LIKE A MURURÉ: SOCIAL CHANGE IN A TERRA-FIRME COMMUNITY ON THE AMAZON ESTUARY

By

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by

Neila Soares da Silva
To my husband, Roger, and in the memory of my father, Pedro, and my dear aunts-guardian angels Cuca and Dodó, for their love, compassion, and concern.
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By

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This thesis portrays the socioeconomic and political circumstances of a community of Amazonian peasants in relation to social transformations in Amazonia, from the end of the rubber boom in 1912 to the time of fieldwork, the summer of 2002. They are direct descendants of escaped slaves. Their history is analyzed by looking at changes in social relations of production and power relations, in various stages and forms of articulation between households in the community and the capitalist market system. The study explores the internal transformations engendered by such historically changing relations—transformations in communal organization of work for production, and household livelihood strategies and family relations—beginning in the mid-1960s, with state-led efforts to massively integrate Amazonia into the national and world economies.

The methodology used in the field research consisted of observation of and participation in daily social intercourse, primarily within the community. Knowledge of the past was acquired through life histories, particularly the testimonies of the elderly.
The analysis of these narratives uncovered a social system marked by enduring hierarchies of economic advantage dividing householders, who entered into reciprocal relations to provide for themselves and reproduce a peasant mode of life, without apparent contradiction. It is argued that these relations among unequals, and their masking in everyday social intercourse, were a response to depeasantization. This analysis highlights the gradual loss by these peasants of a place in the regional economy—from their vital role as extractors of forest products after the crash of the rubber boom to their virtual exclusion from the economy as producers and as consumers at the time of fieldwork. The leveling of intra-community socioeconomic differences is shown. It is explained as a decline in significance of control over land and/or labor in the community.

The interactions are analyzed between the community and the two outside institutions that influenced them in the last quarter of the 20th century. The first was the progressive branch of Catholic church, which promoted political organizing of peasant communities on the estuary, beginning in the mid-1970s. The second institution was a nongovernmental organization (NGO). In the late 1990s, it assisted the slave descendant community in obtaining official recognition of their ethnic territory, and encouraged their engagement in the environmental movement. The effects of these interactions on the ways in which the peasants negotiated their class, ethnic and environmental consciousness in their mobilizations for support for local (sustainable) development are discussed. It is argued that their persistence is a function of their capacity to reinvent themselves as the social, economic, and political worlds they inhabit change, and suggested that it is their full appreciation of the importance of state policies to reduce their poverty and vulnerability that points to a possible future of self-determination.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This thesis tells about social change in a peasant village in the upland tropical forests on the Amazon estuary. The village is located in the municipality of Gurupá, where anthropologists Charles Wagley and Eduardo Galvão conducted field research for their seminal studies of non-Indian Amazonian peasantry: *Amazon Town: A Study of Man in the Tropics* (1964 [1953]), and *Santos e Visagens: Um Estudo da Vida Religiosa de Itá* (1955), respectively. What is presented here is ethnography. The thesis consists basically of description of data collected during fieldwork and analysis of those data. I attempt to build up intelligibility of a social system in relation to the history of outside interventions in Amazonia–global market forces, national development policies, and international concerns with and actions to help halt the processes of Amazon deforestation that such forces and policies effected. The account begins in the second half of the nineteenth century; this was the time depth of the memories of the oldest peasants in the village.

This ethnography has two objectives. The first is to make sense of the conditions in the rural community in my “ethnographic present,” exploring the ways in which the peoples’ lives were affected by state-led efforts to massively integrate Amazonia into the national and world economies, beginning in the mid-1960s. The second objective is to illuminate the interactions between the people in the community and the two outside institutions that influenced them at the time of fieldwork. The first was the Catholic church, as embodied by a Liberation-Theology oriented priest, who came to serve the
parish of Gurupá in the mid-1970s, when the rural communities began to suffer the negative effects of the direct expansion of the capitalist world system into Amazonia. The second institution was a non-governmental organization (hereafter NGO) in the socioenvironmental sector, operative in Gurupá since the mid-1990s. At the time, responding to constraints introduced by major social transformations in the region, the households in the community receded to subsistence production.

Since Wagley’s ethnographic monograph, two of his students conducted fieldwork in this Amazon region for their doctoral research projects, Darrel Miller in 1974 (1975) and Richard Pace in 1983-86 (1998). In addition, a detailed study (Oliveira 1991) of political economy orientation was carried out among roceiros (small-farmers living in the terra firme, i.e., dry upland forests dwellers) and varzeiros (inhabitants of the Amazon várzeas, i.e., floodplain dwellers) in Gurupá, Wagley and Galvão’s “Itá.” Pace also takes the political economy approach in his ethnography. Like Oliveira, he focuses on the effects of capitalist penetration upon communities, but he chooses the town as his unit of analysis, leaving the communities in the rural areas and the traditional anthropological concerns—the understanding of “the actual organization and culture of the society in question” (Ortner 1984:143)—for future investigation. Supplementing Oliveira’s and Pace’s comprehensive responses to the question of what was done to those people (the emphasis being on the “larger system”), this study of social change pays attention to the ethnographic conditions of a particular locale, and seeks to respond to the questions: what did they think about it? what did they say about it? what did they do about it? (Roseberry 1989:126).
My account is based on a two-month fieldwork period in the summer of 2002. The methodology used in the field research consisted of observation of and participation in daily social intercourse, primarily within the community. Knowledge of the past was acquired through life histories, particularly the testimonies of the elderly, my “key informants.”

In rural communities in Amazonia, other kinds of historical work would require more extensive investigation of archival documentation in church and local public registries, access to which, for various reasons, may be difficult. Thus, the biographical narratives recorded were supplemented with the ethnographic accounts of Wagley, Galvão, Miller, Oliveira and Pace. These writings were used as primary sources. Their careful depiction of the “present” conditions of Gurupá and its peoples—the time they shared with their anthropological subjects in the field—and, particularly, their concern with the nature of the ties between the local social groups they studied and the wider political and economic context in which they were located, justified my use of their ethnographies as historical documents (see Marcus and Fischer 1999:96).

A two-month stay in the community was hardly the necessary time to build rapport with the people and start listening to their accounts. Because of these limitations, this study is necessarily provisional; ultimately, it attempts to contribute to the understanding of the persistence, or “endurance” (Nugent 1993), of the historical peasantries of Amazonia through a discussion based on work on one terra-firme (dry upland forest) community of roceiros, focusing specifically on the ways in which they obtained their subsistence. As Nugent (1993) wrote, the historical peasantries of Amazonia do not

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1 “Key informants are people who know a lot about the rules of a culture, are highly articulate, and are, for whatever reasons of their own, ready or willing to walk you through their culture and show you the ropes” (Bernard 2002:187).
represent transformed Indigenous social formations. Their ways of life are a precisely the products of the history of European colonialism and the consequent decimation of the indigenous societies that dotted the banks of the Amazon River and its major tributaries (see also Santos 1984, cited in Harris 2000). In this sense, as Nugent rightly points out, they are creations of colonial and post-colonial expansion, “somewhat similar to Mintz’s reconstituted Caribbean peasantry, artifacts of the European expansion into the New World” (Harris 1998:1).2

**Theoretical Affiliation**

Like Pace’s and Oliveira’s studies, this thesis shares the problematic concerns of studies from the version of Marxist anthropology that Ortner (1984) calls “political economy”–the social transformations in peasant communities effected by the penetration of larger systems into their lives. According to Ortner, the emphasis on external forces, and on the ways societies change, approximate the political economy school to the cultural ecology of the sixties. In the first, the state and the capitalist world system play the deterministic role the environment plays in the latter. But at the level of theory, she adds, “political economists differ from their cultural ecology forebears in showing greater willingness to incorporate cultural or symbolic issues in their inquiries” (1984:141-142). I hope to offer a more updated representation in the anthropological political economy tradition. But I take her critique. Despite its ethnographic orientation, this study could hardly be strong on political-economy analysis and, at the same time, strong on cultural analysis, that ideal “meshing of political economy and interpretive concerns in

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2 See the last section in this chapter. It presents a brief note on social and economic history of Amazonia and the emergence of the historical peasantries of the region.
anthropology” that Marcus and Fisher talk about in their *Anthropology as a Cultural Critique* (1999:77-110). The effort would require long-term fieldwork, at least.

Ortner has other important critiques to political economists—they are too strictly materialistic and not political enough and, most important, their acknowledgment of the significance of history to anthropology is offset by a capitalist centered worldview. Briefly, they don’t pay attention to the processes on the ground, or, “to real people doing real things,” to local structure and history, and to the peoples’ historical agency (1984:142). I also hope to have incorporated these critiques in the thesis. The centrality oral histories have in it is not dictated by the need to validate, or even substitute, my own (rough) reconstruction in those moments in which it is muted by lack of data. Rather, the voices of the people in the community appear throughout the study in an effort to understand their points of view.

This said, in this study, I outline the characteristics of the “present” of a community of roceiros on the Amazon estuary. Then, trying to make sense of their material conditions and social realities, I analyze their history as a history of change seen through changes in social relations of production and power relations, in various stages and forms of articulation between households in the community and the capitalist market system. I look more closely at the internal transformations engendered by such historically changing relations–transformations in communal organization of work for production, productive systems, and household/family relations.

By social relations of production I mean the relations that people must enter into to (re) produce the conditions of their material existence. More precisely, I use the term “relations of production” as defined by Sider (1991)–in the double meaning of “(1) the
social processes through which work is organized to produce goods, and simultaneously,
(2) the processes through which surpluses are formed, transferred out of the control of the
producers, and transformed, by those who have the power, into a wide range of
economic, political, and cultural values” (1991:228).

Ross’s article, “The Evolution of the Amazon Peasantry” (1978), serves as an
implicit counterpoint to the discussions presented in this thesis, particularly in Chapter 3,
where I stress the people’s historical agency in building an entire social system with very
little to start with. Ross’ article tells about the “origin and contemporary [sic] status of
peasants who inhabit the Amazon River Valley in Brazil” (1978:193). As I understand it,
it can be placed at the intersection of cultural ecology studies inspired by Julian
Steward’s tradition (the emphasis is on the low density distribution of commercially
desirable Amazonian products and its effects on cultural development; see Orlove
1980:237) and political economy studies in the historically sensitive version of
dependency theory (the emphasis is on the world capitalist system and its effects on
Amazonian social forms). Ross calls for a redirection of attention from dysfunctional
characteristics of the poor, which underlay explanations of poverty and
underdevelopment in the 1960s, to economic and ecological factors, “which reveal much
of the cultural repertoire of peasants and urban and rural poor to be a positive adaptive
response to limits imposed on them by the political economy of capitalism” (1978:193).
He is right in placing the Amazonian peasantry within macrolevel historical, political,
and economic processes, but, as Ortner critiqued, he puts too much emphasis on the
expanding capitalist market system, and too little on the activity of local social groups
within it. Different from Ross, I emphasize the people’s historical agency.
Not discounting the influence of structures and systems within which people acted, I believe it would be inaccurate to characterize the sociopolitical profiles of the peasant social system I studied—in different periods covered by the people’s narratives concerning their past—as mere adaptation to the imperatives of the natural environment, or accommodation to the conditions of the external market (see also Harris 2000:16). What these narratives uncovered, especially in the period immediately after the collapse of the rubber boom, beginning in 1912, was not a loose social organization of undernourished and impotent peasants pulled from and thrust back to their isolated houses—hardly communities at all! (Ross 1978:216)—providing cheap labor to the regional extractive economy, according to the ebbs and flows of the international market. Rather, what they revealed was a social system marked by clear hierarchies of economic advantage dividing householders, who entered into reciprocal relations, if among unequals, to provide for themselves and reproduce a mode of life.

As I analyze this social system, I engage in dialogue with recent ethnography of the historical peasantries in Amazonia (Lima 1992, 1997; Chibnik 1994; Harris 2000), and explore the tension between a Chayanov-inspired interpretation of intra-communal differentiation, and a view of socioeconomic differences among peasants, informed by Leninist theory. A. V. Chayanov (1966) and V. I. Lenin (1974) were protagonists of a major ideological confrontation in late nineteenth century Russia, regarding the role of peasantries in the transition to capital. Lenin treated rural differentiation in terms of class antagonisms, and viewed as inevitable the polarization of the peasantry between a peasant bourgeoisie and a proletariat, predicting the disappearance of the peasantry under capitalism. Chayanov, on the other hand, interpreted rural differentiation in terms of
demographic cycles—peasant households would differentiate according to their labor composition, that is, the ratios between producers and consumers within the household along its developmental cycle (Chayanov 1966:xxi). Lima, Chibnik and Harris are clearly on the Chayanovian pole of this debate. My material, though it also clings to this pole, suggests a slightly different interpretation. I identified a crystallization of socioeconomic differences in the community, one that transcended the limits imposed by the developmental cycle of the households, but that didn’t necessarily imply a split between the well to do and worse off peasants along class lines. On the contrary, it would not be wrong to assume that these differences in economic position provided a solid basis for the reproduction of the social system qua peasant system (see also Almeida 1988).

**Entry to the Communities**

**My Access to the Communities**

I had no prior relations with the people in Jocojó, the community where I did most of my fieldwork. It was located in the upland forests in rural Gurupá. My access (physical) to them was facilitated by the Federation of Organization for Social and Educational Assistance (FASE, hereafter), an NGO specializing in human rights and environmental protection that works closely with peasant groups and grassroots political movements in Brazil. The NGO had initiated activities in Gurupá in the mid-1990s. It had been working in partnership with the local chapter of the Rural Workers’ Union (Sindicato de Trabalhadores Rurais/STR) ever since. At the time of fieldwork, the primary focus of the FASE program in Gurupá’s interior was land titling. The second most important objective of the NGO’s interventions in local communities was to promote sustainable development, which, as defined in the organization’s brochures, was “something that achieves, at the same time, the goals of environmental conservation,
social justice and economic efficiency” (Gurupá 2002). Thus, the NGO developed projects that tried to reconcile the improvement of rural social groups’ living conditions with biodiversity conservation. To attain these combined goals, FASE had built solid partnerships with INCRA, the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform, IBAMA, the Brazilian Institute for Renewable Natural Resources and the Environment, and ITERPA, the Land Institute of the State of Pará, where Gurupá is located.

Jocojó is one of the 11 rural black communities in Gurupá that have recently succeeded in achieving legalization of a 92,011-hectare area. They were the first to obtain official recognition of their traditional land rights on the Amazon estuary since the legal opportunity was presented to descendants of escaped slaves in the new 1988 Federal Constitution. The families in each of these communities collectively own their territorial subdivisions within the ethnic territory through membership in one global association, which was legally established to receive the communal land title.

In the late 1980s, unprecedented understory forest fires in Amazonia elicited growing international concern about tropical deforestation in Brazil. Thus, international and transnational funding networks of environmental organizations started channeling financial and technical aid through Brazilian NGO for activities revolving around sustainable management of aquatic and forest resources by forest-dwelling social groups. That’s how FASE obtained support from ICCO, a major private development organization of the Protestant churches in the Netherlands, and later the European Union. In the community of Jocojó, FASE carried out an inventory of timber resources involving villagers in order to submit a community-based forest management plan for approval by IBAMA.
Soon after my first contact with the director of the FASE program of activities in Gurupá, known as the “Gurupá Project,” back in March 2002, he sent me copies of two detailed reports containing the necessary updated information on the overall project and its diverse components. The first was a mid-term evaluation report, written by two independent consultants in the environmental movement in Brazil. The second was an implementation progress report, written by the technical team at the NGO. Both documents were dated November 2001. With the help of these readings, which gave me a more recent view of the situation of the peasant groups in rural Gurupá, I wrote my research proposal.

My initial interest was in responding to the question of whether and how the social forms of production of varzeiros and roceiros on the Amazon estuary had been affected by the (re)incorporation of Amazonia into capitalist structures at international and national levels, beginning in the mid-1960s, right after the military took power in Brazil and launched programs for Amazon modernization. The particular estuarial zone where Gurupá is located had never been the target of any big infrastructure building or large-scale development project. Yet, it was deeply affected by government policies of incentives and subsidies to attract capitalist firms to Amazonia from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. With the “blessing” of the Brazilian government, international lumbering firms and, later in the mid-1970s, commercial fishing enterprises caused extensive destruction of terrestrial and aquatic environments on which peasant groups in this Amazon region seasonally depend. I intended to investigate the internal socioeconomic changes engendered by the responses these groups had developed to social, economic, and environmental transformations in their world. I was specifically interested in looking
at processes of intracommunal economic differentiation as expressed in changes in forms of appropriation of land and natural resources.

**The Research Setting, Jocojó**

Jocojó is one of the small tributaries on the south bank of the Amazon, near the town of Gurupá. It takes two and a half hours navigating a small motorboat upstream against the flow of the Amazon to reach it. I ached for the sight of its black waters during every trip in the equatorial sun. Entering the Jocojó River was refreshing. Because it was narrow (rivercourse width <10m), the canopies of the trees on the riverbanks almost tunneled long stretches of river during the remainder of the trip. The next hour before we got to the neighborhood was never empty of surprises. The coca-cola waters mirrored the vegetation cover, sometimes giving us the impression that we could dive into the sky, and every river bend had a story, a funny anecdote about some fellow villager, which the passengers were always happy to tell. Much of what I learned about the *primeirantes* (the founders of the village) was told in the boats. Without my tape recorder, and sharing the same seat, it was easier to engage in free conversations with the people.

Just past the mouth of the Jocojó, there was a small cluster of three houses facing the river. Built about a meter off the ground, they were joined by a wooden bridge that came from the backyard of the main house and branched into two smaller paths upstream of the parental hearth. These were the homes of Miguel Marzagão and Maria Vitória, and their married son and daughter, respectively. They were the only families living in the várzea of the river. During the rainy season, the muddy mix of black and Amazon white waters regained their terrain up to the forest line, where the levee faded into higher elevations. The boat always stopped at the Marzagãos’ for a chat, or to deliver a message
to their close kin in the village. Occasionally, a passenger would buy fish or salted shrimp from these families.

The *vila* (small village, or neighborhood) received its name from the river. I never heard people mentioning the official name of the neighborhood, Our Lady of Nazaré. The Jocojó was the central axis of the community’s territory, its main spatial reference. People lived up or downstream, and all relevant natural features were located within a distance of minutes or a few hours walking from the riverbanks. The spatial arrangement of Jocojó was typical of the majority of Amazon villages. Little had changed since Charles and Cecilia Wagley visited the community in 1948. As he wrote:

> The *vila* of Jocojó contains nineteen houses built along on fairly straight street. It is a small village with a white chapel and a *ramada*, a large open structure used for dancing festivals. An overly large hut without walls is used as a school, and in 1948 it functioned with about the same regularity and efficiency as the one in Itá. Jocojó parents were exceedingly anxious that their children take advantage of the school, for it was the only rural neighborhood which boasted one. (Wagley 1964:30-31)

At the time of fieldwork, the school building was located at one end of the straight street. A water tower and a shed to protect the water pump shared the scene we viewed from the boat when it neared the shore.

**The Fieldwork Experience: How I Met My Hosts**

I arrived in Jocojó on a Saturday morning. The director of the FASE program in Gurupá had told me that his local staff had already made the arrangements with the community concerning my stay there. Bruno, an agronomist of FASE’s work team, had driven me there in the NGO’s powerful motorboat. The men in the community were rebuilding the *ramada* when I first met them. In two weeks, the glorious celebration of St. John the Baptist would take place in Jocojó, I learned. “People from almost all the communities in the nearby islands and *igarapés* (small streams) will come to the
festival,” they said. “A team from Jari\(^3\) accepted our invitation to come for a soccer match with our team,” Dito, the coordinator of the community, explained. They were excited, I could feel, and definitely had no plans for a break. The presentation of my research project would have to wait. Bruno left the village. The children invited me for a swim in the Jocojo River. I was feeling uncomfortable, so I took the opportunity to relax.

My conversation with the villagers happened only on the following day. After the Sunday morning mass, when the whole community congregates, they gathered in the ramada and I presented my research project. I thought that the people at FASE had already given them an overview of the project, but, much to my dismay, not only hadn’t they touched on the research objectives and methodology, such as the mapping sessions, but also they had already carried out themselves much of what I had planned to do during the fieldwork. “We worked hard with the people of FASE to make the map of our land for the recognition of our land rights. It was a requirement of ITERPA,” they said. “I walked with Soninha all across this land to show her our boundaries with the neighboring communities,” Lucas said. He seemed to speak in the name of the group. Assisted by the communities, Soninha, a surveyor, and Bruno had mapped the whole territory claimed by the slave descendants in Gurupá.

As the conversation evolved, I learned that the people in the community resented the way FASE had conducted its activities in Jocojó. This feeling was confirmed when Lucas said, “if you worked for FASE, we would not allow you to stay here.” I froze. Yet,

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\(^3\) The Jari region is located at the junction of the eastern end of the Lower Amazon River and the western edge of the Amazon estuary (Little 2001) pp.32. The peasants of the islands and of the upland forests on the estuary have always moved back and forth between Gurupá and other riverside towns and the extensive Brazil nut stands in the Jari region. In the late 1960s a wood pulp factory associated with a massive tree plantation and a kaolin mining operation were established in this region (Little 2001:77-79) starting the process of industrialization that until the mid-1980s, and after that in a less significant manner, continued to absorb, on a permanent or seasonal basis, the riverine peoples from the estuary.
from a few expressions I saw when he said that, I suspected that the resentment was not totally shared, or it was not felt as intensely as he was voicing. Dito, the coordinator, said, “we are grateful for the support that FASE gave to the quilombola\textsuperscript{4} communities. It would have taken years to get our land title without FASE’s support for the mapping, and the alliances with lawyers and other contacts they have in Belém. But, as you will see, our living conditions haven’t changed a bit. You are welcome to stay, if you want,” he told me, “especially because you plan to stay a long time. People visit us, but they don’t stay long enough to see how hard our everyday struggle is to feed our families here.”

The relationship between the NGO sector of civil society and rural communities has always interested me. I had managed a small grants program that funded “productive conservation”\textsuperscript{5} projects implemented by local resource user groups in Amazonia and the Atlantic Forest. In the supervision of the program, I visited a number of initiatives that were doomed to failure, possibly because of the way the division of labor had been defined from the start. Such a division, never explicitly formulated, was more or less like this: the technical staff from NGOs would take responsibility for the planning of projects, the communities (always taking for granted the existence of a “community of purpose”) would implement them, and a little dialogue (in the context of fora, workshops, seminars, in which differentials in power between development experts and peasants or indigenous peoples are often unattended to) would suffice to seal their “ecological partnerships.”

\textsuperscript{4} In Brazil, fugitive slave settlements were given the name quilombo. The descendants of slaves in the country call themselves quilombolas, based on a long shared history of resistance and a common heritage dating back to the eighteenth century.

\textsuperscript{5} The term “productive conservation” is defined by Anthony Hall as “[a process] based on the economic use of Amazonia’s forest resources and waterways by local populations alongside the preservation of natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations” (Hall 1997:xxiv-xxv).
The words I had heard in our first conversation kept repeating in my mind. In the recent past, FASE had sent several researchers to Jocojó. The heads of all families, men and women, had responded to surveys; *veteranos* (married men with children) and *jovens* (mostly unmarried men and women) helped make maps, participated in forest inventories, and were trained in GPS use. Yet, “we have never received copies of the reports they wrote, or the project proposals they prepared to get funding, or even of the “map of trees” (map for extraction made after the forest inventories).” Most important, the living conditions of the community hadn’t improved at all.

Misunderstanding and suspicion is not infrequent in the relations between local communities and outside institutions, as Almeida (1996:152) wrote. People resent the wealth of NGOs and government, and this may lead to speculation about possible hidden interests, such as vested interests in land by foreigners. Thus, I knew it would not be easy to understand the apparently chronic misunderstandings in the interactions between the community and FASE, but I was prepared to try, even knowing it would take precious time until I felt I was really beginning to gain access to the people in the community. At least they had agreed that I stayed. It was clear, however, that the methodology had to be reduced in scope. There was no reason to try getting their agreement to carry out another household socioeconomic survey, for example. Mapping sessions also seemed pointless to me at that time. Actually, Lucas had already said that they would not participate in any of the activities they had been involved either during the process of regularization of their communal lands, or after the land title was awarded to the quilombola communities.

In a sense, the problems I encountered in the field are discussed in Albert’s (1997) short note, ““Ethnographic Situation’ and Ethnic Movements.” He talks about the
disappearance of the two founding illusions on which classical anthropology was based,
the boundedness of its object and the scientific transparency of its methodology:
participant observation. He discusses the intellectual implications and perspectives
created for the discipline by the transformation of former docile “anthropological
peoples” into political subjects vis-à-vis the nation-states. As indigenous peoples and
their organizations question the purpose and consequences of anthropological research,
anthropologists face two ethical and political obligations that were eluded by classical
ethnography, Albert says. First, they have to be accountable in their work to people who
previously were only the objects of their studies. Second, they have to assume the
responsibility their knowledge entails for these peoples’ strategies to resist nation-states’
policies that don’t take account of local rights. Rather than constrain anthropology,
however, the new condition created increasing demand for anthropological involvement,
he argues. Permission to conduct research is often obtained through negotiations with
representatives of host communities. Their demands range from studies for legal causes,
such as land and human rights, to production of didactic material for training purposes,
such as brochures for health workers in indigenous communities, for example.

But the people in Jocojo presented no demands to me. They hadn’t invited me in
the first place. Yet, they decided to not expel me from the vila in our first meeting. Thus,
I decided that at least part of my work would have to be useful to them. Merely mediating
their relationship with FASE was not my intention at all. As the fieldwork developed,
however, I came to realize that the main cause of their problems with the NGO—the only
possibility of institutional support to the riverine peasants in rural Gurupa, according to
the mid-term evaluation report as well as to my own observation—was the
miscomprehension on the part of FASE technical staff of the community’s social organization and cultural practices. Thus, I dedicated my time to the task of responding to those basic questions anthropologists have always been concerned with: how did this sociocultural system work? and how did it come to be as it was at the time of fieldwork? Put in other words, how did those people manage their lives? how did they make a living? what held them together? what held them in the world? what were their most important ties with the outside? From what I experienced in my interactions with the people in the community and with the FASE work team, my original assessment proved correct—there was really no incompatibility between research and solidarity with the community’s needs and interests. What I could do to contribute to improve the relations between the community of Jocojó and the NGO was precisely to provide the latter with an understanding of the social reality, worldviews, and values that together help to guide these peasant peoples’ social interactions.

The Organization of the Chapters

Chapter 2 is divided in two sections. After briefly introducing the process of Amazon incorporation into the world market, and the specific consequences of this incorporation to Gurupá and the peasant groups in its rural areas, I present the municipality—town and countryside, physical and socioeconomic environment. A long interview with the chief executive of the municipal administration in 2002 serves as my point of departure.

Conventional wisdom says we must always begin with the present situation before we can turn to the past in order to make sense of it. Hence, section two presents an ethnographic account of the community of Jocojó. The focus is the community’s economy—their productive activities, i.e., the ways in which they drew their sustenance
and survival from their environments, and the nature and state of their articulation with
the larger capitalist system in which the community was embedded. Without engaging in
the conceptualization debate, I conclude section two with a brief discussion about the
“peasant” character of the community. This chapter emphasizes the marginal position of
Gurupá in the Amazon economy, and the situation-specific outcomes unleashed by the
process of capitalist expansion into Amazonia, particularly the levels of household
production and consumption in Jocojó, and the general lack of economic options
available to subordinate peoples in rural Gurupá.

In Chapter 3, I provide insight into the past. The story is told at the level of the
history of the community. The background against which this story is told is provided by
Nugent’s historical account of the emergence of the historical peasantries in Amazonia as
independent petty commodity producers, and the ways in which these peasantries were
maintained politically invisible, and their perspectives cast to the side before, during and
after the state-sponsored efforts to modernize Amazonia and integrate the region in the
world market. The personal memories of the elderly and other men and women who lived
through the events in the last quarter of the twentieth century are the foundation for the
analysis of the ways in which the people in Jocojó produced and (re)produced their
livelihoods in relation to outside transformations.

I look at the nature of the transition between two patterns of the community’s
economy. The first is characteristic of the period between the collapse of the rubber
industry, beginning in 1912, and the entrance of capitalist firms on the Amazon estuary to
exploit the old-growth forests on its várzeas. Unquestionably an uneven process, the latter
period began in the mid-1960s and was subsequently stimulated by massive fiscal
incentives and tax holidays given by the Brazilian government, from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s. This economic pattern characterizes the period of the operations of lumbering firms in Gurupá, when the hitherto diversified livelihood strategies of households in Jocojó for managing economic stress and exploitation were nearly totally funneled into various approximations of wage labor, as men in the community were engaged by firms to cut down the forests on their own natural surroundings.

In this discussion about social change in Jocojó, I seek to understand the transformations of sociality, morality, and domesticity engendered by changes in the productive base. In the course of the discussion, I place my ethnographic and ethnohistorical material in the context of recent ethnographies of the riverine peasantries in Amazonia (Lima 1992, 1997; Nugent 1993; Chibnik 1994; Harris 2000). A comparison of my findings about the impacts of capitalist expansion on the organization of productive relations in the community is thus provided. I look specifically at the process of internal (socioeconomic) differentiation in Jocojó. I contend that the particular form of penetration of capitalist firms on the estuary—the nature of their activity (timber extraction), and the ways in which they engaged labor in the community—rather than launch the polarization of these peasants into a class of petty capitalists and another of near-landless laborers, as social scientists informed by Leninist theory would predict, leveled existing economic differences between households and put a check on their ability to socially reproduce.

Hoping to have explained the material circumstances of the families in Jocojó at the time of fieldwork, I conclude this chapter with an exploration of the reason(s) the riverine peasantries in Amazonia remained politically invisible. Following Nugent (1993; Nugent
1997), but distancing from him at the same time, I suggest that these peasant peoples were not simply neglected by those in power in the Brazilian government. Rather, the appearance of neglect seems to mask the fact that they were effectively taken care of, inasmuch as their social forms of interaction with nature and between themselves were viewed by policy-makers as impediments or superfluous to the expansion of capitalism in the region.

Few and rather tenuous relations linked the people in Jocojó to the “outer world” when I met them in the summer of 2002. By all measures, households in the community were excluded from participation in the market both as producers and as consumers. Chapter 4 looks into the interactions of the community with the two relevant “linking” institutions: the Catholic church and FASE, the NGO. I try to assess whether and how these engagements had helped reduce the disenfranchisement of the people in the community, and improve their living conditions. I focus on those situations and circumstances that are not always clear to those who are called upon to act professionally or on a humanitarian basis in the solution of social problems and environmental dilemmas.

Then, I analyze the variations in the people’s discourse practices as related to their involvement in the sociopolitical and economic events of local and regional history. I discuss the process of black identity (re)construction among slave descendant communities in Gurupá after the legalization of their ethnic territory. The ways in which they negotiated their class, ethnic and environmental consciousness in their mobilizations for support for local (sustainable) development are discussed. I argue that it is the full
appreciation on their part of the importance of state policies to reduce their poverty and vulnerability that points to a possible future of self-determination.

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the community’s social relations and material conditions in the different historical periods examined in this thesis. I highlight the gradual loss by the roceiros in Jocojô of a place in the regional economy—from their important role as extractors in the period immediately after the rubber boom to their virtual exclusion from the economy as producers and as consumers at the time of fieldwork. But, as Trouillot (1988) wrote in his Peasants and Capital: Domenica in the World Economy, “the wonder about ‘peasants’ is their continuing existence” (1988:1). I conclude this thesis suggesting that it is their capacity to reinvent themselves as the social, economic, and political worlds they inhabit change that accounts for their persistence.

A Brief Note on the History of the Emergence of Amazonia’s Peasantries

The history of the European conquest and occupation of the Brazilian Amazon is one of genocide, slavery and ethnocide. By the end of the sixteenth century, fueled by the ideology of exploration and discovery, the Dutch, French, and English had already established their strongholds in eastern Amazonia, and sealed political relations with Amerindians with whom they traded. In the seventeenth century, after the Portuguese secured their supremacy over these European potencies in the lower Amazon, the

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6 This historical sketch of the development of the mixed-blood peasantry in the colonial period relies on many sources, but primarily on Parker (1985) and Harris (2000). It ends with the decline of the rubber industry in Amazonia around 1912.

7 The town of Gurupá owes its existence to its privileged geographical position—in the lowland landscape of the Amazon estuary, it rests on a high elevation at the mouth of the Amazon River—a position that allowed it to become a fortress from which the Portuguese could halt Dutch and English intrusions into the colossal Amazon.
Portuguese Crown gave the Catholic church the responsibility to bring together Indians from their villages into mission settlements, and make them Christian slaves or laborers. With the purpose of provisioning colonists with indigenous labor and knowledge of rivers, forests, and their products, mission villages were constructed along the riverbanks, from the estuary to the lower middle Amazon. But this did not occur without tension between the church and the colonists. The greedy missionaries—mostly Jesuits who had entered the Amazon in order to protect the indigenous labor force from outright colonist violence—administered this labor force according to their own interests. Deprived of labor, the colonists and the military succeeded in obtaining support from the Portuguese Crown to free this indigenous labor force from the control of the missionaries. By the mid-eighteenth century, the government of the mission villages was taken from the Jesuits, who were expelled from Brazil in 1759. If their work was intended to physically protect native Amazonians from the decimation caused by the excesses of settlers and colonial authorities, it nonetheless resulted in ethnocide (Kelly 1984; Parker 1985a; Oliveira 1994).

In 1757 the Crown created the Directorate of Pombal, which was the first coherent state policy for the settlement and exploitation of the Amazon in Brazil (Schmink and Wood 1992:40). It was originally conceived to weave the Indians into the social and economic fabric of the colony, and thereby integrate their labor force. The sociocultural transition to local civil society would be accomplished through marriage with whites—which were encouraged to live in Indian settlements—use of Portuguese language and habits, and wages, or payments in cloth and other imported goods. Thus, lay village directors were appointed to administer Indian labor (Parker 1985a:23-35).
Political stability and intensified regional economy were also important goals of the new policy. Large-scale plantation agriculture would substitute for the extractive system of the traditional Amazonian economy. Expeditions to bring Indians into the now mixed-raced towns continued under the supervision of village directors. Those who were captured and survived European diseases and ill treatment resisted working as slaves in plantations. As a result, African slaves were brought into Amazonia for production of plantation crops, but only the elite with large land holdings and capital could afford slaves, and even the elite in the region could only afford small groups of slaves (Funes 1996). Thus, extractive activities continued dominating the economy of the area. At the end of the eighteenth century, when the Directorate was abolished, there had been little success either in creating an integrated labor force, or in building an export economy based on sugar cane, cocoa, rice, tobacco, or cotton (Harris 2000:37). Those Indians and blacks that did abandon the settlements of the whites, moved out along rivers and streams with the hope of fishing, hunting, cultivating, and gathering only for themselves. These survivors of the colonial havoc, and the mixed-blood population that continued scattered along the banks of the Amazon and its major tributaries formed the ‘free’ riverine Amazonian peasantry, known in the anthropology of the region as “caboclos” (Parker 1985a; Oliveira 1994; Harris 2000).

The historical period between the abolition of the Directorate and the beginning of the 1840s is known in the historiography of Amazonia as “the phase of decadence.” According to Santos (1980), economic activity declined due to a combination of factors, including a weakened Portuguese Empire, a decreased international demand for Amazonian commodities, and a series of factors internal to the region. One crucial
political factor was the civil war in Amazonia, known as the Cabanagem Revolt. Historians interpret this uprising as either a result of tensions between factions of the elite in the region (e.g. Santos 1980), or a rebellion of the oppressed rural population (cf. Harris 2000:39). The revolt began in the early 1830s with an alliance between pro-independence elites—Brazil had proclaimed independence in 1822—black slaves, mixed-bloods, Indians and urban workers. It was crushed in 1836, and had major consequences in the formation of the peasantry in Amazonia. First, it devastated the region’s labor force, thus, increasing labor scarcity. Second, it left a vacuum of economic and political power in the region (Schmink and Wood 1992:42); the plantation and ranch owners lost control of their work force. Third, it effectively freed the rural population that survived to organize themselves economically and socially without external control. This encouraged further dispersal of the newly emerged peasantry to riverine lands, particularly floodable forests, surrounding towns (Harris 2000:39).

Thus, the Directorate’s failure to promote agriculture and integrate an Amerindian labor force in Amazonia and the economic decline of the years that followed its end account for the emergence and flourishing of the riverine peasantry. Besides, the collapse of the Directorate explains the appearance and consolidation of two important institutions in the Amazonian socioeconomic landscape: the trading posts and the

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8 Following Santos (1980) and Ross (1978), Pace (1998) argues that the economic depression impacted the production of cacao, the leading export crop of the time; hence, the peasants, now freed from the Directorate and, most important, in the process of consolidation as independent petty commodity producers, “found themselves barely subsisting” (1998:68), relying on agriculture and extraction of less valued products, and depending on credit advanced by traders. Their involvement in the Cabanagem Revolt, he maintains, was a consequence of the frustration with their material circumstances. According to Nugent (1993) and Harris (2000), this interpretation, and representation of the historical peasantry of Amazonia fails to notice the impressive sense of opportunity and flexibility of the peasantry in the region to (re)organize themselves according to the vagaries of external markets.
institution of *aviamento* trade relations. During the Directorate, settlers who were unable to buy slaves and/or secure Amerindian labor became “comissários volantes”–traders who operated outside the legal channels (Parker 1985a:31; 1989:255). Both trading post owners and *aviadores* acted as “ties” between dispersed extractors of tropical forest products and export houses that eventually delivered these products to external markets. In the period of economic decline following the breakdown of the Directorate, many settlers established in riverside villages, and continued to provide this link between local, regional and export markets. As Parker (1989) wrote, “the village *qua* trading post served as a key reference point for emergent caboclo society in terms of trade, communication and information exchange, and social intercourse.” While traders succeeded in controlling the exchange value of the commodities, and maintaining the mixed-blood, or riverine peasants in debt through the aviamento *system*, these peasants, on the other hand, bore the unfortunate distinction of being “kept at arms length from the social sources of power” (Shanin 1971:15).

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9 The aviamento system was the political-economic idiom through which patron-client relations were articulated in Amazonia. The trader-patron would keep the clients in debt by advancing credit and imported goods, mostly foodstuff, but also tools and other industrialized items, in exchange for guaranteed delivery of particular products, principally rubber (Lima 1992; Nugent 1993).
CHAPTER 2
MAKING A LIVELIHOOD: CONTEXT AND PRACTICES

In the mid-1960s, when the military came to power in Brazil, it embarked on an ambitious project to massively incorporate Amazonia into the national and international economies. The region was seen as a vast empty space where the country should consolidate its presence and implement major infrastructural work to allow for the exploitation of its wealth of natural resources, namely land and mineral resources. Under the National Integration Program, building a network of roads connecting Amazonia with the coastal areas of Brazil was initiated in the early 1970s, the most important being the Transamazon Highway, with construction directly related to public policies designed to alleviate the effects of the drought that periodically afflicts the Northeast. By the end of the decade, peasants who had become marginal to the sugarcane plantations of the Northeast of Brazil migrated to Amazonia to settle alongside the highways under the colonization program of PIN (Velho, 1974), but these colonization efforts were short-lived. Rather than concentrate on populating the region and fostering local development, by the late 1970s, the plans of authorities in control of the Brazilian economy changed—attracting private investment to promote accumulation in the country’s industrial sector became the new leitmotiv. Thus, the military’s development policies for Amazonia provided subsidized credit and fiscal incentives for large-scale agricultural projects, timber and mining companies, and facilitated accumulation of public lands by important business groups from the Center-South of the country (Cardoso and Müller 1977; Almeida 1990:228; Schmink and Wood 1992).
Just as the former federal and state government programs had been geared to the material interests and ideological horizons of commercial elites and urban sectors,¹ public policies during the military rule were predominantly antipopular in nature. The indigenous peoples and non-Indian peasantries who have lived for centuries in Amazonia were largely excluded from government policies, only considered, or benefiting, in the short-term through the expansion of programs such as the Rubber Campaign during World War II, or during the aborted colonization program in the 1970s (Santos 1980; Schmink and Wood 1992).

Despite sheltering the major highway through which Amazonian commodities were drained to European and North American shores, the Amazon valley remained largely unaffected by national schemes for modernization of Amazonia, particularly the road-building program. The towns along the Amazon banks, which had begun the twentieth century as important trading centers and stopping places in the busy river network, were hardly ever considered as sites for large-scale economic development projects (Santos 1980; Bunker 1985). Yet, on the Amazon estuary, a number of small towns and riverine peasant communities in their environs were deeply affected by government policies of incentives and subsidies to attract international firms. They became important sources of cheap labor and raw material for international lumbering firms.

Beginning in the mid-1960s, but more intensively in the mid-1970s, three large corporations initiated operations on the Amazon estuary. After depleting its floodable forests of all known commercially valuable species at the time, they advanced to other

¹ The programs were aimed at financing the traditional development schemes of the elites, and consisted mostly of initiatives to promote rubber and Brazil nut collection, and exports of other Amazonian commodities for the international market.
areas upstream the Amazon, where rich stands of hardwoods were still available, leaving a largely impoverished extractive resource base for the locals, and the small-scale sawmills that sprung up in the area with the timber boom (Oliveira 1991). By the mid-1980s, as timber extraction began to wane throughout the lower Amazon, the economies of the towns and riverine communities significantly declined (Pace 1992). Thus, just as it had happened in the periods in which economic activity receded after the “booms” in the world market of diverse fruits of the forests and rivers in the region, such as the boom of raw rubber extraction from the mid-1980s to the early 1900s, riverside towns in the region once again became neglected in terms of the development concerns of the government or the capitalist class.

As Oliveira Filho noted (1979), the interpretations of the traditional historiography of Amazonia used the analytical model of the “cycle,” that is, paid attention to “the boom and bust” of export commodities, and omitted other phenomena occurring in diverse Amazon areas before, during, and after each cycle, particularly the last and most important cycle of raw rubber extraction. Arguably influenced by this historiography, most of Amazonian anthropology between the 1950s and 1990s has represented the Amazonian as stagnant, and the livelihoods and sociality of the social groups historically established in the region, as subject to the imperatives of nature (Wagley 1964; Moran 1974; Ross 1978; Parker 1985a; Parker 1985).

Recent studies on the heterogeneous historical peasantries in Amazonia, however, have offered much more lively narratives, which finally do justice to the historical agency of (small) peoples’. Taking into account the larger system, but paying close attention to the processes on the ground, Nugent (1993) and Harris (2000), argue that, in spite of, or
as a consequence of ‘stagnation’, riverine societies emerged and consolidated, and their economies grew, expanding their “repertoire of forms, shifting from monocultural export extractivism to broad-based production which included a variety of food and non-food crops as well as various forms of petty extractivism” (Nugent 1993:182). With the lessening of international attention, small towns along the Amazon had to reform themselves along more autonomous\(^2\) lines. As Harris (2000) wrote, “the stagnation alleged to have characterized the region in the twentieth century must be juxtaposed to the simultaneous strengthening of local social relations and a resilient peasant economy ” (2000:54).

In this chapter I present an ethnographic account of the economy of Jocojó. It is divided into two sections. The first presents a general account of the socioeconomic characteristics of the municipality of Gurupá, in which the community under study is located. Section two examines the economic practices of the villagers. These two sections are based on my fieldwork in the summer of 2002. This chapter is mostly descriptive. With the brief description of the historical origins and trajectory of the riverine peasantry in Amazonia provided in Chapter 1, it is meant to introduce Chapter 3, in which, based on the memories of the elderly in the community, I discuss the particular historical trajectory of Jocojó, from its beginning to the time of fieldwork. The aim is to explore the nature of the transition between two economic patterns. The first begins with the decline of rubber extraction and ends with the penetration of capitalist firms in the estuarine region under state-led modernization programs (from the 1910s to the mid-1960s); the

\(^2\) Nugent (1993) argues that the limited autonomy of Santarenho social formation that he studied is not a result of a local development initiative, but an adaptation to neglect by the “modernizing apparatus which is by and large unconcerned with Amazonian societies except in so far as their existence has implications for the extraction of raw materials” (Nugent 1993:94).
second pattern begins with the intensification of lumbering firms’ activities on the estuary and ends with their withdrawal to other areas in the lower Amazon where stands of precious woods were still available (from the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s).

The Municipality of Gurupá

The municipality of Gurupá lies wholly within the Amazon Estuary and can be divided into two major ecological zones, the várzea, which occupies approximately 75% of the 8,578 square kilometer territorial unit, and the terra firme. Gurupá includes many islands of the estuarine archipelago that separate the Amazon into a complex network of channels, including the Great Island of Gurupá, whose western end is at the junction of the estuary and the Lower Amazon River (see Fig 2-1). Irregular in shape, Gurupá is bordered by the State of Amapá and the Amazon River on the north, the municipalities of Melgaço and Porto de Moz on the south, the municipalities of Afuá, Breves and Melgaço on the east, and the State of Amapá and the municipalities of Porto de Moz and Almeirin on the west, near the mouth of Xingú River, an important clearwater tributary to the Amazon River. The low-lying area has an average elevation of only 20 m (65.62 ft) above the sea level.

The municipal seat is also named Gurupá. According to the Demographic Census of 2000 (IBGE), the small town was home to 6,593 people; the remaining 16,505 of the 23,098 total municipal population live in the communities that dot the high levees on the várzeas of islands and the shores of the Amazon River. A significantly smaller population lived in communities that string along the banks of the small southern tributaries that empty into the Amazon River. Small diesel-powered motorboats (from 5 to 10 meters

3 Location of the town: Lat.1° 24’15”S and Long. 51° 38’18”W.
Figure 2-1. Location of Area of Study
long and equipped with up to 10 horsepower engines) were the main means of transportation for the peoples in Gurupá’s countryside. Only canoes, however, linked many families to the town.

One of the poorest municipalities of the State of Pará, Gurupá’s IHD-M (Municipal Index of Human Development) in 1991 was 0.396, while the average IDH in the state was 0.491, and 0.742 in Brazil. In 1980, when 40% of the municipalities in Amazonia presented an IHD-M between 0.40 and 0.60, Gurupá’s index was 0.456. The decline from 0.456 to 0.396 in the intercensal interval 1980-1991 reflects the depletion of marketable wood species in the várzeas and consequent migration of lumbering firms’ operations to other municipalities where these species were still available. In the summer of 2002, the economy in this forgotten Amazon area was based on other extractive activities, including fishing and shrimping. Açaí fruit (*Euterpe oleracea*), *dourada* catfish and fresh-water shrimp (camarão) were the main products securing a scanty circulation of money in Gurupá, largely in the town. Lumbering activities really fueled the local economy from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s; the climax was in 1983 (Oliveira 1991:108, citing IBGE census data) (see Table 2-1). In informal conversations with

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4 “The Index of Human Development was created in the 1990s by the UNDP–United Nations Program for Development. It combines three basic development components: longevity, education and income. Longevity is measured by life expectancy at birth. Education combines adult literacy rates and school enrollment rates for elementary school, middle and high school, and college. Finally, income is measured by the population’s purchasing power, based on the GDP–Gross Domestic Product per capita adjusted to local costs of living in order to permit comparison across countries by the use of the methodology known as ‘parity of purchasing power’. The methodology used to calculate the HDI involves the transformation of these three dimensions into indexes of longevity, education and income, varying between 0 (worse) and 1 (better) as well as the combination of these three indexes into a synthesis index” (Sawyer and Monteiro 2001:309, my translation).

5 In his article “Social Conflict and Political Activism in the Brazilian Amazon: a case study of Gurupá” (1992), Pace wrote: “The community is poor: it suffers from underemployment, periodic food shortages, high malnutrition rates, a lack of good medical facilities, and a high infant mortality rate.” (1992:711).
several urban residents, lingering memories of this timber boom were frequently expressed.

### Table 2-1: Log Production in Gurupá

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total log production (m³)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>235,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>450,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>670,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>415,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>265,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>205,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>198,650</td>
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The people blamed the federal and state governments for Gurupá’s abandonment. Lack of investments in the area and a corrupt political system—often translated into pork barrel politics by the state legislature—added to poor geographic location, were pointed out by urban and rural residents as the main causes of widespread poverty in this municipality. According to the mayor, Gurupá’s monthly budget ranged from R$ 450,000 to R$ 500,000 (about $175,000). As shown on the 2000 database on Brazilian municipalities (IBGE 2001), federal funds in the amount of R$ 2,116,914.17 (about $740,919.96) per year, or R$ 176,409.51 (about $61,743.33 ) per month, were transferred to Gurupá through the Municipal Participation Fund (Fundo de Participação dos

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6 About 500 kilometers of Amazon River waters separate Gurupá from the most urbanized areas of the State of Pará, including Belém, the capital of the state. The towns in the Amazon River floodplains have no permanent roads other than the waterway to access markets in these urban centers. In addition, because the high costs of transportation influence location of industries and sawmills, firms choose towns or municipalities that are closer to the urban centers and main ports in the state, to the detriment of Gurupá.

7 Raimundo Monteiro dos Santos; Interview on July 15, 2002.

8 Analyzing public spending at the municipal level in Amazonia, Sawyer and Monteiro (2001:316-317) indicated that between 1991 and 1995 the majority of the municipalities in the region had a total monthly revenue between R$ 500,000 and R$1 million.
Municipios–FPM). The remaining amount of Gurupá’s revenue consisted mostly of monthly transfers from the Ministry of Education for payment of schoolteachers and local acquisition of food items for meals provided to students in the first four grades at municipal schools, equivalent to the elementary school in the US.

There were 197 primary schools and one official middle school in Gurupá. In 2000, there were 7,873 students attending primary school and 196 attending the town’s middle school (IBGE 2001). Because primary schools were located in or near isolated local communities in the interior, the government had difficulties in staffing them with qualified teachers, frequently not community members. Distance is a major problem in Gurupá. In the várzeas, individual households or small clusters of households were scattered along the countless streams that feed into the Amazon delta. As a result, although the average number of children and adolescents enrolled in each school in the rural areas was 20, there were localities where schools had less than ten students attending class.

But education was a high priority for the local municipal government, then controlled by the Workers’ Party (PT), which won the municipal elections for the 2001-2004 term. Assisted by a specialist in literacy programs from Belém, the Secretary for Education, who had completed only four years of school, organized a series of capacity building courses for schoolteachers to use the methodology proposed by Paulo Freire, a

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9 Article 159 of the 1988 Brazilian Federal Constitution established the FPM as a means to mitigate regional inequalities and promote socioeconomic equilibrium between states and municipalities. In addition to the FPM, the National Treasury Secretariat redistributes a considerable part of the federal tax revenues to the 26 states and 5,500 municipalities in the country through the Maintenance and Development of Elementary Education Fund (FUNDEF–Fundos de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento do Ensino Fundamental) and the Rural Land Tax (ITR–Imposto Territorial Rural).

10 Antônio Santana Alves Filho; Interview on June 24, 2002.
Brazilian educator,¹¹ to teach reading and writing to students in the municipality. Despite the fact that there were almost no other permanent jobs than the jobs with the municipal government¹²—a situation also noticed by Miller (1976:303) and Pace (1998:27)—both rural and urban residents seemed to perceive education as a means of social mobility, since better education is likely to improve chances in the job market. Like other leaders of the Workers’ Party in Gurupá, however, the Secretary for Education also emphasized the political, and not only the economic significance of education—he viewed it as a consciousness-raising instrument and a way to promote grassroots political organization and mobilization.

On an experimental basis, in 2001 PT’s administration initiated middle schools in focal places in the várzeas. Because students in the last three grades of middle school already contribute to family labor in gardening, harvesting and fishing activities, the schools operated only three days a week. Every Sunday afternoon 70 small riverboats leased by the administration transported adolescents and young adults from their localities to schools, and returned them to their families every Wednesday afternoons. The experiment had been working successfully at the time of fieldwork, and school dropout was expected to decrease in the municipality.

One of the most valued initiatives of the local administration among rural residents whom I interviewed seemed to be the launching of the program “Casa Familiar Rural”

¹¹ Paulo Freire critiqued official education systems as means to reproduce unjust social systems. His proposals to redirect education consisted of incorporating culture—which he conceives as the practices, wants and knowledge of individuals and social groups—and the particular sociopolitical contexts in which such individuals and groups are inserted, to educate them and elicit more critical views of their local realities.

¹² Of the 23,098 inhabitants in the municipality, in July 2002, about one thousand worked for the municipal government.
(CFR) in Gurupá. Also a boarding school, it provided formal education and training in agroforestry to students selected from diverse communities in the várzea and the terra firme. In July 2002, there were 52 female and male adults attending the Casa Familiar Rural. Every two weeks CFR’s boat docked at the town’s *trapiche* (wharf) and took them downstream the Amazon towards a bay of the Great Island of Gurupá, where the school was located. The knowledge gained at school was intended to be applied in their families’ plots during the period they stayed in their villages. There was high expectation among PT leaders and representatives of the rural workers union that at least 50% of the students participating in the program would have the anticipated multiplication effect in their localities, and hence produce change towards new and more sustainable agroforestry practices, which would not only supply the rural families with the staples of their diet, but also provide them with more permanent sources of income.

Another initiative of the municipal government that was strongly supported by urban and rural residents was the renovation of the sole hospital in Gurupá. Not only had the administration made available to the public diagnostic examinations using X-ray and ultrasound, formerly accessible only in far-away Belém, but also it took the equipment on boat trips to communities throughout the river archipelago and igarapés. In the boat, a physician, at least two nurses and occasionally a dentist–there were no dentists at the hospital on a permanent basis–provided medical and dental care to the rural population, including Pap tests for uterine cancer prevention.

Despite this improvement in the municipality’s health care delivery system, much was yet to be done. Although the local administration hired two qualified doctors who were in tune with its objective to focus primarily on prevention rather than on treatment,
there was only one doctor for every ten thousand inhabitants, while the number recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) is ten. Also, although the hospital was considered a reference to the population on the estuary, including those living in nearby municipalities in the same microregion\textsuperscript{13} (see also Pace 1998:29), there were only twenty hospital beds for 23,098 inhabitants in Gurupá, or less than one bed per thousand inhabitants, whereas the WHO recommends four.

The health conditions of the rural population have probably improved, if the mayor succeeded in implementing a program already designed but whose implementation had not yet begun at the date of my departure from Gurupá in August 2002. The program would promote partnerships between the municipal administration and households in the rural areas. The local government would finance construction of wooden cesspools for household sewage. As a counterpart to this financial aid, the households would provide labor and raw material, if appropriate hardwood species were available in the areas they lived. This was intended to reduce the high number of cases of parasitic infestation among the population,\textsuperscript{14} as I noted then, including the need for hospitalization because of intestinal infections and severe anemia.

\textsuperscript{13} Gurupá forms part of the Portel Microregion, which also includes the municipalities of Bagre, Melgaço and Portel. The Portel Microregion, in turn, is included in the Marajó Mesoregion, which is divided into the Microregion of Arari, consisting of the municipalities of Cachoeira do Arari, Chaves, Muana, Ponta de Pedras, Salvaterra, Santa Cruz do Arari and Soure, and the Microregion of Furo de Breves, comprising the municipalities of Afuá, Anajas, Breves, Curralinho, and São Sebastião da Boa Vista.

\textsuperscript{14} According to one of the local physicians, 100\% of the tests in the hospital’s laboratory present positive results for diverse parasites.
The mayor commented about the hospital’s vaccination campaign in the interior. The 2002 campaign reached the 103 communities in Gurupá’s interior, and a total of 6,000 children took vaccines against childhood diseases. The problems noted by Pace (1998:38), such as shortage of vaccines and difficulties in keeping the supply of ice to preserve them, had been successfully countered by a dedicated team of nurses and paramedics involved in the campaigns, he said. However, finding interior residents remained an issue, despite the fact that campaigns were announced well in advance at the town’s hospital and through the local radio station. Because of lack of education, there were parents who would still hide their children for fear that they would present severe reactions to vaccines. In Jocojó, where I did my fieldwork, two families left their houses on the day the vaccination team visited the village.

But the municipal government confronted situations that were more difficult to address. Its resolve to emphasize illness prevention rather than treatment faced the opposition of representatives in the state legislature, who, according to the mayor, were not interested in supporting initiatives whose positive impacts were felt by voters only in the long-term (a time period greater than the regular inter-election period of four years). He said he had recently lost a “battle” in Belém to get state funds to complete the sewer system in the town. Despite his efforts, the politicians had chosen to support a project to build a new and highly visible riverfront park in Gurupá, rather than the underground sewer system. As a result, a significant portion of household waste would continue to find its way to the Amazon River.

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15 The municipal government uses the Catholic Church’s count of communities in Gurupá’s countryside. In the jurisdiction of the Xingú Prelacy there are 68 communities, and the total number of communities assisted by the Santana Prelacy in the neighboring State of Amapá is 35.
Little could be done with the revenue from “own collections” in Gurupá. According to the mayor, the amount received per month from tax money averaged between R$ 42 to R$ 52,000 or approximately 10 per cent of the municipality’s monthly budget.¹⁶ In our interview, the mayor also complained about the “collective mentality” (sic) of Brazilians, who “don’t like to pay taxes,” only to add that his administration had decided to not levy the water tax in urban Gurupá until the water system covered 100 per cent of the town.¹⁷ Against all odds, however, he said, he had finally succeeded in obtaining state funds to complete the infrastructure required to make running water available to the totality of Gurupá’s urban residents by mid-2003.

Retail sales were also rarely taxed, except in transactions with the local municipal government and FASE, the NGO that was active in the municipality. Although the largest supermarkets had two cash registers each, the bulk of their money came from sales to urban and rural residents whose debts were paid on a monthly basis, on the day of the payment of the social benefits to women and men who were, or still are, agricultural workers and who aged 55 and 65 or above, respectively. The day I arrived in Gurupá was payday.

¹⁶ Imposto sobre circulação de mercadorias e serviços (ICMS). This contrasts with the situation noted by Miller (1976:314). In 1974, during the timber boom, he wrote that the tax revenue on all items extracted from the municipality (the ICM, now ICMS because services provided within municipalities are also taxed) accounted for 33 per cent of the municipal revenue. On the other hand, Gurupá’s “own collections” in 2002 fell within the average stated by Sawyer and Monteiro (2001)–according to their study (2001: 317), 70% of the Amazonian municipalities’ collections total between one thousand and one hundred thousand Brazilian Reais, or $350.00 and 35,000.00 American Dollars.

¹⁷ In 2000, only 1,123 (about 30%) out of 3,801 permanent private households in urban Gurupá had running water (IBGE 2001). According to the mayor, in July 2002 running water was available to about 60% of the permanent private households in the town.
The Town

The town of Gurupá is located halfway between Belém, the capital of the State of Pará, and Santarém, the second largest urban center in the state, situated at the mouth of Tapajós River, a major southern tributary to the Amazon River. My trip from Belém to Gurupá in early June lasted about 28 hours. I took the “Rodrigues Alves,” the largest and safest commercial boat that transported people up and down the lower course of the Amazon River and the estuary. It used to leave the capital every Wednesday around 6:00 p.m. and arrived in Gurupá between 8:00 p.m. and sometime before dawn on Friday. Every Sunday around noon, the Rodrigues Alves approached the newly rebuilt trapiche of the town on its way back to Belém.

I knew frontier cities and small towns in Amazonia, but Gurupá was the first town in a long since settled Amazonian area where I had stayed for more than a few hours between boat trips. Before 7 in the morning, I was already strolling on the town’s streets. I took the First Street, as Wagley referred to it. It branched from the street that originated from the municipal wharf and faced the Amazon all the way downriver up to the highest point of the only elevation in the flat estuarial landscape. The most important buildings of the town were located on the first street, including the Catholic Church and the four-century-old fortress built by the Portuguese Crown on the top of the hill. The Post Office was the first building on this sloping-up street. That’s where social benefits were paid to the population, because there were no banks in Gurupá—they had left with the timber bust. In front of the Post Office, a two hundred-meter-long line of aged people holding their little umbrellas, still shut, patiently waited for their payments to arrive in the town. The manager of this alternative bank allowed doors to open only when the money arrived. This happened between 10:00 and 11:00 a.m., when the line was already spaced to give
room to umbrellas, now opened. Many of the elderly left their grandchildren to hold their place in the line and competed for the few benches in the shade under the trees in the adjoining municipal square.

Along the line, on both sides, a younger crowd, mostly of women and children, tried to sell all sorts of cheap stuff to the elders—plastic containers, cheap aluminum pans, soda pop, homemade snacks and other odd items. All were struggling to meet ends meet. Many in this secondary crowd were hired by storeowners hungry for cash, including the owner of the biggest supermarket in Gurupá. A group of four policemen pretended to observe the activity on the street. Later I found out from a woman in Jocojó that one of them was a “real darling” for she had never had to pay him the “customary” R$ 5 fee for him to cut in line and get her payment. One last curious crowd shared the scene—true vultures were keeping company to their armed peers in uniforms.

Except for the payday spasms, life in the town was mostly slow. Structural unemployment and underemployment accounted for the small groups of men and women chattering, who would sit on the doorsteps of their houses or shops. At noon, the temperature would go up to 110 degrees. All stores would close, and so would the public buildings. Those who could avoid frying in the early afternoon sun would visit relatives in the town or seek refuge in their small riverboats anchored in the bay along the municipal trapiche. At 5:00 p.m., when virtually all residents in riverside communities had already done their business in town, the bay would be bare again. For the few lucky residents who had jobs with the local administration, that’s when the workday would end. By this time, the townspeople would regain the first street or hang around the old riverfront park until the sunset. Adolescents would crowd in the doorway of the middle
school. Evening school sessions would begin at 5:30. Around 7:00, families would have already retreated to their homes. At this time, open-TV channels would start broadcasting soap operas. If there was no party in the town, the deserted streets would echo with the melodramas of remote middle classes broadcast from the industrialized Southeast.

From small riverboats on the river, “the sight of the town [was] a welcome break in the monotonous forest lined banks of the Amazon. It [stood] out neat and colorful against the dark green vegetation,” Wagley wrote (1964: 22). I took the boat trip to the community of Jocojó many times. As the boat left the bay in Gurupá and reached the southern Amazon channel immediately in front of the town, we would note a modest growth of the urban fabric, another mark of the timber boom. But after a while, the monotony of the dark green horizon resumed, leaving behind a thinning line of faded wooden houses. If the river level was high, small riverboats navigated near the mudflats beside the forest. The proximity of the aningais (arum patches, *Montrichardia arborescens*) that colonized flooded areas and mudflats would always make me feel a little safer, for these small boats were hardly well maintained, and the 2.5 kilometer-wide body of water was intimidating. Behind the aninga stands, a uniform row of tall *buriti* (*Mauritia flexuosa*) palms dominated the view.

**Jocojó in 2002: The Ways the People in the Community Secured Their Livelihoods**

The community of Jocojó comprised three house clusters and a vila. The first cluster was built on an inlet of Igarapé Jijuí, a small branch of Rio Jocojó that empties

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18 The Great Island of Gurupá divides the river just before the town; the waters of the north channel flow northeast to the Port of Santana and the city of Macapá, the capital of the northern State of Amapá.

19 I use the term “community” here to refer to both the people and their locality. However, the term has a particular genesis in the Amazon scene—the Catholic Church introduced it in the seventies, the darkest decade of the military dictatorship in Brazil. In Chapter 4, the role of the Catholic Church in the political changes in rural Brazil and in Gurupá, in particular, will be further discussed. What I want to retain here is
into the Amazon some twenty minutes before the riverboat reaches the mouth of the Jocojó. The largest house cluster was located at this point. Moving upwards, about one hour past this cluster, we reached the non-floodable upland where the vila was located. To continue towards the sources of the Jocojó, we needed to paddle. Only canoes would take us to the clearing in the forest of terra firme where two widows and their families shared the acres on which their in-laws once grew large manioc (*Manihot esculenta*) gardens with which they made their livelihoods.

Of the 29 families (157 people) residents of the community in June 2002, 22 lived in 18 houses facing the straight dirt street across the vila. Almost all houses were built above the ground on stilts to avoid animals, insects and dirt from entering through the openings on their wooden floors. All had walls made from wood and two or three rooms. Each house had a big room with at least two open sides, and some had all sides open like big verandahs. Roofs were covered with tiles made from asbestos material or ceramic. Four houses had fresh thatched roofs. Almost all kitchens were separated from the main body of the houses, and all of them were roofed with palm thatching. The chapel and the ramada or *barracão* (community center), as these large open structures used for dancing in festivals and for communal meetings were called, were located at the midpoint of the dirt street. By all measures, they were the “heart” of the community.

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that, today, “community” is used by the people throughout the country’s rural areas, including those living in the remotest Amazonian headwaters, to refer to local social groups that have their own political organization, which often includes positions of representation, such as “coordinator,” “deputy coordinator,” and “secretary” or “treasurer.” Most important, the decision-making processes in local communities, at least ideally, are characterized by widespread participation of community members, men and women, elders and young adults. As Lima (1997: 1) noted, nowadays, the rural-based peoples in Amazonia hardly ever distinguish “community” from “locality,” and the terms “neighborhood” or “vila” are less and less heard in conversations with *comunitários* (community members). My use follows theirs, the term is used throughout this thesis in the empirical sense.
Viewed from the inside, all but a few houses were poorly furnished. Family belongings consisted basically of one table, two or three chairs, a few wooden benches, one hammock for every adult or every two children under five, kitchen utensils, and, rarely, a gas stove and a radio, which hardly ever were put to work, because cooking gas and batteries were practically unaffordable. Two houses of families that had lived for years in the Jari region had sofas and beds, but people generally slept in hammocks. One of these houses had a precious satellite TV, which allowed us to watch all soccer matches of the World Cup in June 2002. To this end, every household in the community, and this researcher, contributed with one or two liters of diesel for the power generator.

Usually, the vila was unlit. The power generator and the water pump lacked appropriate maintenance. Once a week, however, a household would buy diesel to start them up. On these days tap water was available, and the women would take the opportunity to wash the floor of their houses. A water tower was built in the vila in 1992; it was a gift from a local politician during an election campaign, but most of the water used to cook and drink was from the river. Problems related to poor sanitation, such as

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20 The practice of exchanging gifts for votes is still common in rural Gurupá, despite the efforts of the Worker’s Party in the state, and in Gurupá in particular, to raise political awareness among riverside communities. The year of 2002 was election year in Brazil. Supported by the municipal government, a Worker’s Party candidate visited the community of Jocojó during his campaign. I was present in the meeting. After a lively discussion revolving around problems that affect family agriculture in Amazonia, the candidate explained to the attentive audience that his platform called for increased credit opportunities and improved and decentralized technical assistance for agricultural workers. Despite the lucid conversation, in which interesting views on the situation of the rural-based peoples in the area were elicited and which was critical of persisting patron-client relations during election campaigns in rural areas, the candidate heard from a man, who represented the quilombola communities in Gurupá at the State Commission of Rural Black Communities, that the people in Jocojó would exchange their vote for a “sign of the candidate’s commitment to the cause of the agricultural workers in the town,” a gift in cash or in kind. This attitude is frequently interpreted (and critiqued) by rural union leaders, the Catholic Church, and NGO staff as political conservatism, backwardness, and demonstrations of remaining ties with old patrons, or still willingness to conserve old and oppressive patron-client relationships. What they seem to miss is that the future, as viewed by the traditional peasantries in Amazonia—and they don’t seem to have reasons to view it otherwise—is only too uncertain (see Chapter 3).
diarrhea, were constant in the community, especially among children, who led an almost entirely aquatic life. All houses had outhouses in their backyards, and most of them were built on the slope near the ports at which the girls regularly fetched water for their mothers.

The women kept carefully tended “living pharmacies” in their backyards and gardens, especially in suspended wooden structures supported by poles where the more sensitive plants are cultivated in cans. This structure is called jirau. Besides medicinal plants, such as boldo (Peamus boldus Mold.), cidreira (Melissa officinalis L.) and mastruz (Chenopodium ambrosioides L.), used for treatment of intestinal parasites, every jirau had green onions, basil, paprika and other herbs for seasoning fish. The importance of these herbs should not be underestimated, considering that fish and manioc flour, if available, comprise the everyday meal of families in riverside communities, a monotony that herbs sensually break (see also Murrieta 2001).

The children’s duty was to feed chickens, raised mostly for donations to the celebration of saint’s festivals, occasionally to complement meager family meals in the scarce rainy season, but never as an economic option. Although almost every household in Jocojó had some chickens (about a dozen each), at the time of fieldwork, only one household had grown corn to feed them, either in roçados\textsuperscript{21} or intercropped in manioc fields. Usually chickens were fed with crueira, the under roasted coarse granules of farinha (manioc flour) discarded in the processing of the poisonous, or bitter, variety of manioc.

\textsuperscript{21} Roçados are small fields (less than a quarter of a hectare) on areas of secondary vegetation (fallow areas often with less than three years between cycles of cultivation) that are usually monocropped but followed sequentially by manioc.
The children fed the chickens, but they were also the ones who ate their eggs. It was common to find kids inspecting the terrain surrounding their houses to discover where chickens had laid their eggs. These welcome and daily “rewards” complemented the children’s snacks of never left to ripen fruits picked from the trees on their own backyards. However, accompanying their movement from the doorsteps of the chapel, a position from which little in the vila is left without inspection, I frequently caught them sneaking into other backyards to pick fruits from the trees of some grumbling distant kin.

Food security was far from the reality of the people in Jocojó. The base of their diet was farinha and fish. But fish were not easy to catch in blackwater rivers, especially in the rainy season, locally called *inverno* (winter). Thus, farinha was the staple of the diet, and the balance between energy and animal protein was not frequently achieved in the community. In June of 2002, when the water levels were expected to lower with the arrival of the summer, it rained without mercy on Jocojó. On many occasions, I joined the sons of my hosts to watch the showers from the door of their house. Despite the jokes we used to tell one another, and a little gossiping about potential couples in the vila, the delayed rains always evoked melancholic memories of long winter days without a square meal to eat, and they would constantly refer to the season as “the time of hunger.”

Farinha was produced primarily for household consumption, but villagers also sold part of their production to store owners or individual buyers in Gurupá. The families that

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22 During the rainy season fish catches decline because fish migrate out of the river channels into the flooded forests and disperse. Also, blackwater rivers are known for their absence of aquatic grasses, which feed larger fishes (Moran 1993: 48). They are poorer than the whitewater rivers, such as the Amazon, which carry large quantities of silt that they receive annually from the Andes (Goulding 1989: 15). During my stay in Jocojó, from June to August, I never saw catches of more than four small fish (approximately 40 cm) per fisherman fishing in the Jocojó River. The most common fish found on meals in the vila was the jeju, followed by taririras, or trainas, (both fish are of the group Cypriniformes Characo, family Erythrinidae), jacundás (not identified) and jandias (Leiarius marmoratus, of the family Pimelodidae) and *jatuaranas* (*Brycon cephalus B. melanopterus*) (Soares and Junk 2000: 439).
had boats, if cash was available to buy diesel for the long and expensive travel, sold farinha to várzea dwellers scattered along the shores of the Amazon River and islands in the estuary. Other than manioc flour and the by-products of manioc processing, such as *tucupi* and *tapioca*, the only source of family income in the terra firme was *timbó*, a vine, which was planted on the edges of gardens and remained in these sites when they were left fallow. The National Institute for the Environment (IBAMA), however, forbids the selling of timbó. For this reason, the vine was sold only to the *regatões* (itinerant river traders) that visited the community on a monthly basis.

Almost all households in Jocojó sold timbó to these traders during my fieldwork in the vila. I accompanied a group of villagers to the house cluster at the mouth of the Jocojó, where a trader had anchored his boat. We could barely breathe inside the boat cabin. It was covered with timbó vines bought from other *fregueses* (clients) in communities upriver Amazon, near the mouth of Rio Xingú. Adding to the piles of vines other men in the vila had sold to the trader, I calculated he had at least a ton of timbó to sell to varzeiros on the northern islands in the estuary on his way back to Santana, a port in the bordering State of Amapá.

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23 In the process of manioc flour preparation *tucupi* is obtained by squeezing a mash of grated manioc–half soaked and half dry–with a palm fiber tube called “tipití.” The clear portion of the liquid (with toxic compounds) drained from the mash is the tucupí. It is the substance of a traditional sauce very appreciated in Amazonia. The solid particles that separate out from this liquid provide *tapioca*, which is used to make *beiju*, a kind of manioc pancake eaten with super-sweetened coffee in the early morning, usually before household workers leave their houses for the energy-consuming tasks in their gardens.

24 Timbó vines are piscicides. Villagers use them in the dry season to fish in half-dry pools and shallow streams. Fish enter these pools and streams with the incoming tide and are trapped before the tide flows out. When crushed, the vines release a poison that stupefies the fish, which rise to the surface and are easily caught. Gurupá is located at approximately 300 kilometers up the Amazon River from the merging of its white waters with the salty waters of the Atlantic Ocean. Despite this, there are enough tidal lifts in this low-lying area to cause daily flooding of mudflats and flooded forests, especially during the dry season (Wagley 1964: 75; Moran 1993: 79).
On the same occasion, a group of brothers in the vila delivered 52 *frechais* (rafters) of *sucupira* (*Bowdichia virgilioides* H. B. K.) (Martini, Rosa, and Uhl 2001: 343), a hardwood species, which had been ordered by the river trader in the name of a boatbuilder in Santana. I observed their negotiation with the trader. The man was uneasy with my presence, I could sense. Later I found out he associated me with the IBAMA agents—who would have to be ubiquitous in order to effectively enforce environmental law in the vast Amazon estuary. To negotiate with the brothers, he made them paddle to the opposite riverbank, so I couldn’t hear their conversation. Upon their return to the boat, he gave them R$ 390 (about $136.50), or R$ 0.30 (about $0.11) per 20 cm in length (about 8 inches), the average size of a *palmo*.25 Although this was the average price received in Gurupá, the man knew his freguêses were illiterate and had little knowledge of basic mathematical operations, so, in addition to marking up prices of commodities they exchanged for the wood–food items, such as water buffalo cheese made by residents in the islands, coffee and sugar—he made a funny deduction of debts owed for other necessities he had sold on credit to the brothers on his previous visit. As a result, they returned to the vila with little to meet their families’ needs, and hardly enough cash to allow for purchases of other household necessities at stores in Gurupá, including salt, cooking oil, soap, and diesel. In this way, the traditional relation of dependence between regatões and freguêses in Amazonia was perpetuated.

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25 The “palmo” is the local unit of measure for sawn wood; it is equivalent to the distance between the thumb and the little finger.
Other than timbó and the sporadic orders for sawn wood, some households sold fruits raised in their yards, gardens or in their sitios\textsuperscript{26} to buy imported goods in Gurupá. Fruits sold to river traders or to buyers in the city included açaí, banana, avocado, watermelon, pineapple, Brazil nut, cupuaçu (\textit{Theobroma grandiflorum}), and pupunha (peach palm). Fruit trade, however, was also a very irregular economic alternative, and households grew only small amounts of these fruits.\textsuperscript{27} Every harvest was a gamble, the success of which always depended on access to patches of adequate soils\textsuperscript{28} and rainfall. Thus, manioc flour was the bulk of their diet and their most important source of income. But low prices in Gurupá made manioc crops more valued for their consumable qualities—a meal without farinha is not conceivable in Amazonian riverside communities—than for their exchangeable qualities.

In June 2002, almost all households in Jocojó were making farinha from the last manivas of gardens planted in 2000—they call the plant “maniva” and the roots “mandioca.” Some families had re-planted on the same garden sites in 2001; others had chosen to let their sites return to bush. But new plots had also been cleared in that year.

\textsuperscript{26} A “sitio” is the heart of the interfluvial land area where families grow their gardens. In the sitios, the two-faced, pitched roof open structures for processing manioc flour are located. They are locally called “casas de farinha.” Frequently, an old palm-thatched, one-room house is found in the sitios too. If children are too young to attend primary school, families spend the whole week in the sitios, returning to the vila only for the traditional gathering of the Sunday mass.

\textsuperscript{27} When listing the fruits they sell, villagers always added the affix—\textit{inho}, e.g. abacatinho (little avocado). The diminutive word indicates the lack of importance of fruits as a source of income. Fruits are grown mostly for home consumption. Occasionally, however, people sacrifice them for petty cash.

\textsuperscript{28} The soils in Gurupá’s upland forests of terra firme are for the most part nutrient poor soils (Oliveira Jr. 1991: 16). According to Moran (1993: 74), Massaranduba (\textit{Manilkara huberi}) and Sumaúma (\textit{Ceiba pentandra}) are kinds of forest vegetation indicative of poor agricultural soils. These species of vegetation are frequently found in the várzeas of the municipality, but massaranduba is also abundant in its forestlands of terra firme.
As a general rule, all households had at least one and a half *tarefas*\(^{29}\) in maniva with mature roots every year, either in one site, or, to reduce risk of ants and other uncertainties of the environment, in two or three very small clearings in patches of different soils.\(^{30}\) This land area would include plots planted one year and plots planted two years before the year the household’s workers were opening a new garden. Because of the delayed rains in June and early July 2002, many families hadn’t yet begun the work in their new fields. Except for the households where disease in the previous year had prevented workers from opening the minimum required for home consumption, however, all said that they would clear either larger plots or plots the same size as those opened in 2001.

The five thousand hectare area that composed the territory of the community of Jocojó was divided in centros controlled by the families in the community. These centros

\(^{29}\) In Jocojó at the time of fieldwork, a *tarefa* was a land area of 2,500 square meters. Based on a careful socioeconomic survey conducted in 1989 in rural Gurupá, Oliveira Jr (1991: 277) wrote: “a *tarefa* is a unit of land measurement used by the peasants in Gurupá with 0.36 ha on average.” But in my interviews in Jocojó, a one-hectare garden was invariably reported to have four *tarefas*. However, Oliveira Jr’s data coincide with my own concerning the average yield of a one-hectare manioc-plot, which is around four tons of roots, if the plot is well tended. In Jocojó, to produce only for home consumption—the consumption of an average size household (6.82) is 20 liters of manioc flour per week, equivalent to 650 kg per year—a family would need to harvest roots from a total land area of 0.50 hectares each year. My interviewees said that a one-hectare manioc garden, if well weeded, produces 20 sacks of 60 kilograms of farinha on average. Thus, to supply household needs, the total land area in manioc needed is 0.54 hectares. A *tarefa* was a local unit of measurement, which therefore was tied to particular activities. The term “*tarefa*” means literally “task,” a form of labor calculation—that which a peasant and his family, or a work party in the village could complete in X or Y hours, days, weeks. Human in scale, it corresponded to 25 *braças* by 25 *braças*. A *braça* was the linear measure of a man standing with his arm stretched upwards and holding a machete, totaling approximately 2.5 meters. One *tarefa* would therefore correspond to 3,906.25 square meters, and not 2,500 square meters or a quarter of a hectare. Thus, the elderly women in Jocojó were always distrustful when I said that the gardens of other men in the community had four *tarefas* each. They would always say: “that’s why nowadays gardens are never sufficiently weeded.

\(^{30}\) Almost all heads of households declared that they preferred to clear four to five year fallow areas and avoid slashing and burning the ever decreasing areas of *mata grossa*, or old *capoeiras*, as they also call old fallow areas. Usually, these areas were cultivated by their fathers and left fallow for twenty or more years. As Moran (1993) wrote, the conservation awareness of native Amazonians—and historic peasantries in the region, I must add—is because “they still interact closely enough with their physical environment to understand that they have to be concerned with the impact of their actions upon long-term productivity of their habitat.” (1993: 32)
were located between small streams that cut the communal territory, where gardens were grown and manioc flour was processed. The sítios were the heart of these centros. Almost all centros were named after natural features found in their geographical areas, usually islands of palm trees, or concentrations of other relevant tree species. Such names included Tucumãzal, Açaizal, Umarizal, Itaubal, and Piquiá. Occasionally, however, their names referred to the social history of the place, such as Pau de Letra, which referred to a trunk where the first residents in the vila who learned to write engraved their names. But every centro was associated with a particular surname, and the right to cultivate in these areas was acquired by vertical kinship ties, provided that use by that particular family was not discontinued. The children of the first villager to occupy and grow gardens in the area, both women and men, were entitled to a share in it. As they marry, and especially after they have children of their own, separate fields in the centro appear, and new households are established in the vila. The birth of the first child, more than marriage, is the landmark of the new stage in the domestic cycle.

The families that lived on the high levees in the várzea also had centros to grow manioc in the upland forests of terra firme. But they only depended on the trade of manioc flour in the meager rainy season, or at least from late February to June. In the dry season, household necessities, locally called *despesa, or despesinha*, \(^{31}\) were bought with fish and shrimp, and, if home consumption was secured, açaí. Açaí is also a sine qua non of the local diet. Indeed, I never noted belt-tightening associated with açaí in Jocojó, as seemed to happen with other fruits, such as avocado and pineapple, which were sold to river traders despite the children’s appetite for them. Actually, it was common to hear

\(^{31}\) Despesa means expense, the items that households consume or use (but see also note 27).
complaints from the people in the vila about extremely low prices of açaí fruit in Gurupá during the fruit’s season, essentially the summer months of July, August and September. Oftentimes I heard villagers say “I’d rather let the toucan plant açaí than harvest its fruits to sell them for very little money in Gurupá.” The price could be as low as R$ 2.00 (about $0.70) for a twenty-liter can of açaí fruit (about 5.28 gallons) equivalent to two kilograms of rice at the town’s supermarkets.

The householders in the várzea of the Jocojó used to sell their catches to marreteiros (middlemen) and to geleira owners (owners of boats equipped with diesel-powered refrigerators). Middlemen arrived in Gurupá just before the beginning of the dourada catfish season, from July through September. They would come on commercial riverboats and contact fishermen in the city, or “pedem passagem” (ask for a ride) on community boats to reach their clients along the Amazon River. Like the owners of refrigerator boats, frequently fishermen themselves, the middlemen provided their clients with ice, diesel for motorboats, the high-priced malhadeiras (gill nets) and other

32 I refer to the families living in the várzea of the Jocojó River as “varzeiros,” but not all of these people would self-identify as such. The cluster living on the banks of the Igarapé Jijuí, for example, is composed of roceiros from the headwaters of the river. They moved to the várzea areas as a result of the decline in prices of manioc flour in the late 1960s, and massively engaged in timber cutting until the mid-1980s, when timber extraction began to decline in Gurupá. These families have worked mostly for geleiras ever since.

33 In my interviews on the várzea of the Jocojó no mention was made of the conflicts that led these people to establish “partnerships” with geleira owners. But Paulo Oliveira Jr, in his study of the peasantry in Gurupá (1991), mentions that these fishing entrepreneurs, who were funded by the Superintendency for the Development of Fisheries (SUDEPE), beginning in the early 1980s, invaded fishing spots of varzeiro families, destroyed their fishing equipment, blocked watercourses with their gill nets and eventually, with the “blind eye” of the local judge managed to engage varzeiros as “partners” in their predatory activities (1991:157).

34 Batista et al. (2000) provide the following description of malhadeiras: they are “made of mono and multifilament line; lead rope with rustic or styrofoam floats but sometimes just suspended with cables attached to the vegetation; plumb weights in bottom rope” (Batista et al. 2000:421). Malhadeiras are used in the littoral zones of lakes or while crossing it; in creeks they are left parallel to the margins and inside small inlets. Drift gill nets are used to catch catfish in the main rivers. Gill nets distributed to fishers in Jocojó were approximately eight panels wide and 10 meters long. Each panel has one braça, and each braça today is 2.00 meters.
apparatuses for the fishing season. Every geleira also included in its crew a specialist to repair or rebuild gill nets during the season, and each household had a set of styrofoam containers to store ice. If the previous year had been a poor year for fish, these patrons would provide their clients with some cash in advance–though this practice was more and more infrequent, I was told–so varzeiros could get through the first weeks of the new season. When containers filled with their first catch, patrons would come to pick them up, or fishers would cross the Amazon to take them to the geleiras, generally anchored near the prime fishing areas along the shores of the Great Island of Gurupá. From this moment to the last collecting trip, barter would resume and only exceptionally would fishers claim their payments in cash.

In October, catches of dourada decline, and fishers avoid using gill nets lest the clash of ocean tides with downstream waters make them fold, and hence entangle on big stones on the riverbed. But fresh-water shrimp mature at this time of the year. That’s when patrons come to sell matapis\(^{35}\) and babacu for shrimp, as varzeiros concentrate on them. Good catches of other fat fish on the river channels, such as filhote (\textit{Brachyplatystoma sp}) (Soares and Junk 2000: 439), however, are still possible until February, when the river level begins to rise rapidly and waters invade the floodplains. From February to June, varzeiros turn to artisanal fishing and manioc flour processing. But, as Wagley said, “during the winter months, there are times when the only fish to be had is dried \textit{pirarucu},\(^{36}\) imported codfish, and tinned sardines and tuna” (Wagley 1964:

\(^{35}\) Matapis are traps made of a variety of palm fibers. The people in Jocojó, place them near the aninga stands in the mudflats. The mouth of the trap is its widest part. It narrows in a conical shape as it enters the central part of the trap, forming a narrow neck. This central part is quasi-cylindrical in shape, only slightly narrower towards the end. Shrimp enter the matapi and trespass the narrow neck, having difficulty escaping, since the wide mouth faces the direction of the waters.

\(^{36}\) \textit{Arapaima gigas} (Barthem 2001).
73). In Gurupá, however, heavy fishing had long since made pirarucu very rare, and, as the people in várzeas said, “no inverno a gente vai só tariando pra tomar o café e comer a farinhazinha,” (in the rainy season we can barely hold on to drink coffee and eat a little manioc flour).

Fishing and shrimping were marginal economic options to the residents in the terra firme. As the rains in early July finally dissipated, many ventured to the Amazon River for catches of big, marketable fish to sell in Gurupá. But generally they didn’t use fishing methods such as gill nets. A few households had cast nets, gigs and rods, though very small malhadeiras (one to two meters wide and one meter long panels) were more popular in the vila, and almost all households would place these nets in the small inlets of the Jocojó River and the small streams that feed into it. Villagers usually paddled to check their malhadeiras when they arrived from the work in their casas de farinha late in the afternoon, though their children, mostly boys, were responsible to survey these traps at least two times during the day. If luck permitted, two to four jejus, traíras, or jandiás, would secure evening family meals.

Another source of quick but scarce cash was game. Hunting for money was limited, though. In a conversation with two villagers they said “se o sujeito ‘tá aperreado, ele pode matar uma paca ‘pra vender em Gurupá. Agora, se não tiver aperreado, só ‘pra comer com a família.’” The perception that game and fish stocks were depleting resulted

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37 Gigs are locally known as “zagaías.” They are wooden spears with a metallic head of two prongs. In Jocojó, men would occasionally risk fishing with gigs in the night using a flashlight. They call this fishing method “piraquerar.” Rods are sticks with monofilament lines with metal hooks (Batista et al. 2000: 421). When rods are available, boys and adolescents fish in the igapós (flooded forests) and on the banks of Jocojó and its branches. Bait is usually small fish.

38 If a man is very pressed (for a medicine, or basic supplies), he is allowed to sell a paca (Agouti paca) in Gurupá. But, if he is not very pressed, he can only hunt to eat with his family.
in the elaboration of a set of “rules” governing hunting and fishing activities. The community had discussed and approved these rules in 1995. Basically, they spelled out the methods and the quantities allowed to catch or kill, for example, fishing with cacuris\textsuperscript{39} or timbó was banned. Also, in the rainy season, when the rising water level forces terrestrial mammals to flee the floodplains, villagers could only hunt up to two individuals of the same species, if it was a small species. Hunting in the night was locally called lanternar (from lanterna, flashlight). On new moon days, a father and a son, or two brothers would risk finding a paca, a deer or a wild pig using their rifles and flashlights. If lucky, they would share their prey with the family and close kin. Big game would be shared with other neighbors, they said. If money were urgently needed, though, the hunter would be allowed to sell his kill in Gurupá, where a paca was easily sold for R$ 30 (about $10.50). Often, this sum was equivalent to two thirds or even all the monthly family income in the vila.

\textbf{Other Sources of Income: Remittances and Rural Pensions}

On many occasions, I found myself initiating the ever-embarrassing conversation about household income. In the course of my interviews it became clear to me that households in the vila fell short of their needs. According to the doctors and social workers at the hospital in Gurupá, the situation of the residents in other communities in the countryside didn’t seem to be different. Many communities had children participating in the official distribution of powdered milk under the national campaign to reduce malnutrition in rural areas, including Jocojó. But powdered milk merely appeased the residents of the vila.

\textsuperscript{39} Cacuris are large fish traps usually made from the trunks of açaí palms. Like a wall of stakes, cacuris can fence off narrow rivers or small streams, forming a barrier to the fish moving upstream or being carried downstream by the current. At the end of the barrier there is a circular trap into which fish move, and beyond this trap is a smaller inner chamber which may be closed when the fish are to be removed (Wagley 1964: 74).
hunger of those pre-school children. Knowing that unemployment and underemployment already plagued the urban residents in Gurupá, and that the possibility of working for wages in farms outside of the community was virtually non-existent, I set myself the task of researching the alternatives the people in rural Gurupá had to make ends meet. At first, I focused on remittances from sons and daughters sent by their parents to work in urban areas in the region in search for cash income.

I arrived in Jocojó on the eve of St. John the Baptist’s festival. My hosts, Antonio Maria and Clô, were particularly excited. Their 17-year old son, Valmir, would take a ride in the boat the team from the Jari region had rented to come for a soccer match in the community at the celebration. He worked as a cleaner at the kaolin-processing factory in the Jari industrial park located at Munguba, near Monte Dourado, the company town built, owned and operated by the Jari Project in the 1970s. Valmir had left the vila 18 months before. He had been a student in the local Worker’s Party twin institution, the Casa Familiar Rural. Soon, however, he realized that he had no plans to spend the rest of his life in the countryside. Hoping he would be able to contribute to his family’s income, he left school to try his luck in the traditional destination of young men from the rural areas in the estuary. But life in Jari was not what he had expected. “If only I were more qualified!” he said.

As Little noted in his study of territorial disputes in Amazonia, which focuses on the Jari region and the territorial enclave of the Jari Project, temporary workers and unskilled labor in that industrial complex “do not have access to company housing and must fend for themselves in the riverside shantytowns across the river from Monte Dourado and Munguba, respectively” (Little 2001: 84). Valmir, like other migrants from
the upland communities in Gurupá, received the minimum wage, which was R$ 200/month (about $70.00) in 2002. The price of a room in the shantytown, if shared by two workers, neared fifteen percent of this minimum wage. The kaolin factory, in turn, discounted this wage by another thirty per cent to cover its expenses with boat fares, food and drink it provided to workers, and social security payment. Thus, all the contribution that those who had left agriculture for jobs in the industrial complex could make to their families in rural Gurupá was a small sum to honor their parents’ duties in the saint’s festivals.40

There was no secondary school in Jocojó. The community’s one-teacher school had 47 students of different ages in the four different grades of primary school. Students in each grade spent at most two hours and a half each day at school. To attend secondary school in Maria Ribeira, a neighboring community, students had to paddle their cascós (canoes) or cut through a muddy floodable forest in the summer. Only one family in the vila could afford the living expenses of a son and a daughter in Gurupá, because the mother held the position of health agent in the community, and received a minimum wage from the state government for it. A job in the Jari industrial park or in the informal economy in the vicinity of the park was another option for rural students seeking higher education, especially in the case of female migrants, because they often worked as domestic servants and lived with the families they served. Thus, they didn’t have to pay the rent of a room in Beiradã or Beiradinho, the shantytowns across the river. After several interviews and informal conversations with householders in Jocojó and other

40 The amount left, according to Valmir, was barely enough to buy a little breakfast and dinner each day, and a little clothing, if needed. As Marx wrote “the minimum wage [is] that quantum of the means of subsistence, which is absolutely requisite to keep a labourer in bare existence as a labourer” (1978 [1848]:485).
neighboring communities, it emerged that better education, combined with jobs that make it possible, more than remittances, seemed to be the major reason why parents sent their sons and daughters to look for work in the urban areas near the estuary.

Just as they played a crucial role in the economy of the town, the pensions elders received served as a supplement for the deficient income of almost all households in the vila. The people in Jocojó frequently used the terms “house” and “family” as synonymous. This seemed to reflect their ideal that a household consisted of a conjugal couple and their offspring. Ideally, too, households produced and/or bought what they consumed, pooled resources and ate together. Or, ideally, they were the primary units of production and consumption. Also, it was the responsibility of the household head to provide for the family’s needs. This was a matter of honor, and one of the most important criteria against which villagers evaluated married men with children in Jocojó. Indeed, the majority of the domestic units in the community had this ideal composition, and they tried to rely as much as possible on nuclear family labor, based on the division of labor between sexes. But, at least in periods of scarcity as I witnessed in the community during

41 In addition to this first meaning—a couple and their offspring living under the same roof—the term “family” is interchangeable with the term “parente,” when applied to people who are related “through blood.” “É tudo só uma família,” said a man during an interview, as he pointed to the houses of the married sons and daughters of his mother’s siblings. But this use of the term “family” is made only when people want to emphasize the cohesiveness of the relation between cousins. In a more restrictive sense, this second meaning of the term “family” refers to male siblings and their children, and the suffix “ada,” expressing the idea of “collection,” “group” is often added to the family name to refer to such group, for example, the Ruiz family is informally called “the Ruizada.” Here, affinal ties are not recognized, that is to say, a woman of the Ruiz family is included in the “Ruizada,” but not her husband, since he has a different surname. In Jocojó, the Brazilian naming system is followed, thus surnames pass through the male line, and men and women give their father’s patronym to their children. Although the dual surnames of the children are composed of the patronyms of the paternal and maternal grandfathers, the people in the community recognize the paternal grandfather’s patronym as the official “family name.” Because in Jocojó there had been a tendency for men to continue farming their father’s holding—the interfluve areas locally known as “centros”—the term “family” tended to refer to male siblings or sets of male siblings related through parental siblings that are male and farm together, exchange labor on a regular basis without the need to reciprocate, and, if they continue residing in the community, “inherit property”—the areas left to fallow by their fathers and grandfathers.
fieldwork, pensions cushioned the harsh effects of their failing economy—they accounted for the circulation of basic supplies and children between neighboring houses of close kin. While necessities would flow from the houses of the old parental couples, or widow parents, towards the houses of their married sons and daughters, children would often visit their grandparents with the hope of receiving some food.

**Peasants?**

In a conversation with Zeca, a resident in Jocojó and, at the time of fieldwork, the president of the association of slave descendant communities in Gurupá, he recounted a discussion he had just had with his nephew Tiago, a student at the Casa Familiar Rural. Echoing previous discussions with his classmates, Tiago insisted with his uncle that families in rural communities could still tighten their belts a little further in order to save their scarce money for investments in agriculture. “I disagree,” Zeca said. “People who say that we don’t save live in the city. They don’t understand our lives! If they buy one kilogram of beef, they will eat it with their family in two or three meals . . . on the other hand, if I buy one kilogram of beef in Gurupá, when I arrive in the vila, I give a piece to my mother, another to my brother and his family; I don’t eat it only with my family. . . . If we use four kilograms of sugar each week, it is not that my family eats all this sugar . . . neighbors borrow a little, or we share our sugar with them . . . essa gente não sabe vizinhar,” Zeca explained rather annoyed. People who live in cities don’t understand life in rural communities, he insisted. Their constant sharing of food, tools, workdays . . . .

Sharing and other old-ingrained values of the people in Jocojó express a cognitive orientation identified with the sociological category “peasants.”

The meaning and utility of the concept of “peasant” as an analytical tool has been much debated by sociologists and anthropologists (cf. Shanin 1990; Kearney 1996). The
term “peasant” is certainly unsatisfactory, as Harris noted in his *Life on the Amazon* (2000). But while he acknowledges Kearney’s criticism of its continued usage in his acclaimed *Reconceptualizing the Peasantry* (1996), Harris also claims that the term is reinvigorated in Amazonia, and therefore appropriate to describe the predominantly independent basis of the rural livelihoods of the people in his book (2000:10). The people in Jocojó were perhaps less mobile than the floodplain people in the lower middle Amazon region where Harris did his fieldwork; they had a less diversified economic strategy than Harris’s hosts, or, more precisely, there had been fewer opportunities available to them at the time of my fieldwork. Yet, as shown above, in the community, people moved between countryside and town along their life cycles, pursuing educational opportunities, working in the Jari industrial complex, or working as unskilled laborers in the small businesses that proliferated around the complex, or still performing domestic services in the company town. Others attempted to reconcile secondary school in Gurupá with helping their families in agriculture during the weekends. But, as Harris wrote,

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42 I am sympathetic to Djurfeldt’s critique of Kearney’s challenging of the applicability of the term to what he calls “the post-modern world.” Kearney’s book is divided in two parts. The first presents an authoritative critique against dualistic thinking in peasant studies, particularly against studies in the modernist persuasion that emerged in the aftermath of the World War II. The modern sensibilities, Kearney notes, “think in terms of absolute categories, such as subject and object, self and other” (1996:5), but also center vs. margin, rural vs. urban, simple vs. complex, peasant vs. proletarian. Thus, the modernist discourse images “the peasant” as backwards—as opposed to the Western anthropological self—and the peasant society as static, socially bounded isolates. His critique is grounded in his own field experience among the Mixtecs of San Jeronimo in Oaxaca, in southern Mexico. The Mixtecs move across the international border between Mexico and the United States constructing complex livelihood strategies for managing economic stress and exploitation. These strategies include from temporary work picking oranges in California to household self-provisioning agricultural production. Kearney argues that the peasant as an anthropological category has always resisted alignment with “reality;” and the second part of his book is mostly dedicated to conceptualizing a global discourse that accounts—but does not contain, or essentialize—these evermore complex subjectivities. Djurfeldt’s criticism of Kearney is two-fold. First, he contends that Kearney commits what he calls the “epochal fallacy” since in his argument about the non-peasantness of the Mixtecs, there is an implicit assumption that the state of affairs of his ethnographic present will last forever (1999:3). Second, failing to distinguish between “peasant” as an ideal type and the “real” peasants (see Shanin 1990:72), Kearney enters in a discussion about what peasants are, or what they are on the verge of *becoming*, and this leads him into new essentialisms, Djurfeldt rightly points out (1999:6, the emphasis is mine).
“many stay put in their rural and natal communities, working the land and fishing the
waters with their kin” (2000:10). Reality, as Shanin warns us, is necessarily richer than
its conceptualizations, and I do believe the term “peasant” gives insight into the realities
of the people in Jocojó.

For the purpose of this study, therefore, peasants are rural producers who are
characterized by particular labor processes, principally in agriculture, in which the basic
unit of production and consumption in the community—the household, a kinship-based
unit—has control over land, uses low cost technology, and produces (or struggles to
produce) staple crops to meet consumption needs. Most important, peasant householders
in the community put a high value on sharing practices. An understanding of their
clinging to such an orientation, however, requires an understanding of their historical
career. Thus, listening as carefully as possible to the words of the elderly in Jocojó, in the
next chapter, I present a look into their past.

In the present chapter, I offered a portrayal of a rural community and their failing
economy. At the time of fieldwork, all but a few houses in the community were unable to
secure a square meal a day—basically a couple of small fish, farinha, and, if lucky, a bowl
of the much appreciated açaí palm wine. Even those householders who relied mostly on
fishing in the dry season to provide for their families could barely hold on to drink coffee
and eat a little farinha at the height of the rainy season. This chapter was intended to lay
the groundwork for the discussions that follow in this thesis. As the objective of the thesis
is to present an analysis of the social transformations in the life-worlds of this slave
descendant community, relying primarily on ethnography, it begins and ends with the
period I shared with my hosts, since the goal is not just to provide a sense of historical
continuity, but to make sense of the peoples’ material conditions and social realities as I encountered them.
CHAPTER 3
TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY IN RELATION TO OUTSIDE INTERVENTIONS

Inspired by Mintz’s (1974) approach to the study of the Caribbean heterogeneous peasntries developed in the colonial period, in his *Amazonian Caboclo Society* (1993), Nugent offers a frame of reference for the study of the historical peasntries in Amazonia. (Re)directing the anthropological gaze from Indigenous to “lumpen-Amazonia” (Nugent 1993:xviii), he is concerned to show us that the voiceless and politically invisible mixed-blood peoples who live along the banks of the region’s waterways constructed actual, structured social systems. And they have history. The specific histories of real peasant societies “on the ground,” adapting to diverse local conditions, particularly the variety of ecological constraints, and the more general history of the formation of the riverine peasantry in the context of the colonial havoc in Amazonia. It is this more general history, the “ethnohistory of a people without an official ‘ethno’” (1993:xviii) that constitutes one of the main preoccupations of his book. Generalizations about an “Amazonian peasantry” are based on their common and short

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1 Mintz (1973) used the term “reconstituted peasntries” to refer to segments of Antillean societies that were reconstituted as recently as a century or two at most out of earlier economic forms, including Amerindians, African slaves, and other Europeans, which composed the subject masses of European rulers in the post-1492 period of conquest and settlement of the Caribbean region by Europe. The “reconstituted peasntries” were peasant-like adaptations marginal to the plantation system, and resistant to the domination of capital. Their production was “peripheral, interstitial, of short term and, at times, illegal . . . a reaction to the plantation economy, a negative reflex to enslavement, mass production, monocrop dependence, and metropolitan control” (Mintz 1973:99, citing Mintz 1961:31-34 and 1964:xx).

2 In Nugent’s (1993) words: “adaptation [is] not a matter of reciprocity between ecosystem and social system, but rather is a matter of social systems acting upon ecosystems” (1993:62).
historical career, which includes the riverine mission villages and, later, the institution of aviamento trade relations, among other administrative and commercial institutions created to supply the rapacious colonial-extractive economy with a (coerced) labor force. Within the mission villages, through enslavement and other deliberate ethnocidal practices, indigenous peoples were transformed into “a relatively undifferentiated and fragmented set of petty producers” (Nugent 1993:106). After the collapse of the rubber boom, the aviamento trading system had already left its imprint on the economy of the then recently emerged independent petty commodity producers—the historical Amazonian peasantry.

But relatively little is known about specific polities of “free” riverine peasants compared to Indigenous peoples, the primary focus of scholarly attention in Amazonia. What is the basis of their social reproduction? What holds them together? What holds them in the world? How do they change? Viewed as a product of the colonial conquest, which swept away entire cultures and/or values of indigenous lifeways in the Amazon valley, the historical peasants have remained nearly invisible to the anthropology of the region—the social life of particular groups had rarely been taken as object of ethnographic studies before the 1980s. According to Nugent (1993:32), the lack of scholarly attention to this segment of the Amazonian peasants is a consequence of the assumption that Amazonia was left as a timeless wilderness in which no social structure of consequence persisted after the colonial destruction of indigenous societies.

3 As Nugent (1993) noted, “the link between pre-colonial Amerindian societies and caboclo societies is not insubstantial, but it is extremely complicated to reconstruct in any but the sketchiest form” (1993:31).

4 This assumption asserts itself in two different considerations of Amazonian societies. First, nature is what remained between the decimation of pre-colonial indigenous societies and the emergence of free riverine peasants that somewhat replaced them. The second consideration concerns the link between pre- and post-colonial native Amazonia. Despite the archaeological evidence showing that pre-colonial societies in the
Nugent presents other compelling explanations for the “invisibility” (political invisibility) of the riverine peasants than their little “culture.” First, they are “invisible” because of the fluid and diversified nature of their livelihoods. As shown in the previous chapter, which portrays the economy of one community of peasants on the Amazon estuary, their marginal economies involve the creative exploitation of resources—várzeas, igapós, rivers, and terra-firme forests. In this sense, they are “invisible” because “the extensification [sic] of their livelihoods matches the scale of their resource base,” a forest and a river system that are often characterized as homogenous—“the humid tropical forests,” “the várzeas,” “terra firme.” Thus, profoundly different ecosystems are subsumed into blanket categories, and consequently the different kinds of complementary activities of the riverine peasants to exploit their base are obscured (Nugent 1993:33).

Amazon valley achieved high levels of social evolution, post-colonial, or rather, contemporary indigenous social systems are often represented as constrained, if not shaped, by natural ecosystems (Nugent 1993:32). In addition, this assumption has adverse consequences for the riverine Amazonian peasantries. If uninteresting for ‘thick descriptions’ (Geertz 1973) because of their unrealized otherness, or virtual absence of ‘culture’ (Nugent 1993:104; 1997:40), they have also been considered irrelevant to those policy-makers responsible for the official development of the region. Actually, the promotion of Amazonia as a natural space, devoid of socially significant occupation, which the anthropological “cling” to the study of the exotic “other” reinforces, helps sustain the systematic neglect by the official development of the needs of the riverine peasants (Nugent 1993:37). Nugent’s deconstruction of Amazonian anthropology is beyond the scope of the provisional interpretation of the social and economic transformations in the life of a particular peasant community presented here. Nonetheless, I retain his important critique that anthropological research in Amazonia is associated with global-socio-economic transformations. He proposes that the attention now given to the traditional Amazonian peasantry is a direct consequence of the “rise of ecologism,” which is a manifestation of the growing international concern with the depletion of tropical forests, and possibly with the related need to secure the supply of industrialized countries with raw materials and substances available in tropical areas (Nugent 1993:84,103-105; 1997:46).

As previously mentioned, until the 1990s, the bulk of the Amazonian anthropology was mainly concerned with the internal organization of particular societies—mainly indigenous societies—in circumscribed social settings, while the influence of larger impersonal forces affecting local communities was largely unattended to. Representing the multi-faced peasants—they are rural cultivators, but seasonally engage in disguised wage-labor as rubber tapers and/or Brazil nut collectors, or even migrate to work temporarily in the urban informal economy—by articulating the description of their everyday life (culture) with the larger system (political economy) is a difficult task (Marcus and Fischer 1999:77-110), requiring long-term, often multi-sited (Marcus 1995) field research. Little’s Amazonia:Territorial Struggles on Perennial Frontier (2001) is a good example of this approach.
Second, they are economically and politically insignificant because “their priorities are not those of the developmentalists for whom Amazonia is foremost an extractive-resource domain” (1993:33). But despite their exclusion from the developmental masterplan of highly capitalized, large-scale extractive activities, they suffer their negative consequences—the ecological effects, such as the predatory timber exploitation on the várzeas, and, not rarely, displacement. Incorporating previously marginal lands or depleting the existing natural resources on them, the infrastructure provision and related large-scale extractive activities limit, or even cut off, the riverine peasants’ access to the diverse ecosystems on which their livelihoods depend, and thus compromise the maintenance of their repertoire of petty commodity forms. It is clear that the many riverine peasant social systems assumed different forms in different parts of Amazonia. However, they all share this unfortunate defining feature: “they bear the mark of external structures—that of merchant capital for example—for which Amazonia has from the sixteenth century until the present represented a vast resource potential” (Nugent 1993: xx-xxi). Because they realize their social reproduction on the margins, alien to the axioms and rules that define the technocrats’ economic model, they are regarded as decadent, and their economies are characterized as stagnant. Accordingly, their marginalization is justified, maintained. But insofar as they secure their access to the varied ecosystems that constitute their production sites—the necessary condition for the continued reproduction of their livelihoods—in Nugent’s words, “they endure.”

But how does the specific history of the community of Jocojó reverberate with this more general trajectory of the historical peasantries in Amazonia so brilliantly outlined by Nugent in his *Amazon Caboclo Society* (1993)? In the preceding chapter, I portrayed
the failing economy of Jocojó. By July 2002 all but a few households in the community were on the edge of poverty because manioc cultivation was the basis of their economy, and it had been severely eroded. And even those few families who relied mostly on fishing rather than slash-and-burn cultivation rushed to clarify: “in the rainy season we can barely hold on to drink coffee and eat a little manioc flour.” In the present chapter, I look at stories of the lives of adult men and women of different ages in Jocojó with a view to grasping the material conditions and social realities of the peoples’ lives from the early 1900s to the time of fieldwork. Against this backdrop of oral narratives of the past, I examine the ways in which villagers (re)produced their livelihoods in relation to outside socioeconomic transformations, and seek to understand the transformations of sociality, morality, and domesticity, engendered by changes in the productive base.

As said earlier, Nugent (1993) and Harris (2000) argue that the historical peasantries emerged as independent petty commodity producers and their economy of petty forms matured in times of weakening of state dominance and slackening of international demand for Amazon products: the period beginning with the abolition of the colonial administrative policy of the Directorate and consequent dismantlement of the mission village system, 1800-1850, and the interval between the collapse of the rubber export economy and the arrival of large-scale capitalist enterprises to exploit Amazonian raw materials, 1912–1965. In this study of social change in one specific community, I take this latter period of less integration of the local economy and the larger system as my baseline.  

6 Nugent (1993) cautions us to not speak of periods of intensification of local social system’s external relations as ones characterized by integration. In such periods of integration of Amazonian social systems and the global economy, peasants as laborers, not their production, are incorporated within larger economic systems. In his own words, “are periods in which there is competition for Amazonian resources,
communities living around the town underwent radical changes with the emergence and consolidation of state presence and the intensification of capitalist firms’ activities in the lower Amazon. In Jocojó, far-reaching changes occurred with the entrance of international lumbering firms on the estuary, when the men in the community massively engaged in the extraction of valuable wood species to sell to compradores (businessmen) who dealt in cash, or trade for supplies at local stores in Gurupá whose businesses at that moment were totally centered on lumber instead of rubber (Miller 1976:298). Later, as timber ran out along the southern channel of the estuary and islands’ shores, and firms withdrew to other floodplain areas where rich stands of commercially valuable species were still available, the establishment of the Jari industrial complex, at least in its initial phase, from the early 1970s to the early 1980s, absorbed a significant number of unskilled workers from the estuarial zone, who escaped from a declining economy in their localities.

My concern here is to explore the nature of the transition between the economic patterns that characterized these two periods in the community’s history—the first, a period of significant decline in the working family units’ participation in the extraction of Amazon commodities for export, and the second, a phase of considerable involvement in the wider capitalist economy through various approximations of wage labor at the local level, or even wage-labor proper and engagement in activities distinctive of the urban informal economy. To examine this process of transition and the social and economic transformations it entailed I will analyze the relations of production the people in Jocojó

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not incorporation of production within larger economic systems, except to the degree that non-valorized labor forms in Amazonia serve to subsidize commercial extraction. . . . During the rubber boom, Amazonian peasantry per se were not incorporated; rather Amazonian workers were absorbed into large-scale extractive sector. Peasant production, as a consequence, became less cohesive” (1993:201).
entered into in the two periods in order to produce the conditions of their existence. By “relations of production” I mean both “the social processes through which work is organized to produce goods, and the processes through which surpluses are formed, transferred out of the control of the producers, and transformed, by those who have the power, into a wide range of economic, political, and cultural ‘values’” (Sider 1991:228).

Finally, in the last section of this chapter, I return to the time of fieldwork. Here, I revisit the social and economic context of the particular area of the Amazon estuary where Jocojó is located, basically the town of Gurupá and its environs, and reexamine the ways in which households in the community secured their social reproduction—their sources of livelihood, the relationships within and between households, particularly their forms of labor mobilization, and the nature of their relationships to the larger national and regional economic system. I conclude with a brief discussion about Nugent’s idea of “invisibility” to account for the neglect by the Brazilian state of thousands of riverine peasant peoples who had their autonomy increasingly threatened, and their perspectives cast to the side or excluded in the process of capitalist development in Amazonia, but despite modernization managed to “endure” on the margins of Amazon society.

There are by no means the historical resources in contemporary Jocojó or even in Gurupá to allow us to reconstruct the specific history of the community from the days of its foundation as the early hideout of escaped slaves to the decline of the rubber trade in 1912. Instead, it is necessary to rely on the historiography and ethnography from the

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7 The reconstruction of the specific history of Jocojó since its foundation by escaped slaves in the second quarter of the nineteenth century would require exhaustive archival research both in the local notary’s office and the parish registry, which is not always available for researcher’s examination, to supplement the ethnohistories told by the elders in the community. In general lines, this was the methodology used by the historian Eurípedes Funes (1996) to acquire knowledge of the past of the (quilombola) rural black community of Pacoval, located on the right bank of the Curuá River, in the surroundings of the riverside town of Alenquer, in western Pará. The effort required to accomplish this task, however, is much beyond
lower Amazon, and from Gurupá in particular (Wagley 1964; Galvão 1955; Miller 1975; Kelly 1984; Oliveira 1991; Pace 1998), to supplement the memoirs of the elders, and the fragments they retained of the stories they heard from their fathers and grandfathers. The following account, therefore, is far from what O’Brien and Roseberry (1991) have called “historical” work—a combination of “real history” and historical commentaries and texts of social actors and intellectuals.

The Formation of Jocojó

The aviamento system turned into a full-blown mechanism of domination during the Amazonian rubber boom. By the 1850s, with the increased demand for rubber in the international market, extracted rubber became the Amazon’s primary export product, and maintained its primacy over other forest products until the early 1910s. Gurupá had rich concentrations of seringueiras (rubber trees, *Hevea brasiliensis*), and as early as 1852 it had grown as an important area for rubber production. Both peasants and urban workers were drawn into extraction with the rising prices of rubber. Steam transportation was introduced in Amazonia. Gurupá became an attractive destination for many new immigrants who entered the town. The population increased, and, under the impact of external demand for rubber, agricultural production declined. Food shortage hit the residents, both in the town and in the countryside; labor was scarce (Pace 1998). At this juncture, it seems reasonable to assume that the few cattle ranches and plantation owners

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the possibilities of a two-month period fieldwork. As said in the introduction of this study, it was hardly enough to build rapport with my hosts.
in the area that had been able to maintain African slaves struggled to increase productivity of their land through increased exploitation of their labor force.  

Sometime in the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century, definitely before 1888, when slavery was abolished in Brazil, fugitive slaves reached the mouth of a small stream upriver from Gurupá. It was the Jocojó River, barely a creek then. They

8 In his account of the origins of the quilombola communities in the surroundings of Alenquer, Funes (1996) shows us that mistreatment, not influence of greedy river-traders to augment their clientele of extractors of “drogas do sertão” (Amazon forest products), was the main cause of flights of slaves in the lower Amazon. In Jocojó, as in all rural black communities in Gurupá, little is known about the actual circumstances of the escape of slaves from cattle ranches and plantations in the area. But the ethnohistory told by elders in the community emphasizes that their ancestors’ determination was to free themselves from constant whippings they were subject to in the hands of Pedro Lima, the foremen of a plantation in the locality of Gurupá-Miri, upstream the Amazon River from Gurupá. “My grandfather, Pascoal, told me the Portuguese brought his father to Brazil in his early teens. There had been other Portuguese who worked as middlemen. They would buy slaves in Belém to deliver them to local patrons here, on the islands region. The other slaves who came with my grandfather to Jocojó were older than him. Maximiano was the eldest of all, but Placido was the one responsible for the flight. As you may know, at that time, the patrons used to punish the slaves because of their wrongdoing. Placido had impregnated a young slave in the farm. When the patron discovered the woman had become pregnant, he gave Pedro Lima an order to punish Placido, so Placido planned their escape” (interview with Vinicius, 80 years of age, in July 2003).

9 Interviewing old Adelino, he said that his grandmother Aniceta had “worked with” the cabanos during the Cabanagem Revolt (1835-1836). Time and again she recounted the stories about the “pega-pega” in Gurupá, he said. The “pega-pega” was the name given by locals to the military incursions in Gurupá’s rural interior in order to capture able-bodied men, including married men, to fight in the 1864-1869 war in which an alliance between Argentine, Uruguay, and Brazil fought against Paraguay. During the war, Adelino said, the neighborhood of Jocojó already existed, and many residents in the town sought refuge among the blacks that resisted the “pega-pega”. It is impossible to define whether or not Jocojó existed as a hideout of escaped slaves at the time of the Cabanagem Revolt, as Adelino’s fading memories allow us to speculate, without careful archival research. In his account of the Cabanagem, Anderson (1985) says that “the plantation slaves and the runaway members of several quilombos [on the Amazon valley] became very active during the last six months of the Cabanagem” (1985:73). They rebelled against their owners, and the slaveowning segment of the colonial society in general. On the other hand, citing Hurley (1936), Oliveira Jr. (1991) says that the cabanos took command of Gurupá for a brief period in 1836, and that, despite the fact that the local revolt was easily controlled by the commander of the fort at Macapá, on the north side of the Amazon estuary, in the late 1980s, riverine peasants living on the Great Island of Gurupá still recounted that for a long period the island remained as a refuge of the cabanos, who continued raiding Gurupá, forcing merchants and town dwellers to hand over food and other supplies, and then returning to their refuge, protected from retaliation by the intricate network of furos (river channels connecting high várzea to low várzea areas), paranás (small river channels), igarapés, and dense flooded forests. Adelino’s account corroborates Hurley’s commentary on what happened in Gurupá. He said that twice in his youth he witnessed families arriving at Jocojó, escaping from the raids on the town’s residences and commerce.

10 When slavery was abolished, Vinicius, who was born in Jocojó in the beginning of the 1920s, said that the runaways celebrated it for nine days with fireworks, dance and rum provided by Armando, the trading post owner. The party, as his father Teodoso had told him, “was just like the parties organized by the brotherhoods of town dwellers during the celebrations of Saint Anthony and Saint Benedict, the patron saint of Gurupá, and the protector of the poor–tappers and fisherman–respectively.
had escaped from ill treatment on a plantation located on the headwaters of the Igarapé Miri in the surroundings of the town. With the help of Antonio, a trading post merchant of mixed-blood descent established at the mouth of Igarapé Monituba, another stream that empties into the Amazon, and now masters of their own time and labor, they dedicated themselves to manioc cultivation. “Só na lavoura” (working at farming only),\(^{11}\) as old Adelino repeated while narrating to this anthropologist the liberation of his ancestors. But petty extractivism must have been incorporated in their economic repertoire at this early stage.\(^{12}\) During the rubber boom, Gurupá exported other commodities such as *copaiba* oil, cacao, nuts, tobacco, sarsaparilla, tanned hides and animal pelts (Kelly 1984:342). The very nature of their ties to the outside world—which were mediated by the trading post owner—must have left no alternative choice to this developing rural neighborhood. Indeed, by the close of the rubber boom in 1912 the seasonally patterned economy characteristic of the riverine peasantry had already

\(^{11}\) Although the theme of “libertos e sujeitos” (freed from and subject to slaveowners or patrons), which is very recurrent among the peasantries in Brazil’s northeast, never emerged in our conversations as native categories, it is clear that Adelino and Vinicius’s emphasis on the fact that their ancestors worked at farming as opposed to working at collecting stresses the ideal of personal autonomy that is so dear to the riverine peasantries. At the seringais and castanhais (Brazil nut stands), and at any other off-farm occupation for that matter, it was the patron who controlled their labor force, and this limiting of their personal agency is precisely what the people in Jocojó resisted. Of course Adelino and Vinicius spoke from their own lived experiences of working at seringais and castanhais on the lower Amazon, where, even if the mechanisms of control and coercion were less stringent than in the more remote areas on the headwaters of the Amazon tributaries (see Weinstein 1985:60-61), the labor force was definitely submitted to debt-bondage relations. The very fact that they worked under this unfavorable condition in diverse occasions along their lives account for their different vision of agricultural vs. extractive activities (cf. Pace 1998:85; and Lima and Ferreira Alencar 2001:39).

\(^{12}\) As a result of their resistance to the institution of slavery, the runaways had to engage in extractive activities, including increased reliance on fishing and hunting, not only for their own subsistence, but also to re-establish their links with the outside world through trade. It was common for the runaways who escaped plantations near riverside towns on the lower Amazon area to establish clandestine relations with trading post merchants, river traders, or even storeowners in the towns, with whom they could trade their produce and extractive products for supplies, and, most importantly, who had vested interest in maintaining this clientele, and therefore protected them from slave raiding expeditions by informing them in advance about the events in the towns. Through these relations, the aviamento system took hold of the blacks in Jocojó (see also Acevedo and Castro (1998) and Funes and (1996)).
matured on the Amazon delta (cf. Pace 1998:80). Not only did the blacks provide important commodities for the trading post, but also, during the dry season, they would be recruited by merchants from other Amazon areas to work as collectors on the rich rubber forests of “Curuá de Alenquer,” a locality situated on the left bank of the Amazon River, where it receives the clearwaters of the Tapajós River, its major tributary, and on the lower reaches of the Xingú River. In the rainy season, they would migrate temporarily to the Brazil nut stands of the Jari region.

Funes’ careful research in the parish and the local registers of the riverside municipalities of Santarém, Alenquer, Vila Curuá and Óbidos, showed that the majority of the slaveholders on the lower Amazon had on average five to ten slaves only, very small numbers compared to the plantations in the Northeast’s coastal zone. In addition, an examination of post-mortem estates revealed that most of these small groups of slaves comprised families. At times, two or three generations of the same family lived and worked in the same rural property. In fact, according to the elders in Jocojó, the primeirantes, founders of the neighborhood, were a small group of about twelve people, including two married couples and a group of siblings. But soon these first settlers learned to deal socially with others. “My grandfather and his brother ruled everyone in this locality. Whenever an outsider would come, a man . . . a family seeking shelter, they would determine the location of the plots of ground for them to set up their little houses, só na lavoura,” old Adelino insisted. Through kinship arrangements—mostly fictive

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13 There were 135 quilombos (hideouts of escaped slaves) on the banks of the Curuá River (Funes 1996:467). Many of the blacks from Jocojó married into these quilombos and never returned to their community of birth.
kinship ties—novatos (newcomers) were woven into the lives of the runaways. Thus, a new society came into existence.

Little is known about the social and economic organization of actual peasant communities in Gurupá’s rural interior in the decades of the rubber boom, particularly of the rural black communities in the area. Yet, according to the ethnohistories I was told in Jocojó, “era só preto, todos eles . . . era só escravo . . . tudo um sangue só” (they were all blacks . . . all were slaves, all were the same blood). Examining the genealogies I collected in the field—although the hazy memories of stories heard by the elders from their relatives didn’t allow me to feel securely anchored in my material—I observed that these slave descendants managed to keep as much as possible their social associations within a core group of direct descendants of the primeirantes. Not only did they strengthen their links between blood-kin, through marriage of first cousins, but they also reinforced their affinal ties by means of repeated unions of pairs of brothers and sisters. Like diverse segments of the peasantry throughout Latin America, including other communities of riverine peasants in Amazonia, the solution historically engendered by the slaves to secure access to productive resources consisted primarily of kinship relations. Here too, land tenure and kinship could not, and still cannot, be understood without each other.14 In addition, kinship and other kinds of social organization, such as

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14 In her analysis of the socioeconomic organization of two rural communities of mixed-blood peasants in the vicinity of Tefê in the middle Solimões River, one in the várzea and another in the terra firme, Lima (1992) characterizes the consanguineous and repeated family unions, or, in her own terms, the “re-linking marriages” as indicators of the people’s interest in maximizing kinship relationships, and argues that this maximization of kinship ties is a response to deprivation—it provides a solid foundation for economic and political relations between individuals and domestic units within the community (1992:213). No doubt the principle of maximization was active in the formation of Jocojó. And the sentiments of kinship, neighboring, and friendship which resulted from these “re-linking marriages” certainly informed the people’s consciousness of a “moral community,” (Scott 1976) in which the minimal consumption needs of all its members had to be met.
neighboring and fictive kinship ties—the *compadrazgo*\(^{15}\) relations (ritual co-parrenthood)—were reinforced by the people’s perception of threat from the outside, or the determination to lead a life as freed as possible from external political and economic control and influence. Such perception furthered internal cohesion and solidarity (Almeida 1988).

But the centrifugal drive to seize new opportunities to tap rubber trees in faraway seringais (rubber stands) in the early decades of the twentieth century resulted in the dispersal of slave descendants all through the estuary and upriver Amazon. Just as some youngsters married into the quilombos in the vicinity of Curuá de Alenquer, others from this locality married into Jocojó, and still others came to Jocojó from the seringais in Arumanduba, in the vicinity of Almeirin, another town located a few miles upstream from the junction of the Xingu and Amazon rivers. In addition, Gurupá’s active commerce and social life attracted elders from the community during the rubber boom. This was definitely a period of dispersion of kinship relations in Jocojó, including the emigration of many in the group locally called *galhos* (branches)—those who descended directly from the primeirantes. Apparently, in the mid-1900s, locality and economic occupation, not a common origin—the African-slaves ancestry—were the key sources of people’s identity in Jocojó. They saw themselves as “roceiros of the neighborhood of Jocojó” (agricultural producers, more precisely, manioc cultivators). As a result of the process of out-migration, contrary to other rural black communities in Brazil, here, no

\(^{15}\) I use the term “compadrazgo,” the designation of the institution of godparenthood in Spanish, instead of “compadrio,” the designation in Portuguese, because the institution is best known in the anthropological literature through the works of Mintz and Wolf (1967), and Gudeman (1971), who, relying on the ethnography of peasant groups in Hispanic Latin America, provided the most influential discussions of this Latin American institution.
differential rights between old and new settlers, or primeirantes and novatos, persisted. In his *Amazon Town* (1964), Wagley noted: “the small village of Jocojó is said to have been inhabited almost entirely by “Old Negroes,” although the people living there today have about the same appearance as the rest of the people in the Itá community” (1964:137). Wagley’s allusion to the people’s skin color and features is not relevant here. What is relevant is the idea implicit in his commentary: a fading past. A silenced experience of resistance to slavery, seemingly not commemorated by the descendants of the “Old Negroes” in Jocojó, certainly not through storytelling.  

**1912-1965, Like a Mururé: Economic “Independence” on the Margins**

Nossa vida era assim mesmo, que nem mururé . . . It only runs downstream, I know . . . but it is just like our life was . . . our work . . . Each time we were in a different locality . . . tapping milk from massaranduba trees . . . tapping and treating rubber upriver, near the mouth of the Xingú River . . . then collecting *ucuúba* seeds, or cutting *ucuúba* trees on the nearby islands . . . and then collecting Brazil nut downstream, in the Jari region . . . as I said, each time we worked in a different locality, and each time we had a different patron.

“Just like a mururé, that’s how our life was.” Possibly in her late 90s, *Dona* Lucinda, a woman resident in the várzea near the mouth of the Jocojó River, repeated to me as we sipped a little coffee at the door of her house facing the Amazon River.

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16 In his discussion of the changes in the signification of the concept of “quilombo,” Almeida (1997) reminds us that peasant groups who are descendants of African or indigenous slaves were “trained” to deal with hostile antagonists, i.e., to deny the existence of a quilombo, an early hideout of escaped slaves, because the very affirmation of being quilombola—an unlawful condition vis-à-vis the colonial proslavery legislation—would eventually make illegitimate their rights to usufruct acquired by continued occupancy (posse da terra). This may have been one reason for the silence of the people in Jocojó about their past of resistance to slavery. But they generally occupied very marginal lands. Other factors than the dispersal of kin groups, and the fear to have their customary rights to land and resources violated must have intervened. However, it is difficult to grasp the actual workings of power, and cultural power in particular, in Gurupá during the transition from the nineteenth to the 20th century, considering the scanty information on the existing sociopolitical relations of the slave descendants with the outer world in this period as well as on the internal struggles within the neighborhood that were likely to result from the tension between the desire to distance from the dominant society and the need to stay within the reach of the dominant society’s institutions.

17 *Virola duckei* A.C Sm.
“Mururê” is what the peasants in the estuary call the islands of vegetation that float downstream on the Amazon, drawn from the river shores by the strength of its colossal waters. She talked of the riverine’s constant movements to bring a little money into their households. According to the oldest inhabitants in Jocojó, between the demise of the rubber industry and the miniboom of the product during the Second World War, the people in the neighborhood enjoyed a relative material plenty, with a low standard of living, i.e., they perceived themselves as poor rural residents, marginalized in forsaken Gurupá, but secured their continuity exploring the new economic opportunities that were open to them. Jocojó

was a small vila, almost like a trail in the forest. Then the people began to clear the forest around the vila to plant their gardens. First they planted maize, then squash, watermelon and beans . . . Manioc would come last. The géneros [their production for the market] were timbó, and seringa [from the rubber trees in the vicinity of the vila], which the people would go out to trade in Gurupá and downstream in the nearby islands. Then other fábricos [work, understood as extractive activities, collecting times and production] appeared, a fruit that they called by the name jaboti aracunha,\(^{18}\) the massaranduba, the cumaru\(^{19}\) . . . thus, our ganhos [sources of livelihood] began to appear. And the people started trading these new products. (Interview with Adelino, 90 years old, June 2002)

Their accounts corroborate with Nugent’s (1993) and Harris (2000) arguments, which indicate a positive correlation between the “stagnation” periods of the regional economy and the economic dynamism at the level of the riverine communities. As old Adelino said, the local people continued to work at collecting rubber as well as a variety of other forest products, such as ucuúba seeds, andiroba\(^{20}\) oil, and Brazil nut (Oliveira

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\(^{18}\) Not identified.

\(^{19}\) Dipteryx odorata.

\(^{20}\) Carapa guanensis Aubl.
1991:75). While food shortage hit Gurupá in this period (Pace 1998:83),21 the men in the community would paddle their canoes across the Amazon’s southern channel to sell manioc flour and other farm produce to small traders in the Great Island of Gurupá, or to barter farinha for fish and rice with the residents in the island (Oliveira 1991:72).22 Control of land and other non-valorized or unclaimed resources was not a problem to the people in Jocojó—not at least until the mid-1960s, when lumbering companies, through government concessions and/or “(c)om(m)ission,” entered into the forest lands of Gurupá’s várzea and terra firme, and threatened their continuity with environmental degradation and occasionally, more in the várzea than in the terra-firme, destruction of property, land expropriation and evictions.

21 According to Pace (1998:83), food shortage followed the breakdown of the aviamento system with the rubber bust; the scarcity, he says, persisted despite the increase in subsistence agriculture, because the distribution of food, as all commerce in the town, passed through the aviamento chain, which diverted products to Belém, and only rarely would take the products from the terra firme residents to the island dwellers, or to Gurupá.

22 Most of the land bordering the small streams upriver from Gurupá was “owned” (the land titles were of doubtful legal validity) by a trader and storeowner in the town—the “class” of land/storeowners emerged in Gurupá with the rising prices of rubber in the international markets. The people in the neighborhoods along these streams were clients (freguêsas) of the landowner (Wagley 1964:95). After the rubber industry began to disintegrate, the aviamento system persisted—though in a weaker version and in the hands of independent regional firms, which replaced the foreign export houses that concentrated on rubber—and so did the patron-client relations that characterized it at the level of the riverside towns in Amazonia (cf. Santos 1980:258; Pace 1998:82; Wagley 1964). The landowner advanced goods on credit to the freguêsas in exchange for the monopoly over trade of their entire surplus product. Debts were rarely canceled, because industrial goods were overpriced and farm produce and forest products were bought cheap in relation to urban market rates. Ideally, from the perspective of the landowners, the freguêsas would sell (or consume directly) what they produced, and buy what they needed from the same medium—the stores that landowners maintained in Gurupá. The people in Jocojó recognized the “ownership” of the land by the storeowner, and they were also aware of the risk of eviction whenever their patrons would catch them trading away a portion of their produce. Nonetheless, they resisted. They would go to Gurupá after dark to sell manioc flour to other stores, or they would cross the Amazon, or still go upriver to trading posts to sell and buy at more fair terms. Of course the patrons were aware of what was going on, but there was little that they could do, considering the immensity of the area, to prevent these everyday forms of resistance (Scott 1984) practiced by their clients under cover of night.
The Household

The households in Jocojó consumed mostly that which family labor produced—based on a division of labor between sexes—mainly through shifting cultivation centered on manioc.\(^\text{23}\) Apparently, the continuity of their lifeways—basically the reproduction of their patterns of consumption and cultural values and forms—was their aim. Goods were produced primarily for household consumption, and each household controlled its own productive activities, combining subsistence agriculture,\(^\text{24}\) fishing, hunting, and gathering with a variety of petty forms of market involvement. The bulk of trade was done with the patrons/storeowners in Gurupá, but manioc flour and forest products were also traded with small river traders, the regatões, for large-salted fish, brown sugar, honey, and palm thatch to cover houses.

Occasionally, both in the dry and in the rainy season, some members of the households, often the household heads and/or their eldest sons, would engage in “disguised wage labor,” (Velho 1982:42) tapping rubber or gathering Brazil nut in the Island region or in distant forests, and returning “only in October in time to finish clearing the garden sites and to plant their gardens before the heavy rains begin” (Wagley 1964:71). Temporary work was a major concern of all households, because subsistence agriculture was financed out of the saldo\(^\text{25}\) received in the end of the collecting season.

\(^{23}\) I observed the same division of agricultural tasks noted by Wagley in 1948 during his fieldwork in Jocojó. As he wrote, families worked together in their manioc fields. The clearing of fields, the burning and the coivara (pilling up the brush and digging up the roots after burning the field), were mostly male tasks. Women would always take responsibility for weeding their roças, with the help of other women in the vila. More often than not, husband and wife shared the burden of planting, harvesting tubers and processing manioc flour (Wagley 1964:69).

\(^{24}\) “Subsistence agriculture” implies agriculture for use and for exchange—the manner through which peasants purchase subsistence goods (Roseberry 1976:56).

\(^{25}\) The positive balance paid by the patrons to their ‘workers’ after expenses with food and equipment provided to them during the collecting season were deducted.
Traders would buy their farinha, but, as old Adelino said, “no patron ever advanced household necessities, much less cash, for the production of farinha.” Adelino was also emphatic about the importance of the saldo to sustain the households’ participation in the community’s ceremonial life.

The earnings of the family labor were pooled and controlled by the head of the household, under whose authority all the family worked. He was the coordinator of the work force and the decision-maker concerning production and consumption–all the goods that the family used–according to the reproductive necessities of the household. Talking about their natal family, the Flores, a group of middle-aged male siblings in Jocojó, remembered the drastic changes in their domestic life brought about by their father’s death,

The whole lot of the family changes . . . everything collapses. When the strength of the front is lacking . . . when we lose the leader of our workforce, we become just like a canoe without a keel . . . and we miss the head of our work . . . we miss him very much! (Interview in June 2002)

Labor Mobilization and Internal Differentiation

Although there were gender and age-identified tasks, the division of family labor was not rigid among roceiros in Jocojó, and the parental couple in the household usually bore together the “pains” of agricultural activities. But despite the strong–though never explicitly acknowledged in the people’s discourse–ideal of household autonomy and self-sufficiency, extrahousehold labor was often required at times of labor-intensive agricultural tasks, such as clearing sites for manioc gardens and weeding. In such a small neighborhood, labor was recruited within and beyond the circles of close kin through various kinds of reciprocal arrangements, based on dyadic relations between
compadres,\textsuperscript{26} comadres (co-mothers) and/or neighbors. The direct exchange of labor, locally called \textit{troca-de-dia} (literally, exchange of day) was the most common type of mutual aid between the poorer residents, whereas hired labor was the preferred way of obtaining extrafamily aid by the wealthier roceiros. Here labor was often paid in kind, usually payment of part of the harvest for labor and/or permission to process their manivas at the host’s casa de farinha. Ordinarily, the well-to-do roceiros were the most important source of aid and sustenance to poor residents outside the household.

Fatherless at the age of 10, Georgia, a 75-year-old woman, talked of the story of her life and her work:

My father died before I was 10 years old. Two years later my mother died too. At the time, my three sisters and I were under fifteen years of age, and Gregório, our brother, was still a child. The judge in Gurupá had decided to give us away. Each child would be given to a different family in Gurupá and in other localities nearby. But fortunately uncle Adelino and his family had returned from the seringais in the Jari region soon right after my mother’s funeral. So we sought shelter . . . we asked to live with him. That’s how we got rid of the judge’s cruel decision. When my mother was alive, we had our garden sites cleared and then, without any extra help, we planted, weeded, and sold manioc flour. When we needed a little extra money to make repairs on our house, to buy clothes . . . we collected timbó. On occasion, we participated in the “convites” of João Povo, a man who cultivated large manioc fields on the headwaters of the Jocójó River. When my mother died, the manivas in our little garden had just matured. That’s how we paid for her funeral. From the tubers, we manufactured manioc flour to sell. After her death, Rui Marzagão, who had a trading post at the mouth of the Igarapé Monituba, offered to hire my sisters and I to work at his sítio (we promptly accepted, because, of course, we couldn’t eat at the expense of uncle Adelino). The old man, Rui Marzagão, had all sorts of fruit trees in that sítio, and frequently hired the “mulherada” (women) to clear away the underbrush. We were paid by the task then. When we would finish the job, he would measure the area we had cleared in order to make our payment. Sometimes we traded our labor for the goods he sold at his post; but occasionally we were paid in cash. (Interview in July 2002)

The \textit{convite}, as the cooperative work parties were locally called, was another local cultural form of actualizing the interdependence between households in the

\textsuperscript{26} Co-fathers, the relation between the father of the child and the godparents in the \textit{compadrazgo} system.
neighborhood. On such occasions, the host of the work party “animated” his guests with large quantities of food and drink, and eventually reciprocated the work he had received with a similar amount of physical work. Georgia and other elders in the community insisted that whoever hosted a convite had to return the labor received, irrespective of the person’s socioeconomic status. But because of the very expenses involved, only rarely the well off roceiros in the neighborhood incurred such labor obligation. In my chats with the elderly, the convites of the most advantaged roceiros in the vila were frequently mentioned, the zest with which the man cleared new plots, and women weeded “this many tarefas” each time they participated in these events. Definitely, these men were more successful than their less well off neighbors in putting together this important extrafamily aid.

As mentioned, the households in Jocojó were characterized by a pragmatic “multi-occupationality,” but they were relatively homogeneous in the form, that is to say, every household maintained a similar “mix” of productive activities, taking advantage of opportunities whenever a new one would arise. The wealth differences among households were not based upon their differing commitments to agriculture, extraction of forest products, and temporary, or still permanent migration of families or individuals with the preservation of economic ties to the neighborhood. For the most part, economic differences among households were quantitative. They were expressed in variations in the amount of labor and land controlled by each household. Households with grown-up, unmarried children had substantial amounts of labor available. Land ownership, in turn, was also related to the labor composition of the household. As in other communities of riverine peasant people in Amazonia, in Jocojó, it was the continuous use of land and
resources that characterized “ownership.” Hence, the households that had more labor available controlled a greater amount of land than the households headed by a younger man without a significant pool of young labor, especially male labor (cf. Lima 1992:141-144, 212; 1997:2; Harris 2000:63, 151-152; Chibnik 1994:138).

Thus, socioeconomic differentiation was a function of the households’ place in the developmental cycle—it reflected the changing labor composition of the households over their life cycles. But it would not be true to assume that the affluence of households was short-, not long-lived, as Lima (1997:3) Chibnik(1994:138) and Harris (2000:64) suggest in their ethnographic studies of other riverine peasant groups in Amazonia. From my conversations with the elderly residents, and from Wagley’s (1964) and Galvão’s (1955) comments about the social relationships among roceiro families in Jocojó, it became evident that, by 1948, there already was a crystallization of socioeconomic differences between a small group of prestigious and better-off and a majority of poorer roceiro families in the neighborhood, i.e., between cultivators of large and cultivators of small manioc fields. Second and most important, the wealthiest families in the vila had apparently been able to circumvent the limitations posed by the development of the family units—the “demographic differentiation”(Chayanov 1966) noted by Lima, Harris and Chibnik—through social mechanisms that resulted in the reproduction of their privileged circumstances over time. What is more, this internal differentiation played a critical role in the social reproduction of the peasant group.

In her study of the relationship between kinship and the agricultural labor organization in Nogueira, an upland forest community in the middle Solimões River area, Lima (1997) argues that the system of agricultural production coupled with the definition
of land ownership by labor investment reflect a corporate and egalitarian ideology in which all members of the community have equal rights to access to the main means of production. In addition, she argues that the limiting of land ownership to actual use (usufruct rights) precludes the “freezing” of the internal differentiation, and hence the tendency of polarization of the peasant group towards economic classes (Lima 1997:3). Elaborating on Lima’s proposition, in his Life on the Amazon, Harris (2000) indicates additional sources from which economic and political differentiation derive, other than access to labor and amount of land–ownership of materials (boats, fishing nets, etc.) and animals (cattle and other animals), and different family histories–and, similarly to Lima, claims that economic differentiation should not be exaggerated because of the nature of the developmental cycle of the households, and because of “the density and proximity of kinspeople [that] somewhat diffuses the economic divisions between families” (2000:65). The great importance attached to sharing and giving in Parú, the Amazon floodplain village he studied, and the changes in size and composition over the households’ life cycle, account for the “tendency against concentration of resources that would lead to a split between richer and poorer residents” (2000:65). Concluding his comments on inter-communal differentiation, Harris stresses: “differentiation is as much a product of kinship processes (e.g. household formation cycles, senior authority over junior kinspeople’s labor) as a product of the economic factors.” Furthermore, he argues that the egalitarian sense of collectivity people in Parú feel “also arises out of the recognition of being in the same political position vis-à-vis their interaction with powerful outsiders, such as bosses and traders” (2000:65).
As I wish to demonstrate in the next section, the social system in Jocojó was marked by clear hierarchies of economic advantage that divided householders in the neighborhood, and the less well off roceiros recognized their differential access to powerful outsiders. I believe the term “equalitarian”, as employed by Cohen (1982) in his ethnography of the locality of Whalsay in rural Britain, reflects more closely the social relations within the social unit of Jocojó. By “equalitarian” the anthropologist means “the intentional masking or muting of social differentiation, rather than belief in equality as a moral principle (egalitarianism)” (1982:17).

As in Parú, in Jocojó, family history was an important factor affecting the social and economic position of households. The most affluent family in the vila, the Povos, descended from a man who had been recruited by the army to fight the war against the Paraguayans. He was given legal titles to land by way of compensation for his participation in the war from the beginning to the last moments of the conflict. The second most affluent family, the Marzagãos, whose members lived along the Igarapé Monituba and at the mouth of the Jocojó River, was also regarded by the other families in the vila as “owner” of large tracts of land bordering the Amazon. The family had deeds of possession dating back to the late nineteenth century. This group of close kin descended from a government official in Gurupá, who had fallen for the daughter of a couple of fugitive slaves from Jocojó, and therefore spent most of his life in the neighborhood, leaving title to this long strip of land to the sons and daughters of his informal union. But, as already observed, control of the few large and apparently more fertile tracts of land could not account for wealth differences in the absence of labor. In addition to land, what these two important families seem to have accumulated through their extraordinary
connections with the outer world were productive instruments—for example, griddles for their casas de farinha and large canoes bought in faraway Santarém. Labor availability, then, was a consequence of these advantages, since other families in the vila could not afford the expensive materials necessary to process manioc flour.27

Different from Parú, however, in the case of Jocojó, it can be argued that the reason why clear-cut economic divisions did not persist, or even the development of intravillage differentiation towards the emergence of a group of petty traders and another of near-landless laborers did not occur, lies primarily in the “capitalist environment,” more precisely, it lies in the form of penetration of capital into the Amazon estuary and the way households were engaged by capitalist enterprises as they entered Amazonia to extract raw materials. I will return to this proposition in the final section of this chapter. For now I will concentrate on the social relationships of the most advantaged roceiro households within and outside the neighborhood. First, I will briefly comment on their relationships with the patrons in Gurupá. Then I will concentrate on their relationships with the least advantaged households during the period examined in this section, 1912-1965–basically

27 As these two cases demonstrate, the notion of “private property” was not alien to the people in Jocojó. But it existed alongside of the ideas of “communally owned” forest lands, backwater lagoons and streams, and “individualized family plots,” completing one another according to the principles that define the peasant economic model (cf. Almeida 1988:186-187). As Almeida noted in his study of the different systems of common usufruct rights to land historically engendered by peasant groups in Brazil, mainly peasant groups living in areas of old colonization in the country, “in these systems of social relations, the notion of private property is marked by reciprocity ties and by a multiplicity of mutual obligations between kin groups and neighbors”(1988:187). An interesting example from Jocojó illustrates his point.

At their casa de farinha, the Flores brothers narrated the story of the occupation of their centro in the late 1940s:

When our father decided to open new gardens on this forested edge of terra firme, he asked the owner of this land for his permission. The old man said to my father that he could use the land for as long as he needed. When the old man died, my father asked his son if we could continue clearing the fallows for new fields of manioc in this area. The man kept his father’s word. He graciously allowed us to continue farming here. Then he died, and his children never reclaimed this land, and we continue using it each year we open our roças in the areas our father left to fallow. (Interview in June 2002)
relationships concerning the mobilization of labor, which allowed for the continuity of these well-to-do roceiros’ economic and political privileged positions.

O “Tempo dos Patrões” (The “Time of the Patrons”)

In my conversations with the elderly residents in Jocojó, the past was always referred to as a time of plenty, as opposed to the time of fieldwork, June-August of 2002, when gardens were small, fish and game were scarce, fruit trees were seldom planted in large quantities, and fruit hardly ever widely distributed among friends or neighbors in the community. In their discourse, the idea of plenty was usually associated with existing patron-client relations in the past, the opportunities offered by the aviamento system that characterized them, and the advances of merchandise on credit in particular. The “time of the patrons,” as the idea of “plenty” was articulated in their speech, was a time in which “tinha tudo avortado [sic]” (the peoples’ needs were met with less difficulty than at present times, or things were obtained in more than sufficient amounts). It seemed to me that, in Jocojó, as elsewhere in Brazil (cf. Garcia and Palmeira 2001:65-66), the people experienced the waning of the patrons and the freedom from the constraints imposed by patronage with considerable suffering, not relief. Naturally, even if we take into account the reality of the post-1964 environmental degradation and deterioration, mainly the

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28 In their note on the transformations in the Brazilian agrarian structure in the 20th century, Garcia and Palmeira (2001) tell about the historical process that eventuated in drastic alterations in the traditional forms of domination in rural areas of Brazil’s Northeast and Center-South regions after 1950. Such alterations were triggered by a combination of economic and sociopolitical factors, such as the unfavorable evolution of commercial crops’ prices in the international markets, and the promulgation of a new legislation to regulate the labor market. The obligation to remunerate agricultural workers in cash payments according to the “minimum wage” after 1963 resulted in the eviction of peasant families from the latifundia. The peasants experienced the waning of the traditional forms of labor recruitment, which were based on the practice of granting peasants the use of parcels of land to cultivate crops for their subsistence, as a loss, decadence. They expressed the consequent decline of their material conditions as the “times when the patrons became stingy.” These new times, when the peasant householders had to learn to manage their family economies on their own, i.e., without the “protection” of the patrons, were contrasted with a past when the patrons were “generous,” though they obligated the peasants to work according to the plantation interests and needs (2001:65).
depletion of fish stocks, and the actual impoverishment of the riverine peasants on the Amazon estuary, these are undeniably idealized representations of the past, especially given the changes in the aviamento system following the breakdown of the rubber industry in the first decade of the 1900s. Yet, despite any idealization of the past, the sense of loss in the people’s discourse was unequivocal.

As said earlier (note 19, above), when the connections of patrons in Gurupá with export firms in the capital loosened, the patrons continued buying reduced amounts of rubber in addition to Brazil nuts, timber–beams cut from valuable wood species on the Amazon várzeas–timbó vines, salted pirarucu, and andiroba and ucuúba seeds and oil, all through the old aviamento system. Although their stocks and capacity to advance goods on credit to their clients were indeed limited then, they managed to maintain near monopoly over the commercialization of their clients’ produce by means of traditional practices and strategies to secure their personal loyalty and clientship, including displays of liberality to the communities in the interior, such as straightforward sponsoring, or contributing to the festivities to commemorate saints, and various forms of interpersonal exchange, from granting aid to the heads of families in difficulties–those critical life situations such as illnesses and death–to taking responsibility for the education of the sons of their most loyal clients at boarding schools in the town or even in the capital. In this way, as Bourdieu (1977, chapter 4) wrote, the objective truth of the transactions between patrons and clients, which were certainly characterized by exploitation, was

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29 Without international moneys and credit, the “casas aviadoras” (foreign export houses) ceased operations, and independent regional firms–commercial elite who managed to accumulate capital during the rubber boom–replaced them at the regional level. These regional firms, however, were only a token of the powerful institution of aviamento trade relations during the rubber boom in Amazonia.

30 Here, I follow Roseberry’s (1976) use of the concept “exploitation” in its widest sense “to refer to the appropriation by nonproducers of a portion of the total product of direct producers” (1976:45). Patron-
disguised, transfigured, euphemized. Through these practices and diverse exhibitions of their “symbolic capital”\(^3\)–their reputation among, and collectively recognized dependability with, clienteles throughout the all-encompassing exchange networks in the interior they controlled–and particularly through the creation of personal bonds with clients, including compadrazgo relations, patron-client relations were misrecognized; they were viewed by the clients as relationships governed by the norms of reciprocity, not dictated by the logic of economic interest (following Bourdieu, “economic” in the narrow sense). Thus, I frequently heard in my conversations with the elderly that Mr. Oscar Santos was a “good patron.” Santos was the brother-in-law and successor of Liberato Borralho, the most important patron and landowner in Gurupá in the first half of the 20\(^{th}\) century. “‘Seu’ Oscar era muito bom patrão, ele era um homem de fazer muita eqüidade com os pobres,”\(^3\) in chorus, old Adelino and Gregório repeated to me. Such misrecognition, added to the actual impoverishment of the roceiros, mainly in the last two decades of the 1900s, accounts for the people’s idealized representations of the “time of

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\(^3\) In his “theory of practice”, Bourdieu (1977) argues that the relation between symbolic and economic (material) capital is of interconvertibility, i.e., ultimately, one form of capital can be “cashed in” for another, or, as he puts it, “the exhibition of symbolic capital (which is always very expensive in economic terms) is one of the mechanisms which (no doubt universally) makes capital go to capital” (1977:181). Symbolic capital accrues from material capital, it is “a transformed and thereby disguised form of physical ‘economic capital’ [that] produces its proper effect inasmuch, and only inasmuch, as it conceals the fact that it originates in ‘material’ forms of capital which are also, in the last analysis, the source of its effects (1977:183).

\(^3\) Mr. Oscar was a good patron; he would always deal fairly and equitably with the poor.
the patrons,” a time in which the people in the communities had at least these ambiguous mediators trading their product for the market.33

Although all households in Jocojó produced agricultural and extractive goods for the market, and even if the smallest roceiro could participate in the exchanges of the market without the mediation of their wealthier neighbors, access to the patrons in Gurupá, and thereby increased participation in the larger economic system was mostly a province of the well-to-do roceiros in the locality. Wagley (1964) insightfully depicts the relationship of “Lobato” (Liberato Borralho) with João Povo, the patriarch of an advantaged family in Jocojó, at the close of the 1940s:

Co-fathers and co-mothers who are steady customers at the Casa Gato [Borralho’s store] are well remembered by Dona Dora [Borralho’s wife]. When they come to

33 Talking about the natural limits between Jocojó and the neighboring community of Maria Ribeira, briefly and powerfully, Armando Ruiz described the complex mixture of orientations underlying the relationships between patrons and freguêsas in rural Gurupá:

Nowadays, nobody here crosses the Jocojó River to collect timbó on the communal forest lands of “Maria Ribeira,” but, in the past, João Povo used to collect timbó on those forests, because Liberato Borralho, the patron who owned the lands where Maria Ribeira is located, favored João Povo, my father. In reality, João Povo’s uncle owned those lands, but the old man died. He left his son, Jesuíno Povo, planting on his fallows. But Jesuíno had this disease, and his debt increased considerably . . . he had to buy the despesinha of his family; he had to maintain his family . . . buy his medicines. . . . So, he had to penhorar a terra (he had to grant Borralho the usufruct of his land for the duration of the loan, i.e. until he paid off his debt). Later he died, and his family couldn’t work hard enough to pay Borralho that huge debt. But even if he hadn’t died, you know . . . he would have lost the land anyway . . . he wouldn’t have the means to pay off that debt. That’s how many localities here ended up in the hands of the rich. Those ricaços [“aço” is an augmentative affix, “ricaço” means very rich, literally; here it refers to the powerful patrons/storeowners] took hold of the land of so many families in this area by means of this thing they call by the name of “penhora” (conveyance)!

Antônio broke the silence and added, “They were maranhenses (born in the State of Maranhão), Borralho and Oscar Santos.” Thinking I was concluding his words, I said to myself – maranhenses and greedy, crafty! As if reading my thoughts, and perhaps to remind me that his ways and values were different from mine, Armando immediately replied:

Ah! But they were a nossa valência [our only source of support] . . . Gurupá had a very weak commerce at that time. . . . Borralho and Oscar were practically the only patrons there that had the merchandise we needed (the household necessities that they obtained through sales of their own goods or labor) . . . and they used to give us work . . . serviço pelo mato [literally, service in the forests, here the phrase means work at extracting of forest products], you know . . . all the timbó they would buy, the latex, the milk from massaranduba trees . . . (Interview in July, 2003)
trade, they are offered coffee or a meal in her house. João Povo, for example, the neighborhood leader on the Igarapé Jocojó, is Dona Dora’s co-father. She and Lobato stood sponsors at the baptism of João Povo’s eldest son. Whenever João Povo comes to Itá, he eats a meal at Dona Dora’s house. She respects her co-father and will not listen to the gossip regarding João Povo’s complex family affairs (he has maintained both a wife and a mistress for years). João Povo sent his son to live with Lobato and Dona Dora so that the boy might attend school in town. For this he paid the boy’s godparents nothing, and when the son finally returned to Jocojó to live Dona Dora complained, half in jest, half seriously, “My co-father stole our god-child from us.” João Povo has brought many customers to the Casa Gato, and he is a valuable co-father to the owner of the Casa Gato. Nowadays, the people of Jocojó tend to buy and sell at other stores and trading posts, and Dona Dora freely complains to her co-father for allowing “his people” to do so. (1964:158)

According to Wagley and Galvão the prestige of the leaders in Jocojó, which, as shown above, was recognized by powerful outsiders, was due to a combination of facts—they were among the longer established residents in the neighborhood, each headed a numerous family, and they were the best economically positioned roceiros in the locality. Such prestige was reflected in their functions in the organization of the feasts on the day of the saints. Just as in the town, in every neighborhood in Gurupá’s rural interior there were religious brotherhoods (irmandades) dedicated to saints. Each neighborhood had three to five religious brotherhoods, the most important of which was the one that focused on the cult of the local patron saint. The affluent roceiros played prominent roles in the brotherhoods; they made up their executive board (Diretoria), and were responsible for the formalities, and contributed to the upkeep, of the saint’s festivals, which constituted the high days of communal life. It was their prerogative to control the ceremonial funds, which consisted of the voluntary annual contributions from all families in the neighborhood, the membership dues, and the proceeds from the auctions of objects
donated to the saints. Definitely fungible, these ceremonial funds were handy the year around.34

The prestigious roceiros also controlled the few larger tracts of cultivable terra firme in the community’s territory. As the elderly in Jocojó emphasized in our conversations, “the manioc fields of the richer were essential for the maintenance of the poorer residents in the neighborhood”—widows with children, unmarried mothers, orphans, incoming relatives of residents, and other land-poor householders who had little or nothing more than the labor-power of their wives to rely on. Armando Ruiz and Vinicius talked about this essential ajuda (aid, help) that the privileged roceiros provided to their poorer neighbors:

The marisqueiros [here meaning both small river traders and floodplain dwellers] would arrive at the small port of the neighborhood, and they would find only a little farinha to buy. Then they would paddle to S. João [the locality on the headwaters of the Jocojó River where João Povo cultivated his manioc fields]. There, they would always find the large quantities of farinha they needed. Except for Sundays, which the people often dedicated to finding a paca, or to fishing on the Amazon River, not a single day would pass that the poorer from Jocojó and from Pucuruí [another small neighboring community of slave descendants] wouldn’t work at weeding, or clearing, or planting the manivas of the richer. That’s how they managed to buy the despesinha of their families. Even the marisqueiros, if they were short of cash or merchandise, would sometimes stay at João Povo’s and work on his roças for up to one month. (Interview in July 2002)

34 Talking about the difficult economic situation of her eldest son, one of the poorest residents in Jocojó and procurador (attorney for the saint) of St. Sebastian, the less important among the five saints in the locality and whose festival is the only one celebrated in the meager rainy season, old Ignacinha explicited what was only tacitly agreed by villagers:

My son said that he is going to pass this position to another person in the community. Nowadays things are very different from what they were in the past—the procurador doesn’t “cuida do dinheiro do santo,” (literally, take care of the money of the saint, the donations and membership dues paid by the ‘brothers’) as they used to do before. Less than one month after the saint festival, the people begin borrowing the money, and the procurador has no alternative than to surrender the little amount that could serve as his poupançinha (little savings) throughout the year, you know . . . . (Interview in June 2002)
Hence, it was this category of “poor,” especially young unmarried men, that formed the nexus of labor which the well-to-do householders mobilized to work on their large fields not only through hired labor, but also through reciprocal arrangements, such as the convite, or even through informal adoption. But although the parties involved in these types of extrafamily labor perceived these arrangements as ajuda, it is undeniable that there was an imbalance in the exchanges between them.\(^\text{35}\) And it is this imbalance that permitted the reproduction of the structure of the social relations through which the privileged economic position of the land-rich was maintained. Yet, as Mintz (1973) wrote in his note on the definition of the peasantry, “the poor permit themselves to be exploited to remain peasants” (1973:94).

Calling for middle range definitions of peasantries and peasant societies with a view towards bridging the gap between real peasant societies “on the ground,” and the more abstract definitional statements adequate to describe all of them, Mintz underscores the need to understand the peasants in terms of their internal differentiation—not all in the sector are preys, some among them are commonly among the predators, he says. What is more, he adds, “it cannot be assumed that the more powerful segments of the peasantry are necessarily changing the situation by the use they make of the less powerful then

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\(^{35}\) This observation was made by Smith (1979) in his study of socioeconomic differentiation among Huasicanchinos, rural-based petty commodity producers in Central Peru. Just as in Huasicancha, in Jocojó, hired labor also involved the exchange of qualitatively distinct commodities (labor vs. goods). Labor was paid in kind; a small part of the harvest was given to the poorer roceiros so that they could fabricate manioc flour in the ovens at the casas de farinha of the richer. In the case of the institution “convite,” even if the richer returned the same amount of physical labor they had received, sending one of their “sons” to replace them, because the productivity of their land plots was higher than the productivity of the plots of the poorer householders, and since labor was measured on a simple time basis—a day for a day—the institution also allowed for exploitation of the poorer by the richer roceiros. Thus, it would not be wrong to say that the relationship between the host and his guests was exploitative, because the labor given to the better-endowed land plots produced more value than the labor given to the less productive plots, “and the difference would be a surplus expropriated from the less productive farmer” (Smith 1979:293).
they; often, thoroughgoing ‘peasant’ and ‘traditional’ qualities of the small community or
the peasant society depend on just such practices” (1973: 94).

It would be inadequate to subsume the wealthier roceiros in Jocojó under the
category of “predators,” though. As said earlier, the development of intravillage
differentiation towards the emergence of a group of petty traders and another of near-
landless laborers did not occur. But the economic distance between the most and the less
advantaged roceiros was not minimal—though it was a far cry from the distance that
separated these advantaged householders from the local elites/patrons in Gurupá. The
roceiros that regularly worked as day laborers in the manioc fields of their better off
neighbors were not only well aware of these differences in economic position between
them and their “employers,” but also counted on them to continue providing for their
families, and consequently remain peasants. Therefore it would be a mistake to
emphasize the exploitative aspect of these intravillage “hierarchical” relationships. For
the most part, these associations were conceived of as symmetrical exchanges between
those needing to attain the subsistence level and those in need of labor.36

The poorer residents would recur to day labor in their own neighborhood because it
was convenient to them—the work didn’t require leaving their families and their small
gardens for long periods, and this is precisely what men avoided when their children were
young. Likewise, as fieldwork progressed and I listened to adult men of different

36 Robertson (2001) makes a similar observation about the institution of sharecropping among peasant
groups. Social theorists at both ends of the ideological spectrum often view the institution negatively; those
leaning towards left end insist on the exploitative nature of the relation between parties, whereas liberals
emphasize its transitory nature. The practice of sharecropping, those on the right end argue, is inefficient
and irrational, because it contradicts the fundamental motive of human action: self-interest. For this reason,
either party lacks motivation to innovate. According to Robertson, however, recent close examination of
contracts within different localities reveal that, instead of “feudalism” or low yields, what is often found is
a “fluid and versatile range of collaborations,” (2001:171) some equitable, some less so. The efficiency of
sharecropping is mostly due to this flexibility, he concludes; hence its historical persistence.
generations recount the stories of their lives, and observed daily interactions between householders, it became evident that, back in the first decades of the 1900s just as at the time of fieldwork, nothing could be more remote from their idea of an appropriate life of a roceiro than having his time and labor controlled by another villager.

Thus, my material suggests a slightly different interpretation of internal differentiation. Lima’s, Harris’s and Chibnik’s arguments are all somewhat similar. They agree that socioeconomic differentiation was more related to the household’s place in the life cycle than to village social stratification, and hence that intravillage economic differences were short, not long lived. My argument is that different family histories, combined with diverse arrangements through which the land-rich roceiros obtained labor from their land poor neighbors–thus circumventing the constraint posed by the development cycle of the household–accounted for enduring social stratification in Jocojó.

Yet it would be wrong to underestimate the reciprocal foundations of this stratified social system. Just as Lima interprets the repeated consanguineous family unions within communities of riverine peasants in the Solimões area as indicators of the people’s interest in maximizing kinship ties so as to escape deprivation, I interpret the attitude of roceiro householders in Jocojó towards intravillage economic differences and social stratification as a response to depeasantization. Similarly to Mintz’s reconstituted Caribbean peasantry, the production of these roceiros was peripheral, marginal at best in reproducing their lifeways as independent petty commodity producers, but in essence it represented “a relatively mature distancing of direct producers from control of capital”
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(Nugent 1993: 188), a reaction to sociopolitical encroachment in their lives, usurpation of their land, and eventually dependence upon wages.37

1966-1996, Timber Extraction: From Increased Participation in the Regional and Global Markets to Penury on the Margins

Between the mid-1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the rural areas on the estuary began to experience the consequences of the State’s efforts to modernize Amazonia. International lumbering firms arrived in Gurupá to exploit its floodable forests, and established relations with the people in the rural neighborhoods through the mediation of existing patron-client relations. The peasants living along the streams on the Amazon estuary were forced into timber extraction by patron-landowners, now linked to the timber sector, to whom they were tied through patron-client relations, reinforced by compadrazgo ties. “We paddled to Gurupá with our little produce, and ‘Seu Oscar’ (the storekeeper and ‘owner’ of the land in Jocojó) would say that he could keep it as a favor, only to lighten our canoes’ load on our trip back to the village,” 38 said Julinho Povo, a resident in the várzea area of the Jocojó River. Actually, according to the accounts of the people in Jocojó, it is as if timber had become the ‘official’ currency in this Amazon area.

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37 Sider, in his contribution to the collection of essays that explore the relationship between interest and emotion within family and wider kinship groups (1984), also interprets the organization of production along community lines where merchant capital is the dominant capital as evidence of resistance to external domination. He argues that, within the framework of merchant capital, groups that direct their work process, i.e. those who do not work under direct supervision of agents of those who appropriate the surplus, organized themselves along lines of family, kin, or collectivity not only to produce what they must but also, in conjunction with resistance, to continue to do so. In rural Amazonia, merchant capital was the prevailing form of capital at least until the 1970s, though some students of the region argue it still predominates in certain Amazon areas (see Cleary 1993; Nugent 1993).

38 Reacting to the changed economic circumstances following the collapse of rubber exports, and to a rising inflation rate that had begun in the 1950s, the patron-landowners in Gurupá sought to strengthen their position as purchasers of extraction products and agricultural produce, purveyors of imported goods, and suppliers of credit. In control of the terms of trade, they drastically underpriced their clients’ produce. As a result, the clients’ access to their own surplus diminished. Eventually, this contractual inferiority had the effect of pushing them into timber extraction, since their access to basic necessities was virtually suspended (cf. Pace 1992:717; 1998:105).
Even the regatóes and the few trading post owners that had not gone out of business at the time would prefer to trade manufactured goods for timber.39

O “Tempo da Comunidade” (The “Time of the Community”)

The people in Jocojó referred to the period that followed the “time of the patrons” as the “time of the community.” It was Padre Chico, an Italian Catholic priest that came to attend the church in Gurupá in the early 1970s, “who founded the ‘community’,” they say. As said earlier (chapter 2, note 19), the Catholic Church was possibly the most important component of Brazil’s political landscape contributing to the mobilization of the peasantries for improved living conditions, land and resource rights. It was certainly a key factor affecting the structure of the relations between capital and labor throughout the interior of the country (see Garcia and Palmeira 2001). The Liberation Theology-oriented priest arrived in Gurupá when profound transformations were taking place on the Amazon estuary. As said, in the first years after lumbering firms began operations on the Amazon’s south channel, they used the existing patron-client relations in the town to engage the river dwellers’ labor. This contributed to the lingering of these relations well into the early 1980s. Through the old schemes of patronage, patrons maintained their hold on their clienteles’ production, labor and political affiliations—the flow of gifts to the neighborhoods was busier in times of religious festivals, mainly in periods of municipal and state elections. Chico played a role in their waning, though. Noticing this intertwining of religion and politics, he tried to intervene by firing at what he and his

39 The major lumbering firms operating on the Amazon estuary were Brumasa (Bruynzeel Madeiras S/A, from the Netherlands); Eidai (Eidai do Brasil Madeiras S/A, Japanese); Madeira Tropical; Macasa; Companhia Amazonia Madeiras e Laminados (Georgia Pacific) (Oliveira Jr. 1991).
predecessors considered to be pagan customs of excessive drinking of *cachaça*,\(^{40}\) dancing the *gambá*,\(^{41}\) and the resulting fights likely to occur between participants on such occasions, when the majority of adults were often drunk and never quite sober.

In some of my boat trips from Gurupá to the vila, I accompanied Lucas, one of the “Ruizes,” the most numerous family in Jocojó. A man of few words when sober, he would become a talkative and spirited person after his visits to town. Every acquaintance he would bump into when running his errands provided a break for *that last shot of cachaça*. Bobbing on the Amazon River, just he and I on his boat, he talked about the politics of religion, the ways in which Padre Chico had influenced the changes in the power structure both in Gurupá and in the rural neighborhoods. “Padre Chico,” Lucas once said, “did not oppose our dances, drums and drinking in excess on the festivals as much as he opposed the maneuvers of the patrons to secure political support to ‘the right.’” But the elderly resisted his attempts to interfere in the management of the community affairs . . . o velho Oscar era muito chegado com aqueles que tinham mais uma condiçãozinha, né?” (Old Oscar was closely related to the better off in the neighborhood”).\(^{42}\) There was no civic authority in Jocojó. Yet the patrons in Gurupá viewed those well off roceiros who controlled the religious brotherhoods – Lucas referred to them as “the elderly”–as the “chefes do povoado” (as the rulers of the neighborhood).

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\(^{40}\) A strong alcoholic drink made from sugarcane, which is consumed throughout Brazil, especially by the poorer classes.

\(^{41}\) Gambá is how the samba, a dance of African origin, is locally known in the neighborhoods in rural Gurupá, particularly in the communities of slave descendants.

\(^{42}\) The Catholic Church, through the agency of Padre Chico and the progressive Base Ecclesiastic Communities (the CEBs), was key in the organization of the neighborhoods in the interior of Gurupá. The victory of the Workers Party in the municipal election held in 1993 was largely a result of Chico’s and the CEBs efforts to spread a certain “working-class” ideology throughout the area, thus accentuating the loss of power of the influential traditional elites in the town, principally the local patrons, who were already on the wane due to economic changes underway (see Pace 1998, Chapters 8 and 9).
They were the most conservative in the neighborhood and they valued local autonomy as firmly as householders rejected other villagers’ meddling in their household’s business and their families’ privacy. “In the ‘time of the patrons,’ the Catholic Church had little penetration in Jocojó,” Lucas repeated to me.

The community of Jocojó is known among affiliates of the Workers’ Party (PT) in the town for its strong opposition to the ideological influence of Father Julio and the CEBs. From my conversations with the elderly and other adults in the vila, it became clear to me that until the mid-1980s, the attitude of the majority of villagers towards the Church was still characterized by indifference. Actually, it seemed that it had been like that since the foundation of the neighborhood. Moreover, contrary to Oscar, the storeowner in Gurupá and godparent of at least one child of each of the advantaged roceiros in the vila, the only thing the Catholic Church had to offer to the people was the sacraments, but of all the rites of Christianization, only baptism was of relevance to them.

Between the early 1970s and the mid-1990s the rural communities in Gurupá experienced a new and destructive form of penetration of capital in their area, degradation of their environments, the waning of the patrons, the leveling of intravillage economic distance, emigration of young men and women to faraway Amazonian industrial enclaves, and eventually increased impoverishment. It didn’t take long for the people in Jocojó to begin associating the “time of the community” with the unfortunate brand of fracasso (failure, decline, deterioration).

**Transformations in Sociality, Domesticity and Morality**

As international lumbering firms opened regional branches in riverside towns on the estuary, their representatives sought to by-pass patrons, and interact directly with
residents in the várzeas of the Amazon and its tributaries in the estuarine region. By the 1970s, the majority of the households in Jocojó had at least one member working at timber harvesting. The prices of manioc flour and less important forest and river products were miserably low; hence many families neglected subsistence agriculture. Because payments by timber firms were made in cash, and because there always was demand to meet increased productivity—in the 1970s firms proliferated on the estuary—many household heads turned to the market in Gurupá to buy the same items that they were no longer producing with domestic labor, or that they were not producing sufficiently to meet the needs of their families. The cost of household and production supplies became increasingly cheaper.

This was a period of massive social change in Jocojó. One important change took place in the system of land tenure. Mentioning a conversation he had with Gregório, a Jocojó native, Pace (1998) says that Jocojó had grown to its limit by the 1960s, and that the community had used the land surrounding the village to its capacity. In addition, a swamp blocked access to more distant land. This, combined with the low prices of agricultural produce and the information about new opportunities to work for wages in the Jari tree plantation, opened in 1978, explained that, by 1986, half of the households in Jocojó had permanently emigrated to the Jari valley, according to Pace (1998:104). Land was not, and is not, privately owned in Jocojó. The system of tenure is based on usufruct.

43 In his book, The Struggle for Amazon Town: Gurupá revisited (1998), Richard Pace says, “today large extraction firms deal directly with trading post merchants and landowners and eliminate middle positions (import/export houses, aviadores). In doing this the firms deal in cash payments, not in merchandise as the old rubber traders did. Merchandise passes through the traditional channels among import/export firms, aviadores, and trading posts.” (Pace 1998:115) Talking to the people in Jocojó, however, it became clear to me that these voracious firms did make a deliberate move to identify ‘brokers’ (Wolf 1956:1075-1076) who were residents of the riverine communities, and thereby eliminate the merchants from their scheme to exploit the forests on the Amazon estuary.
rights. The land is a communal resource that families have the right to exploit. As said earlier, until the early 1970s, all families cultivated their manioc fields in the proximity of the village. By 1973, however, Gregório himself, and Armando and Maria Ruiz, the parental couple of the largest group of siblings in the community, had occupied two large interfluves in the community’s territory, their respective centros, Umarizal and Açaizal. In my conversations with old Gregório and Armando Ruiz, I came to realize that their move meant more than Gregório had told to Pace. It was not just the exhaustion of the land around the village that led to their decision to establish separate centros–and casas de farinha–from the other households in the community. Rather, relations between families in Jocojó at the time of the timber boom became somewhat strained. It is likely that their concentration on timber extraction led to competition, and not cooperation, as is the case of festive work parties and other forms of reciprocal exchange of labor in the performance of agricultural tasks. If until 1973 the manioc fields of each household were divided into disconnected strips that were interspersed with the fields belonging to other households, and use of different tracts of land was essentially temporary, the new division of the territory of the community in centros controlled by extended families–the situation I encountered at the time of fieldwork–indicated a tendency towards crystallization of usufruct rights into de facto ‘property’ rights (see Lima 1992).

Talking about his decision to occupy his centro, the Açaizal, Armando Ruiz explained to me, “naquele tempo não era como agora não, a gente podia se colocar em qualquer parte, não tinha esse negócio de se cadastrar no INCRA, no ITERPA” (things were different back then; we could place ourselves and open our gardens in whatever corner in the community’s land, and we didn’t have to obtain legal title to our tracts of
land from ITERPA, or INCRA.” 44 Despite the efforts of the Workers’ Party and the Rural Workers’ Union in Gurupá to make clear to roceiros and varzeiros in the rural communities the legal efficacy of the document provided by INCRA declaring that the petitioner occupies a land tract in a rural area, the majority of the rural dwellers in the municipality thought this declaration corresponded to a legal title to land. The document is important, however, because it qualifies women and men as rural workers, upon completion of 55 and 60 years of age, respectively, to receive the rural pensions paid by the federal government. As other villagers in Jocojó, Armando considered that the declaration issued by INCRA established his centro as the private property of his family. The idea of “private property” here was no longer marked by reciprocity ties and by a multiplicity of mutual obligations between kin groups and neighbors as before. Rather, it was informed by the ideology of capitalism.

But increased involvement in the market economy through participation as workers in timber extraction, and increased reliance on the market for purchase of food items, affected not only the system of land tenure, but also the patterns of economic cooperation within households in Jocojó. The new way of earning a living was followed by changing relations in the household. As men concentrated on timber extraction and neglected subsistence agriculture, what and how much the family ate or consumed depended largely on the “productivity” of their labor, (i.e., more forest felling). Except for temporary migration of adult men to collect forest products, up until then men’s and women’s work were significantly complementary and perceived as equally relevant to the reproduction of the household unit. Husband and wife had to cooperate in the performance of

44 ITERPA and INCRA are the land tenure agencies of the State of Pará and the federal government, respectively. ITERPA is the acronym for “Pará State Land Institute.”
agricultural tasks. Now practically circumscribed to child care and tending small manioc fields, women complained that they felt less and less important, and ever more worried that their husbands would drink away their pay in Gurupá. Felling trees was the province of men after all. And, as Zilda, a woman in her forties once said, “nossa roça é a nossa segurança” (our garden/manioc fields are our security), namely, they are what they can rely on that depends little or nothing on the uncertain “outer world.”

As noted earlier, households in Jocojó were income-pooling units of production. And they remained so even after the young unmarried men, encouraged by the Jari Project’s demand for unskilled labor, left home to work for wages. During fieldwork, only three of these “wage-workers” visited the community—two were young women that worked as domestic servants in the houses of white-collar employees in the industrial complex, i.e., they joined the mass of riverine peoples working in the informal economy in Amazonian towns and cities. Although I didn’t observe or hear of any conflicts between fathers and their migrant children in the period, on different occasions during informal conversations and semi-structured interviews, I noticed a certain resentment on the part of the fathers for not having been able to provide for their families and avoid sending their sons and daughters to look for work in the faraway industrial complex. It seemed to me that this feeling of impotence was compounded with their feeling less sure of their authority in the household.

At the level of the community, the crucial change occurred with the withdrawal of the lumbering companies to other areas in the lower Amazon, where dense stands of commercially valuable hardwoods were still available. Just as the patrons in Gurupá, those better-off householders that had been involved in ongoing relations of exchange
and patronage with their less well off neighbors also experienced decline. When firms were operating in the várzeas on the estuary, these roceiros managed to secure their privileged economic position by acting as brokers between the community and the representatives of the firms. They also began to establish themselves as petty traders, buying logs from their neighbors for a slightly smaller amount than they would receive from the compradores of the firms, and selling merchandise they would buy in the town for relatively higher prices than they had originally obtained. Waning with the patrons, or shortly after them, these advantaged roceiros could no longer provide “employment” for their less advantaged neighbors and thus mitigate the effects of inequalities of land and differences in lifestyle in the community. By cultivating the reciprocal foundations of these “hierarchical” relations, the prestigious roceiros had hitherto helped the neighborhood to remain viable and relatively self-sufficient.

**Merchants of a Different Breed: Transformation of Social and Economic Relations Within and Between the Community and the “Outer World”**

I introduced the discussion about internal differentiation in this chapter, arguing that the reason why clear-cut economic divisions did not persist in Jocojó, and the development of intravillage economic differentiation towards the emergence of a group of petty traders and another of land poor laborers did not occur should be looked for in the form of penetration of capital on the Amazon estuarial zone and the way capitalist firms engaged peasant domestic units as they entered Amazonia. As noted earlier, although lumbering firms operating on the estuary used the labor force available in rural communities and remunerated these riverine peasants *qua* workers for their services, they did it, first, through the mediation of local storeowners, and then through the partnership between compradores and brokers in the communities. Thus, capitalist firms acted as if
they were merchants—they remained outside the process of production, and they did not incorporate the peasantries *per se*, but absorbed them as workers (Nugent 1993:201).

But this new extractive sector was of unprecedented, matchless scale. First, highly capitalized, they advanced ever-greater amounts of cash, not food and production supplies, for Amazon precious woods. Second, they were not buying cheap to sell dear on international markets; they were agents of industrial capital, capitalist institutions using the force of money in a largely demonetized economy to engage and exploit a supply of cheap labor. Third, they were much less concerned in establishing durable ties with loyal clients; rather, they hired men from different riverine communities to extract timber, as they advanced into the Amazon valley, ripping off the old growth forests on its várzeas. Fourth, while merchant capital was conservative of the peasantries in Amazonia—they were able to combine their seasonal work at tapping rubber, or collecting other forest products for exchange with subsistence agriculture, fishing and other activities that comprised their diverse repertoire of petty forms—lumbering firms’ operations, interested in the forests proper, not just in forest products, effected significant deterioration of different ecosystems on which the riverine peasants depend to make a living, compromising their continuity as independent petty commodity producers. As Nugent (1993) eloquently puts it, “one of the striking features of Amazon modernization is that, in some senses, it does the opposite of what it claims. Rather than improving the possibilities for the peasantry, it is systematically blocking social reproduction, and in blocking social reproduction in this way, the modernizationist strategy becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, producing in its wake an amorphous peasantry whose stagnant economy will have to survive on the leavings of a pillaged landscape” (1993:9).
Furthermore, high mobility was critical for achieving the goal of this particular capitalist sector: quick profit. Resources were exhaustible. As Bunker (1985) wrote, in extractive systems in Amazonia, the unit costs of “production” (extraction) tends to rise as the scale of production increases, because of the difficulty to access timber in the upland forests, far from the riverbanks. But this “direct variation” (larger volume-higher cost!) was just a specificity of this extractive activity. The fact that this odd variation (from the typically capitalist perspective) made perfect sense to the riverine peasants/petty commodity producers in Jocojó—that is after all their logic—just served to smooth ever further the cash infused transactions between brokers in the community and these welcome, liberal “patrons.” But definitely not agents of circulation, lumbering firms were simply buying means of production to sell products in their countries of origin, benefiting from the existing socioeconomic conditions in the Amazon—a backward region in an underdeveloped country, where the price of land and labor were extremely low, and raw materials very cheap.

But the question remains. Would the well off roceiros in Jocojó have chosen the road to petty trading and then become petty capitalists, as an anthropologist informed by Leninist theory would suggest? Of course, it would be a mistake to speculate about the destiny of these men, had the macro conditions existing in this Amazon area allowed the process of social differentiation to continue. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to assume that these roceiros didn’t see themselves as having mobility possibilities independent of their communities. Rather, from my conversations with the elderly and with men and women who were members of the former well-endowed households in Jocojó, it seemed to me that the heads of these most advantaged families saw their fortunes very much tied
to the fortunes of their kin, friends, and neighbors, and they were always the first to make sure that, in their economic, social, and ritual relations of cooperation with their less advantaged fellow villagers, the balance of rights and obligations, costs and benefits would reach a rough equilibrium. Now I return to the time I shared with the community during fieldwork.

**Jocojó Revisited**

In the 1990s, the people in Jocojó extracted timber only sporadically from their upland forests; difficulties with the transportation of logs, little demand, and depletion of the forests along the Amazon led the majority of the householders in the community to retreat to subsistence agriculture.\(^{45}\) Another period of weakened external relations had begun as lumbering firms withdrew from the estuary. Although the people were able to maintain access to land and water resources, the preconditions for the maintenance of their diverse and flexible economy of agriculture, fishing, hunting, temporary work at extraction of forest products were sporadic, if existing at all, at the time of fieldwork. The selling of their agricultural produce was blocked by the lack of an internal market for food in Gurupá. Most of the food consumed by the urban and rural residents was imported by the main retailers in the town from Central Brazil, or from other Amazon areas, mostly the areas where large-scale agriculture established in southern Pará. The national and international interest for Amazonian hardwood species was steady, but the large concentrations of species of commercial interest on Gurupá’s várzeas and terra-firme forests were virtually nonexistent, or what there was left of them was located in

\(^{45}\) In his article “Social conflict and political activism,” Pace reminds us, "resource depletion has historically disrupted Gurupá’s economy on numerous occasions (see Bunker 1985:60-65), the cumulative effect of past and present reductions and depletion has severely threatened present-day (sic) subsistence patterns (1992:720).
areas of difficult access in upland forested areas. Fish stocks were depleting with the continued activity of commercial fishing boats on the estuary, and continued slash-and-burn agriculture in a limited area had endangered the health of their soils and forests. Food security was far from the reality of the people in Jocojó. Finally, opportunities to work for wages in the capitalist enclaves in Amazonia were rare for unskilled labor at the time, and it seems they will remain so. The people had barely retained the means to provide for their (infra)subsistence. The elderly had their rural pensions – tokens of a welfare state on the wane in Brazil—and with the support of the pensions, close kin could provide a social safety net among themselves. Yet the people could hardly hold on to eat a square meal a day. It looked as if their resilient economy had reached its limit.

Having portrayed their economy and now outlined their historical career, should I call them “semipeasants” (Kearney 1996:93), or (infra)subsistence producers, or still external semiproletarians (de Janvry 1981:116, cited in Kearney 1996:114) instead? The answer, I believe, is no. They were facing increasing impoverishment and isolation, but their ways of living, thinking and acting remained essentially peasant ways. And, it seems to me, that this is what transpired in the discussion narrated in Chapter 2. Zeca, a man in his early forties, and his nephew Tiago, a student at the Casa Familiar Rural, talked about economizing; the uncle repelled his nephew’s alien ideas about “making savings” for family investments, defending what he saw as the most important value of community life: sharing.

But rather than seek to understand what is it that made them keep this cognitive orientation, I think that it is important to attempt to understand why in the midst of capitalist development these people remained “invisible.” One crucial explanation offered
by Nugent (1993) is the complexity of their livelihoods—the riverine peasants in Amazonia remained “invisible” because the extensification (sic) of their livelihoods matches the scale of their resource base, he says. True. From the vantage point of policy makers and agents of state development in Brazil, this was not the way people should interact with land in modernized Amazonia. Clearing the forest—that was the sign of occupation the State chose to acknowledge at the time of modernization. That was how land should be put to use.

“Nothing will prevent us,” proclaimed Brazilian president Getulio (sic) Vargas in 1940, “from accomplishing . . . the conquest and the domination of the great valleys of equatorial torrents, transforming their blind force and extraordinary fertility into disciplined energy” (Kuehls 1996: xiii, emphasis in the original). The visionary President of the Republic claimed the administrative ordering of nature and society, which Scott terms “High modernism.” Discussing how modern states got a handle on their subjects and their environments, in his Seeing Like a State(1998), Scott says that High modernism is one element of a particularly pernicious combination of three elements that resulted in the most tragic episodes of state development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The second element is the unrestrained use of power of the modern state as an instrument for achieving the design of high modernism, and the third is a weakened or prostrate civil society that lacks the capacity to resist these plans (1998:89). This unfortunate conjunction could very well characterize the plans for Amazon modernization and development—an ideology moving state officials, countless state bureaucracies to concretize it, and thousands of powerless and “invisible” peasants and indigenous
peoples who lived in “the great valleys of equatorial torrents,” “empty space” no less, that
the state set about to transform and discipline when the military took power in Brazil.

But what does the clearing of forests attest to the “disciplining designs” of the
state? It confirms the sole attitude towards nature recognized by the state at the time: the
capitalist attitude. “That voracious, even rapacious, attitude toward the material world . . .
that powerful point of view of nature as object, the obedient servant and uncompromising
treasury of man” (Heilbroner 1985:135). This is the right way of thinking and acting, the
right orientation to nature that is required for that limitless invasion of the world for the
purpose of surplus accumulation. And it should be no surprise that the clearing of forests
was precisely what entitled individuals to private property in the period of Amazon
“authoritarian modernization” (Almeida 1990:227).

That is, it seems to me, the reason why the historical peasantries in Amazonia, who
had engendered tenure systems based on communal usufruct rights to land and whose
relationship with their environments was characterized by “mutual constitution,” not
objectification or indifference, were excluded from the plans to modernize and develop
the region. That is the reason why their perspectives were cast to the side or excluded,
and they remained invisible. What Nugent does not acknowledge or emphasize
sufficiently in his explanation of their “invisibility,” however, is that this exclusion from
participation in the national or Amazon community was the way the state took care of,
not simply neglected all those groups that offered resistance to the so-called “economic
rationality,” that “transformation of the blind force and extraordinary fertility of the great
valleys of equatorial torrents into disciplined energy,” into private property, large and
deforested, according to the designs of the modern state. To these peoples the Brazilian
state had no plans for the kind of “good life,”—the political life of citizens with basic rights; rather, it hardly permitted that they lived a “bare life,” mere existence.
CHAPTER 4
THE SHIFTING MEANINGS OF “MOVEMENT”

Three men in the community wrote the official story of the founding of Jocojó, which they used to legitimize their land claim. The story is based on interviews with the three oldest men in the community. They described the beginnings of the neighborhood. It was founded by slaves who managed to escape from Gurupá-Miri. They were acquainted with a trading post owner who lived and cultivated the shores of a stream that feeds into the Amazon, the Igarapé Monituba. “Antonio do Monituba,” as the trader was locally known, had learned from them about their constant whippings. On different occasions, the slaves had been brought to work on his gardens under the supervision of Pedro Lima, the cruel foremen in Gurupá-Miri. So Antonio had promised to support them, if they decided to escape. Thus, during a trip of their master, one of the slaves, a man called Halípio, managed to leave the plantation for a hunt. But in reality he intended to look for an out-of-the-way place, where he and his people could establish a safe hideout. After hours walking, he reached an igapó [seasonally inundated forest]. Realizing that that’s where the upland forest ended, he climbed the tallest tree he could find; from the top of that tree he spotted a patch of terra firme on the other side of the igapó. Upon his return to Gurupá-Miri, he told his fellows about this place, and so they invented another hunt to check it. Halípio guided the group. They cut through the large igapó, and finally reached the shore of a small creek. The edge of terra firme that Halípio had told them about appeared on the opposite bank; so the group crossed the creek, climbed up its bank, and confirmed: that was a safe hiding place. Luck was on their side. Antonio do Monituba used to fish in that small creek. He would paddle upstream for about 100 yards, and then paddle back to his point of departure, where the creek narrowed. The slaves took his canoe and set about searching the mouth of the creek. They paddled and walked, and finally, not far from the entrance of the Monituba, they located the creek’s black waters spreading into the white-water Amazon. That should be the outlet of the creek, they said to themselves. But the bush blocked its course. One happy day, the slaves flew to freedom – Halípio, Antonio Francisco, Plácido, Lucas, Maximino, Páscoa . . . all came to hide on the bank of that creek, the Jocojó. [História do Povo de Jocojó, 1999; my translation]

If the place was an ideal shelter from the abuses in the plantation, it also hampered the realization of these fugitive slaves as free rural cultivators, with access to the busy
river trade network of Amazonia. Only Antonio, the merchant, connected them to the world. It took a generation, the time of the coming of age of a gorgeous girl born to a couple of primeirantes, for them to fully enjoy their hard-won “autonomy.” Through affinal ties, the marriage of the girl to the intendente (equivalent to the mayor) of Gurupá, the runaways initiated the transformation of the black-water creek into the now miles-long Jocojó River. When slavery was abolished, the official history of the locality tells, a couple of fearful but bold runaways who had produced the beautiful girl started visiting Gurupá to trade their produce for supplies on their own. Before long, the couple returned to the neighborhood without their “jewel,” now a stunning morena (black woman).

Dazzled with her beauty, the intendente asked the couple for their permission to keep her. Visiting his “in-laws,” he soon learned about their pains—loaded with their cargo—to reach the Amazon. Thus, the story goes, with the support of the official, the families in Jocojó started cutting the creek. Year after year, they devoted their time to cleaning it, from its outlet to its headwaters. It took another generation until the opening of the waterway was completed, and the Jocojó River, as they named it, came into existence (see Raffles 2002 for a similar story of place-making). In more recent times, only in the height of the dry season do the people in the community have to push and drag their canoes to the mouth of the Jocojó. During my fieldwork, nothing in that landscape would reveal it was man-made, dug out of their will to participate in the “grande movimento” (liveliness and activity)—the river trade and, occasionally, according to their self-determination, the commemorations and religious celebrations of the residents in the town.

This story of human agency and place making provides me with a good entrance to the main theme in the present chapter: the politics of the people in Jocojó. The changes in
the realities of their social and material life examined in the previous chapter provide the
necessary background against which the discussion in this chapter unfolds. Here, after
exploring the initial ideas included in the local concept “grande movimento,” the focus
shifts to the main points of articulation of the community with the outside world in the
last quarter of the twentieth century. Concentrating on the interactions of the community
with the two institutions that influenced them at the time of fieldwork: the Catholic
church and FASE, the socioenvironmental NGO active in Gurupá, I seek to assess
whether and how these engagements contributed to change the conditions of existence of
the community and reduce their disenfranchisement. First, I survey their experience with
Padre Chico, a member of the progressive branch of the church that fostered the political
organization of the localities in the interior of the municipality into “communities,” that
is, local social groups in which elected representatives, and, supposedly, independent and
participatory decision-making processes substituted for traditional structures of power
(see note 19, Chapter 2). Second, I resume the discussion that opened this thesis, and
explore the events and discourses around the entrance of FASE in Jocojó to initiate a
community-based forest management project.

As the discussion unfolds, I trace the changes in the villagers’ conceptualization of
“movimento.” Such changes correlate to the periodization of history in their own locally
and historically evolved narratives of the past: the “times.” As becomes clear in the
discussion, the shifting meanings of “movimento” and the different “times” express
different ways householders in Jocojó participated in and responded to social, political
and economic events influencing them. A summary of the corresponding variations in
“times” and “movements,” and their linkages to different local and regional political-economic contexts is then provided.

**“O Grande Movimento”: Mobility and Agency on the Margins**

“Movimento” is a persistent theme in the stories told by the historical peasantry throughout the Amazon valley (see, for example, Raffles 2002:186; Harris 2000:210-216; Lima and Ferreira Alencar 2001:40). In their reconstruction of the history of the small localities that dot the várzea of the Middle Solimões, Lima and Alencar (2001) note that the presence of this theme is often associated with the conceptualization of time frequently elicited in the life-histories collected in riverine Amazonia—the past was constructed around the remembrance of the patrons, and the “present time” was inaugurated by the ebbing of patron-client relations. But while the theme of movimento crowded the people’s personal reminiscences of the “time of the patrons,” the period was also remembered as the “time of confinement” (tempo do cativeiro). That’s how men and women living in remote riverine communities in Amazonia usually communicate the idea of their past situation of domination, principally during the rubber era, when patrons were powerful and, not rarely, violent, particularly in far-away localities. The “present time” was, therefore, often represented as a “time of freedom” (tempo de ser liberto), a time in which the dependence on the patrons had come to an end. Yet, the anthropologists noted, another transformation was regularly juxtaposed to the social changes occurred with the waning of the patrons—the degradation of the environment. As in Jocojó, the floodplain

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1 “The remembrance of history: social memory, environment and identity in the Middle Solimões várzea” (2001). This article is an exploration of how riverine peoples remember. The anthropologists study the nature of the Middle Solimões’ social memory, drawing on oral histories collected in the early 1990s among floodplain-dwellers living in communities within the limits of the Mamirauá Sustainable Development Reserve (RDS Mamirauá). Their goal is to understand and document the process of occupation of the conservation unit, and identify the social and environmental factors affecting the population distribution in it.
people in Mamirauá chose to lay emphasis on the deterioration of their environmental resource base, when talking about the present. Thus, the “present” was often identified with a perception of decline. Lima and Ferreira Alencar (2001) argue that the association of the changes in the social relations of production, and the relative abundance of resources from which the riverines derived their livelihoods, “contribute to the ambiguity regarding the memory of the ‘time of the patrons’” (2001:39, emphasis added).

Apparently, the suggested ambiguity is the effect of the people’s stance vis-à-vis the “time of the patrons.” If it was a period in which they were subject to binding patronage schemes, it was nonetheless a time of perceived abundance, and perhaps for this reason, it was commemorated, not silenced by the people’s storytelling. But it is also possible that such ambiguity is less a consequence of the mere juxtaposition of a condition of political oppression (domination by patrons/merchants) and a reality of material plenty (fartura, abundance of natural resources) in the people’s interpretation of their past, as the anthropologists argue, than an expression of the complexity of their material and symbolic exchanges with the patrons, as shown in Chapter 3. In addition, while it is true that in remote seringais and castanhais patrons would often take undue advantage of their clients’ isolation and would not hesitate to wield outright violence to discipline them, the relationships between patrons and clients in riverine Amazonia were for the most part flexible (see Weinstein 1986; Parker 1989), and the clients actively resisted domination, as the examples of “everyday forms of resistance” (Scott 1984) mentioned in the last chapter illustrate.

As I attempted to demonstrate in the reconstruction of the historical trajectory of the slave descendant roceiros in Jocojó, there was much room left for the politics of the
peasants on the Amazon estuary both at the time the rubber trade dominated the economic life of Amazonia, and principally in times of slackened international demand for Amazon forest products. Lima and Ferreira Alencar (2001), however, go beyond the contradictory ways the riverines talked about the “time of the patrons” in general, or about their relations with particular patrons, and rightly point out the source of the sentiment of pride that transpired in their glimpses into the past—the river trade, the imported goods patrons advanced on credit, and the forest products they would sell to patrons in return, all would make them feel part and parcel of the “movement.” Thus, the riverines felt connected to Belém and Manaus, the Amazon capitals that had gained renown and prosperity during the rubber boom, and they also related themselves to other parts of the country, or even to imagined foreign shores their products would eventually reach—patrons tied these people to markets, mediating their relations with distant consumers, their physical isolation notwithstanding.

In Jocojó, as my conversations with the elders revealed, the villagers often ventured on long journeys, exploiting possibilities whenever a new one appeared, up and down the Amazon, extracting forest products. They were constantly on the move to bring a little cash into their households—“just like a mururé,” as old Lucinda repeated to me. And it was this mobility, I believe, the possibility of engaging and withdrawing from the extractive sector of the regional economy—an economic, but also a social and cultural intersection between household and community, and the outside world—which they used as a framework for their critique of the “present time.” The “time of the community,” thus, was marked by a discourse of discontent, often punctuated by the emergence of the
term “fracasso” (failure), and shaped by the people’s perception of loss of mobility and autonomy.

**The Catholic Church**

As Garcia and Palmeira (2001) wrote, the Catholic hierarchy played a central role in the popular mobilizations that paved the way to the 1964 military coup in Brazil. But in the late 1960s, possibly due to a growing discomfort with the perception of its weakened cultural and political hegemony in the interior, the church changed to a much more critical stance towards the social relations revolving around the latifundia in the country. In the mid-1950s, Peasant Leagues and other grassroots organizations linked to the Communist Party had been created in the Northeast region. From their association with Protestant pastors, peasant unionism came into being in Brazil. At the time, these organizations embarked on a highly successful campaign to get the Rural Worker’s Statute approved by the Brazilian parliament, which finally enacted the long expected law in 1963. Losing its symbolic hegemony with the arrival of the Communist Party and the Pentecostal churches on the scene, the Catholic church adopted a progressive political positioning and set itself the task of training a corpus of young dynamic Catholic peasant leaders. Eventually it attracted lawyers and educators interested in creating new rural labor unions in the country. This new grassroots and intellectual leadership made up the Christian Base Communities (CEBs), which, in the early 1970s, were established all over the country. Through the CEBs, the church formulated its own critique of government policies and fostered popular mobilizations for improved living conditions in rural areas and urban centers.² Later, in 1975, after a meeting of churches operating in the Legal

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² The political and economic circumstances in Brazil in the aftermath of the military coup, and the national moment of the Catholic church in the late 1960s coincided with major changes occurring in the Catholic
Amazon, the Brazilian National Bishop’s Council created the Land Pastoral Commission (CPT) to work throughout Amazonia, providing a fertile basis for peasant mobilizations in the region, where union structures were weak and poorly equipped (Almeida 1990:227-228; Schmink and Wood 1992:102-103; Garcia and Palmeira 2001:62-71).

In Gurupá, through the CEBs and the local representatives of the CPT, Padre Chico promoted the formal organization of the neighborhoods in the interior into “communities.” As Lucas repeated to me in our boat travels to and from Gurupá, the parish priest’s central objective was to destabilize the networks of social relations based on dependency and subordination of the riverine peasants to merchants (landowners and storeowners) in the town. One of his main targets, then, were the saints’ festivals in the rural neighborhoods, for, as noted in Chapter 3, it was on these occasions that patrons’ displays of largesse were more significant, and therefore, more binding.

But not all communities in the countryside embraced the priest’s progressive ideas, and certainly not all the people in the communities reacted in the same manner to the new approach of the church. In addition, as the ethnography from Gurupá shows (Oliveira 1991; Pace 1998), because the communities in the várzea were more directly affected by the penetration of lumbering firms and açaí palm heart industries on the Amazon estuary, they were more promptly touched by the new theme of the Catholic Church in the church’s line at the international level. First, the new line proposed by the Second Vatican Council “called for the church to move closer to the faithful and for the faithful in turn to become intensely involved in the promotion of social justice” (Hewitt 1998:172). Second, in Latin America, a meeting of bishops was held in Medellin, Colombia. During the conference, the regional episcopate criticized the existing structure of the church, which was viewed as out of touch with the realities in Latin America. In the documentation of the conference, emphasis was given, inter alia, to the theme of the liberation of the poor and economically and socially oppressed, and to the need to support the CEBs as essential instruments for the promotion of social justice. Attuned to these changes, the Brazilian Catholic church, through the National Council of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB), began to make explicit its discontent with the path of the authoritarian regime (Novaes 1997:118; Hewitt 1998:172).
seventies, when the Liberation Theology-oriented priest arrived in the town: “land and work.”

Reacting against the outcomes unleashed by the general process of economic change and environmental deterioration in Gurupá, a strong leadership emerged in the várzea communities. It was from this segment that, in the mid-1970, the Catholic Church recruited those who would become the _catequistas_ (catechists) of the CEBs and promoters of grassroots organization in the rural areas. With its efforts to indoctrinate these young peasant leaders into orthodox Catholicism and, principally, into the new, progressive line of Catholicism in Brazil, the church afforded an outlet for the expression of antagonisms between riverine peasants and patrons in the town. This eventually

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3 Brumasa was the lumbering firm that caused more destruction of Gurupá’s flooded forests, and therefore it significantly impacted, economically and socially, the lives of the riverine peasants on the municipality. But certainly those living in the várzea areas were more impacted than those in the upland forests. The Brumasa initiated operations in Gurupá in 1963. In 1965, it promoted a survey to identify the richer stands of valuable woods on the “Islands region,” as this particular estuarial area is known (Oliveira Jr. 1991:111-112). Between 1968 and 1975, with the fiscal incentive policy for agriculture and ranching from the Superintendency for the Development of the Amazon (SUDAM), Brumasa bought a 500,000-hectare land area in the municipalities of Gurupá, Breves, Anajás, Afiú, Melgaço e Marzagão (Bunker 1985:100; Oliveira Jr. 1991:111). In Gurupá alone, the firm bought about 95,708 hectares, or approximately 10% of the Gurupá’s total area at the time. These acquisitions were meant to control timber extraction activities on the Islands region, and thus secure a steady supply of valuable woods for the firms’ export, according to the pace of its industrial processing operations. All the 95,708-hectare area bought in Gurupá was located in the várzea, because the species targeted by the firm then were all várzea species. The directive of the firm for these areas was to allow the families that had lived and worked on them for years, or even a century, to remain in them—that they had the knowledge of the forests, after all—provided that they worked at timber cutting for Brumasa. As discussed in Chapter 3, when firms arrived in Gurupá, particularly the Brumasa, they engaged local patrons, buyers, and eventually organized crews of extractors in the communities. The varzeiro communities welcomed these “new patrons,” because they suspended the payment of rent—approximately 40 kilograms of rubber/year, and a percentage of all their sales of other agricultural and extractive products, which was locally known as “condição.” But soon, however, they learned that lumbering firms could employ as coercive methods as those employed by traditional patrons in Gurupá and local trading posts owners on the river mouths, including land expropriation and evictions, destruction of property, beatings, and threats to kill them, in case they would risk selling logs to river traders at a higher price. (Oliveira Jr. 1991:112-122).

4 From my conversations with the elderly in Jocojó, I suggest that it is possible that religion has always been a dimension for the expression of antagonisms between these two classes. I didn’t have the chance to explore this during fieldwork, though. More detailed ethnographic material on the religious celebrations of the neighborhoods in the past would possibly provide evidence of this aspect of the saint’s festivals—the festivals as temporarily reversing or leveling ordinary socioeconomic distance between peasants and patrons, store/landowners in the town. In 1948, Wagley participated in “profane” rural festivals in Gurupá,
resulted in a determined resistance movement, centered on non-violent peasant political activity that challenged and, in the 1993 municipal elections, overthrew the power holders in Gurupá, mostly the commercial elite (Oliveira 1991:293-318).

Thus, as fieldwork evolved and I established rapport with former members of the CEBs in Gurupá, I came to realize that some neighborhoods in the interior had became “participantes da caminhada” (participants in the “march,” the peasant resistance movement fostered by the church), while others only organized as communities that pray, that is, “que não participavam da caminhada” (not as participants in the “march”). Jocojó was a case in point. The community remained nearly impermeable to the progressive insertion of the Catholic church in the sociopolitical scene in Gurupá. They welcomed Padre Chico and, at least the youth and young married couples, adhered to the new community organization. This meant increased participation of villagers in decision-making, but mainly broader participation in the Sunday services at the local chapel and in the preparations for, and celebrations of, the saints’ festivals—the high-moments of communal life.

Clearly, the critical point of religious and political friction between the parish priest and the people in Jocojó was the cult of the local saints. The villagers backed the priest as a religious leader, but opposed any interference on his part in the community’s affairs.
particularly in their asymmetrical, but hitherto unfairling economic exchanges with merchants in Gurupá. On the other hand, the priest required that the religious feasts in the formally organized rural communities be completely separated from the excessive drinking of cachaça, drumming, dancing, and the consequent fights that occurred (and still occur) on these occasions. Thus, the people in Jocojó perceived the progressive priest’s attitude towards their festivals as doubly threatening—while they enforced clear boundaries between the “political” and the “religious,” they insisted on maintaining their celebrations within what the church regarded as the threatening shadowy zone between the “sacred” and the “profane.” The gambá (a dance of African origin) is our oldest tradition,” indignant, old Adelino repeated to me. “Antigamente, muito antes d’eu me entender, não tinha essa novidade de flauta de embaúba, viola e cavaquinho. O que os escravos tinham mesmo era só tambor pra bater o gambá,” (in the past, long before I was born, the slaves only had the drums to beat the gambá. They didn’t have these new instruments, the embaúba [wood species] flute, the guitar, and the ukelele), he insisted.

5 The saints’ festivals are the most important feature of Amazonian popular Catholicism. In her dissertation, Lima (1992) cites Maués’s work centering on the old tension between the popular and the orthodox sectors of Catholicism in Eastern Amazonia. Maués shows that it is the practices of Iberian origin, such as the cult of saints and the celebrations of feasts, not the incorporation of beliefs and practices of indigenous origin in popular Catholicism, such as shamanism, that the Catholic church made its strongest efforts to ban in the region (Lima 1992:287). But, as she rightly points out, the syncretism Maués attributes to Catholicism in Brazil “is presented at the level of “popular” practice, not at that of the church. The efforts of the clergy to dictate the parameters of “true” religious practice, therefore, inform the laymen of the syncretic, or “mixed,” nature of their religious practice” (1992:287). Thus, as a result of this opposition on the part of the church, she concludes, the laymen not only become aware of the distinction between religious domains based on ideas of “right” and “wrong,” or “sacred” and “profane,” but also fight for it. “In this sense, religious syncretism constitutes the people’s own identity” (1992:287).

6 In his The religion of an Amazon community (1952), Galvão tells an interesting anecdote about one case of “everyday forms of resistance” related to the tension between the Catholic church and the people in Jocojó. “... a few years ago the visiting priest at Itá [Gurupá] found out that there was a new chapel in Jocojó. He decided to go to the locality to consecrate the chapel. It so happened that it was at about the time of the festival of Nazareth and the judges [those responsible for the expense of the festivals] came to town for supplies. When they were ready to return they were accosted by the priest who expressed his wish to visit Jocojó, especially for the celebration of Nazareth. The Jocojó men tried tactfully to discourage the priest. They told him the trip was a long one, the river dangerous for a small canoe; the igarapé too small
But Padre Chico was adamant, and eventually this friction resulted in his distancing from the community. Between the late 1970s and the early 1990s, pressed by the increasing number of unbaptized children in Jocojó, groups of devout residents tried to approach the church on three different occasions—the priest refused to administer baptism or any other rite of Christianization to the people in the community, without the written approval of the leadership; the leaders, in turn, refused to agree to his demand. Thus, because of their determination to maintain their tradition, and because of their involvement with the urban-based patronage system, traditional in Gurupá, approximations were all short-, not long-lived.

It was only in 1992 that the community finally agreed to abide by the parameters dictated by the Catholic church, and, so they say, separated the moments of devotion from the “profane” practices of dancing and heavy drinking in the cult of local saints. According to former participants in the CEBs, though, it was Padre Chico that ended up accepting their obstinate resistance to the church’s meddling in the community’s traditions and external relationships. But a closer look at the particular economic and sociopolitical circumstances in Gurupá, in 1992, suggests a number of reasons for the community’s move towards the “caminhada” of the Catholic Church and its organizations, the CEBs and the CPT, and the associated Rural Worker’s Union (STR) and Worker’s Party (PT), active in Gurupá since 1981.

for a big canoe; that there was no decent house of enough food; that people would be ashamed, etc. The priest, however, was persistent and said that anything would suit him as long as he could go. The Jocojó men were thus forced to promise to send a canoe for him on the Saint’s day. Rather than break a promise, they did so, but they sent the worst canoe they had. It was unsteady and leaked in several places. The priest tried to embark but almost fell into the water. He was angry and said that if this was the way they were going to treat him, he would never go to Jocojó. That was what the people in Jocojó hoped for. They had bought supplies, contracted for the music, and invited people. With the priest there, no dancing would be possible”(1952:60-61).
As shown in Chapter 3, in the early 1990s the community’s economic prospects were grim. Availability of cash money to purchase household supplies was more and more scarce. First, opportunities to work in timber extraction had all but disappeared with the withdrawal of the major lumbering firms from Gurupá. A few contractors continued exploiting forests in the interest of powerful sawmills from Breves and Porto de Moz, towns on the Amazon River that seem to have prospered at the cost of its riverine forest; but rather than hire labor from the communities in the interior, they frequently invaded their territories to extract precious woods. Second, the offer of temporary jobs for unskilled labor in the Jari plantation had been discontinued since 1985. Those who had some qualification had the alternative to migrate to the Jari industrial complex, where they could survive in the unstable informal sector. But this strategy had not resulted in the economic betterment, via remittances, of the parental households that had sent their young children to look for wages in the complex. It had brought tension, instead—while some households lost all or the majority of their young laborers, others managed to keep all their children in the community, and this had implications for land tenure, since control over land was conditional upon usufruct. Last, access to merchandise through the aviamento credit-debt relations had drastically diminished. The hyperinflation of the 1988-1994 period in Brazil, added to the merchants’ loss of their “partnerships” with timber companies, had caused the collapse of the aviamento system; for the most part, the patrons dealing with the people in Jocojó from the late 1980s on were river traders, who could hardly be differentiated from their clients in economic terms.

This period of decadence coincided with the successful electoral campaign for municipal office of the Workers’ Party candidate. It was a period of increased political
militancy of CEB leaders, and intensive political communication and social interaction between the various rural communities throughout the municipality. By all measures, this was the culmination of a resistance movement that had recently emancipated the Rural Worker’s Union from the control of landowners and merchants, the political elite in Gurupá. This combination of social and economic vulnerability and isolation of the majority of the families in Jocojó, and political effervescence of a movement highly charged with religious symbolism at the level of the municipality, eventually aroused the community and attracted their support to a struggle whose goals were ultimately the goals of all the peasantry in Gurupá—land security, markets for their agricultural and extractive products, basic health and education services, honest legal advice, access to affordable credit, and technical assistance: briefly, survival with dignity.

Every year Padre Chico toured all rural communities in his parish. Jocojó was certainly one of them, at least after 1992. The preparations for the priest’s visits involved all in the community—the women, the veteranos (literally, veterans, but here, married men), the youth (nearly all unmarried women and men), and the children. That’s how the priest encouraged them to organize. Women should grow their own collective gardens; and maintain cantinas (community stores) to escape the overpriced imported goods.

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7 Until 1986, the STR in Gurupá had been a pro-status quo union. In 1986, with the support of the Catholic church and workers’ unions from the Southeast region, in a demonstration of strength and discipline of the peasant movement more than a hundred men and women camped inside and around the union building for fifty-four days to impede the president of the union, a pelego (a servile hanger-on of the commercial elite), from eliminating evidence of the voter fraud he had performed, as had happened in 1982. The occupation attracted media attention and forced investigation of the fraud. Soon after the investigating team confirmed the fraud, the peasant movement organized a convention in Gurupá. On the occasion a march of about 4,000 protesters crowded the streets of the town, perplexing the local elite. At the convention, representatives of the movement were elected to office; due to one last political maneuver of the conservatives, however, only in the 1988 elections did the movement gain control of the union; it has been in control ever since (Pace 1998:177-182).

8 Full adult standing in the community is only attained with marriage and parenthood.
otherwise accessible only through river traders. Men should keep the tradition of cooperation alive, always engaging in reciprocal work services, such as the *mutirões* (cooperative work parties in agriculture). The youth should open their own manioc gardens to sell farinha, and organize football matches with whatever money they made. During the priest’s visits to the community, this annual planning often interspersed other conversations with the families about those basic problems of human existence. Only the priest had little to offer other than encouragement. And collective work in the form of *mutirão*, as the people in Jocojó understood it, that is, as convite (see Chapter 3), was not easy to sustain, principally in times of penury. It was not even considered work, if performed in communal gardens, Zeca explained to me—“work is that which brings food to my pot; with the *mutirão* [the collective work performed in one manioc field and here, too, the farinha that was sold from these fields] we raised a little money to make repairs in the community’s infrastructure—the water pump, the boat, the chapel, and the ramada (the community center).”

Nonetheless, a cantina was opened. It didn’t succeed, though, according to Tiana, the women’s group leader at the time of fieldwork. “What would you say to a mother who had spent all the money her family had buying medicine for her sick child? Would you deny her cooking oil? A little rice?” Clearly, what the church brought that was most appreciated by those in Jocojó who participated in the CEBs, the Women’s Annual Meetings, and the Catechism Week, was “information,” knowledge about the outside world—about human, social and political rights, about the plight of other fellow peasants in Amazonia, about the country’s economy. . . . In short, what these people cherished the most was their participation in the “movimento da Igreja” (the church-organized
resistance movement). Zeca ended a conversation I had with a group of middle-aged couples that gathered in the chapel. “For example, participating in the movement, I obtained knowledge to help my own community during the process of legalization of our land. *In the CEBs . . . and in the meetings of the church in Gurupá, we learned what we know today.*”

In June 2002, the CEBs in Gurupá seemed to concentrate more on religious activities than on political action. During the Catechism Week, Padre Chico exhibited an informative video about NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement); the Catholic church and other civil society organizations had launched a campaign to amass support of the population across the country against participation of Brazil in the agreement. That was all the “liberationist” talk I learned of in my stay in the town. For the most part, the agendas of the CEBs in that parish were much more centered on devotional issues than on politics. Former participants in the CEBs who became leaders of the Rural Workers’ Union and the Workers’ Party, including the mayor, resented this retreat of the church. On different occasions the discontent was voiced—“Padre Chico talked a lot about autonomy and self-determination in the past, but when the communities in the interior, and leadership in the STR and the PT really neared achieving these aspirations, he seems to have disliked it,” with little nuance, I would frequently hear in my interviews.

But this was definitely not an idiosyncrasy of the parish priest. In his brief review of the recent literature on CEBs in the article “From Defenders of the People to Defenders of the Faith” (1998) sociologist W. E. Hewitt wrote that social sciences studies of CEB involvement in Brazilian society and politics indicate that the CEBs’ political function is seriously threatened (1998:174-176). The causes are various, and the shift...
away from overt political action seems to be global. At the international level, Vatican conservatism since the election of John Paul II to the papacy is noted. In addition, despite the general support to the CEB concept, the church has never really accepted the politicization of the phenomenon. Thus, resources made available to the CEBs in terms of monetary, ideological and principally personal support have been gradually reduced, Hewitt points out (1998:183). At the national level, Hewitt explores political changes in both church and society in Brazil. The return to democracy in the country has opened new avenues to political involvement, opportunities that were not available to CEB participants during the military rule. A disillusionment among Brazilians in the face of continued elite privilege and enduring social justice is also identified. The rise of the Catholic Charismatic movement, with emphasis on personal communication of the faithful with God and blatant eschewing of politics, may be related to this disillusionment.

At the same time, and as a consequence of the democratic opening in Brazil, Hewitt notes, countless groups have emerged, pursuing an evermore-fragmented array of causes, ranging “from the environment to women’s rights to judicial reform” (1998:188). In the microcosm of Gurupá, this general trend was confirmed. Not only did the socioenvironmental NGO somewhat occupy a space previously the province of the Catholic church, but it also recruited its staff among those who had followed the trajectory from CEBs to STR to PT.

The Socioenvironmental NGO

FASE is a civil society organization independent of any denomination, although it has strong links to the Catholic church in Brazil. Created in 1961 by members of the Brazilian chapter of the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), an organization of the Council of
North American Bishops, the NGO has a history of commitment to the goals of social justice and equity in Brazil. At its 10th anniversary, FASE had already accumulated partnerships with volunteer organizations within and outside the country to assist urban and rural grassroots groups in the implementation of development projects funded by the Superintendency for the Development of the Northeast (SUDENE). Inspired by Liberation Theology, in the 1970s FASE concentrated on consciousness-raising, and community and union organizing. After participating in the creation of the Land Pastoral Commission, and fostering the organization of the construction workers’ union movement in Brazil, FASE shifted away from urban to rural areas, and directed its focus to agriculture, engaging in discussion and negotiation of state agricultural policies, as the process of democratization initiated in the late 1970s. In 1996, FASE underwent a complete restructuring, establishing three interrelated lines of work—“labor and income,” “urban issues and public policies,” and “environment” (FASE 2002).

In 1997 FASE opened a chapter of its office for the North region in Gurupá. In 1990, the appointed director for the NGO’s program in the municipality had carried out a comprehensive political economy investigation on communities of floodplain dwellers and small farmers in Gurupá’s interior. The investigation was based on long-term field research, involving a team of research assistants who were local leaders in the CEBs and the STR. The Catholic Church, the Federal University of Pará, FASE, the Central Única de Trabalhadores (CUT), and the Brazilian Association for Land Reform (ABRA), provided logistic and intellectual support for the effort. The study was funded by the “Movimento Laici America Latina” (MLAL), an Italian organization that worked in partnership with the STR.
Building on the results of this first broad and successful partnership experience, in 1993, after PT won the municipal elections, FASE organized a consultation seminar in Gurupá to discuss the prospects for timber exploitation in the municipality. The seminar brought together local officials, representatives of rural communities, the STR, the church, and specialists from other Amazon areas. In 1996, FASE finally received a positive response from ICCO, a major private development organization of the Protestant churches in the Netherlands, which “expressed interest in funding a project that linked forest, environment, and community” (Interview with local staff of FASE, June 2002).

But 1996 was election year. The PT local government was competing for a second period with the conservative forces it had defeated in 1992. Also, the STR was closing the implementation of a European Union-funded project in support of family agriculture in that year. The timing of ICCO’s offer, therefore, was excellent for FASE and its allies in the STR and PT; they expected to secure the continuity of financial commitments by the EU for their projects. Thus, assisted by ICCO and the Institute for Applied Environmental Economics, also in the Netherlands, FASE and CUT organized the “Consultation Seminar of Gurupá.” In the five-day event in May 1996, producers and (potential) importers of timber, nuts, fruits, heart of palm, natural rubber products and coconut coir [sic] came together to analyze the problems of producing these products in a manner which may be considered ecologically, socially, and financially sustainable and to discuss what it takes to bring these products to a demanding market in, for example, Western Europe or the USA. These markets demand quality, safety, and prompt as well as reliable delivery of (certified) products in certain quantities. (EWGA 1996)

The event also brought environmentalists from all over the country and representatives of financial institutions, including BASA (Amazon Bank), the Brazilian branch of the Dutch RABO bank, and FUNBIO, the Brazilian trust fund for biodiversity projects. A total of 160 participants from 83 countries attended the seminar, as reported

Gurupá had never witnessed an event of such magnitude. The NGO and its local partner institutions soon felt the political repercussions of their “potlatch.” According to my interviews with local FASE staff and residents in the town, Padre Chico and the nuns, pastoral agents in Gurupá at the time, considered the seminar an exaggeration, distanced from the realities of the town and the peoples in the interior. As a result, what had been a fruitful collaboration between the church and FASE in the municipality up to that time became a near-public opposition to the NGO. This probably weighed, if unintendedly, on the election returns. In 1997, the traditional political elite replaced the sympathetic PT local government. In this unexpected context of confrontation, FASE began implementation of its “Gurupá Project” in partnership with ICCO and the European Union, the donor organization.

The “Sustainable Exploitation of Forest Resources” was a component of this project,9 and Jocojó was chosen as one of the project sites. Interviewing the director of the FASE Gurupá Program and key members of the local NGO staff, I came to realize that the involvement of Jocojó in the initial activities for the community forest management component had been based on their own assessment of interest on the part of one family in the community, the Ruizes. They were the largest family in Jocojó, and had been the only ones to resist incursions of logging companies in the territory of the community between 1994 and 1996. They had also supported the resistance movement of

9 Other activities under the project included land tenure regularization, dissemination of management and processing of açai palm products, management of fisheries and shrimp, creation of a system for monitoring human impact on local forests, dissemination of project results and institutional strengthening of FASE in Gurupá.
the peasants in Gurupá, actively participating in the occupation of the STR in 1986, when
the electoral fraud of the corrupt pro status quo leadership was revealed. Last, and
apparently most important, the Ruizes brothers and their brother-in-law, a resident in the
várzea of the Jocojó River, were the only villagers to continue cutting trees on Jocojó’s
communal lands through the 1990s. During the first administration of the PT, they had
sold rafters and poles for the repair of municipal schools in Gurupá.

Despite the sophistication of the big consultation seminar, no consultative meetings
about the forest management initiative were held with other families in Jocojó. Informal
conversations with some villagers had occurred, but in the town, not in the vila. At any
rate, these conversations were not shared with the community. Thus, the majority of the
villagers did not understand, from the start, what the NGO was actually proposing. The
Ruizes had agreed to begin with a “sample lot,” and quickly suggested to demarcate the
demonstration unit within the limits of their own centro (the interfluvial forestland where
all in that family opened their gardens). An expert would coordinate the forest inventory;
the Ruizes would assist the inventory team in identifying species and installing reference
tags. Once trained, they would be able to carry out other inventories on the centros of
their neighbors, or on communal forest lands to be collectively set aside by the
community. These were the plans of the NGO staff about how to get things done; only
they were not negotiated or even communicated clearly with the people in Jocojó. Thus,
the unplanned and unforeseen appeared to disrupt their plans.

A 100-hectare forest area was inventoried in the second semester of 1998. As
planned and agreed with the Ruizes, they were paid an amount equivalent to the
minimum wage to assist the investigating team. No attention was given to the economic
situation and interests of other villagers. While householders tried to feed their families from the community’s downgraded environment, motorboats loaded with food and equipment for the team and the brothers regularly unloaded in the community’s harbor. As a result, discontent rapidly emerged in the form of rumors and gossip. Local government officials and the nuns who provided social services to the community at the time helped aggravate the situation with further rumors and accusations that the NGO would take the land from the community when the forest inventory was completed. As a result, through the grapevine, the initiative was gradually undermined.

There were many problems with this intervention in the social life of the community. The lack of skills and adequate preparation on the part of the NGO brought about conflicts both between the investigating team and the Ruizes and between them and other families in the community. During the performance of the forest inventory, a “clash” between “technical” and “traditional” knowledge emerged as soon as the one of the Ruizes provided detailed information about the ecology of tree species on their forests. The forester, it seems, did not expect to deal with peasants who had accumulated observations about their own natural resources and environment, but rather with some sort of tabula rasa, into which she would pour simplified versions of her “scientific” knowledge. An NGO staff member tried to explain the reason for the forester’s complaint. Lucas Ruiz

was one of the leaders in Jocojó when the project was approved. At the time, the first of the series of workshops on community forestry management organized by the IEB was about to begin in Acre. So, we decided to invite him to participate in the workshop . . . his family was already in the business of cutting trees anyway. For this reason, we sent him with Sílvia, a professor of forestry from Rio de Janeiro, to attend the workshop. But soon after his arrival, we noted that he had

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10 Instituto Internacional de Educação do Brasil (IEB), (International Institute for Brazilian Education).
become “cocky,” you know . . . so sure of himself, thinking he knew all that it takes to carry out a forest inventory. Because of that trip to Acre, the people he met, the things he heard . . . he had problems with Flávia, the forester, Sílvia’s student. (Interview in July 2002)

Between 1999 and 2000, FASE assisted the slave descendant communities in Gurupá to legalize their claims to their ethnic territory. Because of his intimate knowledge of the region, the villagers in Jocojó asked Lucas to work with the surveyor sent by the NGO. Together, they demarcated forestlands and mapped the boundaries between Jocojó and its neighboring communities. Yet, this broad recognition didn’t seem to have influenced the NGO staff shared perception of the “clash.”

The conflict within the community resulted from the NGO’s decision to begin the community forest management initiative in the work site of the Ruízes. Joca Ruiz, the oldest son of the family, was indeed the coordinator of Jocojó at the time the brothers were introduced by the STR leaders to the director of the FASE program in Gurupá. But this position of “coordinator,” created with the formal organization of the neighborhood into “community,” had little significance within the social unit. Different from the past, when the civil and religious authorities in the neighborhood converged on the person of the well to do roceiros, the power of the Ruízes was not “consensual power” (Swartz 1968:31); rather, it was “purely political,” namely, it derived ultimately from command over physical force. They had never been able to marshal the “support” (Swartz 1968:19) of their neighbor kin and friends in Jocojó. “My father has never been a ‘friend of the Bible;’ he was good at coordinating activities, such as cleaning the igarapé,” Joca once said to me. He tried to explain what he viewed as an internal leadership dispute, which he pointed out as the probable cause of the difficulties during the work of FASE in the community. Joca and his family were convinced that they were discriminated against
because they were illiterate. In a sense, Joca was right. Just as in the past preeminence in the brotherhoods and the *cultos* (weekly religious services) was a standard of conduct of those well to do roceiros who “governed the neighborhood,” in the “time of the community” literacy was regarded by a majority within and outside the community as a *sine qua non* to be a “participant in the caminhada,” the “movement.” But rather than a leadership dispute, there had been a vacuum of authority in Jocojó at the time of fieldwork, a void of legitimacy positions comparable to what existed in the “time of the patrons,” when the well to do roceiros had the ability to eliminate intracommunal tensions and neutralize potential disputes.11

The Ruízes had “tricked” their neighbors, suggesting to the staff of FASE that the “demonstration unit” for the proposed community forestry component be located within their own work site. The community, in turn, objected to the fact that the NGO publicized that it was developing a “community-based project,” for, in reality, the initiative involved and benefited only one family in the community. The NGO had failed to attend to an essential distinction riverine peasants are well aware of: that between “neighborhood” and “community.” Cautioning development institutions and experts promoting fisheries management in a lower Amazon area to attend to this distinction, Araújo (1994) wrote, “distinguishing between ‘community’ and ‘neighborhood,’ avoids the common confusion between an arena of mobilization and preeminence of leadership that defines itself *to–and by–the outside*, and the internal political dynamics of the neighborhood” (1994:304).

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11 In his book *The Struggle for Amazon Town: Gurupá Revisited* (1998), Pace argues that the people from Jocojó did not develop a high level of political awareness for activism for different reasons. They never had land invasions and abusive patrons, as many communities in the várzea had; half of the community had migrated to the Jari complex, including those individuals who were more open to the progressive Liberation Theology; and finally they had a “leadership void” following the massive migration and the “retirement” of João Povo, he wrote. “The individuals who have succeeded João do not hold the hamlet together as in the past” (1998:198, emphasis added).
Insufficient attention to this distinction can cause conflicts and result in death, as Araújo shows in his case study.

Another source of misunderstanding between FASE and the people in Jocojó resulted from the reliance of the NGO on the “peasant” origins of its local staff. As mentioned earlier, they were former CEB catechists who joined the “movement of the church” at a very young age. Clearly, the NGO hired them because of their personal experience and knowledge of the region and the peoples in the interior. Yet, social scientists in Brazil have observed the difficulty of pastoral agents and militants of the social and human rights causes in the CPTs and CEBs to understand the diverse social realities of the peasantries. Unable to see beyond the general category of “poor,” and to distinguish between “worker” (as opposed to capitalist) and “peasant,” mostly because of their training within the Catholic church and the “popular left,” they often blame the peasants for their conservatism (Esterci 1984; Novaes 1997; Martins 2002). The pastoral agents have in common the desire to be the “instruments” of the community, Novaes (1997:167) wrote in her study of Catholicism and land conflicts in the Northeastern State of Paraíba. “Certainly, there are also pastoral agents of peasant origin. But they are precisely those who, distinguishing themselves from other peasants, learned the techniques and knowledge specific of the codes of the dominant society” (1997:167), she emphasizes.

In fact, in their interactions with the people in Jocojó, and possibly with all communities where FASE developed projects, the local staff members who were ex-pastoral agents blamed the villagers for their “individualism,” and “conservatism.” In the case of Jocojó, they blamed the community for their adherence to the old tradition of the
brotherhoods, which they found somewhat “mysterious.” Apparently, they used an
ideology of “collectivism”\textsuperscript{12}–into which they seemed to have been indoctrinated–as a
framework for their critique of the peasant lifeways and modes of socioeconomic
organization. One staff member, a man in his late forties who participated in the
legalization of the communal lands of the families in the Great Island of Gurupá, objected
to this “culture of individualism” that the people were not able to eliminate. This
individualism

that still predominates in the lives of the people in the communities hinders any
possibility of advancement. . . . Like I told you, almost all communities in the
interior had a machine to process rice, many communities had trucks, cantinas, or
even medical supplies stored, but if the leadership volunteered to take care of these
communal goods, critiques would immediately follow . . . other villagers would say
‘Ah! He wants to be the owner; he is trying to be the patron here! I always say to
the people in the communities that “communities” should be the type of society of
our dreams . . . utopia . . . For example, if a person in the city sees the propaganda
on the TV about the communal land title the State Government issued to the
families in the Great Island of Gurupá, she will think that a ‘piece of heaven’ fell
right here into Gurupá. . . . But if you attend an assembly of the families in the
island, you will see a totally different reality. What these people understand by
“land regularization” is not the definitive land title the government issues; land
regularization, as they see it, only occurs when their individual land plots are
demarcated, that’s when they recognize their land was legalized. (Interview in
August 2002)

“There is a regrettable absence of leaders with a ‘sense of collectivity’ in Jocojó,”
another staff member repeated. And still another, expressing his frustrations with
frequent setbacks in their partnerships with communities, questioned whether they should
be bold enough “to wreck, break everything, let fall into deep economic decadence, the
primitive reality of communities like Jocojó,” so that they could begin to construct “the
evolution.”

\textsuperscript{12} The idea seems to be better translated by Marx’s concept of “primitive communism,” which refers to the
collective rights to basic resources, absence of hereditary status or authoritarian rule, and the egalitarian
relationships preceding exploitation and economic differentiation in human history (Bottomore 1983:394).
I had endless informal conversations with householders in Jocojó—men and women—about this “sense of collectivity.” And, as fieldwork developed, I confirmed what I had sensed in my arrival in Gurupá, when I met with the local staff at FASE, just after my first meeting with the community—those incredibly committed ex-catechists would greatly benefit if they could have a little training in cultural anthropology, as many CEB members had, back in the 1970s. This would allow them to comprehend the nature of “peasant ethics” (Woortman 1990), and hence understand the value directives and existential propositions that guide their social interactions. This would also elucidate the ways the riverine peasants in Gurupá tend to think about development agents, and their advice and interventions in the communities. Zeca, his wife, Lina, and his brother and sister-in-law talked to me about their perceptions on the entrance of FASE in Jocojó. As in other peasant sociocultural systems throughout Brazil, the discourse of roceiros and varzeiros in Gurupá is organized by the categories family, work and freedom—the latter understood as “autonomy”—and these categories are not conceived of separately (Woortman 1990). That which is “collective” [work, initiatives] improves the social life of the community as a whole, you know. . . people say that we cannot think in terms of the “collective,” but we have never had a communal experience that resulted in benefits to each individual head of family. Every time we divided the outcomes of our collective works here, only a little money was left to each family, so we always opted to buy things that benefited the whole community. The “collective” doesn’t bring sugar and coffee into our homes. What brings the “hearth” to our kitchens is the [physical] work that we and our families expend in our gardens, or the tree that a head of household cuts down, sells, and with the money he makes, he buys

13 In his article “Com Parente não se Neguceia” (1990), based on an extensive corpus of ethnographies on the peasantry in Brazil, Woortman examines the talk of diverse peasant groups in all major geographical regions of the country. He identifies cultural categories organizing the peasants’ discourse. “Family, work and freedom” are central among these categories-values, which constitute what Woortman calls “peasanticity,” and define a moral order. They are actualizations of a general ethics, which the anthropologist reveals through the related anthropological categories of “honor, reciprocity and hierarchy,” the basis of the “peasant ethics” (1990-57).
whatever goods he sees as necessary to provide for his family. People talk a lot about the “collective,” but first, each father must think of his family, of making investments in his house. . . . (Interview in July 2002)

His talk elucidates the “peasant ethics,” and the social construction of the “father” in this sociocultural system, in particular. The father provides. He must provide his family with food and other necessities, bringing “the hearth” to his kitchen. As mentioned in Chapter 2, this was a matter of honor, and one of the most important criteria against which villagers evaluated married men with children in the community. The father, if an honored man, provides by controlling property, the prerequisite to the earning of cash, which was necessary for the purchase of market goods. Property, in turn, is created by the expenditure of the physical labor of the family, which the father controls too, and thereby reasserts his manliness, his honor. Thus, according to this ethic, the father, not the community, manages the household economy. The father governs, gives the direction. Just as the Flores brothers had said to me (Chapter 3), when recounting the story of the disease and subsequent death of their father, “after we lost the leader of our workforce, we became just like a canoe without a keel.”

Before I left Gurupá, I had a long informal session with all the local team of FASE at the NGO’s office. We exchanged views on the events in Jocojó. Much has been accomplished already. FASE is long-established NGO active in the promotion of the well being of grassroots groups in Brazil. It played a key role in the processes of land regularization, benefiting slave descendants and várzea dwellers in Gurupá. Recognizing that legalization of land was just a first step to actually improve the living conditions of these peoples, the NGO actively participated in the negotiations between IBAMA and environmentalists to amend the existing regulations for approval of community forest management plans, adjusting them to the needs of local communities in Amazonia.
Yet, FASE was not able to tap into the existing international literature, and accumulated experience in Amazonia—a learning experience to all parties involved, no doubt—on collaborative management of forest resources. The people in Jocojó, and the Ruizes for that matter, didn’t have a decisive say in the objectives, design or implementation of the forestry initiative. They were involved after the NGOs, ICCO and FASE, identified a “problem” (the “environment”) and devised a “solution” (the project). There had been other families in the community who were interested in managing their forests, and it would have elicited their support, had they been involved in the initiative from its inception. Furthermore, there had been other families that were striving to obtain financial and technical assistance from the state government to experiment with agroforestry systems and sustainable fisheries. Agricultural credit available at the time was prohibitive to these people, who depended mostly on rural pensions to survive. As Julito Pombo once said in a meeting between roceiros and varzeiros, and representatives of the Bank of Amazonia at the STR headquarters in Gurupá, he would rather “sit at the beach and scrub a vulture until it whitened, than take out loans from the FNO.”

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15 The “Constitutional Fund of the North” (FNO) is a public policy that integrates the fiscal incentives system of the Brazilian government for the North region; through the PRONAF, its program for support of family agriculture, the FNO provides financial assistance for activities that are carried out by the small farmer and his family only.

16 A few families in Jocojó got loans from the FNO in 1996 through the mediation of the STR in Gurupá. The loans were for raising cattle or rehabilitating fallow areas. Extension agents from the state rural extension agency (EMATER) stipulated that borrowers interplant banana trees and açaí palms, species that grow well on natural levees and riparian lands, on their fallows in the dry upland. Borrowers were forced to pay for significant amounts of fertilizers, which they barely touched, soon realizing the crops would be lost. I asked them how they were going to pay off their loans, but they didn’t seem concerned with their long-term indebtedness to the Bank of Amazonia. Actually, they told me that the “project” had been successful; the money had been used mostly to meet household expenses, mitigating their precarious economic conditions for the duration of disbursements.
what can be achieved in the space opened by a new legislation of the Bolivian
government to strengthen a “rural civil society” in that country, she wrote:

I came to see the space created by the law as a playing field already designed for a
certain game with specific rules. All sorts of players can enter the field, all sorts of
things can happen in the field, but you cannot play soccer on a baseball diamond.
(Medeiros 2001:416-417)

The big consultation seminar organized by FASE and ICCO in Gurupá brought
together international and national experts and NGO workers, representatives of state
development and research institutions, officials from all levels of government, and union
leaders and community peasants. Such broad participation, principally of international
development and financial agencies reflects the general idea that “traditional populations”
(Carneiro da Cunha and Almeida 1999) form the basis for sustainable development and
environmental conservation. But despite this acknowledgment of the role these
populations and indigenous peoples have in Amazonia, as Nugent (1993:254) notes, little
attention has been paid to the issue of their social reproduction qua peasant and
indigenous societies, with their specific ways of life.17 They are certainly not atavistic
ecologists, but their social forms of production–their ethnosciences–have been largely
beneficial to their natural surroundings.18

17 Of course, their ways of life, their culture, do change. But I follow Kirsch (Kirsch 2001) in his use of
Sahlins, when he reminds us that the contemporary definitions of culture as a process that continually
undergoes change “have the effect of erasing the logical and ontological continuities involved in different
ways that societies interpret and respond to imperialist conjuncture. If culture must be conceived as always
and only changing, lest one commit the mortal sin of essentialism, there can be no such thing as identity . . .
let alone continuity. ’ To completely naturalize also obscures what is lost or forgotten” (Sahlins 1993:4,

18 For a comprehensive review of studies in the natural and social sciences on indigenous peoples, rubber
tapers and riverine peasants, babaçu gatherers, quilombolas, etc. in Amazonia see (Diegues, Andrello, and
Nunes 2001). A total of 471 publications (theses, books, articles and reports) that address traditional
knowledge related to the environment and biodiversity were consulted. The works analyzed, the authors
wrote, “indicate that the traditional populations in Amazonia constructed across generations a significant
set of knowledge and practices about the natural world and biodiversity [that is] essential to their survival
in the forest and along rivers and lakes” (2001:206, emphasis added).
When I left Gurupá, the relations between the majority of the families in Jocojó and FASE were still strained. The Ruízes resented the fact that the NGO had never given them any feedback concerning the forest inventory. They expected to have received at least the “map of trees,” as they called the forest census. Because of their greed, other villagers repeated, the Ruiz family was punished with restricted access to their best tract of agricultural lands, the area where the inventory had been carried out as well as its surroundings. Joca Ruiz, Lucas and their younger brothers feared that IBAMA would fine, or even arrest them, in case they disturbed those forestlands. FASE and principally IBAMA agents would detect any signs of human interference in that area. The Ruízes conceived the inventory as a photograph that could be used against them at any moment if they transgressed. Other families in the village, however, had a more esoteric interpretation. They believed the area had become “mystical.” It took me a while until I understood what they meant by “mystical.” Chatting with old Gregório one clear summer night, he was showing me the constellations of Scorpius when he suddenly interrupted:

that one is not a star. It is the satellite! It constantly surveys the centro of the Ruízes. Now they cannot open their gardens near the area of the inventory, because nothing escapes the gaze of the satellite. It knows everything that happens down here on the ground. (Interview in August 2002)

A Panopticon19 hovering over Jocojó! Fearing the Ruízes would use the forest census to do business with the first logging company that approached them—and a new

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19 The Panopticon is a mechanism of power. Michel Foucault analyses it in his *Discipline and Punish* (1995). Designed in the eighteenth century to discipline the abnormal individual, its major effect is “to induce in the inmate [a condemned man, a madman, a patient, a schoolboy, a worker] a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault 1995:201). The principle on which the Panopticon is based consisted originally of an architectural disposition of buildings—a central tower with wide windows located at the center, and a supervisor was placed in it; an annular building located at the periphery, divided into cells whose windows, to the inside and the outside, corresponded to the windows of the tower; the inmates were placed in the cells, which were constantly illuminated from the outside.
wave of predatory timber exploitation was expected to come soon from as far away as Paragominas in Central Pará–someone in the inventory team had suggested that to the people in the community.

But Zeca, married into the Ruízes family himself, and who also slashed and burned in that same “mystical” centro, calmed me:

I know many people think my brothers-in-law would be more than willing to cut down our forests for less than nothing. What they don’t take into consideration is that we already had this opportunity in the past. But it didn’t tempt us. Our ancestors established in this area about two centuries ago. And after all these years we still have many trees standing. You should see the area that we reserved for the animals to reproduce. We are not like the residents of Marabá. I remember the instructor in the second workshop of community forest management, saying that those people had destroyed all their forests in a twenty-year span! If we didn’t destroy our forests in two hundred years, what makes these people in Gurupá believe that we would do it now? Now that we have much more imagination than we had before!

“Imagination”—that’s what they had gained with what my host Antonio Maria once called the “movimento do meio ambiente” (literally, the movement of the environment). He referred to the meetings with government officials, consultation seminars, visits of environmental experts to Jocojó, activities related to the process of land regularization, and a host of other activities that had made him the representative of the Quilombola Association of Gurupá (ARQMIG). Antonio Maria was responsible for negotiations of financial aid from the state government in support of sustainable development projects of the slave descendant communities in the municipality. All this “movement,” rather than make the men in Jocojó become “cocky,” as my friends at FASE believed, gave them more “imagination”—the awareness on their part that their cultural practices, particularly what they had done for generations to procure their livelihoods, were now valued (see also Lima 1992:309; and Nugent 2002:72).
Correlating “Times,” “Movements” and Social, Economic and Political Transformations in Gurupá

I have outlined the story of the outside relations of the community of Jocojó. In this rough reconstruction, I attempted to approach the people’s perspectives on the circumstances affecting their social and everyday life in the last quarter of the twentieth century. In this section, I focus specifically on the corresponding variations in meaning of “movimento” and attributes of “time” in local discourse, as related to the people’s involvement in the economic and political events of local and regional history (see Table 4-1). Contrary to the two highlighted “times” in the oral histories collected—the “time of the patrons” and the “time of the community”—the period of transition between them was not emphasized in the peoples’ memories. Occasionally it was marked with the phrase “a entrada da madeira” (the beginning of timber cutting). Actually, in chronological terms it virtually overlapped the “time of the community.” But as culturally perceived, this latter period was more closely associated with the mid-1980s, as the families in the community faced deep economic crisis and began to adhere to the rural movement organized by the Catholic church. Finally, I treat the period of fieldwork, “Socioenvironmental NGO,” as a transition period. Through ARQMIG, their political organization, and now strategically objectifying their “otherness,” the leaders of the slave descendant communities in Gurupá mobilized to gain access to policy-making and negotiate support for their projects on their own.

My point of departure in this historical series was the “time of the patrons,” which corresponds to the period of consolidation of the historical peasantries in Amazonia, following the end of the rubber boom. Gurupá, which had been an important center of rubber production in the State of Pará, lost its economic and political significance in the
region. But despite the decline of the rubber economy, the aviamento system persisted, although in a weakened version, in the hands of independent regional firms and a local merchant class. They continued buying rubber, but other tropical products were added to their repertoire of trade commodities, such as Brazil nuts, massaranduba milk, seeds, and cacao. Seizing every new opportunity as new ganhos (new export commodities, sources of livelihood) appeared, householders in Jocojó covered long distances on riverboats to bring a little cash into their households, and contribute to the reproduction of their “moral community.” This was a time of great peasant mobility and agency. Accordingly, in local historical consciousness it was remembered as a time of “grande movimento,” intense movement, always associated with the idea of material plenty. Certainly, the peasants were subjugated to capital, since patrons siphoned the product of their labor to international markets. But back in the neighborhood, on the margins—their cherished space of freedom—these people were able to maintain their autonomy as manioc cultivators and independent petty commodity producers.

There were a few continuities, but major changes occurred between the “time of the patrons” and the period of intensive exploitation of Gurupá’s várzea forests. Although the international lumbering firms that came to the Amazon estuary used the local merchant class as their agents, they infused the local economy with cash, and this eventually transformed everything from the social relations of production linking peasants/extractors and patrons, to the social relations of daily life and work within communities. In Jocojó, the people’s memories about the period they worked at timber cutting on their communal lands were never free of contradiction. On the one hand, this period was associated with increased consumption of consumer goods, improvements in their houses, access to tools,
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Tempos</th>
<th>Movimentos</th>
<th>Local Political and Economic Context</th>
<th>Regional Political and Economic Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Tempo dos Patrões” (from early 1910s to mid-1960s)</td>
<td>“Grande Movimento”</td>
<td>Gurupá lost economic and political significance in the Amazon region with withdrawal of Amazon rubber on the world market; Aviamiento system persisted, but in weakened version and in the hands of independent regional firms and local merchant elites, who continued to buy reduced amounts of rubber, but diversified trade, including Brazil nuts, small quantities of precious woods, seeds, cacao, etc.</td>
<td>Collapse of the international rubber trade, and breakdown of the powerful aviamiento system, which linked trading posts at river mouths, local aviadores, export houses in the main capitals in Amazonia, foreign firms and international banks; Consolidation of historical peasantries in Amazonia based on diversified livelihood strategies, combining subsistence agriculture, fishing, temporary work at extraction, hunting, and various forms of petty extractivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber Extraction (from mid-1960s to mid-1980s)</td>
<td>$$$ Increased circulation of cash in Gurupá’s economy; International lumbering firms used merchant class as their agents; Aviamiento system persisted, but transactions in cash increasingly supplanted system of credit-debt relations; Logs traveled over the Amazon River to reach foreign ports</td>
<td>Direct penetration of capitalism on the Amazon estuary; Monetization of Gurupá’s economy, increase in number of retail stores and pure market transactions between peasants and storeowners; Peasants, as laborers, were increasingly incorporated within the larger economic system; they were hired to fell their own forests for international lumbering firms; Food production in rural Gurupá once more neglected</td>
<td>Brazilian government efforts to massively integrate Amazonia in the global market; Programs for Amazon Modernization and Development were launched, federal government grants fiscal incentives to attract international capital to Amazonia; Establishment of Christian Base Communities and Land Pastoral Commission in Amazonia’s sociopolitical landscape in support of rural social movements’ activities, principally peasant mobilizations in new frontier areas, where land conflicts were frequent and violent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempos</td>
<td>Movimentos</td>
<td>Local Political and Economic Context</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Tempo da Comunidade”</td>
<td>“Movement of the church” or “March of the church”</td>
<td>Economic crisis following withdrawal of lumbering firms; Collapse of aviação credit debt system as a consequence of increase in pure market transactions, and resulting loss of freguesias during height of timber extraction; Catholic church sponsored peasant resistance movement: CEBs and CPT active in rural and urban Gurupá, promoting political organizing of peasants; Rural Worker’s Union and Workers’ Party opened chapters in Gurupá; Workers’ Party won local election for 1993-1996 term;</td>
<td>Rise in international concerns with Amazon deforestation; Threatened by large-scale capitalist enterprises (cattle ranches, mining projects, dam and infrastructure building), rubber tappers and indigenous peoples in Amazonia forged the alliance “Peoples of the Forest,” and mobilized for the maintenance of their modes of existence; “Alto Juruá, first “Extractive Reserve,” created as a conservation unit in 1990; Multilateral Institutions, International cooperation agencies and NGOs channeled resources in support of sustainable management of forest resources and biodiversity conservation by forest dweller groups through national NGOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from mid-1970s to mid-1990s)</td>
<td>“Information”: circulation of new ideas, human and social rights discourses among roceiros and varzeiros in Gurupá</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Socioenvironmental NGO”</td>
<td>“Movement of the Environment”</td>
<td>Gurupá increasingly marginalized in regional economy; FASE established regional office in Gurupá; Through mediation of FASE, State of Pará officially recognized the ethnic territory of slave descendant communities, issuing land title in the name of ARQMIG, the Quilombola Association of Gurupá; Second electoral term of Workers’ Party (2001-2004)</td>
<td>Consolidation of environmental movement in Amazonia; Intense grassroots mobilization in Amazonia for creation of public policies in support of bottom-up development and conservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from late 1990s to fieldwork)</td>
<td>“Imagination”: incorporation of new ideas and circulation of “sustainable development discourse” among roceiros and varzeiros in Gurupá; Emergence of discourse of ethnic difference among slave descendants</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
and occasionally chainsaws and motors for locally built boats. Also, because cash was the means by which credit advances were made and balances paid, they were able to pay off their debts in cash, purchase merchandise at lower prices in different retail stores, and thus avoid the credit-debt relations that bound them to patrons. This was an important factor contributing to the decline of merchants and trading post owners in Gurupá (Pace 1992:718). On the other hand, this lure of cash resulted in neglect in subsistence agriculture, environmental degradation, and eventually increased impoverishment.

The third period in this sequence was quite different from the first two. Contrary to what had happened after the end of the rubber boom, with the decline in timber extraction, Gurupá entered into deep economic stagnation, without showing its previous ability to reorganize along more autonomous lines. Padre Chico arrived in the municipality to witness the peak of predatory timber extraction, and assist–actively, not passively–the breakdown of the aviamento system. This was the “time of the community.” The families in Jocojó resisted the inauguration of this new time. They preferred the certainty of the old patrons. At least, through the “serviço pelo mato” the patrons would give them–their jobs as extractors of forest products–they could fulfill the needs of their families for food, shelter and clothing. But patrons waned due to a combination of factors, including inflation, the withdrawal of major lumbering firms from the area, and reduction of their clienteles. Due in part to the same factors, the economic conditions in the community deteriorated too. Without their traditional mobility, and now deprived of their major source of income–their labor was no longer needed–the people in Jocojó gradually joined their fellow várzea dwellers in the vigorous peasant resistance movement flourishing at the time. Now in the “movement of the
church,” these people, who had been almost entirely denied education, gained
“information,” the awareness that their basic needs made rights, consciousness of
themselves as rights-bearing creatures.

From my conversation with men and women in Jocojó who participated in the 54-
day occupation of the Rural Workers’ Union, and in other mass mobilizations organized
by the church, it seems correct to assert that the most important connotation of
“information” was political knowledge, the increase in awareness of the commonalities
between roceiros and varzeiros in the municipality, despite the diversity of their survival
practices, or their different land tenure situations, or yet their different relations with the
local elite of merchants, trading post owners and local government officials. Ultimately,
their goal was to secure access to natural resources, better market conditions for their
products, basic services, and credit. Their ability to overcome these divisions and work
together in the struggle to gain control over the local political system could well be
translated as a passage from, broadly speaking, class culture to class consciousness, a
passage that was made possible by the collective action promoted by the progressive
Catholic church priest, and the church’s CEBs and CPT. As Sider (1991) wrote, “in the
absence of collective action, a collective consciousness is not likely to develop”

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20 Lima (1992) asserts that the segment of the Amazonian peasantry referred to as “caboclo” does not
constitute a class. In her critique of the term “caboclo,” she distinguishes between the use of the term as a
category of social classification, and as a social category of anthropological studies. As mentioned earlier in
this study, in the colloquial use, “caboclo” is a term of reference, not of self-reference. As used in the
anthropological literature, the term distinguishes the historical peasantries from other rural inhabitants in
Amazonia, principally new migrants who came to the region under governmental programs for occupation
and development. This distinction is based on cultural characteristics, mainly human-environmental
relations and technology. “Caboclo” does not constitute a social group, understood as concrete human
aggregation defined by close interaction and personal relationship, she wrote. It does not constitute a class
either, since the notion of class “implies the existence of explicit political interests, especially in the
Marxist sense, when the notion of class is close to that of a social group based on the existence of a unified
group consciousness” (Lima 1992:11, citing Guiddens 1980:62). According to Lima, the only category of
instruments for the development of class consciousness, and the fora necessary for the transformation of “the poor with a general perception of common interests” (a class in itself) into “the poor with common interests and apt for political confrontation,” (a class for itself) the progressive Catholic church promoted a sense of unity and capacity for action among riverine peasants in Gurupá.

Lima (1992) suggests that the lack of involvement in a political movement accounts for the absence of a collective identity among caboclos in Amazonia (Lima 1992:iii). Environmental concerns, she suggests,

may provide a basis for the emergence of a political consciousness among caboclos. The rural people’s recognition of the role they might play in the new phase of Amazonian politics might lead to the creation of collective identity and motivate the people to adopt their own term of self-ascription. (1992:iii)

In a way, this happened in different Amazon areas, not in the region as a whole, beginning in the mid-1980s, as Almeida (1994) comments in an insightful article on rural social movements in the region, which is discussed below. But the assertion that the riverine peasants would have to be “touched” by the environmental movement/eco-politics to develop a political consciousness, it seems to me, is an underestimation of their political understandings and horizons, which can transcend the “little worlds” of communities (see, for example, the suggestive discussion in Anderson 1985). But principally, the assertion also downplays the transformations in the Amazonian sociopolitical landscape accomplished by the Catholic church and its organizations, the self-ascription used by rural peoples in Amazonia is that of “poor.” I use the concept of class here in the general sense asserted by Marx that major class divisions existed in all forms of society beyond the early tribal communities. The distinction that needs to be made between the periods before and after the Catholic church initiated the political organizing of rural inhabitants of Amazonia, it seems, is that which exists between a “class-in-itself” and a “class for itself.” A “class-in-itself” becomes a “class-for-itself” as class consciousness, and consciousness of antagonisms between classes are developed, and political organization is promoted.
CEBs, the CPT. These organizations mobilized a class substratum on which different political identities would be constructed. As Kearney wrote, “expressions of identity are always constructed; class is positional and relational within a field of value. . . . Because value is ontologically real, that is, essential, class is an essential feature of personhood” (comments by Michael Kearney in Fischer 1999:494). The relationship between class (class differences) and expressions of identity (cultural differences, i.e., ethnicity, “race,” gender, nationality, etc.) is not either/or but both-and, he argues. As he puts it,

it is never a question of whether identity or class is the primary categorical dimension of a person or group but one of how the identities that are historically given or consciously constructed map onto class positions and the uneven exchange relationships that define them in a field of value (in Fischer 1999:494)

This relationship between class and identity is implied in Almeida’s “Universalização and Localismo” (1994). The article chronicles the broad political mobilizations of distinct social groups in Amazonia, which agglutinated their specific interests despite their differentiation vis-à-vis material conditions of existence. These economically differentiated groups often formed as a reaction to state programs and state-sponsored private sector interventions in the region. Such interventions—dams, ports, airports, railroad and road building, large-scale mining, large-scale cattle ranching—targeted the land and natural resources of rural social groups, but completely disregarded their interests, or even their existence. The rural social movement “Alliance of the Peoples of the Forest” is a case in point. Perhaps the most important case of construction of a political identity in the recent history of social movements in Amazonia, this alliance was forged between rubber tappers from the State of Acre and indigenous peoples from western Amazonia in 1989. Supported by rural workers’ unions, the Catholic church, and committed allies from environmentalist NGOs and Universities, they banded together to
resist the appropriation of their traditional lands and the destruction of Amazon ecosystems. This perceived threat of loss of their resource base formed the basis for the creation of political solidarity between these hitherto sociopolitically fragmented groups. As Almeida emphasizes, and different from what Lima suggests, “the ‘ecological crisis’ (Wolf 1984:336-350) lived by different segments of the peasantry and by indigenous groups in Amazonia has an explicit political and ideological dimension and does not correspond to the ‘ecological question’ that characterizes the larger society” (Almeida 1994:522, citing Almeida 1990:13).

As mentioned earlier in this study, Gurupá was not directly affected by infrastructure-building and large-scale economic development projects. But the peasants in its interior did live an “ecological crisis,” as discussed earlier, because the municipality was affected by government policies designed to promote the extraction and export of natural resources. In the case of the terra-firme communities, such as Jocojó, principally timber extraction and commercial fishing for export, which endangered the stable combination of resources from which they earned their living. As Pace (1992) noted, the main sources of conflict and organized political activity in Gurupá were market-based tensions (outright extinction or loss of control over resources), and to a lesser degree, political ones (1992:717). But while in different Amazon areas rural social movements amplified and diversified, organizing under broad categories of mobilization, such as “the peoples of the forest,” and “those affected by dam-building,” varzeiros and roceiros in Gurupá continued their struggle for access to market and control of the local political system, mobilizing as “rural workers,” and organizing exclusively through the CEBs and
the Rural Workers’ Union, maintaining the political predominance of class in their confrontations.


Pace notes that at the end of his research period,

Gurupá was beginning to feel the effects of these new trends [the new social movements in Amazonia, and the alliances between rural Amazonians and national and international NGOs]. I remember asking my consultants about extractive reserves, the Rubber Tappers’ Union originating in Acre, and the union leader Chico Mendes, who was assassinated while defending the rubber tappers’ way of life. In the 1980s no one I talked to was aware of any of these. By the 1990s, however, union leaders were discussing joining the Rubber Tappers’ Union and setting aside land for biological reserve. They are actively pursuing information on replanting strategies for many hardwoods and palms in the area. They are also trying hard to form a fisher’s cooperative and to limit commercial fishing in the municipality. (1998:212)

He registered the influence of FASE’s activities in Gurupá. This brings me to the last period in this historical series of “times” and “movements” that punctuated the social history of the community of Jocojó: the period marked by the launching of the FASE Gurupá Project in 1997 and by the emergence of ethnicity-based political organization among slave descendants in Gurupá. From the economic standpoint, there was continuity between the “time of the community” and this period of consolidation of the environmental movement in Amazonia, and direct influence of the movement in rural Gurupá. The municipality’s economy remained largely stagnant and marginalized, as described in Chapter 2. At the micro level, the living conditions in Jocojó, as in other rural communities in the interior, remained badly low. But from the social and political standpoints, as shown in Pace’s comments, the new cycle of rural movements—the broad alliances in support of a proposal for the sustainable development of Amazonia—now echoed in every day discourse. Accompanying my hosts on their errands in the town, I witnessed countless encounters between community and STR leaders, officials of the
local PT administration, and staff of FASE. More often than not, the subject matter of their conversations was local (sustainable) development. Their talked revolved around ideas and technologies they wanted the students at the Casa Familiar Rural to test in experiments in forest extractivism and fishing, about news from initiatives in other Amazon areas, potential sources of credit, and possible solutions to the problem of market for their products. Clearly, all this represented the “imagination” that Zeca and Antonio Maria in Jocojó so emphatically affirmed they had gained in their exposure to the “movement of the environment.”

The times of imagination, however, were also times of economic crisis in Brazil. Funds for experimenting with management of natural resources were rare and difficult to access. More so in the case of largely illiterate peasants lacking adequate documentation and knowledge to fill out the numerous forms required to access existing commercial credit lines and small-grants environmental programs. For the most part, governmental and non-governmental international aid and state agencies’ funds in Amazonia were mediated by NGOs. But as shown in the discussion about the interaction between FASE and the roceiros in Jocojó, the NGO had not been effective in dealing with complex problems involving participatory local development. Also, despite the fact that these roceiros had historically combined extractive activities and agriculture, they depended primarily on the latter, particularly in the absence of a stable market for their products. According to the local FASE team, however, donor agencies refused to provide funds for agriculture, or even for experimenting with agroforestry (but see Smith 2000:163). This was a constant complaint in our conversations. The people at FASE knew the priorities of the people in the interior, but felt powerless to address them.
All this certainly contributed to reinforce the idea among roceiros in Jocojó and their relatives in other slave descendant communities that they needed to strengthen ARQMIG, the quilombola association in Gurupá, in order to initiate a cycle of non-mediated relations with state agencies for support for their projects. They wanted to gain social recognition *qua* “rural black communities”—the denomination used by organized slave descendant groups of peasants in Brazil, in their mobilizations for social justice and restitution of past dispossession. FASE had helped them get recognition of their “quilombola” title to land, navigating the intricate state bureaucracy. Now they shifted their gaze to other critical demands: capital, market and technologies. Their goal was to gain access—through ARQMIG, not through outside organizations—to decision-making process in public policy for bottom-up development *and* conservation. The process of political (black) identity (re)construction under way in Gurupá could very well be interpreted as a means of articulating these demands.

In order to obtain official recognition of their “black territory,” these slave descendants were asked to *dig up* their memories and *write* their history, declaring *unbroken continuity of identity* with the first escaped slaves who established in the area. Gradually, a collective consciousness of ethnic contours was laid on a well-grounded class consciousness that they had acquired in the “time of the community,” as participants of the “movement of the church.” Although these people had always asserted their kinship continuity with the escaped slaves who founded Jocojó, apparently, in everyday intercourse they had never played out their differences from other communities of riverine peasants on the estuary. In everyday discourse, they identified themselves as “roceiros de Jocojó” or as “poor,” a self-identification based on their perceived position
in the economic structure of Amazonian society, or on their economic occupation and the locality where they lived, more precisely, the river where they lived.

Mirroring the times of the environmental movement/eco-politics, in which national and international supporters seemed to have a diminishing regard for class difference, but were often willing to give some kind of recognition to claims of cultural difference (Sharp 1996:92; but see Ribeiro 2000), they now learned to couch their demands in the language of ethnicity and sustainable development. It would not be wrong to assert that this transition period of the “movement of the environment” announced a time in which the people in Jocojó, and their relatives in the “black territory,” would engage state agencies making good use of their “informed imagination.”
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

In this thesis I portrayed the socioeconomic and political circumstances of the roceiro community of Jocojó in relation to historical changes in Amazonia, from the decline of the rubber industry after 1912 to the time of fieldwork, the summer of 2002. The purpose of this final chapter is to provide a summary of the main changes occurred in the community’s social relations and material conditions, according to the historical sequence examined: “time of the patrons”/”grande movimento,” timber extraction/increase in cash circulation, “time of the community”/“movement of the church,” Socioenvironmental NGO /“movement of the environment.” As I present the summary, the main arguments of this ethnography are highlighted.

Table 5-1 presents the main points of this summary. The critical nexuses are shown between the community and the larger system of social relations in the different periods of the historical sequence covered in this study. The ways the people in the community produced and reproduced the material means of their social existence are identified, and the transformations in the community’s economy are highlighted. To this end, I single out the ecological conditions in which the community existed and from which families derived their livelihoods, and the relations of production proper, that is, the ways work was organized for production at the household and the community levels, including the social forms of access to and control over the means of production (land, labor power, and instruments of production), and, principally, the ways households’ surpluses were appropriated by representatives of the larger economic system.
Table 5-1: “Tempos” and “Movimentos”: Transformations in the Social Life of the Community of Jocojó from 1912 to 2002

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stagnation of Regional Economy</td>
<td>Amazon Modernization</td>
<td>Hyperinflation, Foreign Debt Crisis in Brazil</td>
<td>Neoliberal Polices in Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Time of the Patrons”</td>
<td>(Timber Extraction)</td>
<td>“Time of the Community”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Movement of the Church”</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household</th>
<th>Basic unit of production and consumption</th>
<th>Basic unit of production and consumption</th>
<th>Basic unit of production</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land/property</td>
<td>Men occupied interfuvial zones, <em>centros</em>, each <em>centro</em> had one <em>casa de farinha</em>, but tendency towards crystallization of usufruct rights into <em>de facto</em> rights</td>
<td>Extended families controlled <em>centros</em>, <em>roças</em> opened by each individual family, property of <em>roças</em> based on use, but idea of inheritance of property based on declaration of occupancy issued by INCRA</td>
<td>Extended families controlled <em>centros</em>, <em>roças</em> opened by each individual family, property of <em>roças</em> based on use, property of plants in old fallows and backyards based on expenditure of physical labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>Women tended small gardens, processed <em>farinha</em>, but small <em>roças</em></td>
<td>Men worked at timber cutting, cleared new, but small <em>roças</em></td>
<td>Family labor in agriculture, main tasks performed by husband and wife, according to division of labor by sex and age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproduction of material means of social life</td>
<td>Labor and land based, logs sold, cash payments, increased consumption of market goods, neglect of subsistence agriculture; <em>varzeiro</em> households fished for commercial fishing boats in the dry season</td>
<td>Land based, household-focused; emphasis on subsistence agriculture, petty trade, mostly of <em>timbó</em> vines; <em>varzeiro</em> households fished for commercial fishing boats in the dry season</td>
<td>Land based, household-focused; emphasis on subsistence agriculture, petty trade, mostly of <em>timbó</em> vines; <em>varzeiro</em> households fished for commercial fishing boats in the dry season</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Note: *Italics denote the *roças* (plantations) were based on use, property of plants in old fallows and backyards based on expenditure of physical labor. 

**Table 5-1: “Tempos” and “Movimentos”: Transformations in the Social Life of the Community of Jocojó from 1912 to 2002**
<table>
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<th>Historical Period:</th>
<th>Historical Period:</th>
<th>Historical Period:</th>
<th>Summer of 2002</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stagnation of Regional Economy</td>
<td>Amazon Modernization</td>
<td>Hyperinflation, Foreign Debt Crises in Brazil</td>
<td>(Transition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Time of the Patrons”</td>
<td>(Timber Extraction)</td>
<td>“Time of the Community”</td>
<td>(Movement of the environment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Women complained about loss of authority within household due to neglect of subsistence agriculture</td>
<td>Men resented fact that they could not provide for their families, and avoided sending their children to look for wages in the Jarí industrial complex</td>
<td>Parental couple shared decision-making in most households in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical nexus between rural and urban sectors</td>
<td>Labor and goods, via petty commodity production</td>
<td>$$$$$ Cash</td>
<td>Ideology, “information,” roceiros began to see themselves as rights-bearing creatures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Moral community, sharing of meat, fish and fruits among kin and neighbors</td>
<td>Moral community, less sharing among neighbors</td>
<td>Moral community, sharing mostly among close kin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental conditions</td>
<td>Resources perceived as abundant, idea of material plenty</td>
<td>Overfishing with <em>timbó</em> in the Jocó River; overfishing in the Amazon River by commercial fishing boats</td>
<td>Fishing in the Jocó River possible three years after community erected rules of access to and use of river, small tributaries, <em>igapós</em>, and fauna within limits of community territory</td>
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Table 5-1: Continued

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<td>(Transition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Grande Movimento”</td>
<td>“Movement of the Church”</td>
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<td>(Movement of the Environment)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land</th>
<th>Labor mobilization</th>
<th>Power Structure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Well to do roceiros controlled best tracts of agricultural lands, the less well off cultivated area around the vila; rights to fields disappeared as land was left to fallow</td>
<td>“Exchange of day,” “convite,” hired labor</td>
<td>Social power of well to do roceiros, civil and religious authority converged on their persons; economic power of patrons (symbolic capital/economic capital)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well to do roceiros were more involved in timber extraction, land was less important</td>
<td>Householders cut timber, logs delivered to patrons under the aviação system, well to do roceiros mediated transactions with patrons first, and then with lumbering firm’s representatives</td>
<td>Social power of well to do roceiros, civil and religious authority converged on their persons; economic power of patrons (symbolic capital/economic capital)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Householders petitioned INCRA to obtain title to 100-hectare plots of land within centros controlled by extended families</td>
<td>Mutirão, occasional ‘exchange of day,” mostly among cumpadres, close kin within centros exchange labor without need to reciprocate</td>
<td>Socioeconomic differences levelled, following collapse of aviação system/decline of patrons and withdrawal of international firms from estuarial zone; formal organization of community, increased participation of all in decision-making</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communal land title encompassed the 100 ha petitioned INCRA, ITERPA, which were declared void</td>
<td>Mutirão, close kin within centros exchange labor without need to reciprocate, “exchange of day” among cumpadres infrequent</td>
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“The Time of the Patrons”: “Grande Movimento” (from the Early 1910s to the Mid-1960s)

The period between the demise of the rubber industry and the mini-boom of the product during World War II was a period of consolidation of the historical peasantries in Amazonia. Despite the dramatic decrease in rubber export, the extractive economy remained the focal point of Amazon River life. But because the roceiros in Jocojó retained control over the means of production, and because there had no social or geographic barriers to their mobility, they could engage in diverse productive activities, combining “disguised wage labor” as extractors in faraway localities on the Amazon valley, manioc cultivation, fishing, hunting, and a variety of forms of petty extractivism on their own natural surroundings.

In Jocojó, land was perceived as abundant and other natural resources as boundless until the arrival of lumbering firms in Gurupá. The direct descendants of the primeirantes, the founders of the neighborhood, as well as the newcomers could place themselves and open their fields in every corner in the community’s land. All but the two wealthier families in the neighborhood, who had “rights of property” (marked by reciprocity ties, as defined in Chapter 2, note 27) over large tracts of agricultural land, grew manioc on fields located in the area between the vilá and the Amazon River. To circumvent the uncertainties of the climate and soils, each household had two or more manioc fields planted each year, the rights over which disappeared as land was left to fallow. The householder only retained rights over the perennial plants he or she had cultivated. Expenditure of physical labor, as mentioned earlier, generated rights of use and disposition.
Agricultural and other tasks necessary for the (re)production of the household were divided between husband, wife and children according to their categorization as appropriate to the sex and age of the household member. But husband and wife bore together the actual pains of agricultural labor. In my interviews with the elderly in Jocojó, this interdependence was invariably emphasized. If nursing or the need to take care of young children restricted the mobility of women, in the peaks of extractive seasons, men and their eldest sons would travel long distances, as new ganhos (sources of livelihood, generally extractive activities) appeared. This was precisely what the elderly stressed—while their men and sons engaged in temporary labor, women would make sure, by tending their manioc fields, alone, with their children, or in diverse arrangements with their female close kin or neighbors, that they would have farinha to meet the consumption needs of the household throughout the year.

The centrality of agriculture was marked by the way people in Jocojó defined themselves: as roceiros, i.e., small farmers, but basically manioc cultivators. The ability to control the process of production in planting manioc not only conferred authority to the head of household, but also reaffirmed the idea of the neighborhood as a “space of freedom” (see also Harris 2000). On various occasions the oldest men in the community recounted to me the stories of oppression in that they had undergone themselves in the seringais and castanhais in Arumanduba and on the Jarí valley, or, more frequently, that they had heard from their fathers and grandfathers. These stories frequently ended with the comment, “but in the end of the season, we would get our saldos (the balance, see note Chapter 3, note 25) and return to Jocojó to clear new fields and eat farinha with our wives and children.” Back in their neighborhoods, there were neither foremen nor patrons
meddling in the affairs of their households, not even their fellow well to do neighbors and occasional (small) patrons.

At the level of the community, through various forms of cooperation, householders secured the extrafamily aid needed, the most important of which were the “exchange of day, convite (literally, invitation), and ”hired labor.” The convite was more frequently used by the well to do roceiros, who opened large manioc fields and used to sell large quantities of farinha to patrons/storeowners in Gurupá. The people’s memories of the convites conveyed the idea of conviviality. On these occasions, hosts and guests feasted and commemorated communal bonds.

Hired labor, however, was the usual form used by the better off men in the community to mobilize labor from their neighbors who didn’t control labor and land in sufficient amounts. This, together with family histories and the extraordinary ties with the outside world, that permitted that the well to do roceiros accumulated means of production–basically the best and larger tracts of agricultural lands and the instruments of production to process manioc–accounted for enduring, but apparently not progressive, social stratification in Jocojó. The fact that the better off roceiros controlled the best lands in the neighborhood, however, didn’t imply that land was scarce. Labor, not land, was.

If relations between the well to do and the less well off roceiros could be characterized as exploitative, they also served to generate a series of obligations through which the land poor ascertained future ajuda (help) in cases of illnesses, or other moments of life crisis. More important, these relations were perceived as symmetrical–the labor- and land-poor roceiros obtained the necessary complement to their own
(insufficient) agricultural production and thus provided for their families, and the well off, in turn, maintained their privileged economic position.

As mentioned above, in this period of material plenty, the social reproduction of the household was based primarily on a combination of agriculture and temporary labor at extraction. Diverse forms of petty extractivism were considered accessory activities. The aim of householders was the reproduction of their ways of life—the primary purpose of this pattern of economy being home consumption. Householders used the saldo, the credit received in return for their labor as extractors to purchase necessities and finance agriculture.

Manioc, and to a lesser extent timbó, were the only crops grown for use and for exchange. When in Jocojó, householders would deliver farinha to patrons in Gurupá in return for market goods through the system of aviamento credit-debt relations, or they would cross the Amazon to sell it at higher prices to trading post owners in the Great Island of Gurupá, or still barter it for fish and rice with várzea dwellers. But not infrequently the well to do roceiros would buy all the production of farinha in the neighborhood and trade it with patrons in Gurupá. These patrons, and other patrons in faraway seringais and castanhais exploited the roceiros in Jocojó by appropriating their surplus product and their labor power, respectively. These were the critical nexuses between the rural community and the larger system. The roceiros proper and their extractive products and agricultural produce contributed to the “grande movimento,” as noted in Chapter 4.

My main arguments in the analysis of this period of the historical trajectory of the slave descendant roceiros in Jocojó were the following: First, their life was not dominated
by the imperatives of Amazonian political economy. These people did develop a
diversified livelihood strategy, not a semblance of strategy (Ross 1978:217-218), which
permitted that areas of their social life, however pervaded by the demands of extraction
of forest/river products, remained determined by their own demands, according to their
own value directives. Second and related to this first point, the oral narratives I recorded,
and their own efforts to “make a history” so as to validate their land claims and obtain
official recognition of their territorial rights, revealed a much more complex
sociopolitical profile than suggested in the relevant literature. The system was
“equalitarian” (Cohen 1982), that is to say, it was marked by enduring hierarchies of
economic advantage dividing householders, but these differences were intentionally
masked and muted in everyday social intercourse. Poor and well off peasants entered into
reciprocal relations to provide for themselves, and reproduce a (peasant) mode of life,
without apparent contradiction. I interpret the attitude of roceiro householders in Jocojó
towards intravillage economic differences and social stratification as a response to
depeasantization.

Timber Extraction: Increased Cash Circulation in Gurupá’s Economy (from the
Mid-1960s to the Mid-1980s)

As mentioned in Chapter 3, householders in Jocojó were forced into timber
extraction by miserably low prices obtained for their agricultural produce in Gurupá. As
Pace (1992) wrote, merchants in the town and trading post owners in its vicinity were
striving for their survival since the end of the mini-boom of rubber in Amazonia after
World War II. Rising national inflation, combined with the negative effects of the
regional depression in extracted commodities between 1945 and 1966, had compromised
their ability to extend credit to their clienteles (1992:717). At first, the roceiros saw
timber cutting as an accessory activity. It was conceived as supplementary to agriculture and petty extractivism. Soon, however, it became their main source of livelihood and brought about major changes in domesticity, sociality and morality in Jocojó.

As timber cutting grew in importance in the neighborhood, and more and more men engaged in the activity, land and forest resources, which had hitherto been perceived as abundant and boundless, began to be perceived as finite. Notice of conflicts over access to land and forest resources on the várzea areas may have contributed to this change in perception. By 1973, the major families in the vila had already occupied the larger interfluvial zones on the communal lands in Jocojó. In this way, the division of the community territory in different centros I encountered in 2002 was established. Every centro had its own casa de farinha. The families who had for years planted together and shared the few casas de farinha available in Jocojó were now definitely separated. More important, although property continued to be based on use and association to specific land plots, a tendency towards crystallization of usufruct rights into de fácto rights was manifested at the time.

International lumbering firms began operations in Gurupá in the mid-1960s. Through patrons, firms hired labor in the communities on the Amazon estuary. But around the mid-1970s, firms had already established regional offices in the towns of Breves, Porto de Moz and Gurupá, and the well to do roceiros in Jocojó had already been identified by “buyers” from these offices. Thus, the two wealthier families in Jocojó, the Povos and the Marzagãos, became directly involved in the transactions with lumbering firms, buying logs from their kin and neighbors in the vila, and delivering them to firms. The transactions between buyers and these well to do roceiros, and between them and the
other extractors followed the system of aviamento: firms advanced cash to the well off men, and they advanced cash to the extractors to help finance extraction, and to cover their households expenses (despesa) for the duration of extractive cycle. Logs were delivered on the Amazon in return. After “buyers” measured the jangadas (log rafts), they balanced the accounts and a new cycle of forest felling would begin. Whatever profits the well to do men would make, they converted into merchandise bought in Gurupá to sell at slightly higher prices in Jocojó.

Apparently, with direct penetration of capitalism into the estuary, the hitherto stable socioeconomic relations between the well off roceiros and their poor neighbors were heated. It impossible to assert, however, whether or not competition and contradiction leading to a polarization of these intra-community socioeconomic differences, and a subsequent split between a class of petty capitalists and another of landless peasants would occur in Jocojó, as a Leninist interpretation of peasant economy as a transitional one would suggest. Rather, from my conversations in the village, there were indications that the reciprocal foundations of this stratified social system were not shaken enough. Although it is not possible to maintain that there was no tendency for capitalism to develop within the community, and insist in the stability of the peasant mode of production, the Chayanovian argument, my own point is that in Jocojó, as apparently in other várzea communities, as long as intra-community economic differences and social stratification existed, it served to halt emigration and ultimately depeasantization.

Like patrons in Gurupá, the well-endowed roceiros in the neighborhood faced economic decline beginning in the mid-1980s, mostly because of the withdrawal of large firms from this Amazon area, as the forests on the várzeas and the more accessible upland
areas were depleted of the species of commercial interest at the time. But I insist, even if the macro conditions existing in Amazonia had permitted that these “rich” roceiros formed, with other wealthy peasants in the region, a class of petty traders, my interviewees and the economic situation of these men or their descendants at the time of fieldwork suggested that they would not separate their destinies from the destinies of their kin, friends and neighbors. The little that they had accumulated during the prosperous times of timber extraction was reported to have been converted into aid, foodstuff, medicine, or had deteriorated for lack of maintenance—an old truck given by one of the lumbering firms to pull logs from the upland forests, and a large motorboat then reduced to its hull.

At the level of households, the women continued performing their tasks in agriculture, but their bargaining power within the domestic circle declined. Because men diverted their work from agriculture to extraction, and because households became increasingly dependent on the market for reproduction, women’s work in agriculture was devalued. Different from the previous period, when the emphasis was on subsistence agriculture and household consumption, women were now relegated to an accessory position, tending manioc fields that they knew were not sufficient for the household expenses during the whole year.

This period of forest felling overlapped with the “time of the community,” but for at least 18 years the households in Jocojó approached and distanced themselves from the timber extraction sector, according to external forces but, to a certain extent, to their own wants too. The economic pattern that characterized this transition period separating a time of plenty from a time of failure differed significantly from the old pattern of the
“time of the patrons.” The aim of householders was still the reproduction of their lifeways. But cash entered in circulation, and timber was the official currency in Gurupá; merchants, trading post owners and itinerant river traders all dealt in timber. This had the effect of diverting labor from agriculture to extraction, and caused households to depend more and more on market consumption.

Even if this unprecedented circulation of cash enticed these men to “increase their productivity” by felling more of their own forests, turning a profit was not possible. They were poorly paid for the logs they cut, even though they obtained higher prices compared to the prices of farinha and other their produce. Their families were provided for, and their houses improved. Actual profits, however, were essentially made by the capitalist firms, which appropriated surplus value in their articulation with the peasant households, accessing labor first through patrons in Gurupá, then through the well to do roceiros in the neighborhood. What circulated between the rural and urban sectors were above all cash and logs.

The “Time of the Community”: “Movement of the Church” (from the Mid-1970s to the Late 1990s)

The formal organization of the neighborhood into “community” occurred between the mid- and the late 1970s. Timber cutting for international firms lasted until 1986, although a few families in Jocojó continued in this extractive activity well into the 1990s. A combination of overharvesting of timber and açai palm heart, and overfishing in the Amazon by commercial fishing fleets, which came to Gurupá in the early 1980s, caused significant environmental degradation in Jocojó. Little by little, the idea of fracasso (failure) solidified in the peoples’ minds, always associated with the new times, in which their “disguised forms of insurance” (Wolf 1969:279, citing Lipton 1968:341) had
disappeared. Now, neither their labor, nor, principally, their production linked these roceiros to the urban sector. My argument here is that socioeconomic differences in Jocojó were leveled due to this unfortunate combination: control over land and/or labor meant nothing in this new time.

Their relations with the urban sector were primarily political then, and economic exchanges with the larger system were virtually non-existent. Itinerant river traders siphoned off of Jocojó the little that these people produced on their centros, basically timbó vines. In 1992, when the families in the community resumed relations with the Catholic church, they were both economically and socially isolated from the outside world, and experienced the harsh consequences of government policies for modernization and development of Amazonia on their own natural surroundings.

In the late 1980s, the children of those men who had occupied the interfluvial areas in the community’s territory, back in the early 1970s, had already married and opened their own manioc fields in these areas. This was a time in which the people in Jocojó became aware of the possibility of petitioning to INCRA to obtain title to 100-hectare land plots. The document issued by INCRA was merely a declaration of occupancy, not a formal title to land, but for years it was believed to constitute formal property rights. Within the centros, close kin continued slashing and burning their fields, irrespective of these “titles,” but access to these lands was nearly blocked to non-kin in the community. The former notion of “property rights” now gained new contours: it was defined along capitalist lines.

The lack of economic alternatives, added to this “enclosure,” may have contributed to the massive emigration of families and young males in Jocojó in the early 1980s. As
Pace wrote, “the extraction boom had depleted or reduced certain key resources vital to farmers/extractors’ means of livelihood” (1992:720). Resource depletion had already disrupted the Gurupá’s economy on several occasions, he explains, but “the cumulative effect of past and present reductions and depletions had severely threatened (present-day) subsistence patterns” (Pace 1992:720). The variety of sources of livelihood the people in Jocojó once had at their disposal in their natural surroundings were evermore scarce.

Back into subsistence agriculture, they tried to extract from their manioc fields the levels of consumption of the previous timber boom. They hoped to earn a living from agriculture, selling farinha in the Jari region through their kin that had established themselves in the industrial complex. Problems of soil exhaustion, lack of access to fertilizers and pesticides, and most important, problems of transportation of their produce blocked their success.

With the new “community organization” and gradual involvement in the “caminhada da Igreja” the mutirão was instituted in Jocojó. The people reinterpreted the original idea of mutirão, as encouraged by the Catholic church elsewhere in Brazil, which consisted of collective work and collective appropriation of the outcomes, and adjusted the institution to a new modality of convite, one in which “era tudo um nivel só,” as Joca narrated to me. All participants in the mutirão were equal, he said. The times of the “little patrons,” as the ex-catechists at FASE referred to the well to do men in Jocojó, were over. But the communal bonds were ascertained all the same on these occasions. That’s how they made communal projects viable. And that’s how Padre Chico gave a motor to the community when they built together their boat, the “Jesus Christ.”
Householders in Jocojó tried to feed their families exclusively from their land, rivers and lakes. But game was increasingly scarce. The logging companies that invaded the upland forests in Jocojó beginning in the mid-1980s hired professional hunters in Gurupá to feed their crews. The result was the near-extinction of the species of fauna that the men in the community used to bring to their homes at the end of the day, on their way back from their manioc fields. Armadillos, *pacas, caetitus*, all were now dreamt of, but rarely encountered on their trails and river banks.

Timbó was their only alternative source of income, but they also used piscicide on the Jocojó River, the streams that fed into it, and the igapós on their lands. Fish disappeared from their black waters in a few years, according to old Gregório, who was known to be a specialist in the use of malhadeiras. By 1995, the coordinators in the community suggested that they develop rules of access and use for the river, small streams, lakes, fauna, and forestlands. All residents supported the idea. In three years, boys and their fathers were bringing fish from the old Jocojó to their hearths. Occasionally, a little timbó was sold to the river trader who visited the community on a monthly basis.

In 1992, a man in Jocojó who had been involved in the peasant resistance movement earlier than and despite of his close kin, neighbors and friends in the community, organized a big mutirão to cut the bush that constantly regrows, blocking the course of small rivers and streams on the estuary. Three communities of slave descendants participated in the effort. The Jocojó was the first river to be “cleaned.” History was reenacted, then. Just as the first runaways, back in the late nineteenth century, had opened the waterway to participate in the “grande movimento,” the traffic of
people and goods on the Amazon highway, now their descendants officially inaugurated their participation in the “caminhada da Igreja,” the peasant resistance movement sponsored by the Catholic church, by cutting the bush that blocked the Jocojó before it reached the Amazon. Only in this new time what circulated between the people in the community and the Catholic priest, CEB catechists, rural union leaders, and other roceiros and varzeiros in Gurupá were words, ideas: the “rights discourse.” That’s how their struggle to obtain their land title began. They claimed official recognition of their territorial rights, and the system of communal ownership of land and resources that their ancestors had engendered, and they married and repeated their unions between their families and opened their “space of freedom” to novatos coming from the Northeast region to tap rubber trees in Gurupá during the rubber boom.

The Socioenvironmental NGO: “Movement of the Environment”

The legalization of the “black territory” of slave descendants introduced no changes in the forms of appropriation of land in Jocojó. Extended families continued growing manioc and processing farinha on their centros. With the help of FASE, their “limits of respect” between neighboring communities were defined. These boundary lines that had been respected for generations were now fixed on paper—maps that the people circulated with pride in the community.

Rural pensions now reduced the frequency of the bouts of hunger that afflicted the families in the vila. Foodstuff circulated from the parental hearths to the houses of their married children. Households continued to be the basic units of production, but not of consumption. Extended families were, instead. What householders extracted from their roças was not sufficient to feed their families. Cooperation in the form of mutirão continued, though with little zest. Only rarely could householders provide food and drink
to their guests. Timbó vines, fruits, and rarely sawn wood, were sold to the river trader, on whose monthly visits the families that did not have access to rural pensions depended.

To qualify as slave descendants and obtain official recognition of their collective “black territory,” the slave descendants in Jocojó engaged in a process of identity (re)construction, which they strategically associated with the “imagination” they had gained through their connections with the environmental movement, in order to influence ethnic minority and sustainable development state policies. This “imagination” was not an ideology—understood as the “capability of dominant groups or classes to make their own sectional interests appear to others as universal ones” (Guiddens 1979:6). It was not a passive acceptance of an environmentalist agenda defined by “eco-elites” (Nugent 2002:69-72) from outside Amazonia either. Rather, following the example of the rubber tappers in Acre, equating social and ecological justice, and using their “informed imagination,” these slave descendant roceiros and verzeiros in rural Gurupá were voicing a claim deeply rooted on reflection on their own experience as economic actors in processes that eventually unleashed the dire ecological consequences and conditions in which they now lived.

In their identity-based mobilizations, through their quilombola association, they aimed at developing new, recreating old, and defending their few existing sources of livelihood, so as to continue their mode of life. Apparently, these people knew how crucial state policies were for them to escape their poverty and vulnerability, and gain control of their economic futures. As Edelman notes in his article, “The Persistence of the Peasantry” (Edelman 2000), after more than a decade of neoliberalism,

state agencies remain central points of reference . . . the state may have diminished its size and activities, but it still remains a fount of amelioration of specific
problems and an essential element in the political legitimation—as well as the certification, licensing, even incorporation—of new social subjects who seek to survive by engaging the market. (2000:5)

In this thesis, I attempted to place the history of the people in Jocojó within the social and economic processes in Amazonia, beginning after the rubber boom. Through autobiographical narratives of women and men in the community, I tried to understand their points of view about their own social historical. These fragments of the past highlighted a continuous, if uneven, undermining of the ecological and socioeconomic pre-conditions for their social reproduction—unrestricted access to ecosystems based on which they developed their diversified livelihood strategies, and the existence of a market for their agricultural produce and extractive materials (Nugent 1993:197). When those few who considered the possibility looked beyond their relationships to their lands, forests, rivers, lakes, and igapós, and considered temporary migration to the industrial enclaves in other Amazon areas, they realized that their access to these places was practically blocked by their chronic illiteracy and general lack of qualifications. Leaving agriculture was no longer an option to the people in Jocojó. Most important, it was not what the majority of the roceiros in the community wanted.

Apparently, up till the legalization of their black territory, these people had neither emphasized nor downplayed their black ethnic identity in their everyday intercourses with outsiders. But they were known in Gurupá as descendants of the “old Negroes of Jocojó.” Their kinship continuity with the runaways who founded the neighborhood was already an expression of resistance and ethnicity. For generations they had been creating and recreating a landscape to live in and a place in the world, living their own lives as much as possible on their own terms, reinventing themselves, as the social, political, and economic worlds which they inhabited changed. Now they carved out a political space by
means of essentialist practices . . . to continue to do so. This particular way of placing
themselves in the ever-changing world accounted for their persistence. Future
ethnography could illuminate this.
APPENDIX A
GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

ABRA – Associação Brasileira de Reforma Agrária (Brazilian Association for Land Reform)
ARQMI G – Associação dos Remanescentes de Quilombos do Município de Gurupá (Quilombola Association of Gurupá)
BASA – Banco da Amazônia (Amazon Bank)
CEB – Comunidades Eclesiais de Base (Base Ecclesiastic Communities or Christian Base Communities)
CFR – Casa Familiar Rural (Rural Family House)
CNBB – Conselho Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil (National Council of Brazilian Bishops)
CPT – Comissão Pastoral da Terra (Land Pastoral Commission)
CRS – Catholic Relief Services
CUT – Central Única dos Trabalhadores (Central of Workers’ Unions)
COOMAG – Cooperativa Mista Agroextrativista de Gurupá (Joint Agroextractivist Cooperative of Gurupá)
EMATER – Empresa de Assistência Técnica e Extensão Rural (State Rural Extension Agency)
EU – European Union
FASE – Federação de Órgãos para Assistência Social e Educacional (Federation of Organizations for Social and Educational Assistance)
FNO – Fundo Constitucional de Financiamento do Norte (Constitutional Fund of the North)
FPM – Fundo de Participação dos Municípios (Municipal Participation Fund)
FUNBIO – Fundo Brasileiro para a Biodiversidade (Brazilian Trust Fund for Biodiversity)
FUNDEF – Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento do Ensino Fundamental (Maintenance and Development of Elementary Education Fund)
GDP – Gross Domestic Product
GPS – Global Positioning Satellite
IBAMA – Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis (Brazilian Institute for Renewable Natural Resources and Environment)
IBGE – Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics)
ICCO – Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation
ICMS – Imposto sobre Circulação de Mercadorias e Serviços (State Sales Tax)
IEB – Instituto Internacional de Educação do Brasil (International Institute for Brazilian Education)
IHD – Index of Human Development
IHD-M – Municipal Index for Human Development
INCRA – Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária (Brazilian Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform)
ITERPA – Instituto de Terras do Estado do Pará (Land Institute of the State of Pará)
ITR – Imposto Territorial Rural (Rural Land Tax)
MLAL – Movimento Laici America Latina (Latin America Laic Movement)
NAFTA – North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
PIN – Programa de Integração Nacional (National Integration Program)
PT – Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers’ Party)
PRONAF – Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar (National Program for Support of Family Agriculture)
RABO – Dutch Bank
RDS – Reserva de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (Sustainable Development Reserve)
STR – Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Rurais (Rural Workers’ Union)
SUDAM – Superintendência para o Desenvolvimento da Amazonia (Superintendency for the Development of Amazonia)
SUDENE – Superintendência para o Desenvolvimento do Nordeste (Superintendency for the Development of Northeast Region)
SUDEPE – Superintendência para o Desenvolvimento da Pesca (Superintendency for the Development of Fisheries)
UNDP – United Nations Development Program
WHO – World Health Organization
APPENDIX B
GLOSSARY OF PORTUGUESE TERMS

açaí – (*Euterpe oleraceae*), a palm fruit used to make a popular pulpy juice
ajuda – aid, help
andiroba – (*Carapa guanensis Aubl.*) forest tree which produces an oily nut (seed)
aningais – (*Montrichardia arborescens*) arum patches
aviador – (pl. aviadores), creditor/supplier in aviamento system
aviamento – credit and supply system for extractive activities
babaçu – (*Orbignya phalerata Martins*), an oily nut from babaçu palm tree
barracão – community center, a large open structure (shelter) used for dancing festivals and communal meetings
beiju – type of pancake made with tapioca
boldo – (*Peamus boldus Mold*), a herbal plant with medicinal use
burúti - (*Mauritia flexuosa*), a tropical palm tree which produces edible fruit and seeds
cabanos – rebel involved in the Cabanagem Revolt (1835-1836)
caboclo – Amazonian peasantry of mixed ethnic ancestry
cacau – (*Theobroma cacao L.*), cocoa
cachaca – a strong alcoholic drink obtained by distillation of fermented sugarcane juice
cacurí – large fish trap usually made of the trunks of açaí palms
camarão – fresh water shrimp
caminhada – “march”, the resistance movement fostered by the Catholic church
cantina – community store
capoeira – fallow area, secondary growth forest
casa de farinha – open structure for processing manioc flour
casas aviadoras – foreign export houses in aviamento system
casco – canoe
castanhal – (pl. castanhais), Brazil nut tree stand
catequista – catechists, lay instructor of Catholicism trained by the Church
centro – interfluvial land areas where extended families grow their gardens
cidreira – (*Melissa officinalis L.*) a herbal plant with medicinal purpose
coivara – agricultural practice consisting of gathering together the partially burned into piles digging out the worst of the under burned roots systems

comadre – co-mother, term for women linked by godparenthood

comissários volantes – traders who operated outside the legal channels

compadre – co-father, term for men linked by godparenthood, the relation between the father of the child and the godparent in the compadrazgo system

compadrazgo – Spanish word for godparenthood; in Portuguese “compadrio”

compradores – buyers

comunitários – community members

condição – literally, condition

convite – literally, invitation, term used for cooperative work parties

copaíba – (Copaifera officinalis), a tree species which produces an oleoresin that accumulates in cavities within the tree trunk; it is harvested by tapping or drilling holes into the wood of the trunk and collecting the resin that drips out.

cruêira – under roasted coarse granules of manioc flour discarded in the processing of the poisonous (bitter) variety of manioc

culto – weekly religious service

cumarú – (Dipteryx odorata), forest tree species for timber; it also produces a dark seed with medicinal properties

cupuacú – (Theobroma grandiflorum), a native Amazonian tree that produces an edible fruit, which contains an oily seed similar to cocoa

despesa – expense, the items that households consume or use

diretoria – executive board

dourada – kind of catfish

drogas do sertão – literally, backland drugs, Amazon forest products

embaúba – (Cecropia glaziovi Snethlage), tree species for timber

farinha – type of flour, but in the Amazon usually referred to manioc flour made from the bitter variety (Manihot esculenta)

fabrico – extractive activity

festa – literally party, saint’s festival

filhote – (Brachyplatystoma sp.), species of fish

fracasso – failure, decline, deterioration

frechais – rafters

freguês – (pl. fregueses), client

furo – river channel connecting high várzea to low várzea areas
galhos – literally, branches, direct descendants of first settlers
gambá – a dance of African origin, similar to samba
ganho – source of livelihood
geleira – a boat of any size with an ice store that transports fish
gênero – produce
igapó – flooded forest
igarapé – small stream
igreja - church
intendente – head of city’s government, equivalent to a mayor
inverno – winter, usually referred to the rainy season throughout the Amazon region
irmandade – religious brotherhood
jacundás – (not identified), species of fish
jangada – log raft
jandiás – (Leiarius marmoratus, family Pimelodidae), species of fish
jatuarana – (Brycon cephalus B. melanopterus) species of fish
jeju – (group Cyprimiformes characo, family Erythrinidae) species of fish
jirau – suspended wooden structure supported by poles used to cultivate herbs and horticultural plants
jovens – unmarried men and women
lanternar – from lanterna (flashlight), hunting in the night
malhadeira – gill net
mandioca – (Manihot esculenta), manioc; the roots of the manioc plant provides farinha, tapioca, tucupi, tipiti; the leaves may also be eaten (manisoba) and the stalks are used as cuttings (maniva)
maniva – aerial part of the manioc plant, usually used to replant the crop
maranhense – a person who is born in the State of Maranhão
marreteiro – middleman
massarandúba – (Manibara huberi), forest tree species for timber
mastruz – (Chenopodium ambrosioides L.), herbal plant species
mata grossa – old fallow area, secondary growth forest
matapis – type of fish trap made of palm fiber
morena – black woman
movimento – literally movement, social movement when indicated within the text
mulherada – women
mururé – “islands” of vegetation that float downstream on the Amazon river, drawn from the river shores by the strength of its colossal waters, as they are called by the peasants in the estuary of the Amazon river
mutirão – (pl. mutirões), cooperative work parties in agriculture
novato – newcomer
paca – (Agouti paca), animal species
palmo – unit of measure for sawn wood; equivalent to the distance between the thumb and the little finger of an open hand
paraná – small river channels
participantes da caminhada – participants in the “march”, the resistance movement fostered by the Catholic church
pelego – a servile hanger-on of the commercial elite
penhora – conveyance
pirarucu – (Arapaina gigas), species of fish
poupança - savings
primeirantes – the founders of the village, first settlers
procurador – attorney for the saint
pupunha – (Bactris gasipaes), peach palm species with an edible core (palmito), if fecund, produces an edible fruit
quilombo – fugitive slave settlement, hideouts of escaped African slaves
quilombola – descendants of African slaves
ramada – same as barracão
regatão – (pl. regatões), itinerant river trader
ricaços – literally very rich people, refers to the powerful patrons/storeowners
roça – cultivated field, garden
roçado – small field (less than a quarter of a hectare) on areas of secondary vegetation (fallow areas often with less than three years between cycles of cultivation) that as usually monocropped but followed sequentially by manioc
roceiros – small farmers living in the terra firme, dry upland forest dwellers
saldo – positive balance paid by the patrons to their “workers” after expenses with food and equipment provided to them during the collecting season were deducted
seringa – product extracted from rubber trees
seringal – (pl. seringais), rubber tree stands
seringueira – (Hevea brasiliensis), rubber tree
sítio – heart of the interfluvial land area where extended families grow their gardens
sucupira – (Bowdichia virgilioides H.B.K.), forest tree species
sumaúma – (Ceiba pentandra), forest tree species for timber
tapioca – edible starchy granulated solid particles that separate out from drained grated manioc mash; it is used to make beijú
tarefa – literally task, a form of labor calculation on which a peasant and his family, or a work party could complete in x or y hours, weeks. Human in scale, a tarefa corresponds to an area of 2.5 x 2.5 meters (equivalent to a man standing with his arm stretched upwards). Land area corresponding to 2,500 square meters (by the time of fieldwork, although in the past a tarefa was reported to correspond to 3,906.25 square meters)
taririras – (group Cypriniformes characo, family Erythrinidae), species of fish
terra firme – dry upland forest
timbó – type of vine plant that releases a piscicide (poison substance) that stupefies the fish, rise to the surface and are easily caught
tipiti – tube made of palm fibers used to strain manioc mash
traíras – same as taririras, species of fish
trapiche – wharf, dock
troca-de-dia – literally exchange of day, direct exchange of labor (common type of mutual aid between the poorest residents)
tucupí – clear liquid extract (containing toxic compounds) drained by squeezing grated manioc mash with a tipiti; it is used as an ingredient in a traditional sauce very appreciated in Amazonia
ucuíba – (Virola duckey A.C.Sm.), forest tree species
várzea – white-water floodplains
varzeiro – inhabitants of the Amazon várzeas, floodplain dwellers
veteranos – literally veterans, married men with children
vila – small village, neighborhood
zagaia – gig, wooden spears with a metallic head of two prongs, used in the fishing method called piraquera
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Neila Soares da Silva was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on November 11, 1957. She received her bachelor’s degree in architecture and urban planning at the Santa Ursula University (FAU-USU) in 1981. After a four-year period working at an architecture firm, she started her graduate studies at the Graduate Program in Social Anthropology at the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro. At the time, she did her fieldwork among Nambiquara Indians in western State of Mato Grosso. From this experience, she joined AWARU, a non-governmental organization that provided legal support to indigenous groups in Central Brazil. In 1992, she worked in the organization of the “Indigenous Peoples World Conference on the Earth, Environment and Development”, during the “Earth Summit” (UNCED, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). In the same year, she was appointed as head of the land tenure department at the regional office of the National Indian Foundation, FUNAI, in the State of Mato Grosso. At FUNAI, she also worked as anthropologist at the Special Projects Unit, Brasilia headquarters, under programs for demarcation of indigenous peoples’ lands. In 1996, she joined the Rain Forest Unit at the World Bank, Brasilia Office to work as a social scientist, where she was responsible for the task-management of the Demonstration Projects, a sub-component of the Pilot Program to Protect the Brazilian Rain Forest, PPG 7. Neila came to the University of Florida to study at the Tropical Conservation and Development Program at the Center for Latin American Studies under the guidance of Dr. Marianne Schmink. In the Fall Semester of 2003, she began her doctoral studies at the Anthropology Department at UF.