make sense because many Portuguese settlers in the 17th and 18th century were not much better off than mission Indians--often in worse shape. Many of these rural settlers, and their mixed-blood offspring, were incorporated into the emergent caboclo society at the beginning of the 19th century; the necessity to make a living and língua geral facilitated their entry into this social milieu. In the process, they contributed further to the role and importance of Catholicism within caboclo society and, perhaps, to the eventual abandonment of língua geral in favor of Portuguese.

While Catholicism may be the coin of the religious realm in Brazilian society, we find that folk Catholicism of the Amazon interior has incorporated many indigenous beliefs and concepts, most of which are of Tupi origin. Curupira, Anhangá, Matinta-Perera, Boto, Campanheiros do

Fundo, Cobre Grande, Bicho Visangento, Mães do Bicho, and panema are examples of indigenous elements that have been incorporated into folk Catholicism (Galvão 1952:88-112). In some instances, they have undergone considerable alteration in the process of being incorporated into the general framework of Catholic thought. Their persistence through to the present is no doubt linked to the fact that caboclos pursue an existence in the forest-riverine environment little different from their Amerindian ancestors. Moreover, insofar as many of these beliefs and concepts have their origin in the aboriginal experience within the Amazon rainforest-riverine environment, they provide a measure of uniqueness to the Catholicism of the Amazon caboclo.

The nuclear family, which is at the center of caboclo socio-economic existence, might be construed as additional evidence of Iberian culture influence. After all, it could be argued, a major goal of the Directorate was to impose the Portuguese concept of family (and home) upon Amerindians and to force them to abandon communal existence that was so intimately connected to kinship systems. As was discussed above, the first caboclos did indeed adopt this form of social organization. However, as MacLachlan noted (1972), the nuclear household may have been as much a function of the sense of isolation (economic, social, psychological) that caboclos experienced following the Directorate as it was a function of Portuguese cultural influence. In this state of isolation, and given the prevailing extractive economy, the nuclear household was the most adaptive unit of social organization.

Iberian cultural patterns indeed have influenced and shaped caboclo culture but this may be more a case of Portuguese (and Jesuit) influence before 1800 than any new major adjustments after this date. The persistent social and economic isolation of most caboclo communities did not provide much opportunity for significant interaction with extra-regional forces: often, there was little interaction with extra-local populations. Catholic religion and Portuguese language may have been simply "filling the vacuum" created by the destruction of many diverse Amerindian groups and the subsequent mixing of survivors. In the post-1800 period, the development and evolution of caboclo culture may well have been accomplished with little external influences other than the persistence of an extractive-based

regional economy. Even here, we find that this economy had its roots in the years before 1800 as did the caboclo response to it.

#### Caboclo Research

The major difficulty for the student of Amazonia who desires to gain an understanding of caboclo society is the literature itself; there have been discouragingly few in-depth studies of caboclo communities. The principal studies are those of Wagley (1953), Galvão (1952), and Miller (1975) in Gurupá, Sternberg (1956) in Careiro, and Parker (1981) in Limoeiro do Ajuru.<sup>2</sup>

The results of the work by Wagley and Galvão in Gurupá have remained the principal reference sources for information regarding caboclo communities. (Miller's 1975 master's thesis dealt with change in Gurupá during the 1950-1975 period.) In approaching their work, it is important to keep in mind that Gurupá was and is representative of caboclo communities most heavily influenced by extra-local forces (both in historical and contemporary contexts). That is to say, if we were to construct a continuum (or a gradient) of caboclo communities categorized from least to most integrated into regional socioeconomic life, Gurupá would be placed among the group of communities at the "most influenced" end of the scale. The town has a long history of extensive links to external markets and was greatly influenced in the process. During the Rubber Boom, Gurupá was a major center of commerce as it was located within one of the richer rubber stand areas. It was not only an important river town for trade but also was a principal stop for ships moving upstream. A weekly newspaper was published, shops were stocked with imported goods, and a town hall, "planned as the largest building on the lower Amazon" and designed by an Italian architect especially brought to Gurupá for the project, was begun in the first year of this century (Wagley 1976:49). Both Wagley and Galvão devoted considerable time and effort to the investigation of rural neighborhoods around Gurupá and it is from these locales that we learn the most about caboclo culture. However, these outlying areas were intimately connected to the town and to each other, and the market played a significant role in rural decision-making.

In most cases, rural residents worked land that was owned by others, often patrons. The legacy of the Rubber Boom was explicit in the persistence of class consciousness and racial typing that was documented by Wagley and Galvão in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and by Miller in the 1970s.

Gurupá thus provides a crucial insight into the evolution of a caboclo community that has long had direct and extensive linkages with regional forces. It also furnishes a marvelous opportunity for comparative analysis with those caboclo communities only now undergoing change resulting from integration into the regional economy. Finally, the work of Wagley, Galvão, and Miller in Gurupá affords us the opportunity to investigate the differences and similarities between communities such as Gurupá, located at one end of a continuum, with caboclo communities located at the other end which have remained for all intents and purposes socially and economically isolated from regional forces.

The Careiro area, located within a very short distance of Manaus, has been intimately linked to this city by markets. Sternberg (1956) reported that the principal economic activity was raising cattle: meat, milk, and cheese were marketed on a daily basis in Manaus. In addition, bananas, cacão, and other crops were sold there. In the Careiro area, subsistence economies were greatly overshadowed by market considerations. Sternberg's work is thus of considerable importance in that it provides the only in-depth investigation of a rural community in Amazonia organized to produce for a market economy (excluding recent migrant populations). This study should be of particular interest to those interested in the question of how caboclos and their communities respond (e.g., social, economic, and political organization) to development opportunities such as commodity production.

Careiro is also of interest given its demographic history. In the late 1800s, the area underwent a major transformation when nordestinos arrived and settled in force in the area. As Sternberg noted (1956:19), the local population was soon dwarfed by the Northeastern population; at the time of his work, the vast majority of Careiro residents traced their ancestry to these original immigrants. As such, Careiro provides an excellent opportunity to study

the incorporation of extra-regional peoples and their descendants into the general Amazon cultural environment, particularly given the fact that in this area they comprise the dominant force in the local population.

My own study of Limoeiro do Ajuru (Parker 1981) investigated the changes in a small, relatively isolated caboclo community that were prompted by its sudden inclusion within the formal political structure of Pará State. In 1961, Limoeiro do Ajuru was designated the sede of a new município by the same name. Prior to this date, it had been of small size (less than 300) with no ties to external markets and without formal leadership. Although only 120-150 km by boat from Belém (dependent upon route) and 55 km from Cametá, the community had remained largely a world unto itself. Following its designation as sede, its population swelled to nearly 1,000 in a space of 10 years--new residents came from the interior of the município. Evidence of the local nature of the sede and município population can be seen in the census data. In 1970, the population of the município was 10,047. Only 583 (5.8%) residents had been born outside the município of which 576 (99%) claimed Cametá município, immediately to the south, as their place of birth (1981:225-230). Moreover, in the community census I conducted in 1978, a very large majority of residents listed the general local area as the birthplace of both their maternal and paternal grandparents. Although only one caboclo community, the census data from the município raises a question about the presumed mobility of caboclos that is often found in the literature (Moran 1974:142).

Unlike Gurupá, class consciousness and racial typing did not exist in Limoeiro do Ajuru before the 1960s. No local elite had arisen during the Rubber Boom and as there were only insignificant and very sporadic economic links to the outside world before 1960, there was little basis for class development. Internal power structures were non-existent as leadership was consensual, informal and non-binding. Religious activities, even in the late 1970s, were the province and responsibility of local residents as there has never been a representative of any church assigned to the community. At most, a priest from Cametá would make one or two day-visits each year.

Of course, the community underwent radical change after 1961 with the rapid formation of classes and internal power structures. Still, I was unable to document any form of racial typing similar to that reported for Gurupá. Newspapers and magazines were still extremely rare in the late 1970s (illiteracy was very high among adults), although radios had made an appearance by the mid-1970s. Based on his work in Gurupá, Wagley suggested that caboclos in Amazonia were, in the 1950s, plugged into the national scene; for example, they discussed state and national policies, played soccer, and gambled at *jôgo do bicho*, a kind of "numbers" game that is a national passion (1976:31). In contrast, while "Limoeirenses" played soccer, *jogo do bicho* did not exist in the community, and they exhibited little interest or knowledge of state and national political realities.

Throughout the interior of the município are found hamlets that are at best only marginally connected to the sede, much less to the rest of Brazil. These communities are representative of perhaps thousands of other caboclo communities which bear little resemblance to Gurupá, Careiro, or post-1960 Limoeiro do Ajuru, itself bearing little resemblance to the first two towns. The point that must be made is that the few studies of caboclo communities that have been done were focused upon populations located along the main Amazon channel (Gurupá and Careiro) or in the process of rapid cultural change (Limoeiro do Ajuru). While there is considerable room for further studies of such communities, there is a great need for investigations of caboclo communities that remain in socioeconomic isolation and little changed from the past. Only with in-depth studies of the broad range of caboclo communities found in Amazonia can we hope to develop a comprehensive and incisive description and analysis of caboclo culture in the region.

The extent to which the entire issue of caboclo culture is neglected can be seen in the recent literature. In his preface to *Man in the Amazon* (1974), a collection of papers from a major conference on the subject that had been prompted by the scope and rapidity of economic development initiatives in the region, Charles Wagley noted that as editor of the volume he had asked Emilio Moran to write an essay concerning caboclo culture. Although the subject of

caboclos had not been included in the conference's agenda, Wagley in the process of preparing the volume came to believe that a paper on the "contemporary culture of the Amazon rural population was needed" (1974:viii, emphasis added). It seems extraordinary that without Wagley's editorial wisdom, a book entitled Man in the Amazon would have overlooked the caboclo population in the Amazon. Unfortunately, subsequent volumes have not followed Wagley's lead and have ignored the Amazon caboclo. Change in the Amazon Basin Vols. 1 & 2 (Hemming 1985), Frontier Expansion in Amazonia (Schmink and Wood 1984), The Dilemma of Amazonian Development (Moran 1983), and Land, People, and Planning in Contemporary Amazonia (Barbira-Scazzochio 1980) have not included caboclos in their collections of papers as a specific topic.<sup>3</sup>

#### Problems in the Literature

The paucity of caboclo research and the general neglect of caboclo culture in the literature concerning the human environment of Amazonia are serious impediments to the interested observer. There are other problems as well: confused terminology and mixed-analysis have contributed to further obscure the role of caboclos in Amazonia. These sorts of problems are particularly common in the literature regarding development strategies in contemporary Amazonia.

Stephen Bunker, for example, has employed the term "cabocclization" to refer to a "regression to subsistence activities following the collapse of market activities" that occurs in "economically stagnant areas" that have "extremely low population and economic density" (1979:59-60). The suggestion of marginalization and dependency is further implied in his assertions that in these areas long chains of intermediaries (aviadores) maintain dominance through indebtedness and appropriate an exceptionally high proportion of surplus production (1979:60; 1985:73, 108, 128). There are several difficulties here.

The use of "cabocclization" in this context ignores the origins and history of caboclo culture in Amazonia. In not attending to caboclo culture and history in Amazonia, Bunker has misunderstood caboclo culture in the present. Like other researchers, this may be a consequence of

Bunker's research agenda which has focused upon large towns, urban areas, and colonization centers: Maraba and Altamira on the Transamazon highway, and the Santarem--Alenquer--Monte Alegre triangle along the main channel of the Amazon River. His work in these areas has indeed contributed to our understanding of the reasons why the development programs of state and federal agencies were such abysmal failures. However, the primary focus of his work has been the Transamazon highway area and has dealt primarily with recent migrants to the region--not Amazon caboclos--who were participants in development programs of various agencies.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, although Bunker's Underdeveloping the Amazon (1985) included "caboclo" in the glossary of terms to be found in the text, I was unable to find a single instance of its usage. This is a striking omission given his statements that the book is a study of "the predominately extractive economies of the Amazon" (1985:13) and will show how state policies undermined "existing but fragile human communities" (1985:56, emphasis added). Unfortunately, caboclos and caboclo culture do not feature in his analysis. By excluding or ignoring caboclos, Bunker's work is really the analysis of the failure of development strategies vis-a-vis migrant populations enrolled in sponsored programs. His research, as is the case with many others working in this general area, does not provide any insight into the relationship between development forces and the predominant socioeconomic expression of rural Amazonia: caboclo culture. The casual lumping of all rural inhabitants under terms such as "small farmer", "peasant", or "small-holders" without reference to their origin, experience in the Amazonian environment, and relationship to formal programs can make generalizations about "rural Amazonia" rather confusing.

The nature and location of Bunker's research have resulted in his failure to recognize that caboclo culture is an adaptive system that has evolved over time to response in the region's economy and environment.<sup>5</sup> Weinstein (this volume) shows how caboclos even during the Rubber Boom years were able to remain autonomous, and to resist peonage and proletarianization. This ability to remain autonomous despite the tremendous economic forces that were at work within the region was a function of adaptive strategies and sociocultural patterns that caboclos had in-place before the Rubber Boom. But, as Weinstein points out, the rubber

economy itself served to further extend, refine, and solidify the major components and characteristics of caboclo culture, and it was the rubber economy that further encouraged caboclos to remain independent as individual producers. Weinstein refers to caboclozation as the process by which many of the newcomers to the region, exposed to Amazon caboclos, adopted their adaptive strategies and absorbed crucial survival information encoded in caboclo culture. She notes that the elites of the rubber era were particularly apprehensive about the impact that Amazon caboclos might have upon the migrant population pouring into the region: the caboclozation of nordestinos was to be avoided at all costs.

Moran (1974:144-145) observed that caboclo culture has managed to ignore or to absorb external influences without much difficulty or consequence. Indeed, there has been a remarkable elasticity to caboclo economics--individuals and communities have moved in and out of market contexts with seeming impunity. For example, both Miller and Schmink (this volume) point out that caboclos moved rapidly to take advantage of the brief flurry of rubber trade during WWII and just as quickly returned to traditional economic activities when the market dried-up. Rather than being cast in a negative light, the independence exhibited by caboclo culture in dealing with the regional economy should be seen as evidence that caboclo culture has been "the optimal adaptation to life in the region" (Moran 1974:144).

With regard to Bunker's description of contemporary aviamento in caboclo areas, I would offer the following observations. Bunker offers no evidence or data for his claims regarding aviamento in areas of "low population and economic density" (i.e., caboclo areas). He merely cites, without elaboration, Santos' (1968) general discussion of aviamento which itself is largely an analysis based upon Rubber Boom aviamento. There is general agreement that aviamento achieved its greatest expression during the Rubber Boom years, and many believe that it placed rubber tappers as a whole in a debt-peonage position vis-à-vis the various players in the aviamento hierarchy. However, Weinstein, a noted authority on the Rubber Boom period, argues (this volume) that caboclos, by virtue of their cultural patterns and multiple subsistence strategies, were able to retain much greater independence than heretofore realized, and were able

to effectively resist peonage. Her analysis is an excellent demonstration of why it is so important to treat caboclos as a distinct population. Unfortunately, the aviamento system, and its perceived handmaiden debt-peonage, have become enshrined in the literature (as exemplified by Bunker's comments) as a fundamental feature of caboclo existence through to the present time.

Before proceeding further, I should point out that aviamento, strictly speaking, describes a nested hierarchy of trade relationships (debt obligation and credit extension) from the collector to the major commercial houses in Manaus and Belém. (It can be, if desired, extended to the large southern cities and beyond to the international market.) While it certainly can prove to be a vicious progression, this is by no means a necessary outcome. The origin of aviadors (traders) in Amazonia is found among the disenfranchised and luckless settlers of the Directorate epoch who out of desperation engaged in illegal trade with Directorate Indian villages. More to the point, it can be argued that the very nature of the Amazon environment (which even today encourages the use of rivers as principal transportation routes), the time involved in river travel, the extractive-based regional economy, and the seasonality factor in collecting, all combined to create an impeccable logic for aviamento with its system of debt-credit relationships.

Wagley's work in Gurupá provides the principal account of contemporary aviamento in a caboclo community (1976:90ff). He noted that the debt relationship between trading post owner and collector was much less rigid and corrosive than had prevailed during the Rubber Boom. This was made evident by the fact that no enforcement mechanisms existed to ensure that collectors with debts to a particular post only traded at that post; rather, the collector's own sense of obligation and honor were relied upon to keep him "bound" to the post. While prices were higher at these posts, owners made their greatest profit from the sale of rubber thus establishing a measure of mutual dependence between owner and collector. But far more interesting for our purposes is the fact that what allowed the aviamento system to persist in this quasi-"classic" form of debt and post-bound collector was the "ownership" by the trading post operator of the lands the collector worked. The post

different places. The success or failure of migrants in Amazonia is completely unrelated to the Amazon caboclo. This represents a very different reality than did occur during the Rubber Boom when nordestinos were absorbed into caboclo society and were, as Weinstein notes, cabocloized.

In contemporary Amazonia, migrants, many of whom are nordestinos, are attempting to set up shop without reference to the survival information that proved so important to nordestinos during the Rubber Boom and afterwards. Caboclo strategies and the caboclo adaptive system are generally not available to the newcomer. What is different for the nordestinos of today who move into the region is that the economic context has changed. They are not being lured by the rise of a new extractive economy but rather by the promise of land and employment opportunities. The land available to them is tied to the road system which has largely followed upland terra firme interfluvial avenues where few caboclos are encountered; caboclos tend to be located within the Central Plain along rivers and streams. Indeed, these roads infringe far more upon Amerindian territories than they do upon caboclo territories. Thus, migrants must struggle within this alien landscape without benefit of caboclo cultural assistance. As the literature regarding pioneer peasants demonstrates, the migrant experience has been dismal to say the least. Caught between bureaucratic indifference and incompetence on the one hand, and official corruption on the other, pioneers have had a rough go of it. Indeed, the very term "posseiro" indicates the experience of pioneers since the 1950s. Martins (1980:105) describes the pioneer experience as a "migration of posseiros" who are caught up in a pernicious pattern of settlement and eviction.

Moran observed that even in one of the few situations in which caboclos and migrants were together, the Transamazonian colonization program, caboclos kept to themselves, wary of both the government officials and the newcomers. They "preferred to live on their own land rather than in the planned villages built by the government" and showed little inclination to participate in the "nationalistic 'melting pot' gregariousness encouraged by the government" (Moran 1981:96). For those migrants lured to the region not by land but by labor opportunities, there is almost no possi-

bility to participate in or to be exposed to caboclo society. Even in instances where caboclos and migrants might meet, say at a mining camp, few contexts would exist for significant information exchange; it might well be the case that here, like in the case described by Moran, caboclos would keep to themselves.

It is absolutely essential that these two populations be kept distinct; linkage of Amazon caboclos with pioneer peasants as suggested by Foweraker's unfortunate phrase "invasion of caboclos" should be avoided unless the basis for linkage is made explicit and the two populations are clearly distinguished in the discussion. While the occasional misuse or confusing use of "caboclo" and/or the misrepresentation of caboclo culture are nettlesome, what is really discouraging is that researchers appear to be ignoring caboclos altogether. It is as though the human environment of interior Amazonia were comprised exclusively of Amerindians and pioneer peasants. One need but undertake a cursory perusal of the recent literature (e.g., the volumes noted above) to find ample evidence for this assertion. Indeed, the actual structure of volumes is often organized along these lines with a section on Amerindians and another on the pioneer-migrant-posseiro-colonist complex.

David Maybury-Lewis' elegant essay "Demystifying the Second Conquest" (1984) is concerned with the future of the "peoples of Amazonia" as the economic frontier expands into and through their territories. For Maybury-Lewis, "peoples of Amazonia" translates to Amerindians and the objective of this Conquest is Indian lands, not Indians, as was the case in the Colonial period. I would like to suggest that we extend our concern to include Amazon caboclos who, like their Amerindian counterparts, also face the daunting prospect of absorption by the expanding economic frontier and the loss of lands and culture. In past years, the description of the Amazon region as a demographic vacuum prompted sharp rebuttals from those concerned with Amerindian peoples. Thus, there is an irony of sorts in the fact that Amazon caboclos find themselves and their culture treated as if they do not exist both by the government and by the general research community.

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## Caboclo Culture Change

When the economic frontier does reach caboclo communities, change can be rapid and dramatic. In this volume, four essays address the subject of caboclo culture change within communities impacted by regional development forces: Itaituba (Miller), São Felix do Xingu (Schmink), Itacoatiara (Wesche), and San Jorge (Hiraoka). The first two communities are located in the upland terra firme and the latter two are situated along the main channel of the Amazon River. Both Itaituba and São Felix experienced a rapid and massive influx of pioneer peasants. The Itacoatiara area saw little in-migration but did experience significant capital penetration as well as outsiders, mostly Paulistas, gaining control of large areas of land. All but San Jorge had the process of culture change initiated by their incorporation into regional road networks.

San Jorge, a small, isolated Peruvian ribereno community, is located about 40 km from Iquitos. Riberenos are the Peruvian counterparts to Brazilian Amazon caboclos; their origins, sociocultural organization, and adaptive strategies are essentially the same. In recent years, the community has begun to change in response to the introduction of new technologies, extra-local wage-labor opportunities, the allure of popular culture (e.g., radio broadcasts from Iquitos), and the migration of young people to Iquitos. Hiraoka's study describes a community undergoing change not from roads or migrant arrivals but from the reaction of its residents to factors largely external to the local area.

The discussions of these four communities provide a general picture of caboclo culture change in response to regional development forces. For caboclos, as has been the case for recent migrants, the nature of contemporary economic development is fundamentally different than anything they have encountered in the past. Like Amerindians, caboclos find that it is their lands that are under assault; in most instances, their labor potential is of little importance.<sup>6</sup> In this novel economic context, the arrival of the economic frontier can initiate a process of de-cabocloization in which caboclo adaptive strategies and general cultural patterns that have been in place for 200 years begin to breakdown and the traditional system unravels. As these studies suggest, environmental deterioration, decima-

tion of local natural resources, dissolution of social relations, class conflict, and status associated with material possessions are often by-products of this process of de-cabocloization.

Caboclos, like many other peoples throughout history, often contribute to the demise of their own culture. Whether it is leaving fertile varzea lands for terra firme land near roads (Wesche), migrating to urban areas (Hiraoka and Miller), or electing to remain in communities because of perceived benefits (e.g., wage-labor and the education of children) despite the fact that remaining effectively precludes traditional life (Schmink), the end-result is often identical: the abandonment or loss of traditional culture.

Miller's description of the Azevedo family is perhaps the most telling example of the process and result of de-cabocloization. As Miller observes, their "abandonment or rejection of caboclo strategies and the adoption of a way of life more in line with the rest of Brazilian society" (emphasis added) signals a new trend of profound proportions for caboclos. The Azevedo family in fact is no longer a caboclo family but rather has become part of the urban/town lower class. Lured by wage-labor and/or the promise of increased material welfare, they have readily rejected caboclo culture and adaptive strategies. The decision-strategies of the Azevedo family (and others like them) represent a marked departure from traditional caboclo responses to economic opportunities that have generally maintained their independence as individual producers. For instance, compare the Azevedo's passionate desire for wage-labor with Weinstein's (this volume) recounting of the difficulties experienced by Ford Company in securing wage-laborers for its rubber plantation despite its offer of high wages.

What is central to any discussion of caboclo cultural change engendered by economic development policies/programs is the very real possibility that caboclos may be unable to fall back upon the traditional system and its adaptive strategies should they so desire. Access to the environment and its resources is critical to caboclo socio-economic life and to their repertory of adaptive strategies. The case studies presented herein suggest that as the economic frontier sweeps through traditional caboclo areas,

the relationship between residents and the land can be fundamentally altered either by the appropriation of their lands or by their own willingness to be absorbed within the new system. (In San Jorge, the pattern is different but the result is similar; land tenure stresses have resulted from the newly arisen local elite obtaining control of the best lands.) Whether by choice or not, the result is that many residents lose their association with the land and become incorporated within town/urban lower socioeconomic classes where wage-labor is a necessity, if not a desire, and traditional caboclo strategies are irrelevant.

In the past, the control of land was generally linked to the natural products of the forest (e.g., rubber) and caboclo culture remained intact and largely unaffected (see Weinstein, this volume). In contemporary Amazonia, however, caboclo lands are most often desired for monocultural agriculture and livestock raising, and to a lesser extent for mining, lumbering, and colonist projects. While the destruction of large areas of local forest lands and the restricted access to land associated with these land-uses can be sufficient to preclude re-adoption of traditional caboclo life, other forces are at work as well. As each of the four studies demonstrate, the new economic conditions extant in the town/urban environment and its hinterland impact significantly upon the values and goals of residents. Although they can be torn between the advantages and conveniences associated with "new town" life (e.g., electricity, plumbing, schooling) and the negative aspects such as crowding, noise, strangers, and less security, they nevertheless find it increasingly difficult to extricate themselves from this environment as it would entail the loss of conveniences and would require moving away from the area and friends. More to the point, their children, weaned on the paps of progress, development, and material possessions, will embrace the new reality and reject the old. In any event, they will reach adulthood without the necessary knowledge and experience to survive in the riverine-rainforest environment. The fear is that while some caboclos may indeed improve their lives by participation in the new system, many, many others will only find their existence more ephemeral, dependent, and poverty stricken. While the number of caboclo communities directly impacted to date by the economic frontier is still quite small, the rapid expansion of the frontier in Amazonia threatens to

engulf a large proportion of caboclo towns and hamlets in the coming years.

### Concluding Comments

My purpose in this introduction has been to suggest that our knowledge and understanding of Amazon caboclo culture is limited and fragmentary. Less colorful and exotic than their tribal cousins, caboclos have not enjoyed the attention that Amerindians have heretofore enjoyed. Ignored, overlooked, and at times casually lumped together with migrant populations, caboclos remain largely unstudied despite their central role in the human environment of Amazonia. While we can provide a general sketch of the events and processes that led to the evolution and development of caboclo culture in Amazonia, there is precious little data or research regarding caboclo communities, specific aspects of the culture, or caboclo culture in general. In this regard, I have attempted to demonstrate that many assumptions and generalizations about caboclo culture are based upon insufficient or incomplete evidence. The questions I have raised have not been intended to challenge the results of specific caboclo studies but rather to suggest that efforts to extrapolate from them at this point is a dubious enterprise at best.

The purpose of this volume, the first to devote exclusive attention to Amazon caboclos, is to encourage and promote research focused upon caboclos. The historical section covers the period from 1615 to 1920 with each essay leading logically to the next. This should provide the reader with a general framework with which to approach the subject of caboclo history and, it is hoped, may encourage some to pursue the subject further. The second section of the volume is topical in nature and is intended to present, in addition to the subject of culture change discussed above, a variety of perspectives and approaches to contemporary caboclo culture from agricultural strategies to medicinal practices and beliefs.

The need and opportunity for caboclo research are tremendous. It is not often that an area of inquiry remains so wide-open, where the results of one's work can become part of the benchmark literature and can contribute to a

major advance in our knowledge. Opportunities for community-level studies can be glossed into three broad categories: (1) those that remain beyond the frontier and its general influence; (2) those that are undergoing change from the impacts of extra-local development activities; and (3), those that have been absorbed by the expanding economic frontier. In each of these categories little work has been done, but it is the first category for which we have literally no data. My work in Limoeiro do Ajuru (1981) and Hiraoka's (this volume) in San Jorge provide a glimpse of communities before change had begun, but both studies are reconstructive in nature.

As was noted in the opening section of this discussion, caboclos occupy and exploit a wide range of environments in Amazonia: they fish, hunt, gather, and undertake agriculture in more kinds of macro/micro environments than any other population of the region. Their knowledge of these environments and their strategies for obtaining and managing natural resources can make a substantial contribution to our understanding of ecosystem structure, dynamics, and potentials.

For 200 years, caboclos have quietly and successfully managed to live independently amidst an environment all too often labelled a "green hell". It is only now that the future of caboclos in Amazonia is uncertain. Orlando Boas once remarked to me that the problem confronting Amerindians was no different than that confronting all poor and powerless peoples--the lack of effective representation and the failure of judicial systems to recognize and protect their rights. In Amazonia, caboclos, who are not self-defined as are indigenous groups and who lack lobbying groups that have taken up their cause, are in an extremely vulnerable position. The "second conquest of Amazonia" as Maybury-Lewis terms it is well underway and caboclos (along with Amerindians) are the potential victims. Cabocloization was the result of the first conquest, and the product of this process, the caboclos, created a new form, a new pattern, of existence in Amazonia. De-cabocloization, with its attendant loss of independence, land, culture, and knowledge, may well be the outcome of this second conquest. Caboclos have neither identity nor supporters. They deserve both.

## NOTES

1. During the Rubber Boom, Amerindian groups were also involved in the collection of rubber. In some instances, this participation in the rubber economy resulted in the cabocloization of Amerindian groups (see Weinstein, this volume).
2. There are a number of other authors who have written about various aspects of caboclo culture in Amazonia. See for example Brabo 1977, 1979, Kelly 1984, Lisansky 1980, Moran 1974, Oliveira 1975, Penteado 1967, Ross 1978, and Smith 1981. Judith Gunn, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, has just completed a two-year study of a caboclo community located along the main channel of the Amazon River above Manaus. Another University of Wisconsin-Madison Ph.D. candidate, David McGrath, has recently begun a study of aviamento in Amazonia, working in the Abaetetuba area. For Peruvian ribereños, see Hiraoka (this volume) for references.
3. I should note that Emilio Moran asked me to contribute a piece on caboclos to the volume he was editing but for personal reasons I was unable to accommodate his request.
4. In a discussion concerning deforestation around Santarém, Bunker (1981) briefly mentioned "peasants" but these were people who were bound to the roads near Santarém and who were engaged in the production of agricultural commodities.
5. Bunker's neglect of caboclos may be a function of his belief that the "core of indigenous productive technology" was lost during Colonial rule and that the trade strategies of that era had "eliminated effective human occupancy and use" of most of the Amazon (1985:65). It is true that the main channel of the Amazon was severely depopulated and a measure of the knowledge possessed by floodplain groups was lost (particularly ecological knowledge encoded in ceremony and ritual). However, it is hoped that the present volume will demonstrate the direct linkages between Amerindian societies and subsequent caboclo culture, that caboclo

did possess and have passed on indigenous technologies, resource perceptions and management strategies, and that caboclo culture since the early 1800s has constituted "effective human occupance and use" of rural Amazonia.

6. One example of the extent to which the government has ignored caboclos is the fact that they were entirely overlooked by government planners when they designed the Transamazon colonization project (Moran 1975).

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