

EDITORS NOTE

This special issue of *História, Ciências, Saúde — Manguinhos* offers a selection of texts originally written for the seminar “Visions of the Amazon: Culture, Science, and Health,” held at the Espaço Cultural dos Correios in Rio de Janeiro in March 1999. The seminar was coordinated by the Casa de Oswaldo Cruz and the Centro de Pesquisas Leônidas e Maria Deane (Fiocruz’s Amazon office), with the support of Brazil’s national research council, CNPq, and Associação Brasileira de Pós-Graduação em Saúde Coletiva (Abrasco).

After thousands of years of ‘native’ human occupation, which was both extensive and diversified, the Amazon has been moved to the top of the agenda both for the Brazilian nation and for our globalized world at the turn of this millenium. Ever since the sixteenth century, the Amazon has been an object of curiosity, investigation, imagination, and exploration for travelers, scientists, traders, *sertanistas*, writers, sanitarians, and engineers. But it was in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, during the rubber boom, that this universe began gaining greater national and international visibility.

It was then that Oswaldo Cruz, Carlos Chagas, and other scientists from the Instituto de Manguinhos began visiting the Amazon. Upon returning, they revealed this immense piece of the country to their fellow citizens in South-Central Brazil. Abounding in contrasts, the Amazon boasted economic riches and an exuberance of ecosystems that commingled with startling poverty and deadly diseases. The “green hell” described by Alberto Rangel — or the “other *sertão*” unveiled by Euclides da Cunha — invariably surprised its visitors, whether they were Brazilians from other parts of the country or foreigners. In his march westward, Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondon met up with a broad diversity of indigenous communities and endeavored to attenuate the voracious incursions of modernity. The notion of drawing the people and lands of the Amazon into the civilizing process was in tune with the First Republic’s nationalist climate.

The golden years of the rubber trade died away, save a brief resuscitation during World War II. It was only in the 1960s and especially 1970s that the Amazon truly became Brazil’s last economic frontier. The discourse of national integration espoused during the time of the military dictatorship stimulated the implementation of major industrial, mineral, agricultural, and livestock ventures, mobilizing huge numbers of prospectors, small landholders, and migrants in search of land — all drawn by the perpetually renewed mirage of an eldorado.

In the 1980s, particularly after Brazil’s democratization, the Amazon became the focus of intense controversies in the press, the academic world, governmental agencies, and national and foreign NGOs. The crux of the question has been how to harmonize economic use of the territory’s natural resources with preservation of its bio-geographical wealth. Efforts to guarantee the compatibility of these two goals have opened new rifts and seen the emergence of new social actors within the region itself.

The Amazon is indeed a vast entity that can inspire words of vagary or of hyperbole. It demands adjectives or descriptors to fix its concrete meaning — like the “Brazilian Amazon,” “Amazônia Legal,” “the Amazon Basin” — or to underscore its gargantuan proportions or exotic nature — like “green hell,” “the earth’s lungs,” “the world’s bread-basket.” Although its pendulum has swung from moments of oblivion to fervid attention, the Amazon has never failed to generate an ongoing interest in the form of studies, discourses, and even exaggerations. Following some decades of peaceful conscience on the part of the nation and the world, ushered in by the end of the rubber boom, the pendulum swung back to the other extreme in the late 1980s and that is where it still remains. The region has once again become the target of passionate, loud, multi-faceted attention from Brazilians and foreigners, rubbertappers and environmentalists, laborers

and entrepreneurs, scientists and bankers. The big difference is that now the voices of local social actors are easier to hear than ever before.

In this issue of *História, Ciências, Saúde — Manguinhos*, researchers from a gamut of fields— history, sociology, anthropology, political science, geography — provide a cross-section of the Amazon. Each in his or her own way, the authors introduce us to fresh new interpretations and hypotheses concerning the area. The Amazon they explore is Brazilian — in other words, that immense part of the Amazon basin, rainforest, and bio-geographical unit which lies inside Brazil's tenuous borders, inhabited by Brazilians of different languages, ethnic backgrounds, lifestyles, and origins.

In 'Private investments, environmental impact, and the quality of life at a mining venture in the Amazon', José Augusto Drummond discusses the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of the Serra do Navio manganese mine in the state of Amapá, which was the longest-running of all the great projects implemented in the contemporary Amazon (1957-98). Challenging the common postulate that such ventures automatically cause environmental and socioeconomic damages, Drummond presents evidence that makes us rethink the roles of large-scale, capital-intensive ventures in this zone.

In 'Biosphere, history, and conjuncture in an analysis of the main Amazon issues', José Augusto de Pádua blends different levels of analysis and chronological scales. Clear and balanced, the result is an accessible look at extremely complex natural and social issues.

Janaína Amado affords readers a look at a remote historical and social dimension of the region in 'Involuntary voyagers: Portuguese banished to colonial Amazon'. Based on unpublished documentation discovered in Portuguese archives, Amado tells us about a little-known role the Amazon once played: receiving all kinds of condemned and persecuted Portuguese. Jane Felipe Beltrão explores another facet of Amazon history in 'The curative art of specialists in folk medicine in times of cholera: 19th century Grão-Pará'. The author shows that the roots of the area's persistent epidemic and endemic diseases and its precarious stock of public health tools reach far back.

In 'Instruments and signs of civilization: the origin, formation, and recognition of the Amazon elite', Ana Maria Daou portrays the emergence of Manaus's social and political elites from the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth century. In her description of the structural underpinnings and lifestyle of a new regional elite, Daou correlates the rise of different local and outside types to the rubber industry and the concomitant growth of government and commercial services.

In the essay 'The social imaginary of the Amazon: the anthropology of knowledge makers', Samuel Maria de Amorim Sá analyzes tensions between imaginary images that are endogenous and exogenous to the Amazon people and region. The author argues in favor of a continual reprocessing of institutions and solutions from both "the inside" and "the outside." In 'Euclides da Cunha and the Amazon: an outlook mediated by science', José Carlos Barreto de Santana recovers little-known writings by the author of *Os sertões*. In these scattered texts, Cunha has once again produced scorching, hyperbolic literary images, this time focusing on the human and natural landscape of humid rainforests. This new multidisciplinary 'polyphony' was to influence later Brazilian visions of the Amazon.

Fernando Sergio Dumas dos Santos, in 'Folk traditions in the use of medicinal plants in the Amazon', examines different branches of folk knowledge of medicinal plants, especially in the Negro, Branco, Acre, and Purus river regions. The text has direct bearing on two vital contemporary issues, that is, "traditional" or "folk" knowledge of Amazon nature and the uses to which the area's biodiversity can be put.

For the first time in the literature, 'Levels of socioeconomic development in the Brazilian Amazon — 1970 and 1980' brings together macro-regional databases and uses them to measure and compare the population's developmental level in Amazônia Legal. Authors Archibald O.

Haller, Ramon S. Torrecilha, Maria Cristina del Peloso Haller, and Manoel M. Tourinho detect a generalized improvement in these levels and call into question assumptions and findings presented in the literature. They put forward a polemic sociological explanation to account for the co-existence of notorious social blights alongside such improvements. Their argument is that this juxtaposition, far from being a paradox, is in point of fact typical of frontier lands undergoing accelerated processes of social change.

In 'Science in the periphery: Unesco and the proposal to create the International Institute of the Hylean Amazon and the origins of Inpa', Marcos Chor Maio and Magali Romero Sá investigate efforts to set up a major scientific research center in the Amazon after World War II (1945-52). Based on unpublished archival documents, they look at Unesco's proposal to form the Instituto Internacional da Hiléia Amazônica (IIHA, or International Amazon Rainforest Institute). Weighing the external and internal aspects of the ensuing polemic, the authors identify problems inherent to the establishment of scientific institutions on the periphery and suggest that creation of the Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas da Amazônia (Inpa) came in the direct wake of these controversies.

Combining a rich ethnography with an enticing and lucid analysis, in 'Boi-Bumbá in Parintins, Amazonas: a brief history and ethnography of the festival', Maria Laura Viveiros de Castro Cavalcanti gives us a vivid anthropological interpretation of an event that is enjoying ever greater national fame. Loris Machado's fine photographic work (Images) enhances our appreciation of Cavalcanti's article on this major folk festival.

Our 'Interviews' department presents Márcio de Souza's opening talk at the seminar 'Visions of the Amazon: Culture, Science, and Health'. Based on his research into the turbulent life in the Amazon shortly after Brazilian Independence, especially during the Cabanos Rebellion, the writer contends that part of the mutual "wonder" still felt by locals and outsiders stems from their distinct colonial histories and from the rather arbitrary way in which the two colonial units — Brazil and Grão-Pará — were merged into one single independent nation after 1822.

The 'Debate' department is dedicated to commentaries made by cinematographers and cultural producers at the screenings held at the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil in parallel with the seminar "Visions of the Amazon." Murilo Santos, Dominique Gallois, Aurelio Michiles, Selda Vale da Costa, Renato Pereira, Ricardo Arnt, and Geoffrey O'Connor explain their viewpoints on the origin and messages of these films and videos, presented under the coordination of Stella Oswald Cruz Penido.

The 'Sources' department offers a preliminary inventory of the Fundo Família Carneiro, drawn up by Priscila Fraiz. Fraiz underscores the importance of documents on the scientist Paulo Estevão de Berrêdo Carneiro, intellectual mentor of the project to create the International Institute of the Hylean Amazon.

Lastly, in 'Bibliographic Essays', José Augusto Drummond offers an overview of works by social scientists on social and environmental topics in the Brazilian Amazon published in the last twenty years. The article includes an extensive bibliography of recent titles in Portuguese or English. Drummond maintains that most of this literature is marked by a negativist, if not apocalyptic, vision of the region's and population's future prospects.

It is our hope that the texts in this special issue of *História, Ciências, Saúde — Manguinhos* will contribute to a fuller understanding of the Amazon and of its inhabitants, enriching the Brazilian debate and the national memory.

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Guest Editors