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An Archaeology of Forest Peoples

VINICIUS HONORATO [I] *e* *BRUNA ROCHA* [II]

Introduction

AT THE END of the 20th century, Eduardo Neves (1999) proposed that we should view Brazilian archaeology as indigenous history, helping to distance the discipline from the concept of "prehistory" – a problematic term[1] that was largely used uncritically. Neves' proposition converged with others from his generation (e.g. Eremites de Oliveira, 2002; Noelli, 1993; Silva, 2000) who had begun to build a direct connection between archaeology and indigenous peoples of the present. They thus developed the fundamental tenet espoused by José Brochado (1984, p.1), who declared that "If no relations are established between ceramic traditions and styles and the people who made them, something very important has been utterly lost". Contrary to what the then paradigm in archaeology advocated, he argued that ethnographic connections should be actively sought – not repelled.

These ideas were in line with initiatives coming from the Brazilian indigenous movement, which was being articulated on a national level for the first time, and which called for the recognition of the protagonism of indigenous peoples. The then prevalent approaches that portrayed indigenous peoples as being on the verge of extinction were beginning to be questioned by anthropologists and historians (e.g. Cunha 2006). John Monteiro (2001) observed that until that moment, Brazilian historiography tended to disregard the indigenous people as legitimate historical actors, echoing the statement that "Of such people in childhood, there is no history: there is only ethnography" (Varnhagen 1877, p.22). Monteiro also criticised archaeologists for mainly focussing on archaeology relative to the pre-Columbian period, or – in the case of the sub-discipline known then as Historical Archaeology – on colonial villages and, increasingly, on remains related to enslaved Africans and their descendants. By presenting a fossilized image of indigenous people as "inhabitants of a remote past or a distant forest" (Monteiro 2011, p.4, our translation), these approaches contributed (even if inadvertently) to the effacement of indigenous people who had had some level of interaction with surrounding Euro-Brazilian society, as they were considered "less indigenous". Thus, cultural transformations were equated with extinction, despite the processes of negotiation that indigenous peoples carried out in the face of colonial reality over centuries. For Monteiro archaeology, by ignoring the figure of the "colonial Indian", implicitly contributed to an erasure of indigenous presence after 1500.

This scenario has since changed markedly with an increase in archaeological research aimed at exploring indigenous persistence over centuries of colonisation (e.g. Noelli; Sallum, 2019). Collaborative or ethnoarchaeological work with indigenous communities (e.g. Cabral, 2014; Heckenberger et al., 2003; Machado, 2016; Silva, 2002) connected with the record of their history and territoriality (e.g. Jácome, 2017), has led to what has been called indigenous archaeologies (e.g. Silva, 2012), carried out with, or led by, indigenous researchers (Munduruku et al., 2021, among others). This shift has led to new epistemological problems regarding concepts often considered basic to the discipline, something which has also been driven by access to universities for indigenous students and researchers (e.g. Jesus, 2022, Munduruku, 2019; Priprá, 2021; Wai Wai, 2017).

For a long time "traditional peoples and communities"[2] were in contrast seen only as informants who could lead the archaeologist to the indigenous past by pointing out patches of Amazonian Dark Earth (hereafter referred to as ADE), concentrations of ceramics, or stone axes, in what has been dubbed "opportunistic use" (Rocha et al., 2014). Such invisibility had already been pointed to in other areas of knowledge (Adams et al., 2008; Nugent, 1993), but in relation to archaeology or historical ecology the involvement of these actors in research has only changed significantly in the last decade. Today several research projects and methodologies are geared to addressing the complex relationships of traditional communities with landscapes, plants and other entities in their territories (e.g. Cassino et al., 2019; Levis et al., 2018; Machado, 2012; Santos, 2022) and with archaeological materiality (e.g. Bezerra, 2013). The multiple dimensions of the rubber economy in relation to capitalism have also been examined (e.g. Muniz, 2022). It is indeed urgent to reaffirm the importance of explicitly embracing traditional peoples and communities that often descend from indigenous people and/or Africans, but not only these groups, and who do not necessarily recognise themselves as indigenous or *quilombolas.* Archaeological research still tends to focus on indigenous peoples *or* on traditional peoples and communities *or* on *quilombola* communities. Though justifiable, such contours can limit our attempt to compose long-term histories of the territories where we work and unwittingly contribute to the anonymity of neighbours belonging to another social group who share the same landscapes.

Forest Peoples and their resistance to the Anthropocene

Established in the 1980s, the Alliance of Forest Peoples presented itself as an "essentially political coalition between rubber tappers and indigenous people who, in the face of common enemies, align themselves in the same political identity" (Guerrero et al., 2012, our translation). As outlined by Aílton Krenak, they fought for rights linked to traditionally occupied territories and the dignity of their occupants:

> Chico Mendes, rubber tappers, riverside dwellers (ribeirinhos) and indigenous communities dreamed of a network of cooperation between different communities in the Amazon, a dream that had a significant impact on the articulation of Indians with Brazilian society, and with a set of political, environmental and socio-environmental issues, at a time when they hadn't yet been framed in the terms that we use now, in the 21st century. I'm talking about the end of the 1980s, 1990s, when environmental issues were still seen as something very elitist. Chico Mendes began to work with these ideas, relating them to land issues, with access to land, with access to fundamental human rights for people who lived in conditions of semi-slavery in the forest. He, I and other indigenous leaders started the Alliance of Forest Peoples. (Krenak in Moreira, 2022, our translation)

Working in southern Amazonia along the upper stretches of the Tapajós river, which is characterised by a series of rapids, and the Xingu river's principal tributary, the Iriri, we have come to define our practice as an Archaeology of Forest Peoples in recognition of the powerful alliance mentioned above. Forest Peoples often have a heterogeneous heritage, combining their indigenous, African and northeastern Brazilian origins, which can overlap in the archaeological record. We have sought to contribute to the understanding of the history of Forest Peoples by providing elements that help demonstrate their different historical trajectories, such as specific forms of social organization and their own particular, close relationship with their territories, while at the same time recognising that they all possess common aspects.

It is only possible to understand "Amazonia against the Anthropocene"[3] by recognising the territories and ways of life of Forest Peoples, based on diversity; it is essential not to deny the history of the Forest Peoples. Supporting territorial demands and other rights of Forest Peoples also means standing beside those who show us that other ways of inhabiting the world are possible.

Archaeology presents itself as an effective tool for understanding the historical contexts of indigenous, traditional and *quilombola*[4] peoples, as it haves at its disposal privileged means to investigate the history of non-literate peoples or what Prins (1992) calls "composite cultures", which are partially literate. Written documentation regarding indigenous, traditional and *quilombola* peoples was, and still is, often produced by actors external to these groups, with interests that are commonly antagonistic to theirs. In land conflicts, it is written documentation that is usually considered in legal environments as holding an objective "truth" compared with collective recollections and memories transmitted orally over generations by traditional peoples – but these can, however, become an instrument of resistance to territorial expropriation (Torres, 2014).

Due to the continued effacement of traditional people, we will present definitions of Traditional Peoples and Communities (PCT, Portuguese acronym) that stem from the rubber tappers' struggle. We will highlight the genesis of one of these peoples (the beiradeiros) and then provide examples of the use

of archaeological information in the context of territorial disputes in the Terra do Meio and upper Tapajós regions in Pará state.

From rubber tappers to beiradeiros

Traditional peoples and communities live in what Alfredo Wagner de Almeida conceptualized as "traditionally occupied lands,[5] which express a diversity of forms of collective existence of different peoples and social groups in terms of their relationships with natural resources" (2008, p.25, our translation). Initially referred to in legal terms as "traditional populations" (Bill 9,985/2000), they began to be referred to as Traditional Peoples and Communities a few years later. Decree 6,040/2007[6] defines them as "culturally differentiated groups who recognise themselves as such, who have their own forms of social organization, who occupy and use territories and natural resources as a condition for their cultural, social, religious, ancestral and economic reproduction, using knowledge, innovations and practices generated and transmitted by tradition" and whose traditional territories encompass "the spaces necessary for [their] cultural, social and economic reproduction... whether they are used permanently or temporarily" (Brasil, 2007, 3rd Article).

In the Amazon, the genesis of many traditional peoples and communities can be directly related to capitalist advancement, whether due to the profound transformations caused by mercantilist expansion linked to the European invasion or from the establishment of Industrial Capitalism – this being an inflection point leading to the Anthropocene, according to its initial conception (Crutzen; Stoermer, 2000). The Industrial Revolution is closely linked to the exploitation of latex from the rubber tree (*Hevea brasiliensis*) which was used to manufacture gaskets for steam engines, belts, wire insulation, machine tubes, shock absorbers and eventually tyres. Rubber accompanied iron and steel wherever industrial machines, mine pumps, and railroads were installed (Dean 1989, p.32).

To satisfy the ever-increasing demand for rubber, hundreds of thousands of workers were mobilised. Indigenous labour was generally treated as "a local and transitory alternative in the face of new opportunities" (Cunha, 2006, p.133, our translation). As the 19th century progressed, an increasing number of people from northeastern Brazil joined the ranks of the rubber tappers. Heavily exploited through a system of debt bondage, they were used in the conquest of indigenous territories, leading to their fragmentation and to the advance of national society in areas that until then had been little frequented by non-indigenous people.

Transformations on a global scale, however, caused the pace of the race for rubber to suddenly slow down. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Amazonian monopoly on rubber production was broken, following decades of research and experiments to adapt the rubber tree to other parts of the world. Without fungi and the other natural competitors found in the Amazon, the rubber tree started to be cultivated in plantations, one located close to the next, in southeast Asia. This significantly increased the productivity and reduced the cost

of Asian production, compared with Amazonian. The misfortune of Brazil's *seringalistas*,[7] however, represented a chance for the tappers to break free from the system of debt bondage. As Mauro Almeida summarises:

> With the collapse of the world rubber market, in 1920, the extractive-export trade-post [*barracão*] system became obsolete. As a result, rubber tappers had to survive on the basis of their northeastern peasant experience, but above all by learning indigenous technologies, a forest way of life that minimally depended on imported goods, in which collecting and extractivism were components. This is the origin of the colocação economy. (Almeida, 2021, p.69-70)

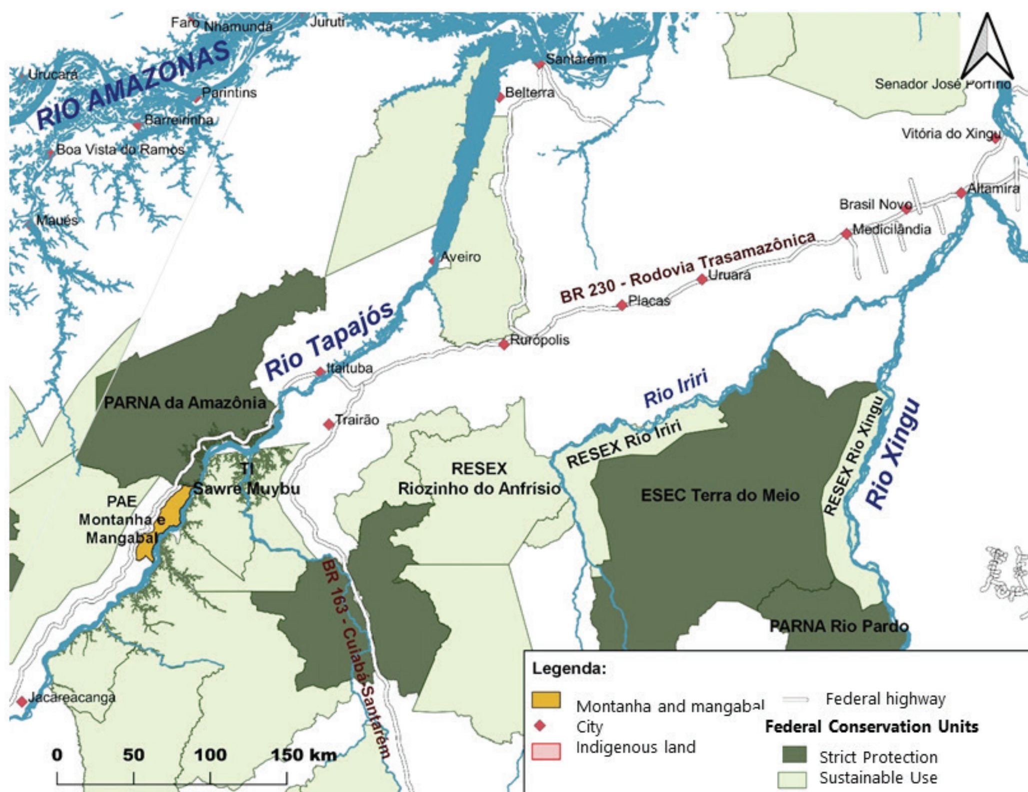
On the middle/upper[8] Tapajós river and in the Terra do Meio region, the descendants of rubber tappers call themselves *beiradeiros.*

The Forest Peoples of the upper Tapajós and Terra do Meio

Indirect archaeological evidence indicates ancient indigenous presence in these regions, possibly dating from the end of the Pleistocene (Simões, 1976) at approximately 10 thousand years ago. Near the upper Iriri river, a radiocarbon date indicates human presence at the end of the middle Holocene (Balée et al., 2020), some four thousand years ago. Indigenous presence during the late Holocene has been recorded in both regions, often linked to ADE sites (Balée et al., 2020; Honorato de Oliveira, 2015; Rocha, 2017; Perota, 1979; 1982). Due to difficulty of access and the fact that the upper Tapajós region was under Spanish rule until the signing of the Treaty of Madrid in 1750, documentary records that could signal indigenous presence were only produced from the mid-18th century onwards as far as we are aware (Rocha, 2017).

In addition to the presence of rubber tappers, these historical records document the presence of indigenous peoples from the four major Amazonian indigenous language stocks – Arawak, Jê, Karib and Tupian – as well as from isolated languages. In the upper Tapajós, Tupian language speakers predominated; the presence of speakers from the Tupi-Guarani (Apiaká, Parintintin and Kayabi), Munduruku (Munduruku) and Mawé (Sateré-Mawé) families is recorded.[9] In the Terra do Meio, the presence of indigenous peoples who speak languages from the Tupian stock – such as Xipaya and Yudjá (Juruna linguistic family) and Kuruaya (Munduruku linguistic family) –, from the Karib language families such as the Arara, and speakers of Jê languages such as the Kayapó is found. These Forest Peoples currently inhabit Strict Protection and Sustainable Use Conservation Units,[10] Indigenous Lands (in differential stages of official recognition), as well as an Agroextractive Settlement Project.

The occupation was strongly influenced by the characteristics of the rivers crossing the region, which flow down from the Brazilian Central Highlands: the Tapajós river originates from the merging of the Teles Pires and Juruena rivers; and the Terra do Meio is located in the interfluve between the Tapajós and Xingu rivers (Map 1), more specifically in the region on the western bank of the Xingu river, including the Iriri, Curuá and Riozinho do Anfrísio Rivers.



Source: Map: Vinicius Honorato, cartographic data: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MMA).

Map 1 – Traditionally occupied territories on the middle/upper Tapajós and Terra do Meio region mentioned in the text.

Until it reaches the vicinity of the town of Itaituba, the Tapajós river is characterized by its 99 rapids. Its navigation is difficult and restricted to smaller vessels, as is also the case with the rivers in the Terra do Meio. These geomorphological characteristics contributed to resistance processes that delayed the colonisation of these regions when compared to the lower courses of the Tapajós and Xingu rivers, downstream from the last rapids and, therefore, with facilitated navigation. Archaeological information points to the last rapids on the Tapajós as a boundary of cultural interaction from at least the 9th century onwards (Honorato de Oliveira 2015; Rocha 2017). However, during the rubber boom[11] rapids allowed greater control over the transportation and movement of people on the Tapajós and Xingu rivers. The need for routes to get around the rapids guaranteed the region's bosses "more land and power than the average trade-post agent [aviador] and *seringalista*"[12] (Weinstein, 1993, p.215). Some of these paths connected the Tapajós and Xingu basins through interfluvial networks spanning hundreds of kilometres and have their origins in centuries-old indigenous routes.

From the 1960s, the opening of roads by the military dictatorship (1964-1985) would once again accelerate the colonisation and plunder of Forest Peoples' territories. The advance on these territories was justified through the denial of the history of Forest People. The narratives used included the 'pristine forest' myth, which invested in the dissociation between humans and nature. Using the discourse of "integrate [the Amazon] so as not to hand it over" (to supposed foreign interests), new land routes – the Transamazônica (BR-230) and Cuiabá-Santarém (BR-163) highways – which connected the Xingu and Tapajós basins, become vectors of an aggressive advance of industrial society over traditionally occupied territories.

Forests without people?

In a clear effort to erase Forest Peoples and their history, the opening of roads in the Amazon in the 1970s was linked to the promise of "land without people for people without land". These roads promoted an increase in land grabbing, which spiralled to proportions never seen before in the upper Tapajós and Terra do Meio regions (Torres, 2008). This led to invasions of traditionally occupied territories and permanently pierced the barrier established by the rivers' rapids, which had previously protected them.

To defuse the international criticism engendered by images and reports that exposed indigenous genocide, the destruction of the forest and the advance of the "agricultural frontier", the dictatorship decided to create strict protection nature reserves. The first in the Amazon was the Amazon National Park (PARNA, Portuguese acronym), located south of the town of Itaituba. Based on the Yellowstone Park model imported from the United States and other parks and reserves created in African colonies, the creation of the park resulted in the violent expulsion of the communities living there (Torres; Figueiredo, 2005). The park's management plan produced by the Brazilian Institute of Forest Development (IBDF, 1978) stated that Brazil's largest national park – whose more than one million hectares were supposedly almost all untouched – could be explored by tourists (see Hymas et al., 2021). The management plan includes a section called "Cultural values" and sub-sections on Archaeology, History and Anthropology. Two archaeological works are cited: Evans (1964) and Simões (1976). The inclusion of these references is not, however, seen to contradict the narrative that "a National Park encompasses the best of nature within a country, worthy of being conserved and preserved permanently" (IBDF, 1978, p.1). This suggests that archaeological research undertaken at the time circulated among state officials and was politically mobilised to deny continued human presence in the area.

A few years later, a portion of the Parna would be dismantled to allow for limestone quarrying, exposing a lack of commitment to environmental protection. Forced to move to Itaituba, beiradeiros would die of melancholy, unable to adapt to urban poverty (Torres; Figueiredo, 2005). Women were "compensated" for the loss of their territory with, at most, a sewing machine.

In the 1980s, alternatives to this "preservationist"[13] approach were offered by Forest Peoples themselves. In reaction to processes of expropriation from their territories, unionized rubber tappers in Acre state, in southwestern Amazonia, began a struggle that would culminate in the creation of Extractive Reserves (RESEX, Portuguese acronym).[14] A RESEX is based on the collective use of land and the absence of the *patrão* to provide protection against external pressures, maintaining a centuries-old way of life. The rubber tapper movement from Acre, which gave rise to the idea of the Extractive Reserve, "advocated the end of *seringais*[15] with the preservation of the way of life associated with the *colocação*"[16] (Almeida 2021, p.68), pointing to an explicit political strategy of combining transformations with historical persistences.

In the first decade of the 2000s, in the context of reaction to land grabbing and predatory logging activities, and social organization against them, which accelerated in response to the murder of Sister Dorothy Stang (Silva, 2009, p.69), Extractive Reserves Riozinho do Anfrísio, Rio Iriri and Rio Xingu were created in the Terra do Meio. These RESEX represented a great victory for the beiradeiros living in these territories. A new national park was also announced – Serra do Pardo, as well as the Terra do Meio Ecological Station (ESEC, Portuguese acronym). Thus, strict protection nature reserves were instituted in places historically occupied by rubber tappers and their beiradeiro descendants. Established in 2005, the Terra do Meio ESEC pressured the beiradeiros living there to leave, with many abandoning their plots. This eviction was often caused by the hampering of traditional subsistence practices: according to the beiradeiros who lived there, state agents declared that they would not be evicted by force, but by hunger, indicating an increase in restrictions on daily activities (Guerrero, 2020, p.98).

Also in the early 2000s the image of the pristine forest was recycled by Workers' Party governments to justify hydropower dam projects on the upper Tapajós. The very rapids that slowed down the pace of colonisation and helped the anticolonial struggles of previous centuries now began to attract dam builders through a project proposed by the State and a series of private actors. Official advertisements, speeches by the then president of the Energy Research Company (EPE, acronym in Portuguese) and environmental NGOs initially advanced the narrative that the construction of the Tapajós Hydroelectric Complex[17] would be environmentally responsible and omitted the presence of indigenous peoples and traditional communities around the São Luiz do Tapajós and Jatobá dam areas. According to the government, construction would take place in the same way as offshore oil platforms, that is, "in areas where man is not present" (PAC, 2012). In an evident effort to efface the presence and history of the beiradeiros and Munduruku, the hydropower project delayed State recognition of indigenous and traditional territories: the Montanha and Mangabal beiradeiros' demand for a RESEX was denied,[18] while the publication of a report (RCID,

Portuguese acronym), that signalled the first step in the recognition process of the Sawre Muybu Indigenous Land, only occurred in 2016, after the ousting of president Dilma Rousseff was seen as inevitable.[19]

Below, we will present the archaeological research that contributed to the resistance of the Forest Peoples in these contexts.

The beiradeiro and Munduruku struggle for recognition of their histories and territories

On the Tapajós, archaeological work with the beiradeiros of Montanha and Mangabal (hereafter referred to as Mangabal) and with the Munduruku was conducted from 2010 onwards in contexts of land conflicts characterised mainly by land grabbing and in the shadow of the Tapajós Hydroelectric Complex (Rocha; Honorato, 2021).

When we [the authors] arrived in Mangabal, the beiradeiros were celebrating their recent – and historic – legal victory against a company from southern Brazil that had grabbed more than one million hectares of land, threatening the beiradeiros and portraying them as invaders in the courts. An injunction, which had just been issued in favour of the beiradeiros, was the first in the country to prohibit entry into the territory without authorisation from a traditional (non-indigenous and non-*quilombola*) community, thus suspending a previously insurmountable instrument, called the Torrens Record (Torres, 2008). To achieve this, collective memory was employed as an instrument of "vernacular resistance and an alternative source to a hegemonic ideology established by a political and cultural apparatus" (Torres, 2014). Elements of beiradeiro and rubber tapper materiality, and historical documents all supported the process (Ibidem). However, given the threat of the Tapajós Hydropower Complex and the government's refusal to create the Montanha and Mangabal RESEX, the celebrations were short-lived.

Archaeological work has involved surveys informed by local knowledge, the excavation of sites and the mapping of meaningful places. Radiocarbon dating of material excavated at the Terra Preta do Mangabal site, currently beiradeiro territory, points to an early period of occupation between the 7th and 9th centuries AD; the presence of well-developed mango trees[20] and crockery and glass located both along the higher, level part of the site and on the granite boulders that connect it with the river further indicate that this site was occupied by rubber tappers between the 19th and 20th centuries (Rocha, 2017).

Samples of archaeological ceramics excavated at the Terra Preta do Mangabal site and dated around the 8th century AD display a lozenge motif frequently observed in tattoos that were traditionally worn by the Munduruku, widely recorded during the 19th century (e.g. Agassiz, 1869; Florence, 2007 [1876] Figure 1; Barbosa Rodrigues, 1875). The French watercolourist Hércules Florence, a member of the Russian Empire's Langsdorff Expedition, noted that:

> On this trip, the curious or scientific man can observe notable changes in the ceramic ornaments used by the indigenous people. Those of the Apiacás are constantly made at right angles; those of the Mundurucus are in lozenges, while in other places they are irregular in design, although always of better or poorer taste. They appear on pots, bowls and pipe tubes.[21] (Florence, 2007 [1876], p.272, our translation)

Archaeological, historical and oral information thus indicates that this motif has persisted for around 1,300 years.

Source :Watercolor by Hércule Florence, 1828 .

Figure 1 – Left: Pottery excavated from the Terra Preta do Mangabal site, containing a motif composed of incised lozenges reminiscent of Munduruku tattoos widely recorded during the nineteenth century. Right: *"Femme et enfant Mandurucús. Aux bas-fonds appelé Tiacoron en la Riviere Tapajós, Juin 1828."*

On the other side of the river, in the Munduruku Sawre Muybu village, excavated archaeological remains relate to a single occupation, with three radiocarbon dates falling between the 9th and 11th centuries AD. Our interpretation, based on analyses of lithic and ceramic artifacts, is that these materials are associated with Tupian people who maintained some form of contact with speakers of Karib languages, from whom they imported materials including ceramic vessels (Rocha, 2017) and to whom they could export lithic raw materials such as flint (Honorato de Oliveira, 2015). These vessels served as an inspiration for the manufacture of 'hybrid' ceramics, which have distinct technology and shape, but which contain a stylistic 'signature' in common with the imported items. These hybrid ceramics may in turn indicate ongoing processes of ethnogenesis (Rocha, 2017). Linguistic data compiled by Rodrigues (1985) also point to historical relationships between speakers of Tupian languages (including the Munduruku language) and Karib languages, based on an analysis of different types of cognates linked to different domains. These include cognates for "bowl", "pot", "gourd", and "calabash jar" (ibidem).

Sawre Muybu is also an interesting example of the importance of historical places in current location choices. Village chief Juarez Saw Munduruku explained how the Munduruku traditionally select sites for new villages, highlighting the importance of abundance: "We are not going to choose a place where we will go hungry... We know the land, the dark earth... [where] everything we plant grows".[22] Juarez indicated a tree called *cutite (Pouteria macrophylla)* which is an indicator of the presence of katô (the Munduruku term for ADE), giving an example of how the landscape is read. At least since the 19th century, the occupation of ADE patches has been part of a traditional Munduruku occupation strategy (Hartt, 1885; Frikel, 1959; Hilbert, 1957; Melo; Villanueva, 2008) that may have enabled the rapid expansion of the Munduruku people towards the lower Tapajós, as hypothesized by Francisco Noelli (pers. comm. December 10, 2013) (Rocha, 2017).

Environments with abundance provide a better infrastructure for the development of life. In the Amazon, such environments were often enriched by past societies and continue today to be transformed by indigenous and traditional peoples. In many of these places, beiradeiro and indigenous histories come together, both through the search for enriched soils and concentrations of useful plant species resulting from long occupation processes and through technical expertise and knowledge of the landscape that allow a life of abundance there. The beiradeiros of Terra do Meio recognize this historicity by naming ADEs as *maloca* soil, i.e. an ancient indigenous dwelling place.

Over the last 150 years, rubber tappers and their beiradeiro descendants learned to live in the forest and engaged in a series of relationships with their indigenous neighbours – ranging from open conflict,[23] which led to the (often forced) incorporation of indigenous women and children into the emergent rubber tapper society, to relationships of exchange, family and social networks and, finally, political alliance (Loures, 2017). Currently, the beiradeiros of Mangabal are not seen by their Munduruku neighbours as other 'whites', called pariwat,[24] but rather as *wuyg̅uybug̅un* –

> There are *pariwat* who live like Indians, but they are not indigenous. Chico Caititu is not a *pariwat*, he is considered *wuyg̅uybug̅un*, he lives like an Indian, he lives from the forest, he lives from fishing, he lives from hunting, he lives from cultivating crops, and he knows the importance of nature, the river, of animals. But his culture isn't Munduruku, he doesn't paint his body..., they [the beiradeiros] have [their own] history. We have [our] history also and, just as they preserve their history, we also preserve ours. So the *wuyg̅uybug̅un* are like us, but they are not an indigenous people. (Jairo Saw in Loures, 2017, p.236-237)

This alliance between the beiradeiros and the Munduruku was fundamental for carrying out the "autodemarcation" of the Sawre Muybu Indigenous Land and of the Montanha and Mangabal Agroextractive Settlement Project – direct actions in which they themselves marked out the borders of their lands,

that were crucial in pressuring the State to recognise these territories. During the long and as yet unfinished process of recognition of the Sawre Muybu Indigenous Land, the memory of beiradeiro elders, together with other evidence, contributed to the scale of the response that occurred after the State challenged the Munduruku's right for recognition (Torres et al., 2016).

Among the arguments frequently used in this challenge was the allegation that Munduruku occupation of the region was not traditional. In spite of unequivocal historical and archaeological information that points to continued Munduruku presence throughout the 19th century, and possibly for thousands of years before, it was argued that Munduruku had not occupied the area, or that its occupation began after 1988, making it irrelevant to its claim for recognition, according to the "time frame" thesis.[25] The aforementioned archaeological information formed part of the technical report that analysed the challenges to the recognition of the Sawre Muybu Indigenous Land (Torres et al., 2016), and was also used in the Public Prosecution Service's recommendation that the environmental licensing of São Luiz do Tapajós hydroelectric dam (and, therefore, its construction) be cancelled[26] (Rocha; Honorato, 2021). This archaeological research was also cited by the National Indigenous Peoples' Foundation's reports that identified and delimited the Sawre Muybu and Sawre Bap'im Indigenous Lands.

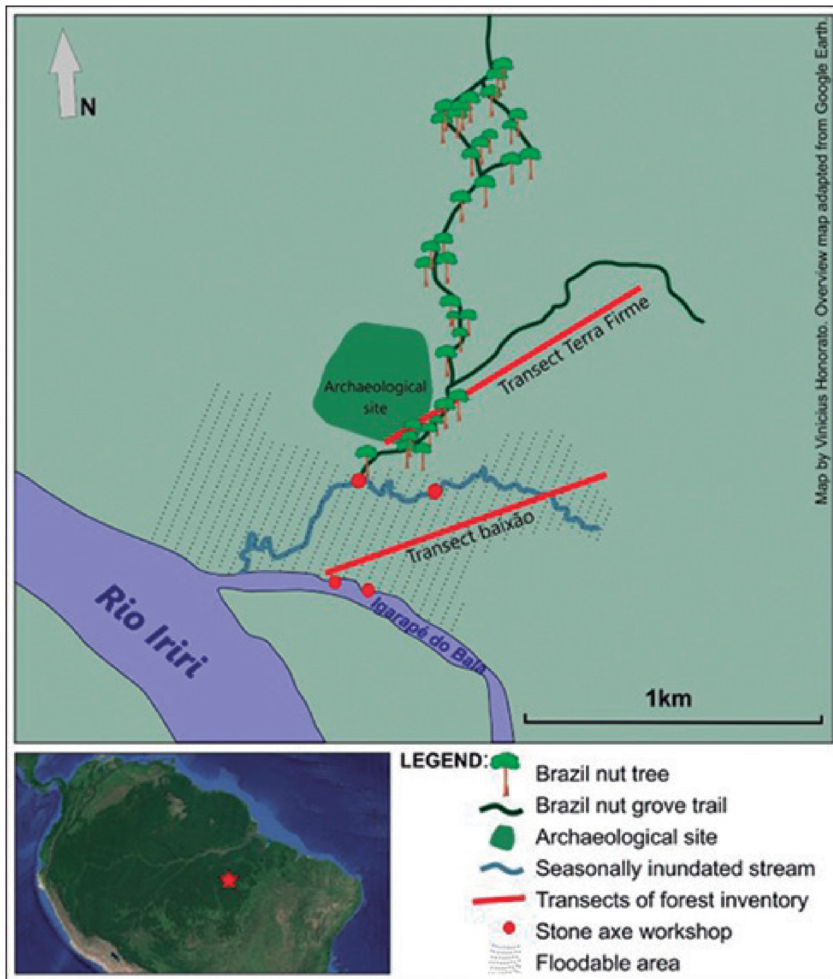
Beiradeiros in Strict Protection Nature Reserves

The Terra do Meio case presented here took place in the land ownership context described above. After reports from beiradeiros, who claimed that an Ecological Station had been superimposed on their land and following an on-site visit by the Federal Public Prosecutor, Thais Santi Cardoso da Silva, a multidisciplinary team was set up to produce an expert report to assess the possible impacts that the human occupation of the Conservation Unit could cause. The report (Almeida et al., 2018) sought to answer ten questions listed by the federal prosecutor's office, which sought to decide whether or not their occupation was traditional and to assess the compatibility of this occupation with the objectives of Strict Protection Nature Reserves.

To answer some of the questions posed by the Prosecution Service (MPF, Brazilian acronym), we carried out archaeological work based on the premises of Historical Ecology, closely integrating archaeological mapping and excavation methodologies, forest inventories, freelisting of tree terms by beiradeiros, faunal surveys and participant observation (Balée et al., 2020). The site chosen for the first sampling, known as Grota do Cachorro, featured ADE and fragments of archaeological ceramics that had been observed by Mauro Almeida and William Balée during a previous visit. Today Grota do Cachorro is an area used by the family of beiradeiro José Alves Gomes da Silva, also known as Zé Boi.

The ADE patch is partially surrounded by the beginnings of Zé Boi's family's Brazil nut (*Bertholletia excelsa*) trail (Map 2). The fact that the archaeological site, indicated by archaeological artefacts and/or ADE, is located here

points to a positive relationship between the Brazil nut trail, the Brazil nut trees themselves and the past habitation site. The largest concentration of Brazil nut trees is to be found in an area adjacent to the ADE patch, which may indicate that, as well as the possibility that the Brazil nut grove was formed by the inhabitants of the archaeological site, the trail itself may have been established in the distant past. The absence of Brazil nut trees on the ADE also points to an occupation that may have extended (even if discontinuously) until recently, as young Brazil nut trees (seedlings, shoots) tend to develop more quickly in open areas (Scoles; Gribel , 2021) – something that has not occurred in the habitation area where the ADE was formed.



Source: Adapted from Balée et al. (2020).

Map 2 – Brazil nut trail and Grota do Cachorro archaeological site, and its relationship with Zé Boi's family's Brazil nut grove.

The fact that the largest concentration of Brazil nut trees is found beside the archaeological site's habitation area may also indicate that the develop-

ment of the trees was fostered there, pointing to possible management practices during the period that the ADE was formed or even before then.

Data obtained in Grota do Cachorro points to an occupation related to the ADE occurring between the 15th and 17th centuries AD. The core of a fallen Brazil nut tree, found near the site, was dated to between the 17th and 18th centuries AD, suggesting a correlation between the Brazil nut grove and an indigenous occupation prior to the arrival of rubber tappers which, considering the limits of dating error margins, may have been coeval with the indigenous occupation that generated the ADE (Balée et al., 2020).

Brazil nut grove management is practiced intensely by beiradeiros who maintain the trail, remove vines that climb the Brazil nut trees and favour seedlings and young trees by eliminating other nearby competing species. An important comparative study of Brazil nut groves located in strict protection areas (that prohibit human occupation) and managed sites demonstrated how Brazil nut groves located where human presence is prohibited have a more advanced average age and a lower regeneration rate, whereas those in managed areas display a greater quantity of young Brazil nut trees, seedlings and shoots (Scoles; Gribel, 2011).

As a result of almost a decade of requests from the beiradeiros and then from the MPF, scientists and civil society organizations, an agreement was signed at the end of 2018 that recognised the beiradeiro presence in their territories (Guerrero, 2020, p.111). Although such agreements are provisional instruments with limited guarantees, the inclusion of archaeological research alongside other disciplines, as well as beiradeiro traditional knowledge, proved to be helpful, paving the way for other activities in the region, this time less linked to conflicts, although they still happen, and more associated with future projects.

Closing thoughts

Whether it results from mercantilism and colonialism or from the emergence of Industrial Capitalism, the Anthropocene is unequivocally the result of the spoliation of traditionally occupied territories, transformed into places where raw materials are plundered and labour exploited. The defence of their territories and ways of life is a form of Forest Peoples' anticolonial[27] resistance and an example of an "Amazon against the Anthropocene". Their territories are places of social plurality, where the relationship between humans and the environment is different from the extractive approach and the scientific maximization of production; they show how human presence in Amazonia does not necessarily lead to environmental degradation (Balée, 2006).

Currently, in both the Terra do Meio and Tapajós regions, as well as in other areas of the Amazon, the opening of roads, the construction of dams, the creation of strict protection nature reserves, land grabbing, logging and other initiatives led by State and private actors threaten traditional territories. By and large this happens without appropriate consultation with those to be impacted.

Currently, the plan to build the EF-170 railway, known as "Ferrogrão",[28] has become a new threat to traditional territories in both the Tapajós and the Xingu river basins. Official discourse surrounding the construction of EF-170 once again uses its supposed sustainability as an argument, ignoring projections of an increase in land grabbing and consequent deforestation along its intended route.

The examples of the Terra do Meio and the Tapajós showed that the denial of the history of Forest Peoples is one of the pillars of territorial spoliation. This has been enacted through the creation of strict protection nature reserves that expel traditional occupants, and through the opposition of State and private interests to the recognition of indigenous and beiradeiro territorial rights. The denial of history occurs both through the refusal to recognise the presence of Forest Peoples and through the negation of processes that transformed these peoples over the centuries. As the contributions to this dossier highlight, the very constitution of the forest, often portrayed as virgin, is evidence of age-old human occupation and agency, and of other ways of inhabiting the world. Meanwhile the right to change is not admitted, nor is historical persistence recognised. Including traditional peoples and communities among the historical actors to be studied archaeologically contributes to the understanding of distinct trajectories but with many convergences, and can strengthen alliances of historical neighbours that, like the Forest Peoples Alliance, show that there are other ways of being and of organising the world. The Extractive Reserve concept represents an important counter-colonial case in point, of opposition to the colonising impetus of national society that is built through the homogenisation of knowledge, discourse and history – through the establishment of a "monoculture of the mind" (Shiva, 2002).

Lastly, by building historical understanding from material remains, archaeology presents itself as a powerful tool for telling the history of peoples who are non-literate, partially literate or whose history has always been composed from documents produced by external agents. As presented in the examples of the upper Tapajós and Terra do Meio regions, such histories can directly contribute to the defence of, and struggle for, traditionally occupied territories.

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Notes

1 Problematic because it ties the beginning of history to the advent of writing, which in the Americas mostly occurred with the European invasion. This definition of history further implies that present-day indigenous peoples who are in 'voluntary' isolation are prehistoric.

2 The concept of "traditional peoples and communities" can be translated as "local peoples" in English, but we have opted to keep "traditional" in order to remain faithful to the Brazilian term.

3 In chronological terms, we will consider the European mercantilist expansion and the Industrial Revolution as the temporal milestones of the Anthropocene (Crutzen; Stoermer, 2000, Lewis; Maslin, 2015), therefore the same milestones as Mercantile Capitalism and Industrial Capitalism. In the text, the term "Anthropocene" will be used heuristically, based on the recognition of the power that the proposal has to recognise a geological era based on the effects of human action. In the first half of this year, however, the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS) did not recognize the geo-stratigraphic markers that would define the beginning of the Anthropocene.

4 Descendants of Africans and Afrobrazilians who were able to escape and form free communities out of reach of plantation society.

5 Here indigenous and *quilombola* communities can be included.

6 In other words, almost 20 years after the promulgation of the Brazilian Constitution, which recognises the primary rights of indigenous peoples and the historical rights of *quilombola* peoples, respectively.

7 Rubber estate owner and trader, also referred to as *patrão*.

8 Hereafter glossed as "upper Tapajós".

9 If we consider Rodrigues' and Cabral's hypothesis on routes taken by Tupian peoples as they expanded, it is reasonable to suppose that speakers of the Juruna family may have crossed the Tapajós in the direction of the Xingu basin, where they currently live.

10 "Sustainable Use" Conservation Units are those that permit the presence of communities, who are allowed to use the area's natural resources, while "strict protection" nature reserves ban human occupation in order to "maintain ecosystems free from alterations caused by human interference" (Bill 9,985/2000).

11 The first rubber boom began around 1870 and had declined by around 1920. The second rubber boom was considerably shorter, lasting from 1942-1945.

12 In Brazil, the "preservationist" approach holds that nature must be protected from humans, who should not be allowed to occupy protected areas – even when communities have lived for generations in these territories. In contrast, the "conservationist" approach is premised on the compatibility between the presence of local communities and the conservation of nature.

13 Currently a category of Sustainable Use Conservation Units, the Extractive Reserves were initially conceived by rubber tappers as a solution to their land reform.

14 Beyond representing the idea of a concentration of rubber trees, "the *seringal* [rubber estate] was a social and territorial organization based on the work of tappers, which generated profits for the *patrão* class" (Almeida 2021, p.90).

15 A colocação is "a management unit, a form of social organization and the place where

a culture created by rubber tappers during the 'one hundred years of solitude' during which they were forgotten by the same capitalism that brought them there without providing for a return fare" (Ibidem, p.71). "Called communities today, the *colocações* are forest area used by household unities, internally articulated and among each other by neighbourhood, cooperation, exchange and political mobilisation relationships" (Ibidem, p.66).

16 Although the "Tapajós Complex" that included three megadams on the Tapajós and four large dams on the Jamanxim River was spotlighted, the plan encompassed the entire basin, for which the construction of 43 dams was scheduled.

17 The then chief-minister to the government, Dilma Rousseff, emitted a directive that was contrary to the creation of the RESEX. President Lula agreed to this decision. Technical note published by the Department for Energy Planning on the 5th December 2007, annexed to the Recommendation n° 260 – Casa Civil, 16 April 2008.

18 In 2014 the then president of the National Indian Foundation (which has since been renamed the National Foundation of Indigenous Peoples), admitted to representatives of the Munduruku people that she had been pressured not to sign the Identification and Delimitation Report for Sawre Muybu: Available at: <https://autodemarcacaonotapajos.wordpress.com/2014/11/26/funai-admite-pressao-e-condiciona-demarcacao-de-ti-a-hidreletrica/>. Accessed on 23/04/2024.

19 *Mangifera* indica is an exotic species, native in southeast Asia.

20 This seems to be the case of transposition of graphic motifs to different surfaces, including that of the human body – a practice often observed among Tupi-Guarani peoples (F. Almeida, 2008; Müller, 1990) and among Panoan speakers (cf. DeBoer, 1991).

21 Interview conceded on 13.3.2014.

22 Attacks by Kayapó indigenous people are still recalled by beiradeiro elders – many of whom were born on the eastern bank of the Tapajós and who migrated to islands in the middle of the river or to its western bank.

23 In the Munduruku language, "pariwat" means "other, foreigner" (Hilbert, 1957), or non-Munduruku, non-indigenous or enemy (Loures, 2017).

24 This thesis proposes that only indigenous people who can prove to have been on their lands on 5th October 1988 (the date of the proclamation of the Brazilian Constitution) or who can prove that they were filing claims to their lands in the courts at this time, should have the right to claim land. This ignores the fact that many indigenous people had been expelled from their lands, particularly during the military dictatorship, and that legislation at the time prohibited indigenous people from making any legal claim, since they were legally defined as incapable under the regime of tutorship by the State which was abolished by the 1988 Constitution. Although the Supreme Court ruled this thesis to be unconstitutional, the Brazilian Congress, which is dominated by representatives of agribusiness, has since voted a law that recognises this thesis.

25 Available at: <https://www.mpf.mp.br/pa/sala-de-imprensa/noticias-pa/mpf-recomenda-ao-ibama-que-cancele-o-licenciamento-da-usina-de-sao-luiz-do-tapajos>. Access on: 23 apr. 2024.

26 As Antônio Bispo dos Santos posits, "we will take all processes of resistance and struggle in defence of [indigenous and local] peoples' territories against colonisers, symbols, meanings and ways of life practiced in these territories as counter-colonisation" (2015, p.48).

27 Railroad EF-170 is projected to connect grain production centers of Central Brazil with Miritituba, on the middle Tapajós River, from where industrial river barges can ship containers to the lower Amazon and beyond.

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Documents

Anonymous Report submitted by the Ministry of Mines and Energy entitled: "A tradicionalidade da Terra Saweré (sic) Muybu incidente na área da Flona Itaituba I"; Challenge presented by the Consórcio Tapajós: Case n.08620.056543/2013-19, protocolled under n.08620.128745/2015-31.

ABSTRACT – In Amazônia, the systematic denial of the presence of indigenous, *quilombola* and local peoples has ensured the spoliation of their traditional territories. But in the 1980s the Alliance of Forest Peoples mobilised indigenous peoples and unionised rubber tappers to take on a common political identity in the face of encroaching industrial society. This movement will conceive concrete alternatives to guarantee environmental conservation and collective rights to territory. Working from the Tapajós and Terra do Meio regions in Pará state, we advocate for an archaeology geared to embrace the multiple pasts of social groups that traditionally occupy their lands and that can be put to the service of their struggles for recognition. After all, Forest Peoples are the main protagonists in resisting the Anthropocene.

KEYWORDS: Archaeology, Forest peoples, Indigenous peoples, Local peoples, Historical ecology, Amazonia.

RESUMO – Na Amazônia, a espoliação territorial dos povos indígenas, quilombolas e povos e comunidades tradicionais têm se efetivado a partir da negação sistemática de sua presença. Contudo, na década de 1980 a Aliança dos Povos da Floresta mobiliza povos indígenas e seringueiros sindicalizados a assumir uma identidade política comum frente ao avanço da sociedade industrial. Esse movimento concebe alternativas concretas para garantir a conservação ambiental e direitos coletivos ao território. A partir de trabalhos realizados no médio/alto Tapajós e na Terra do Meio, Pará, propomos uma arqueologia direcionada para abarcar os múltiplos passados de grupos sociais que tradicionalmente ocupam suas terras e que possa ser instrumentalizada para contribuir como suas lutas por reconhecimento. Afinal, são os Povos da Floresta os principais protagonistas da resistência ao Antropoceno.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Arqueologia, Povos da floresta, Povos indígenas, Povos e comunidades tradicionais, Ecologia histórica, Amazônia.

Vinicius Honorato is a professor at the Federal University of Western Pará.
@ – vinicius_honorato@yahoo.com.br / https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4176-5451.

Bruna Rocha is a professor at the Federal University of Western Pará.
@ – bruna.rocha@ufopa.edu.br / https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4250-0946.

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[I,II] Universidade Federal do Oeste do Pará, Programa de Antropologia e Arqueologia, Santarém, Pará, Brasil.