

Chapter 9

Peoples of the Amazon and European colonization (16th-18th centuries)



Indígenas Kanamari durante trabalho na roça da aldeia Massapé (Foto: Bruno Kelly/Amazônia Real)

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Graphical Abstract

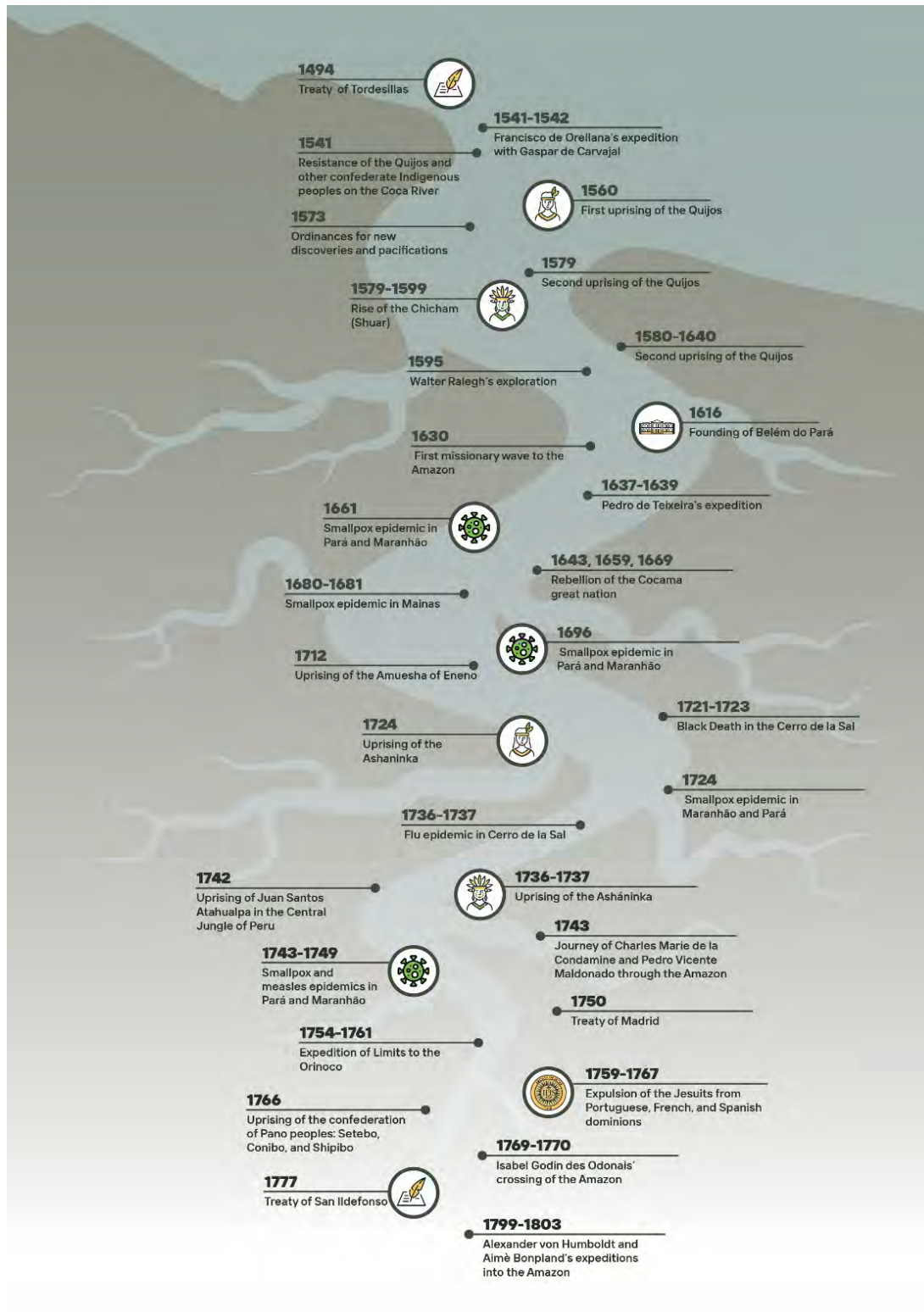


Figure 9.A Graphical Abstract

Peoples of the Amazon and European Colonization (16th - 18th Centuries)

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Key Messages

- The 16th–18th centuries left traces on the Amazon, such as its name. Several myths remain, built around a wealthy (metals, medicines, materials), marginal, distant, dangerous, and sometimes empty (as a result of depopulation) space, attractive for the appropriation and mobilization of knowledges.
- Colonial notions such as those based on the “civilization/barbarism” duality have strongly influenced political and social relations with the political-administrative centers of kingdoms and republics, and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. For example, there is a constructed opposition between activities considered as signs of “civilization,” such as extensive agriculture, in contrast with hunting, fishing, forestry, or subsistence agricultural systems. These kinds of dichotomies often appear in the region’s development policies and proposals.
- The construction of “borders”, “limits,” and “frontiers” was also recurrent in the territory; between the European kingdoms and the inheriting States of the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, English, or French colonies; between the mountains and the plain; or among Indigenous peoples. Those borders ignore various dynamics of intense exchange, such as those performed between the Amazonian territories and the coasts and high Andes.
- The relationship between Indigenous peoples and European conquerors and colonizers was usually violent and defined by tensions in which processes of military and religious domination met with resistance. The Amazonian peoples subjected to missions underwent ethnogenesis, which gave rise to new identities containing both traditional and missionary elements.
- Demographic decline contributed to perpetuating the myth of the “great Amazonian emptiness” and the division between the Amazon and the Andes. The extinction of many Indigenous peoples because of contact with non-Indigenous agents and “civilizing” policies draws attention to the continuity of this dynamic through to the present, highlighting the vulnerability of Indigenous peoples in initial contact or voluntary isolation.
- The introduction of technologies such as iron tools created both new relations and tension between Indigenous peoples, and between them and colonists.
- Several cities were located in areas occupied by Indigenous peoples, whereas others were built in new places.

Abstract

This chapter deals with the history of the Amazon between the 16th and 18th centuries. It is organized according to various themes that have left indelible traces on the territory, in some cases up to the present day. The name of the Amazon River and subsequently of the whole region illustrates the influence of European myths. Several legends have been woven about the Amazon since then, including that of harboring

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potential inexhaustible riches or being a dangerous and empty space (largely owing to the depopulation of Indigenous peoples). “Borders” were also established in the Amazon in many ways; between Indigenous peoples, between “civilization” and “barbarism,” between urban and savage, between Catholicism and paganism, between the Andes and the Amazon, and between Brazil, colonized by Portugal, and the Andean-Amazonian countries colonized by Spain.

Key actors in European colonial expansion were military explorers, state officials, missionaries, and scientists. They built a narrative that combined fantasy with truthful information that included ethnographic descriptions as well as maps of the location of waterways, populations, natural resources, and natural history. They were also central to the establishment of urban centers.

Since the era of European conquest, the extraction of natural resources has been accompanied by subjugation and exploitation of the workforce and the development of multiple forms of domination and extermination, especially of Indigenous peoples. Moreover, conquest and colonization of the Amazon implied drastic changes in the relationships within Indigenous societies, between Indigenous peoples, and between these peoples and the agents and representatives of the colonial states, varying significantly between the kingdoms of Spain and Portugal. In turn, Indigenous peoples have accumulated various forms of resistance and rebellion to preserve their ways of life, territories, and autonomy. This chapter contributes to an understanding of the Amazon as a result of the accumulation of multiple and diverse long-standing determinations.

Keywords: Amazon 16th–18th centuries, explorations, cartography, colonial rule, cultural imposition, slavery, myths, epidemics, resistance, religious missions, extermination, urbanization.

9.1 Introduction

Because of the sluggish economy on the Iberian Peninsula, one of the most important incentives for maritime exploration in the 15th century, especially by the Portuguese and Castilians (later Spanish), was the search for alternative routes for trade with the Far East, which had been hampered by the expansion of the Ottomans and the taking of Constantinople. In the late 15th and early 16th centuries, English, French, and Dutch ships joined these explorations. In this economic context, Christopher Columbus set sail from the port of Palos (Spain) in 1492 and, two months later, arrived at Guanahani Island in the Caribbean, unaware that it was another continent.

Additional Spanish expeditions departed from the Caribbean, leading to Spanish expansion through Mesoamerica and South America, following the Atlantic coast to the Orinoco River, and the Pacific coast to the heart of the Inca empire. The Inca empire was experiencing a civil war when Europeans

arrived, making it easier for the Castilian Francisco Pizarro and his people to seize power and, therefore, control a good part of the territory. In the process of the fall of the Incas, conflicts among the conquerors erupted, notably one faced by Pizarro and Diego de Almagro, both serving the Spanish monarchy. At the same time, the Portuguese, more interested in preserving their enclaves on the African coast to maintain their trade with Asia, established some ports on the eastern Atlantic coast.

The first explorations of the Amazon were organized from the coastline controlled by the Portuguese, and from the Andes in the hands of the Spanish. Those on the Iberian peninsula were living in a time of transition between the Middle Ages and the modern age, in the midst of the emergence of the Renaissance. In a worsening context of conflict between Christians and Muslims, particularly in the kingdom of Castile, and the revival of the idea of the Crusades, their imagination was shaped by biblical stories, chivalric novels, and Greek mythology. With this economic, cultural, and social

baggage, the conquerors explored what they described as a “strange region” inhabited by complex societies (see chapter 8) that they named the “country of the Amazons”, which included places such as the Country of Cinnamon, El Dorado, Gran Paititi, Gran Mojo, and even Eden. The newcomers were guided by three principles: gold, personal glory, and gospel (Velásquez Arango, 2012).

This chapter shows the initial impact of these ideological, economic, social, and cultural clashes, as well as other trends generated during the era of conquest and colonization, many of which have lasted up to the present. Some processes that took place between the 16th and 18th centuries were: expeditions that navigated the great Amazon River and its Basin; ruptures and reconfigurations of the relations between the Andes and the Amazon; expeditions in search of mythical places and knowledges; demographic and cultural impact on Indigenous populations; establishment of cities, missionary settlements, and institutions of colonial rule; Indigenous resistance and rebellion; and, last but not least, the delimitation of boundaries between the Brazilian Amazon and the so-called Andean-Amazonia.

The topics within each section follow a chronological order, covering some decisive events during the entire period of the European conquest and colonization of the Americas.

9.2 Arrival of the Spanish and Portuguese: From Gaspar de Carvajal to Cristobal de Acuña and the origin of the name of the Amazon

The Amazon owes its name to “the Amazons” mentioned in the accounts of Gaspar de Carvajal in 1541–1542. In America, the first chronicles of conquest correspond to a genre that “is part history, part fiction, and part description of geography and nature [...] In this narrative, the chronicler is a witness or participant in the events he describes” (Carrillo 1987: 27). Reading sources from the 16th century requires understanding of the subjectivity of the conquerors. Their stories give an account of the interests and cultural load that they brought

from the old continent: the search for valuable spices from the Far East in the Country of Cinnamon, El Dorado, El Paitite, El Enim, or El Gran Mojo, including stories that interpret what they saw based on Greek mythology.

Some attempts to explore the Amazon occurred in the 1530s. One expedition departed from the Atlantic coast, through the Maranhão, led by Aires da Cunha in 1535. The other left in 1538 toward the eastern foothills and reached the river Huallaga, a headwater of the Amazon. The leader, Alonso de Mercadillo, sent 25 horsemen to explore the country. Led by Diogo Nunez, after 25 days they reached a land full of Indigenous peoples with gold ornaments. They fought these people and moved on to the territory of a prosperous, well-organized people called Machifalo or Machiparo, whose many villages lay on the upper Amazon (Hemming 1978: 184-185).

After those first explorations, Francisco Pizarro appointed his brother Gonzalo as Governor of Quito. There, rumors suggested that the Country of Cinnamon or El Dorado were to the east, towards the interior of those lands. Gonzalo decided to organize an expedition, managed to gather 220 Spaniards and 4,000 Indigenous people, and also summoned Francisco de Orellana, who reached him at the intersection of Napo and Aguarico. Having decimated his supplies, they agreed that Orellana, with 57 men and the Dominican Gaspar de Carvajal, chronicler of the expedition, would advance in search of settlements to obtain food for the entire expedition. They were to return in 3 or 4 days after their departure. Either because he wanted to get ahead to claim the lands that were discovered or, as he himself stated in the trial that later followed in Spain, accused by Gonzalo of treason (of which he was exonerated), being unable to return against the current and being worried to face the danger of mutiny from the people who accompanied him, Orellana decided to continue downstream, along the Napo River, until they found a great river through which they continued to navigate for several months until they reached its estuary at the ocean (Carvajal [1541-1542] 2007).



Figure 9.1 Detail of a World map showing the Amazons, 1544. Source: Cabot (c.1544).

Gaspar de Carvajal described that, having been attacked by Indigenous peoples, including some warrior women, they took one prisoner, who gave information about a large town made up exclusively of women who lived in more than 70 villages, led by one called Coroni. The chronicler portrayed them as very white and tall, with long hair, braided and tousled at the head, “very thick and they walk naked in hides covered with their shame, with their bows and arrows in their hands, waging as much war as ten Indians” (Carvajal [1541-1542] 2007: 22). They were referred to as the Amazons. The connection of the term with the great river took a little longer. Even upon their arrival to the Atlantic Ocean, it was called Marañon, and from then on as *Río Orellana*. Only later did it receive the name Amazon (Carvajal [1541-1542] 2007). The “discovery” was of such importance that only two years later, Sebastiano Caboto included the river and the myth of the Amazons in a Planisphere that was published in Venice in 1544 (Figure 9.1).

Almost a century later, between 1637 and 1639, Pedro de Teixeira departed from Pará, arrived in Quito, and made the return route accompanied by the Jesuit Cristóbal de Acuña, who wrote the chronicle of a new discovery of the Amazon River. He ratified Carvajal’s narrative about the warrior women, thus consolidating the name of the great river (Carvajal, Rojas y Acuña 1941:265-266).

The chronicles of Carvajal and Acuña illustrate the diversity of peoples and languages encountered, and the large populations and abundance in which Indigenous Amazonians lived. However, between the Orellana–Carvajal and Teixeira–de Acuña expeditions, the Omagua populations were almost extinct as well as other populations from the estuary of the Amazon River (Carvajal, Rojas y Acuña 1941:111).

Why did this region collect such a large number of myths, more than others in the Americas? (Pizarro 2009: 13-81). Some authors cited in this chapter point out the geographical similarity of the region with biblical stories, Greek writings, and chivalric novels, which referred to Eden, places of gold, great

wealth, and strange beings that, with the spread of the printing press, circulated in the Iberian Peninsula with a seal of veracity. However, owing to its permanence in time, one aspect must be highlighted: the Amazon also became a privileged expression of the notion of borders in the sense of the “unknown” and “the other,” of that beyond a “civilized” center, an inexhaustible source of myths (Velásquez Arango 2012).

9.3 Millennial and more recent relations between the Andes and the Amazon

South American mountains and plains have been linked over time in different ways. Increasing evidence supports that their supposed division, associated with geographical, climatic, landscape, and cultural issues, has been a myth (Pearce *et al.*, 2020). Long before the Spanish conquest, Indigenous peoples who inhabited the so-called *piedemonte* or foothills were fundamental in this connection. They were intermediaries between the mountains and the jungle plain, mobilizing knowledges, myths, and hundreds of products through those vast territories.

For the Incas, the Amazon was the *Antisuyu*. Several groups from that region were assimilated by them (sometimes forcefully, sometimes voluntarily), before the arrival of the Spanish. In some places, their influence lasted, and because of this and previous relations, the Spaniards encountered many “Andean Indigenous peoples” in the foothills. However, evidence of this expansion and its precise territorial scope is controversial and continues to provoke debates and research (Moore 2016).

With conquest and subsequent processes of depopulation and resistance, part of that connectivity was lost. Eventually, this apparent disconnection led, among other things, to the idea that lowlands and highlands were clearly separated territories. An imaginary border was built between “civilization” and “savagery” or “barbarism”. Administrative borders of townships and provinces were established up to the so-called eastern borders, although in practice they were highly permeable.

During European colonization products, such as coca, essential in mining operations, flowed widely from east to west. The foothills were never a barrier, but an elastic meeting space of material and symbolic exchange, a transitional place whose meaning was complex and evolving, a place of escape or one of confinement, always a refuge (Saignes 1981; Renard-Casevitz, Saignes and Taylor 1988).

Myths such as the Amazons, Paitite, Enim, or El Dorado contributed to the construction of an unknown and hostile territory beyond the border, but one that was also attractive; Paitite sparked many Spanish expeditions toward the Andean–Amazonian slopes.

Like their Inca predecessors, the conquerors encountered fierce resistance to their expansion in the foothills and plains. According to Saignes (1981:175), “the Spanish failure to settle in the foothills is due both to the lack of large mineral deposits and to the impossibility of exploiting the Indigenous labor force.” They also found a different kind of nature, less domesticated and familiar.

An illustration of how relations between the mountains and plains were portrayed appears on a map possibly drawn by the religious Hernando de la Cruz from a sketch by the Portuguese pilot Benito de Acosta, presented by Cristóbal de Acuña in 1640 (Burgos Guevara 2005) (in the catalogue of the National Library of Spain, it is attributed to Martín de Saavedra and Guzmán and dated 1639) (Figure 9.2). In that map, one of the first of the Amazon River, the connection between Andean glaciers and the Atlantic Ocean appears to be articulated by the river. The same is observed in the map of the French academic Charles Marie de la Condamine in 1743, after his scientific trip through the river with the Creole Pedro Vicente Maldonado (Figure 9.3). In both cartographies, the river and plains were drawn in relation to the mountains.

The water determined the main routes for the initial explorations of gold-seeking soldiers, then of missionaries, and finally of adventurers in search

of treasures, including minerals and natural products (Chapter 12).

9.4 More explorations of the Amazon

Explorations of the Amazon carried out by Europeans, most of them with the support of Indigenous peoples, combined greed and curiosity. The first centuries of conquest and colonization witnessed raids by explorers dressed as soldiers, missionaries, scientists, or “entrepreneurial” adventurers such as the *bandeirantes*. Their motivations included the control and possession of territories, appropriation of gold and plants such as cinnamon, slavery, and establishment of settlements. Over time, missionary and scientific interests increased around cartography, geography, natural history, and ethnography, sponsored or endorsed by commercial interests. All of these interests remain until this day, for example in mineral and oil prospecting, bioprospecting for useful plants, or research on ecology, biology, hydrography, climate change, and ethnography.

The kingdoms of Spain, Portugal, England, France, and Holland vied for appropriation and control of the territory. In the 16th century, the Spaniards organized expeditions from Quito, the site in the Andes closest to the plain, using traditional routes that facilitated intensive exchanges as between the highlands and lowlands for millennia (Burgos Guevara 2005). The Portuguese, on the other hand, sailed “upstream,” whereas the English, French, and Dutch entered mostly from present-day Guiana and Suriname.

Early travelers were fundamental in generating myths that alluded to the dangers and richness of the Amazon. Among the most famous were a city of gold (El Dorado), a Country of Cinnamon, and a territory of warrior women they called Amazons. They also spread the idea of a city or place called Paitite, where the Inca nobility would have taken refuge after the conquest. That place still flows between imagination and reality (Tyuleneva 2003). Sometimes it was confused with the myth of the fabulous empire of the Enim. Myths were fueled by stories such

Figure 9.2 Map of the Amazon, 1640.
Source: Saavedra y Guzmán (1639).



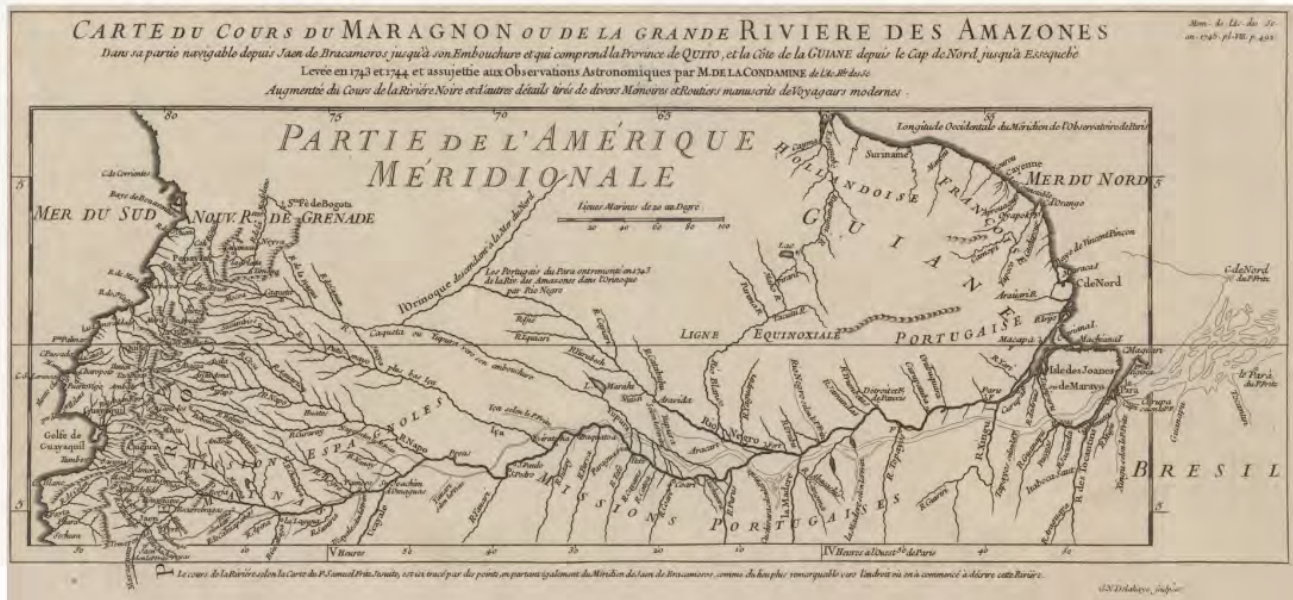


Figure 9.3 Map of the Amazon, 1745. Source: Condamine (1745).

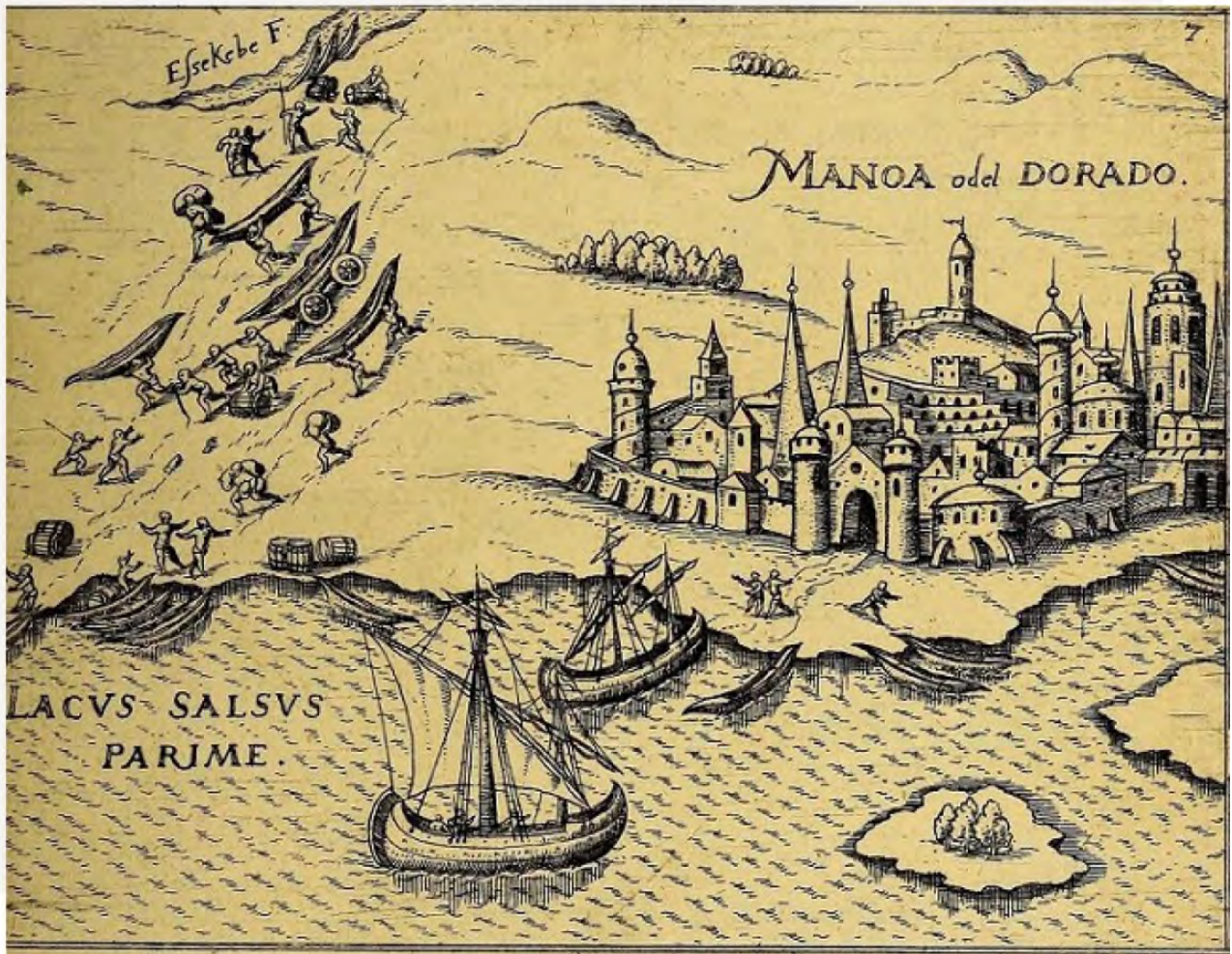


Figure 9.4 The city of Manoa or El Dorado on the shores of Lake Parime. Source: Raleigh (1848).

as those of the Spanish adventurer Pedro Bohórquez, who supposedly arrived at the capital of Enim in 1635 and met its sovereign in the royal palace. During the 1680s, the missionary Manuel Biedma founded three missions that provided the necessary infrastructure for the exploration of the upper Ucayali River, where that kingdom was supposed to be located (Santos 1992: 138).

The fantastic coexisted with the possible, always with the certainty that the Amazon had potential for extractive activities. The river was also considered the boundary between the island of Guyana to the north and the island of Brazil to the south, with the island of Brazil's southern limit the La Plata River (Ibáñez Bonillo 2015).

One expedition in search of the Country of Cinnamon was led by Gonzalo Díaz de Pineda, who left Quito in 1538. They only reached the foothills. Shortly after, Francisco de Orellana's expedition took place. Narrated by Gaspar de Carvajal, his chronicle was crucial for the construction of images of the inhabitants of the forests, among them the legend of the women warriors. El Dorado appeared in narratives from the 1530s (Langer 1997). Its alleged existence led explorers to several

places: the mountains of present-day Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru; the Amazon; and sites in Central and North America. Was El Dorado an Indigenous ancestral myth, or was it created to mock, confuse, or get rid of the oppressors? Did it only exist in the imagination of Europeans, to accommodate and justify their wishes and expeditions? The answer perhaps lies in an amalgam of these and other possibilities. What we can be sure of is that Europeans named the place with words familiar with their symbolism and their ambition for gold. One of the best-known narratives in this regard dates back to the 16th century. Walter Raleigh, who entered from present-day Guyana in 1595, wrote an account of a vast, rich, and beautiful empire, whose capital, Manoa, was El Dorado (Figure 9.4). His tale contained fantastic ingredients to stimulate England's imagination and greed, among other things claiming that it was a continent isolated from the rest of America (Raleigh 1848).

During the second half of the 16th century, several Spanish expeditions departed from Cusco and Asunción in search of the Kingdom of Paitite or Mojos. From Cusco they reached the region of Madre de Dios and the Beni River, and reported numerous Indigenous peoples living in the foothills, whom

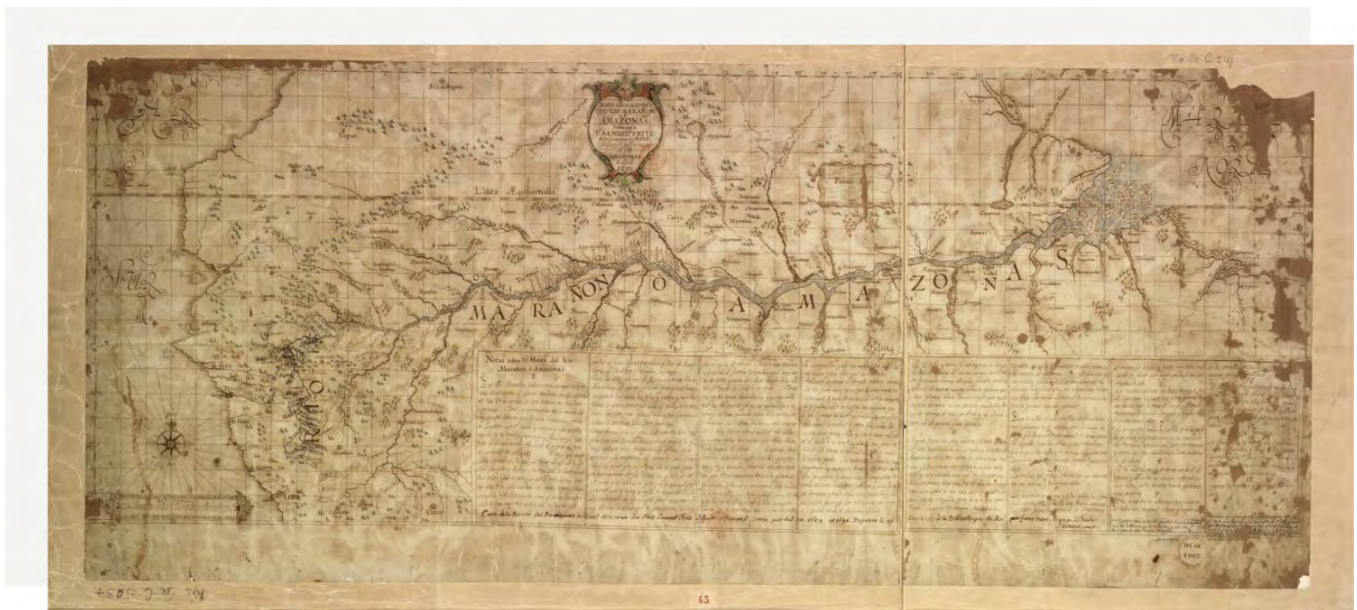


Figure 9.5 The Amazon River, 1691. Source: Fritz (1691).

they generically called *chunchos*. Those that left Asunción founded places such as Santa Cruz de la Sierra in 1561, and went to the land of the Mojos Indigenous peoples, in the upper and middle Basin of the Mamoré River, without finding the wealth they were looking for. A well-known expedition of that time, because of its dramatic circumstances surrounded by treason and murders, was that of Lope de Aguirre.

From 1640, expeditions included new goals and activities, including missionary purposes (Saignes 1981). Several religious groups, especially the Jesuits and Franciscans, incorporated cartography and natural history into their activities, helping to spread the idea of a wonderful world and providing instruments for its control (Chauca 2019). In 1741, the Spanish Jesuit Joseph Gumilla published the book *El Orinoco Ilustrado*, describing the preparation of *curare* poison and giving accounts of Amazonian peoples and nature. When the French academic Charles Marie de la Condamine traveled the river with the Riobambeño Pedro Vicente Maldonado, in 1743, he met the Swiss Joannes Magnin, a cartographer and ethnographer in charge of the missions of Maynas, who gave him copies of his maps (Condamine [1738] 1986). The academic also accessed at least one map by the Czech-German Samuel Fritz (Figure 9.5), who lived in the region in the late 17th and early 18th centuries (Almeida 2003). He took these maps to Europe and used them to perfect his own drawings. Pedro Maldonado contributed to the knowledge of the Amazon through his fine map of the Real Audiencia de Quito and his lectures on the poison called *curare*, a mixture of various ingredients, before the Académie Royale des Sciences in Paris in 1747, and the Royal Society in 1748.

A singular and unusual narrative of the Amazonian journey was that of the Riobambeña Isabel Godin des Odonais. In 1750, her French husband Jean Godin des Odonais, nephew of the academic Louis Godin, arrived in Quito as part of the Geodesic Mission together with La Condamine and other academics. He traveled to Cayena without his wife and could not, or did not want to, return to Riobamba

(present-day Ecuador). More than 20 years later, she departed to Cayena, crossing the Amazon, and had a dangerous and dramatic journey in which her companions died, leaving her alone. On the brink of death, she was helped by two Indigenous people. Seeing her alone and lost in a riverbank, they helped her embark in a canoe, gave her all the attention needed to heal, and took her to Andoas, from where Isabel was able to continue. That adventure, recounted in the Amazon, in Cayena, and in the salons of Paris by Isabel and her husband (Godin des Odonais [1773] 1827), spread around the world and contributed to the myth of a dangerous territory.

A geopolitically-relevant expedition in the mid-18th century was the demarcation of the Treaty of Madrid (see next section). In 1754, the Spanish crown sent a commission under José de Iturriaga with officers, doctors, cartographers, astronomers, chaplains, surgeons, soldiers, and a group of naturalists led by the Swedish Pehr Löfling.

Among scientific explorers of the Amazon, two that stand out are the Prussian Alexander von Humboldt and the French Aimé Bonpland. They confirmed the veracity of the imaginary “island of Brazil,” when verifying that the Casiquiare channel joins the Rio Negro to the Orinoco River (Figure 9.6). They also made novel observations on Amazonian fauna and flora, such as electric eels, on which experiments were performed (Figure 9.7) (Humboldt and Bonpland 1811-1833).

For Europeans, the Amazon always represented an exotic territory with countless unknown riches, promoting all kinds of myths. Early raids sought, with the force of the sword, everything from precious metals to slaves. They established the first narratives about a space that could be cruel, although still holding rewards. Missionaries became key to knowledge circulation and territorial control, being the protagonists in the opening of waterways, drawing of maps, and ethnographical and natural history observations. They were followed by naturalists motivated by curiosity and economic interests, sponsored directly or indirectly by hun-

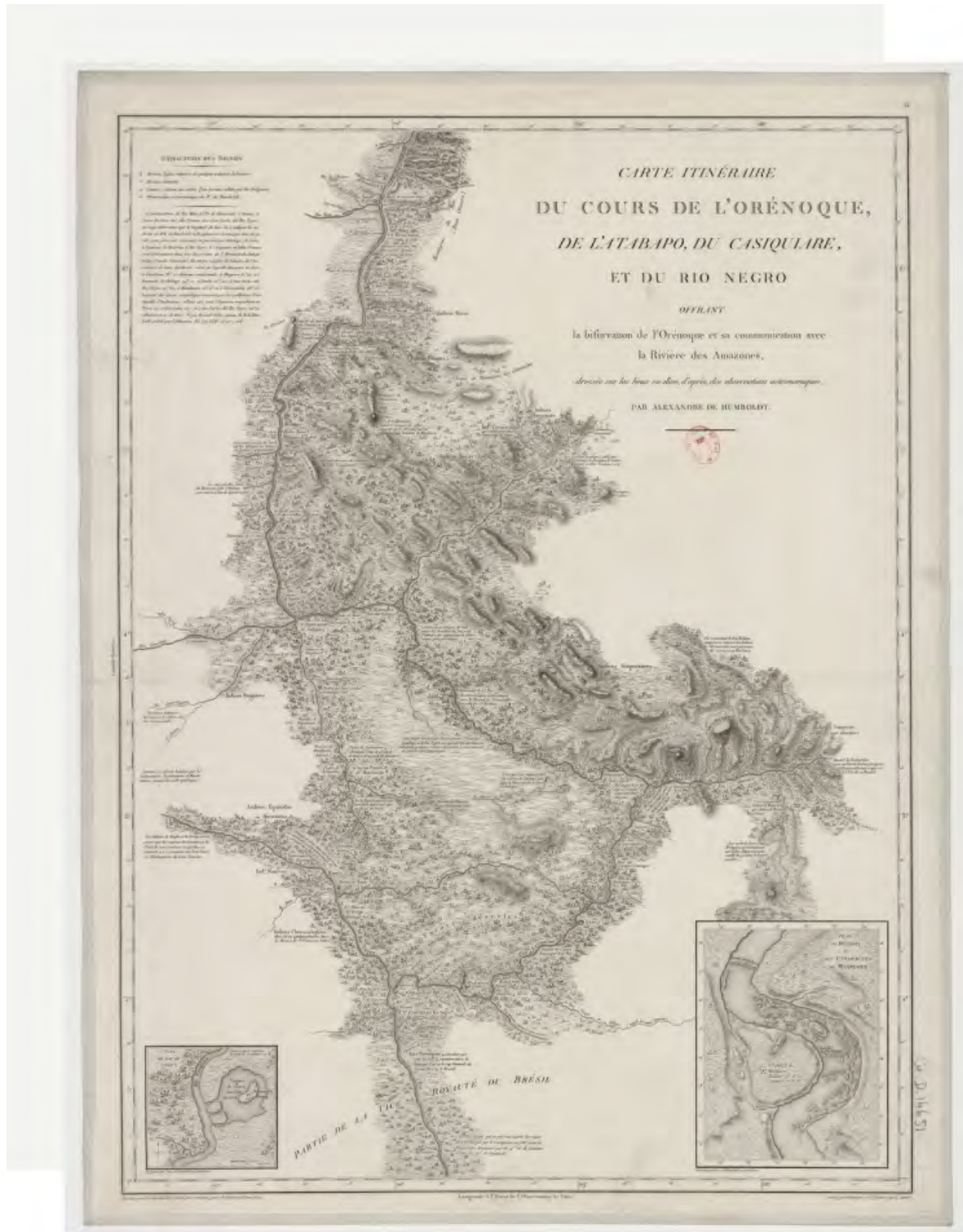


Figure 9.6 The Orinoco, Atabajo, Casiquiare and Negro River, 1800

ger for overseas territories and raw materials. Occasionally, these actors refuted or clarified myths, but always built new challenges for scientific curiosity, maintaining fascination for a territory rich in possibilities and risks. These fantastic visions of a place containing wealth, and knowledges about the material and cultural world are still very alive.

9.5 Conflicts between the Kingdoms of Spain and Portugal

The Lusitanian–Hispanic confrontation is almost as old as the arrival of Europeans in America. While Pope Alexander VI's *Inter Caetera* Bull, issued in 1493, donated the American territories to the Catholic Monarchs, in exchange for the spread of Catholicism among "their" native populations, the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) gave the Spanish crown control over the entire continent, except for the far east which remained in Portuguese hands (Figure 9.8). The territorial agreement did not guarantee dominion over most of the Amazon, much less its inhabitants (Herzog 2015a: 17-37), but undoubtedly laid the foundations for what would end up being the current configuration of the region and, by extension, the majority of South America.

The absolute lack of knowledge of the territories crossed by the imaginary demarcation line meant that the Treaty of Tordesillas was not easy to apply. Both crowns vowed to respect this delimitation, but the tools each empire used in its penetration process and the obstacles each one faced explain the differences in their expansive success. Whereas the occupation of the Amazon received broad support on the Portuguese side, the Spaniards governed as though tropical frontiers were worthless (Lucena 1991: 7). The Portuguese advancing forces included soldiers and ransoming troops, allied natives, missionaries, and private traders, whereas those of the Spanish consisted mainly of missionaries and, to a lesser extent, soldiers. Hence, where the principal frontier institution in one kingdom was military, in the other it had an evangelistic character. Moreover, the Spaniards' incursions into the Amazon were short-lived and without

continuity over time, therefore failing to consolidate a permanent presence. Simultaneously, the Lusitanians made uninterrupted advances from their coastal settlements to the west, ascending the great river and its tributaries beyond the line agreed upon in the treaty, strengthening their presence in the tropical plain (Zárate Botía 2001: 236-240).

The Portuguese exploited the dynastic union of the two Iberian crowns, between 1580 and 1640, to push their conquests far to the west (Hemming 1978: 229). Using a military, religious, and administrative project for the Basin, they laid "the foundations for the integration and effective colonization of the immense Amazonian territory" (Santos Pérez 2019: 45). Agents from both kingdoms spread the Portuguese and Spanish languages and imposed European practices (cultural, commercial, legal, spiritual) that would guarantee colonization; we will delve into that later. It was in that context that Pedro Teixeira's expedition in 1637–1639 took place. His travel up the Amazon River to Quito sought to integrate the space dominated by both crowns, recognize the territory and Indigenous populations, and confront English, French, and Dutch occupation attempts from the north (Hemming 1978: 213, 223-237). In any case, border conflicts resumed almost immediately after the separation of the so-called "Iberian Union" in the mid-17th century.

The limits between Portuguese and Hispanic possessions were still far from defined at the beginning of the 18th century. Border conflicts intensified between both crowns. The dynasty that assumed the Lusitanian throne strengthened the model that had been in place since the previous century to ensure a vast presence of its various colonial agents in the Amazon. Over the following decades, more fortifications were built on the northwestern and southwestern flanks of the frontier with the Spanish. Also, exploration by religious orders was encouraged up Amazonian rivers until they converged in the territories that, in turn, were occupied by missions of their counterparts under Spanish jurisdiction. Moreover, the advance of the

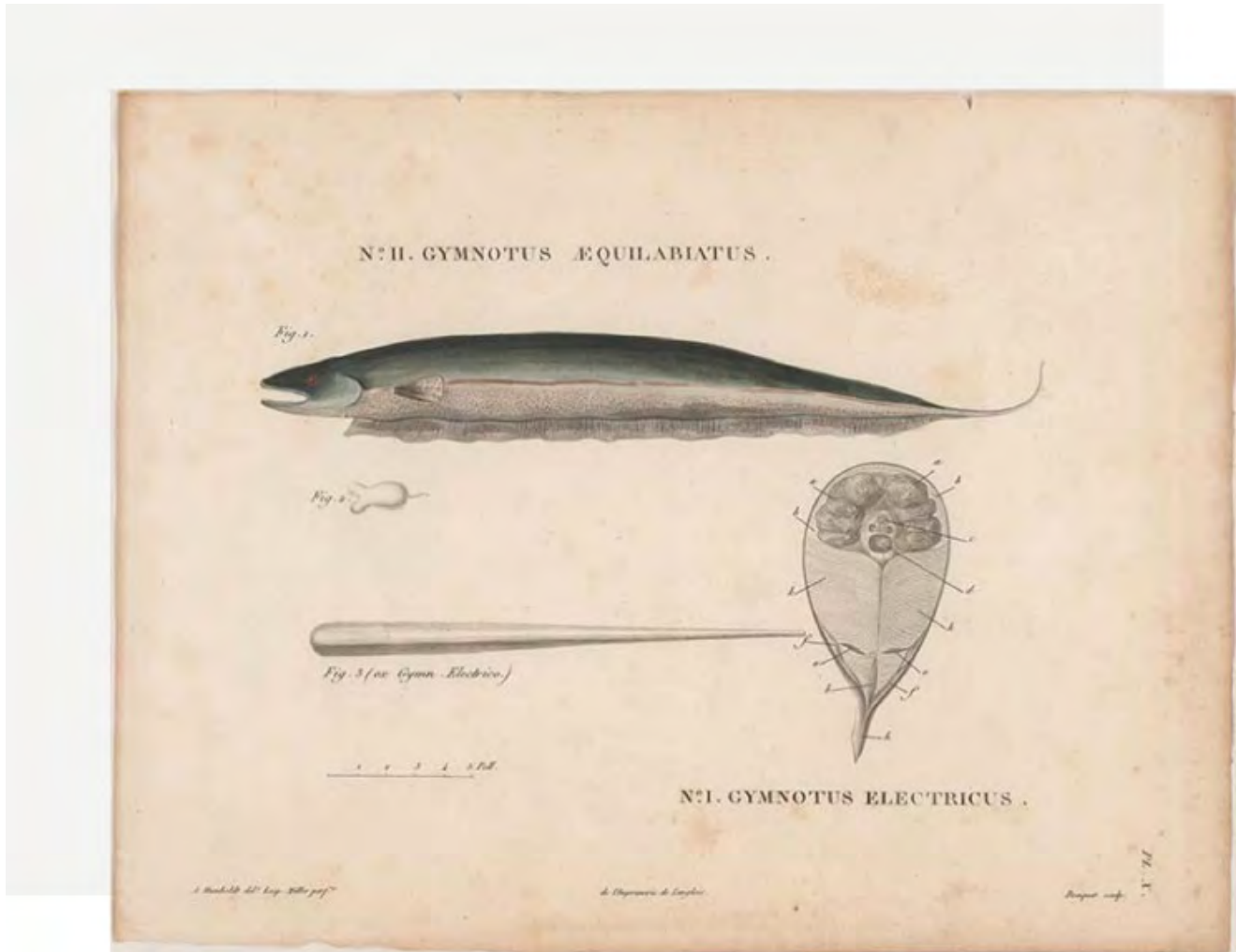


Figure 9.7 A cross-section of the electric eel (lower right) and an elongated knifefish (top). Source: Humboldt and Bonpland (1811-1833).

agricultural frontier required Indigenous labor captured by ransoming troops and private individuals with (and without) a royal license (Hemming 1978: 217-282, 416-451; Purpura 2006). This expansionist policy resulted in increased *in situ* or diplomatic disputes (Herzog 2015a) between state, clergy, and military agents; traders; and Indigenous people, particularly in the areas of the Guaporé, Mamoré, Marañón, and Napo rivers (Lehm Ardaya 1992; Avellaneda 2016; Lopes de Carvalho 2011). The reaches of Teixeira's and other ransoming expeditions led the Lusitanians to place the western border with the Spanish at the mouth of the Yavarí River (Hemming 1978: 275; Santos-Granero 1992: 168).

In the mid-18th century, pressure to end long-standing disputes made the boundary demarcation between the two crowns an urgent issue. The Treaty of Madrid (1750) was approved after several negotiations in which each party provided maps, documents, and reports to support its arguments (Ferreira 2007; Martín-Merás 2007). This agreement modified the ambiguous demarcation line established three centuries earlier to another that was equally imprecise; although the treaty advocated the physical limits of the great tributaries of the Amazon River, such as the Yavarí, Yurúa, Purús, Guaporé, and Madera, their hydrographic basins were practically, if not totally, unknown. Therefore, the drawn borders linking these more



Figure 9.8 Boundary agreements between Spain and Portugal. Source: Own elaboration from Roux (2001).

or less known natural accidents were virtual. The treaty, however, was short-lived as it was voided in 1761 due to continuous incidents involving agents of both parties and intense smuggling between the

two territories (Lucena 1991: 11-19; Roux 2001: 515-517). The lack of a recognized delimitation favored Portuguese advances towards the Neogranadine provinces in the north and Mojos and

Chiquitos in the south, with the consequent dispatch of armed forces by the Spanish authorities. Meanwhile, the military, administrative, and economic reforms undertaken by both crowns since the mid-18th century promoted the furtive migration of missionary Indigenous, enslaved or free African people, farm laborers, and deserting soldiers between both domains (Lopes de Carvalho 2011; Santos Gomes, 2002; Avellaneda 2016; Martínez 2020). The said scenario compelled the opening of new diplomatic negotiations between Spain and Portugal that finally gave rise to the Treaty of San Ildefonso in 1777 (Figure 9.8). This agreement reproduced the terms of 1750, specifying certain legal aspects and maintaining many of its geographical uncertainties (Lucena 1991: 24-28; 1999; Torres 2011; Herzog 2015a: 25-69).

The delineation of borders on the ground involved Boundary Commissions composed of engineers, geographers, botanists, and astronomers appointed by each crown (Hemming 1987: 26-35). Several commissions, a priori composed of an equal number of Spaniards and Portuguese, worked along different areas of the demarcation line. However, in most of them, the disparity between the Spanish and the Portuguese expeditions with regard to personnel numbers, logistics, and control of supplies and provisions, would subordinate the former to the latter's interests. This situation eventually led to the legitimization of Portuguese dominion over many of the disputed areas (Lucena 1991; 1999; Zárate Botía 2001: 250-255). These commissions' negotiations and delimitation work were substantially responsible for the current configuration of the Amazon by "outlining and creating an imperial frontier that did not exist until then, and by giving shape to what is known as the Andean Amazon or upper Amazon, and the Brazilian Amazon" (Zárate Botía 2012: 29).

9.6 Depopulation: The impact of conquest and colonization on Indigenous peoples

As mentioned in Chapter 8, the demographic loss of Indigenous populations estimated in the first 100 years of conquest and colonization of the

Amazon reached up to 95% (Koch *et al.*, 2019). The high vulnerability of these peoples to inter-ethnic contact continues to the present day owing to the rapid spread of diseases and a fall in fertility rates (Morán 1993). In the 1950s, anthropologists were concerned with the demographics of Indigenous populations in Brazil. Ribeiro (1956) and Wagley (1951) noted that contact with non-Indigenous peoples has led to demographic catastrophes, in many cases even to ethnocide. Between 1900 and 1957, 87 ethnic groups had become extinct in Brazil alone (Ribeiro 1967). At present, Indigenous peoples in initial contact or in voluntary isolation face the risk of disappearing because of the same causes.

Analysis of demographic evolution of Amazonian populations in the 16th to 17th centuries relies on data collected in response to various criteria and positions on the potential of ecosystems and the workforce. It also builds on estimates of chroniclers and missionaries made upon direct observation or by transmission from their informants. In contrast, the recording of missionary data for administrative and evangelization purposes was relatively more systematic in the 18th century.

According to archaeological evidence (Chapter 8), pre-colonization demographic densities of Indigenous populations were higher than those today. These findings have led to attempts to estimate, in some way, the demographic losses caused by contact with Iberian agents during centuries of conquest and colonization. One of the first researchers to link archaeological remains and demographic losses during the first century of contact was William Denevan (1980). In his opinion, estimations made before 1950 and based on sources from the second half of the 17th century underestimated Indigenous populations in the Amazon (Steward 1948), as by this time Indigenous peoples had already suffered the onslaught of disease and epidemics as a result of contact. In addition, scholars extrapolated these data to the entire Amazon, but Denevan pointed out that the demographic distribution was very uneven, with areas with very high densities on the banks of the great rivers (*várzea*), the coast at the estuary in the Atlantic, and the low

savannas. However, new archaeological discoveries indicate the existence of many other regions that must have had high population densities. In all cases, it is estimated that Indigenous populations before contact were far higher than today (Denevan 1980). Depopulation implied processes of ethnic disarticulation that accentuated the vulnerability of Indigenous peoples, forcing them, in many cases, to seek refuge and even request the presence of missionaries and the establishment of reductions in their territories (Lehm, 1999; 2016).

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the first chroniclers, such as Gaspar de Carvajal, observed numerous Indigenous populations governed by complex organizational systems and enjoying products and resources in abundance. A century later, Cristóbal de Acuña already accounted for the disappearance of once populous Indigenous peoples, such as those who lived at the Amazon's estuary in the Atlantic and the Omagua regions (Carvajal [1541-1542] 2007; Carvajal, Rojas y Acuña 1941:111). Understanding the shocking period of conquest on a demographic level demands a greater emphasis on the study of sixteenth-century sources.

More systematic demographic information is available for the second half of the 17th century, because it was in the interest of missionaries and the Spanish crown to keep relatively detailed records on demographic dynamics. Similarly, in the Pará and Maranhão regions (Brazil), epidemics were documented out of concern for loss of Indigenous and slave labor. There are several references to demographic losses because of the spread of diseases, facilitated by the concentration of Indigenous populations in missions, as well as to the damage caused by displacement. Raids were conducted to capture Indigenous populations and subjugate them to labor regimes and life systems contrary to their own traditions.

In some Jesuit and Franciscan missions (Table 9.1, Figures 9.9 and 9.10), initial increases in population resulting from Indigenous recruitment later led to progressive demographic declines in the

second half of the 18th century. They recovered slightly and steadily until the rubber boom of the late 19th century. Indigenous populations would never fully recover from the impact of conquest and colonization.

Indigenous peoples located in the sub-Andean region were the most affected, owing to their proximity to Spanish cities. As colonial rule expanded, so did the diseases brought by Europeans (smallpox, measles, and influenza), against which native populations lacked biological defenses. The Panatahua and Payanzo peoples from the Franciscan Conversions of Huánuco, in Perú, decreased from 10,000 inhabitants in 1644 to only 300 in 1713 (Santos-Granero 1992: 184). Their Amazonian ethnic identity would disappear as they became subsumed into the Andean population. As noted, the disappearance of many Indigenous peoples from the eastern foothills caused fractures in relations between the Andes and the Amazon and fed the idea of a “natural frontier” and a “great Amazonian emptiness.”

The Iberian conquerors used the great rivers to enter the Amazon, spreading disease among the numerous Indigenous populations that lived there. The population was concentrated in missions, creating the conditions for the spread of disease, as in the case of the Maynas region. Indigenous peoples suffered significant demographic losses and many nations disappeared. Between 1719 and 1767, the region was devastated by three great epidemics that affected the Maina, Cocama, Cocamilla, Omagua, Yurimagua, and Conibo peoples, concentrated in missions along the rivers Marañón, Hualaga, Ucayali, and the upper Amazon. Demographic losses were extensive; for example, the general smallpox epidemic of 1680–1681 killed approximately 85,000. Of the 100,000 individuals concentrated in the missions of Maynas, only 15,000 survived (Santos-Granero, 1992: 189). The continuous recruitment of independent groups explains the regular increase of the population in the missions of Maynas; there, the Jesuits benefitted from so-called *correrías*

Table 9.1 Census reports from Maynas. Source: Golob (1982:193), in: Santos (1992: 186).

Year	Number of Indigenous peoples	Number of missions	Population average per mission
1719	7,966	28	284
1727	5,942	22	270
1740	11,036	32	313
1745	12,909	41	307
1760	12,229	34	359
1767	19,234	36	534

de indios (Indian raids) in the interfluvial regions to recruit Indigenous populations to the alledged “safety” of missions (Lehm 1992). Both in the missions of Maynas and the Conversions of Huánuco, the under-5 population was the most affected; in some missions, during a four-year period, no child survived to age 5 (Santos-Granero 1992: 190).

The demographic evolution of five Amuesha missions in the Franciscan conversions of Cerro de la Sal (Peru) (Figure 9.9) and twenty-six Jesuit missions of Mojos show similar trends (Figure 9.10). Early demographic growth was mainly due to recruitment, followed by demographic drops that reached 50% compared with the peak, and finally a recovery process. In the Cerro de la Sal Conversions, demographic declines were mainly owing to the spread of disease and, as discussed later and by Santos-Granero (1992), subsequent uprisings. From 1710 to 1818, these missions suffered significant epidemics; between 1721 and 1723 the so-called black plague affected mainly the Asháninka, and between 1736 and 1737 influenza devastated the Yánesha and Asháninka (Santos-Granero, 1993). In Mojos, according to Block (1994), demographic declines were owing to the impact of disease, low fertility rates probably due to contact stress, cultural practices such as selective infanticide to the detriment of women and twins, and Lusatian invasions. The size of the population

makes it possible to highlight the importance of the Mojos Missions in comparison with those of Cerro de la Sal, and even those of Maynas.

The regions of Pará and Maranhão also suffered epidemics in 1661, 1695, 1724, and 1743–1749. The smallpox explosion of 1661 occurred in Pará; it began among the Portuguese settlers, affecting them, their slaves, and the Indigenous populations of the interior villages. In 1695, an outbreak of smallpox spread by a slave ship in Maranhão was known as the “great death,” with over 5,000 lives lost by the end of the century. Between 1724 and 1725, a new epidemic caused a massive number of deaths. More than 1,000 slaves died, particularly Indigenous peoples. The cause was a visit from the bishop of Maranhão and Pará. The first cases appeared among those who traveled in the canoe transporting them, and along their journey they left sick Indigenous people in the villages they visited. Many Indigenous people fled to the interior seeking refuge, taking the disease with them to regions where the magnitude of its impact will never be known. Between 1743 and 1749, epidemic outbreaks of smallpox and measles were registered in Pará and all its districts. In 1750, known deaths from this long period of epidemics reached 18,377, of which 7,600 were residents of Belem and the rest of Indigenous villages subject to religious orders (Chambouleyron *et al.*, 2011).

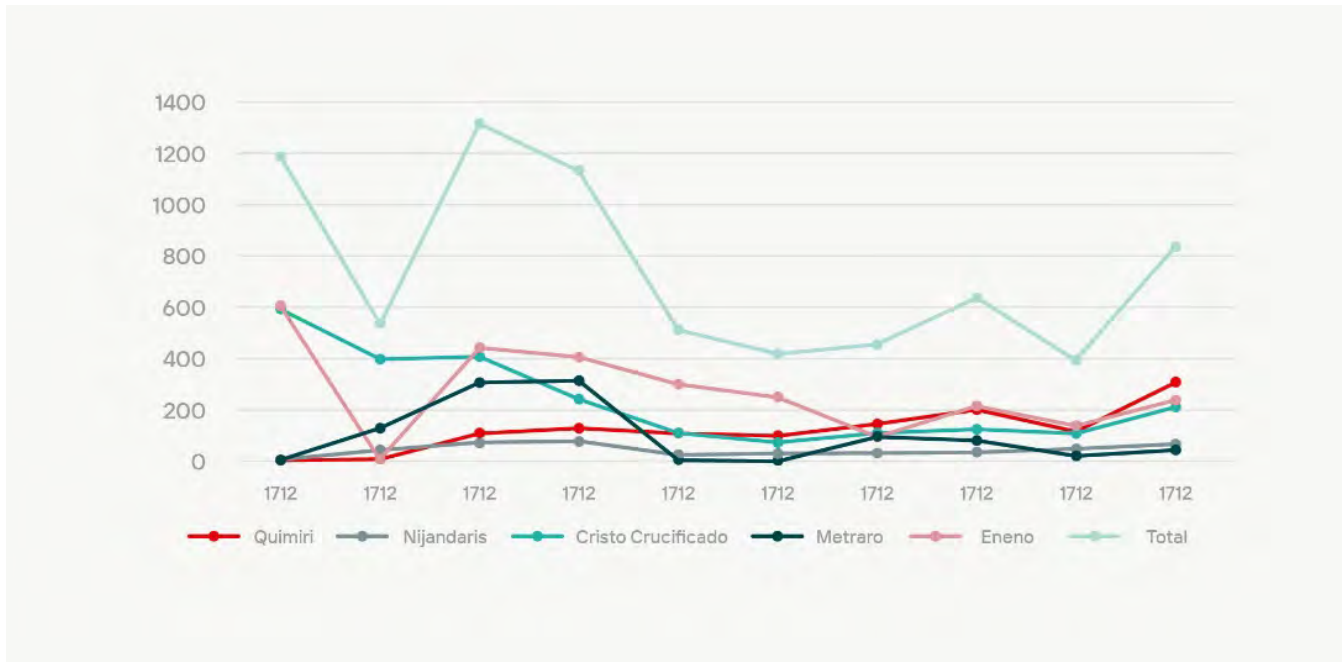


Figure 9.9 Demographic evolution of Amuesha in Cerro de la Sal conversions, 1712-1762. Source: Santos (1992: 194).



Figure 9.10 Demographic evolution of Mojos Missions, 1691-1832. Source: Barnadas (1985: LV).

In the Portuguese Amazon, demographic losses due to epidemics resulted in royal authorizations to “extract” free people from the forest to replace labor force losses in cities and settlers’ agricultural areas. Likewise, declines due to epidemics resulted in the intensification of the slave trade from Africa to Pará and Maranhão. The first slave route to this region developed between the mid-1690s and the mid-1700s. After 1690, the losses suffered as a result of epidemics led to the recruitment of people to serve as soldiers, especially from the interior regions of the Madera River Basin (Chambouleyron *et al.*, 2011).

Expeditions and Boundary Commissions resulted in new demographic declines owing to confrontations with the Indigenous peoples and the spread of disease. During the first half of the 18th century, confrontation between the Portuguese and Manaó caused the death of more than 20,000 of the latter. By the second half of the century, they had been decimated. However, some survivors joined the Mura, putting up the greatest resistance to Boundary Commissions (Zárate, 2014).

In summary, there were two major periods for demographic analysis; first, the arrival of the conquerors, whose references are qualitative and not very precise; and second, the colonial period, whose data is based mainly on more detailed mission records, but with limited data on other areas. Additional sources are the reports of Portuguese authorities based in Belem and Maranhão.

9.7 Colonial control and dominance through the settlement of European populations

In the 16th-18th centuries, the Amazon became an open field for different agents who entered the region to exploit its natural, mineral, and human resources; to establish settlements, including urban centers and missions; and to evangelize its inhabitants in the name of the unity of the Christian faith (García Jordán 1999). During this period, uncultivated spaces were seen by Europeans as unoccupied, or physically abandoned, open, and available for occupation despite the presence of Indigenous

people (Herzog 2015b). Accordingly, they believed that by establishing a population and economic activity the land was controlled, and therefore under colonial rule.

As described above, the first explorations were made primarily by Spaniards looking for mythical riches. The Spanish Crown delegated conquest to private citizens, promising titles and grants to those who were successful. These so-called *huestes indianas* had an eminently military character and their objective was to discover new territories, identify their resources, make contact with the native population, and establish urban centers (Useche 1987; Renard-Casevitz, Saignes and Taylor, 1988: 124-179, 233-293).

The most important institution introduced by the Spanish monarchy to ensure control was the *encomienda*, a process by which The Crown gave Indigenous populations within a specific territory to individuals who had excelled in military service. The *encomenderos* did not have rights over the land, but rather over the populations, regrouped in new settlements, indoctrinated in the Christian faith, and transformed into vassals to be used as labor. Although the *encomienda* had a greater presence in coastal and highland areas, it also spread to the Amazonian foothills, especially Ecuador (Renard-Casevitz, Saignes and Taylor, 1988:233-293; Santos 1992:81-106, 157-163). Lack of regulation led to rampant violence and abuse by the *encomenderos*. The publication of the *Sublimis Deus* Bull, stating Indigenous peoples had the right to be treated like any other vassal of the Christian princes, prompted a change in legislation, including the prohibition of inheriting people. This institution slowly disappeared as the *encomenderos* died, leaving the natives under the tutelage of the Crown (Peñate 1984). However, Taylor (1999: 214) points out that the titles and privileges that went with them were recognized in the western Amazon for many years to come. From the 17th century onwards, use of the military for conquest declined in favor of a peaceful, non-warlike occupation by missionaries, as will be shown in the following section. However, this did not exclude the use of force on certain

occasions (entries or raids), either to face native hostility or to ensure evangelizing on the immediate border with other European crowns (Herzog 2015a: 109-114). Indeed, the English, French, and Dutch also settled between the estuaries of the Orinoco and the Amazon, competing with their Iberian rivals for trade relations with Indigenous peoples (Hemming 1978: 119-138, 198-229, 283-311; Lorimer 1989; Van Nederveen Meerkerk, 1989).

In the early 16th century, the Portuguese established small warehouses along the Atlantic coast where people lived and occasionally traded with Indigenous people. Soon after, the Crown sought to expand its domains, dividing the coast into hereditary captaincies whose administration was granted to private individuals who, in turn, distributed land to their men. Armed expeditions, known as *bandeiras*, were organized from these captaincies to advance towards the interior in search of gold, precious stones, and slaves for the coastal enclaves and plantations. The northernmost captaincy lay to the east of the estuary of the Amazon. The Portuguese attempted to explore the great river early on, but Indigenous resistance to the advances of ransoming troops soon halted their efforts in the area for the rest of the century. Slaving expeditions to the Pará and lower Amazon restarted in the 17th century, now with the assistance of missionaries. Those captured were classified as slaves, and those who were “persuaded” were considered as “free;” the former belonged to the traders and settlers, the latter were lodged in missions and expected to work for private individuals and state officials (Hemming 1978: 7-10, 69-78, 184, 218-220, 335, 412-413; Monteiro 2019).

Several attempts were made to free Indigenous people under Lusitan rule; none lasted. Indigenous capture and enslavement continued to be legally enforced throughout the colonial period, and The Crown did not interfere with the capture of slaves (Hemming 1978: 311-317, 412-419; Perrone-Moisés 1992; Lopes de Carvalho 2019: 147). Slavery remained institutionalized during the dynastic union of the two Iberian crowns (1580–1640), despite the passage of laws protecting Indigenous people. This

was partly because the Spaniards had promised not to change the Portuguese legal system, and felt the inhabitants of the Lusitanian kingdom did not fit into the Laws of the Indies (Hemming 1978: 152), and partly because of the Portuguese’ interest in securing control of Maranhão and Pará, a territory organized jurisdictionally as a connecting bond between the areas under the control of Spain and Portugal that approximately corresponds to the current Brazilian Amazon (Marques 2009; Santos Perez 2019).

Europeans associated the right to land with agriculture; hunting and gathering did not have a place in the equation. The Spanish crown respected the territorial rights of Indigenous peoples over the lands they cultivated, as long as they submitted to the kingdom’s laws. In the 16th century, they were issued titles based on the continued use of those lands by their ancestors. Such documents would later be invoked to prove their rights to land since the “times of conquest” (Herzog 2013; 2015a: 124-125). However, this only benefited sedentary societies. The nomadism of most Amazonian peoples prevented legal recognition of the extensive lands they occupied and used (Marilyn Urquijo 1978). Agriculture and, thus, the settlement of these societies in a specific location, were essential aspects of colonial society.

Urban settlements (towns, villages, forts, and missions) were part of the colonial strategy of occupation and territorial control (Alencar Guzmán 2017). In the Amazon, disease, Indigenous resistance, and the lack of mineral wealth hindered the establishment of new urban areas. Current cities, such as Belém do Pará or Santarém, remain in their original location. Many others moved, trying to find less problematic or richer places whose resources would not be depleted so easily, such as Santa Cruz de la Sierra in present-day Bolivia or Zamora and Archidona in present-day Ecuador. Others simply disappeared over time. In Spanish America, several towns founded in the late-16th and early-17th centuries became gateways from which all expeditions attempted to conquer the jungle until the late-19th century (Useche 1987; Renard-Casevitz,

Saignes and Taylor, 1988: 124-179, 233-293; Musset 2011, 166). On the Lusitanian side, military and private agents progressively moved along the Amazon and the Tocantins rivers, and their tributaries, impelled by growing economic demands for resources and slaves. The location of savannahs on the banks of the great central rivers favored the formation of large cattle ranches and the expansion of agriculture based mainly on cocoa, tobacco, and sugar cane. The workforce of these plantations were primarily native and African slaves who arrived in the region in the mid-17th century. Their presence in the Amazon significantly increased agricultural production for export. Slave labor was also employed in the construction of urban public works and fortifications (Hemming 1978: 343, 367-376; Chamboleyron 2014; Sommer 2019: 617-618). In the 18th century, the last colonial urbanization processes took place in the Amazon, this time with a military feature; numerous fortifications were built to defend imperial borders against rival kingdoms (Souza Torres 2011). Likewise, Boundary Commissions contributed to this process; small, riverside villages ended up becoming cities, such as Barcelos in present-day Brazil. Other places they settled became town centers, such as San Fernando de Atabapo in present-day Venezuela. So-called “twin” cities also emerged on either side of disputed borders, such as Tabatinga and Loreto de Ticunas, later Leticia (Zárata Botía, 2012).

Raids originated from these areas, particularly in Portuguese domains, and trade relations were also established with some populations not subjected to the colonial labor system. European markets were filled with so-called *drogas do sertão*: vanilla, wild cinnamon, sarsaparilla, nutmeg, urucú, indigo, various oils, resins, wood, cinchona bark, and others. In return, natives obtained metal axes, knives, weapons, and fishhooks (Solórzano 2017: 197). Interest in metal tools led many of them to seek contact with colonial agents and even to appropriate forging technology. Access to metal sources also reinforced inter-ethnic conflicts and slavery relations between groups far from the trading front. Greed for tools created trade circuits connecting

the upper Amazon with the Orinoco Basin in present-day Venezuela and the coasts of the Guianas. The exchange of slaves for tools intensified in the 17th and 18th centuries and lasted well into the 19th century (Benavides 1986, 1990; Santos 1988; Santos 1992: 5-32).

Alliances among European agents and Indigenous peoples shifted and became functional to the interests of both. Indigenous people expected gifts, involvement in trade circuits, titles recognizing their leadership, and dominion over rival groups in exchange for supporting European kingdoms. Europeans saw strategic allies in these autonomous nations, as they could serve as auxiliaries in expeditions into the jungle, act as intermediaries, and convince independent peoples to negotiate with them. Alliances allowed the expansion of colonial agents (traders, missionaries, soldiers, ranchers, miners), and extractive and agricultural industries (Herzog 2015a: 97-109; Roller 2019). It is worth recalling that under European colonial logic, such alliances, rather than securing friend- and partnership, formally turned them into vassals and the lands they occupied into the property of the Crown (Herzog 2015a: 95).

Incursions had a strong impact on native societies, causing disappearances or disruptions of many groups, as well as regional dislocations. The societies that suffered the most damage in the Spanish territories were those located in the foothills and high jungle, owing to their proximity to Andean urban centers. Among them, riverine groups were more affected, relative to interfluvial ethnic groups (Santos-Granero 1992). In Portuguese lands, the societies that inhabited the banks of the Amazon River and the estuary suffered the worst fate, enslaved by the agents of Belém do Pará. Those who faced less European contact lived in the *sertão*, the inland forests, along the less traveled rivers, or on the waterfalls of its tributaries (Hemming 1990: 213-218; Sommer 2019: 614). In short, the more impacted peoples as a result of the European presence were those that inhabited the main access routes to the Amazon.

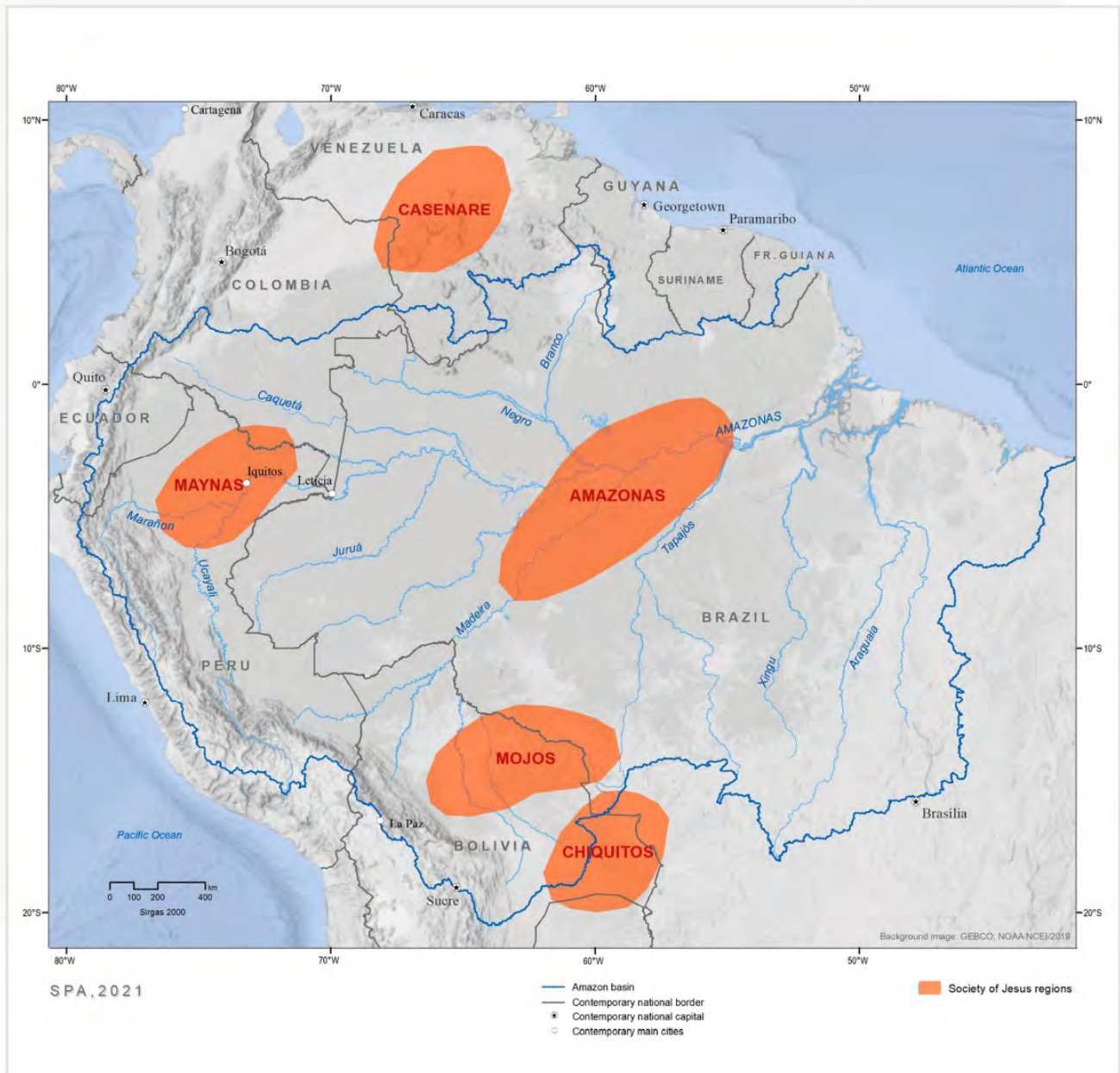


Figure 9.11. Society of Jesus in the Amazon. Source: own elaboration from Livi Bacci (2010).

9.8 Jesuits, Franciscans, and other religious orders

Cities were established by military and civilian agents to control territory, while missions aimed to

evangelize Indigenous populations and bring them under the rule of the Iberian Crowns. Ordinances for new discoveries, conquests, and pacifications in 1573 provided that imperial expansion over these populations (and the territories they occu-

ped) would be conducted using persuasion and appointed the mendicant orders responsible for such action. This norm was never revoked or modified, which is why it continued to be applied throughout the 18th century (Weber 2013: 144).

The first missionary wave took place around 1630. Dominicans, Augustinians, Capuchins, Carmelites, Franciscans, and Jesuits advanced towards the Amazon either from the Andes or the Atlantic coast. But it was the latter three that realized the largest presence in the region (Sweet 1995: 9-10). The Jesuits were the main agents of the Spanish Crown to enter the Amazon, in the upper Orinoco and the plains of Casanare and Meta, the Maynas area following the course of the Napo River, and the Mojos and Chiquitos regions in the headwaters of the Mamoré and Guaporé rivers (Negro and Marzal, 1999; Saito and Rosas, 2017). The intermediate areas from the Andean foothills to the Neogranadine jungles were assigned to Dominicans, Augustinians, and Franciscans (Santos-Granero 1992: 125-173; Merino, Olga; Newson 1994; Chauca Tapia 2019). Missionaries were of much less importance to the Portuguese, who delegated control of populations and territories to soldiers. The south of the Amazon River was assigned to the Jesuits, who operated in the valleys of the Madeira, Tapajós, Xingú, and Trombeta rivers, while the Franciscans settled in the North Cape (current-day Amapá). The Carmelites were entrusted with evangelization on the border with Maynas and the valleys of the Solimões and Negro rivers (Torres-Londoño, 1999; Alencar Guzmán 2017: 62; Sommer 2019; Lopes de Carvalho 2019: 136-137). The search for new populations to evangelize allowed the advancement of the internal border of both empires and the recognition of the geography and hydrology of the Amazon, giving rise to the early cartographies of these regions (Burgos Guevara 2005; Chauca Tapia 2015).

The missionaries' aim was the Christianization and Europeanization of Amazonian Indigenous groups, considered culturally and technologically inferior. Their lack of a stable and permanent place of residence, ignorance of the Christian faith, alleged poor discipline, and unfamiliar norms of

behavior, at both the personal and group level, were perceived as signs of barbarism, justifying missionary intervention (Boccaro 2010: 106-112; Waisman 2010: 209-211). The priority of the missionaries was religious conversion; the "infidels" received notions of catechesis to later be baptized and become "neophytes," that is, Christian people but in need of tutelage as they still had to learn to be "vassals" of the Crown (Saito 2007: 454). It was a religious guardianship to be conducted within the missions – that is, in an urban environment – where Indigenous peoples were to abandon their state of "barbarism" tied to life amid nature, embrace Western culture, and become "civilized."

The concentration of Indigenous populations meant the restriction of their mobility and autonomy, and the introduction of Iberian cultural aspects that were alien to them. The missions followed the Iberian "checkerboard" urban model, in which the church, workshops, and clergy residences were built around a large central square. Parallel streets were occupied by the dwellings of neophytes, while Indigenous catechumens (not yet baptized) lived on the periphery (Martins Castilho Pereira 2014). The introduction of new crops and cattle breeding caused changes in the landscape and ecology of the area (Radding 2008). The promotion of these activities sought to turn the neophytes into "productive subjects" through training in craft trades (e.g., blacksmithing, carpentry, spinning). This involved the introduction of a new concept of time, arranged according to a specific purpose and regulated by a bell; disciplinary aspects and a compulsory notion of work, leading to the rise of the idea of "indolence" for not producing what was expected; and last, the alteration of kinship systems, gender roles, and division of labor (Sweet 1995: 14-22; Santos 1992:43-44). The wealth produced by the missions did not always allow them to be self-sufficient. In the case of the Mojos, sumptuary goods, metal utensils, and the salaries of specialized personnel were financed with income obtained from slave labor on Society of Jesus estates located on the coasts of modern-day Peru and Ecuador (Block 1994: 65-77).

Various ethnic groups congregated at the missions. Europeans knew these peoples by the specific names of bands, tribes, and chiefdoms, usually given to them by those who did not belong to such groups. Chroniclers and clerics would assign multiple different names to the same people or apply the same name to several groups, depending on their location or relationship at any given time. These ethnic labels served more to ascribe an identity than to describe them, whilst suggesting a false sense of ethnic purity or continuity, ignoring that people met and mingled, entered and left groups, or became bilingual or polyglot (Weber 2013: 35). Indeed, as discussed in detail in Chapter 12, these populations spoke multiple languages, which prevented their evangelization. The missionaries tried to impose a *lingua franca* among Indigenous peoples, preparing standardized grammars and vo-

cabularies, attempting a cultural and linguistic homogenization. The result of this policy was ambiguous; even though Quechuaization or Guaranization was achieved in some provinces, in others it was only possible to impose the use of a *lingua franca* within each mission (Lehm Ardaya 1992: 144-145; Pinheiro Prudente 2017). Over time, these languages solidified as specific idiomatic variants and became the identity mark of missionary ethnic groups (Wilde 2019: 549).

The highest authority within the mission was exerted by the missionaries. Indigenous leaders were recognized but subordinated to the supervision of the clergy. A new social order emerged. Native leaders held positions in government, ensuring community order (moral, social, productive), acting as auxiliaries to clergy in liturgical celebrations (as sacristans or musicians), and the militia, playing a defensive role against Lusitanian military advances.

The hierarchy of society within the missions gave rise to a new native bureaucracy. They were distinguished by their attire (clothing and accessories), differential access to resources and literate culture, education, and training in European arts such as music, drawing, and silversmithing (Saito 2007; Waisman 2010; Lopes de Carvalho 2011; 2019; Avellaneda 2016; Wilde 2019). New leadership emerged based on the authority and respect conferred by both Indigenous people and the missionaries, owing to their knowledge of Indigenous people and the appropriation of practices of Iberian origin (Sweet 1995: 36-39). Music, painting, and sculpture became the best vehicle for engaging Indigenous peoples in this new order, especially in the Jesuit missions. Conceptions and aesthetics of Indigenous origin were reflected in the arts, although subordinated to European creative logic, and perpetuated over time, even once the missionary process was over (Waisman 2010; Diez Gálvez 2017, Monteiro 2019).

The organization of missions entailed the territorial and demographic fragmentation of several ethnic groups, which were forced to leave their tradi-



Figure 9.12. Peruvian Indigenous person with his weapons. Source: Eder (1791).

tional lands to live under the standards of a new social, economic, labor, and political order, shaping new identities within the centers. Parallel to this process of deculturation, a course of ethnogenesis also took place. It was undertaken both by the missionaries; imposing institutions, knowledge, and habits; and by Indigenous peoples, adopting and appropriating them to suit their interests, and giving rise to the so-called “mission culture” or “missionary memory” (Block 1994; Wilde 2019). The experience of these Indigenous peoples led colonial agents, and later republicans, to consider them closer to “civilization”, while groups that remained autonomous continued to be perceived and portrayed as hostile, barbaric, and savage.

9.9 Secularization of the missions

In the latter half of the 18th century, the Hispanic and Lusitanian monarchies implemented a reformist policy aimed at strengthening their respective kingdoms through the modernization and rationalization of the economy, society, and the administrative apparatus of both the peninsula and the Americas. The secularization of the missions pursued the integration of Indigenous peoples into a broader socioeconomic system, considering their submission to the general laws of justice and taxation; their insertion into labor markets, regional trade, and industry circuits; and their contact and mixing with colonial society.

The Jesuits were expelled as part of this reformist policy. Among the orders, they received jurisdiction over most of the Spanish Amazon. They exercised tight control over the neophytes under their tutition, ensuring their minimal relationship with the Hispanic colonial regime. They were also highly autonomous in the management and commercialization of supplies produced, making them appear as a threat to the power of the colonial state in the mid-18th century (Mörner 1965; Merino and Newson 1994). The Jesuit presence in the Lusitanian Amazon had been declining since the mid-17th century. Frequent conflicts between the missionaries, settlers, and soldiers for control of Indigenous labor strained the relationship of the former

with the colonial administration. Their services would be requested and canceled on successive occasions by the governors of Maranhão and Pará, to the point of being replaced by the Carmelites at missions in the Solimões, Negro, and Branco River regions. This animosity would grow in the mid-18th century, as private and imperial interests in direct access to natural and human resources increased (Hemming 1978: 316-341, 410-461; Lopes de Carvalho 2019).

In Portugal, doctrinal modernization and the defense of royal rule advocated by Marquis de Pombal precipitated the estrangement of the Society of Jesus in 1759. In Spain, efforts to subordinate the religious orders reached its peak when Charles III expelled the Jesuits in 1767. France had already done so in 1764. At that time, the Society of Jesus served approximately 60,000 Indigenous people on the Hispanic Amazonian border in just over 70 missions, as well as 25,000 Indigenous people in ~20 missions along the lower Amazon and its tributaries in the Portuguese Amazon (Hemming 1990: 224; Merino and Newson 1994: 10-14).

In this context, the Spanish administration approved different provisions in each of its jurisdictions, with the aim of secularization, centralization, and acculturation of Indigenous populations. The fate of the Jesuit missions relied on their strategic importance, economic resources, proximity to markets, and temperament of Indigenous peoples. Those that still wanted to undergo conversion (neophytes) were handed over to the mendicant orders, particularly in areas connecting the Upper Amazon and the Upper Orinoco. Those who had already embraced Catholic principles and “learned” to live as Europeans ceased to be under guardianship and were recognized as full subjects of the Crown, for example those in the Guapore area. Their government was entrusted to civil administrators, while their spiritual affairs remained with the secular clergy (Merino and Newson 1994; Weber 2013: 162-201). In turn, in 1757 the Portuguese Crown enacted a Directorate to be observed in Indigenous settlements of Pará and Maranhão. Originally designed as a specific legislation for the

Amazon, it was soon extended to the whole Luso-American domain. Although it was devised as a temporary measure, it would be in force for 40 years. The Directorate withdrew all orders from direct control of the peoples concentrated in villages and the missionaries were assigned exclusively to contacting and converting “wild tribes.” Former missions acquired township status and fell under the rule of a civilian officer, who was to oversee the administration and “civilization” of Indigenous peoples and secure their rapid and complete integration into Portuguese society as quickly as possible. It also meant the legal end of Indigenous slavery, although in practice it persisted for decades (MacLachlan 1972; Hemming 1987: 11-12, 40, 58-80).

Both crowns understood that exposure to daily colonial life was the optimal path to acculturation. Especially emphasized on the Lusitanian side, their aim was none other than the “Portuguese-ization” of the Amazon. Missions lost their native names and were re-named after towns in Portugal. The entry of settlers into old missions and their marriage to native women was encouraged to accelerate the adoption of western-style domestic and economic practices. The Portuguese language was imposed, and considered a fundamental basis of civilization (Hemming 1987: 12; Sommer 2019: 615-616, 620-621). In the Spanish domains, the use of Castilian within former missions intensified at the expense of native languages. Recognition of the monarchy’s power and authority was enforced to guarantee the internalization of Western culture, and its effective domination. Natives were no longer exempt from paying taxes; they paid with labor (e.g., textiles, wild cacao), further securing their conversion into faithful and industrious vassals (Ribera 1989 [1786-1794]: 207-212; Weber 2013: 164-175). Some of them resisted and even rebelled, while others made common cause with the new administrators, recreating new leadership structures based on inherited mission culture. This did not imply the abandonment of their ethnic identity and cultural traits (Block 1994).

Reformist policies sought to mobilize the native

workforce, and thereby rationalize and increase the region’s production and assure the desired stimulation of colonial trade and industry. Cattle herding expanded; production of crops such as cocoa, rice, manioc, tobacco, and banana increased; and manufactured goods diversified. Native production in the Spanish Amazon drew the attention of traders. In some cases, civil administrators were in charge of all transactions. In others, direct trade with outsiders was restricted to specific dates each year. Indigenous populations kept providing services to the Crown (Block 1994: 126-141; Radding 2008: 120-138). Under the Directorate rule, the growth of agriculture and the introduction of commerce were seen as the best means of “civilizing” Amazonian peoples. They could be employed in agriculture, expeditions, or provide services for settlers and provincial authorities. The director not only decided for whom they would work, and therefore what activities they would perform, but also administered payments. Additionally, they had to harvest town communal lands, with production for both local consumption and to supply cities, state employees, and the Boundary Commissions. Indigenous people worked on large coffee or sugar plantations alongside African slaves brought to the Amazon by the Grão-Pará and Maranhão trading company (Hemming 1987: 11-17, 40-52; Melo Sampaio 2004). Furthermore, natives were inserted into smuggling networks established by merchants, clergymen, soldiers, and governors in the border areas between the different crowns (Sommer 2006; Lopes de Carvalho 2011).

The new system made Indigenous peoples more vulnerable to labor demands, expropriation of their lands, abuse by those in charge of the towns, and exploitation of the natural resources on which their subsistence depended. In the Spanish domains, the division between temporal and spiritual affairs brought tensions between state officers and the clergy, generating conflicts between them and native leaders. In Directorate villages, directors received a percentage of production as reward for their work; this encouraged physical abuse and increasing overexploitation of Indigenous labor. During the 40 years that this rule was in force, the

population administered in Pará and the Amazon fell by over a third, from 30,000 in 1757 to 19,000 in 1798 (Hemming 1987: 57, 60).

All these factors contributed to the depopulation and disintegration of towns (but not all, not even the majority), increased the spread of disease, and promoted desertions (Merino and Newton 1994: 28-30). Most Indigenous peoples under the protection of mendicant orders or whose settlement had been late abandoned the missions and returned to life in the forests. Occasionally they joined communities of African slaves who had fled colonial domination. This phenomenon took place particularly, but not exclusively, north of the headwaters and middle reaches of the Amazon River. Many descendants of these populations in voluntary isolation on remote tributaries were encountered by ethnographers and missionaries in the 19th and 20th centuries, who misclassified them as “uncontacted” groups (Sommer 2019).

9.10 Indigenous resistance against conquest and colonization

From the arrival of the first conquerors until the end of the colonial period, multiple mechanisms of domination were implemented in the Amazon, to which Indigenous peoples responded with a variety of forms of resistance and rebellion. Broadly, three phases can be observed in the relationship between the conquerors and Indigenous peoples of the Amazon. The first was characterized by incursions of the latter up to the early 17th century. The second occurred between the second half of the 17th century and the first half of the 18th century, with the establishment of settlements, cities, missions, and forts, and the entry of various colonial agents, mostly merchants, including slave traders, along the rivers. The third phase started in the second half of the 18th century, during the most serious attempts to consolidate colonial power within the framework of competition between Portugal and Spain, including through Boundary Commissions and expeditions as a result of the Madrid and San Ildefonso treaties.

Although some mechanisms of domination developed during colonization seem to have disappeared, others have left explicit or indelible marks upon the present. The numerous expeditions that entered the Amazon in search of riches were characterized, according to reiterative elements in chronicles of the time, by the looting of villages in search of food and by coercion of the natives, forcing them to build boats and stay in forts or European settlements (Maurtua 1906; Carvajal [1541-1542] 2007). Appropriation of the livelihoods of Indigenous populations was accompanied by attempts to control them as a workforce.

At first, the conquerors were received with hospitality, but news of their abuses progressively spread and the initial reception on good terms became a declaration of enmity (Carvajal [1541-1542] 2007; Santos-Granero 1992). The most frequent expressions of resistance in the first phase of conquest were the abandonment and burning of villages and crops, as well as the constant harassment of expedition members transformed into confederate movements that involved several Indigenous peoples. At times, these movements managed to liberate large territories and expel the conquerors for decades. Among the oldest confederate rebellions, in 1541, the Quijos revolted against Francisco Pizarro's expedition with the participation of several ethnic groups from the left bank of the Coca River, who were victims of torture to obtain information about the location of the Country of Cinnamon (Santos-Granero 1992). In the same way, the expeditions of Juan Alvarez Maldonado and Gómez de Tordoya through Cusco and La Paz, respectively, and the conflicts between them, ended up inciting a confederate movement among the Araona, Toromona, Tacana, and Leco in the present-day Apolobamba region in Bolivia (Ibáñez Bonillo 2011; Lehm 2016).

As Spanish and Portuguese settlements were consolidated, colonial institutions for dominion gained a foothold. Although it is often claimed that *encomiendas*, *repartimientos*, and forced labor in the colonial *obrajes* and mines were institutions con-

finned to the high Andes, evidence from the foothills shows that they were also present in the Amazon, although dispersed. Between 1560 and 1579, the Quijos area was the scene of two uprisings in response to abuses by *encomenderos*. The second, led by Jumandi, managed to destroy some Spanish cities such as Ávila, Archidona, and Baeza. After the defeat of the Quijos, the Jesuits used the route to establish the missions of Maynas (Uribe Taborda *et al.* 2020: 58-63; Campion Canelas 2018: 121-122; Ruiz Mantilla 1992).

In some places, usurpation of land and extraction of natural resources was accompanied by the subjugation and exploitation of Indigenous labor. Between 1579 and 1608, in a state of permanent uprising, the Shuar, Achual, and Huambisa, among other Indigenous peoples, rose up in the face of abuse by colonial agents who had forced them to labor in gold mines. Led by Quiruba or Kirub, they took the cities of Logroño de los Caballeros, Sevilla del Oro, Valladolid, Huamboya, and Zamora. The Iberians fell back, and a “frontier” was “established” which lasted well into the 20th century. The uprising had significant influence and spread to other areas of the Amazon and the foothills (Santos-Granero 1992: 215-220; Campion Canelas 2018).

The establishment of religious missions implied greater impact, since they facilitated the spread of disease. Missionaries put pressure on the cultural, religious, and governing systems of Indigenous peoples, and promoted linguistic and cultural homogenization. These actions encountered various forms of resistance; progressive and massive abandonment of the missions, open attacks or the death of missionaries and soldiers, or movements involving various groups, such as the great rebellion of the Cocama nation between 1643 and 1669, or that of the Pano groups from Ucayali in 1766 (Santos-Granero 1992: 220-226, 227-232).

In the territories controlled by the Portuguese, colonial domination was characterized by the capture and enslavement of Indigenous peoples for the production of sugar, cocoa, and other agri-

cultural products. In 1720, Portuguese incursions through the Negro River encountered resistance, led by Ajuricaba of the Manao people, who managed to unite the different groups of that river, slowing the advance of the conquerors (Sommer, 2019).

The treaties of Madrid and San Ildefonso implied the deployment of expeditions and Boundary Commissions. These processes, which lasted several years, had a serious impact on Indigenous societies. At times, leaders and even entire Indigenous peoples had no choice but to collaborate with Spain or Portugal. Alternatively, they resisted by maintaining a permanent state of war, in which the missionaries played their role (Zárate, 2014). In 1755 and even 1766, multi-ethnic articulations persisted in the Negro River region, based on wide pre-colonial networks, with complex and dynamic leadership systems, made even more complex with the incursion of agents linked to the colonial world and relationships between the internal and external policies of Indigenous peoples. In the late-18th century, colonial control of the territory did not materialize despite multiple attempts. Indigenous leadership demonstrated sophisticated political and diplomatic strategies and the maintenance of a permanent state of war. This case also highlights the approach, not always effective, of both the Spanish and Portuguese empires to incorporate Indigenous peoples into the colonial system by recognizing their authorities and granting them privileges (Melo Sampaio, 2010).

Between 1770 and 1790, the Tapajós region was the scene of attacks by the dreaded Munduruku. At first, the target of their offensives were canoes conducting Indigenous captives, followed by any colonial agent, man, woman, or native in league with the colonists. Their constant violent resistance allowed them to avoid being ruled by the colonial regime (Sommer, 2019). In the late 18th century, peace agreements were forged between the Portuguese and important factions of Karajá (1775), Kayapó do Sul (1780), Mura (1784-1787), Xavante (1788), Mbayá-Guaikurú (1791) and Mundurukú (1795) (Roller 2019: 641).

Some rebellions had messianic characteristics, combining elements of Indigenous mythology and Catholicism. These types of movements became more frequent in the late 18th century. The one led by Juan Santos Atahualpa in the central jungle of Peru stands out, as it linked different peoples, such as the Yaneshá, Asháninka, and Piro, individuals or groups from the Andes such as Juan Santos of Cusquean origin, and mestizo and Afro-descendant settlers (Santos 1992: 233). After the uprising, the region was isolated from the rest of the Viceroyalty of Peru until 1847, a hundred years later, when new attempts at colonization began in the republican period. Indigenous peoples regained their autonomy and their pre-conquest ways of life, but also maintained elements brought by the Spaniards, such as cattle raising and the cultivation of fruit trees of European origin. Also, very importantly, they kept running numerous smithies to forge tools and iron artifacts (Varese 1973; Zarzar 1989; Santos-Granero 1993).

9.11 Conclusion

The European conquest and colonization of the Amazon entailed intensive transformations in the territory, especially among its ancestral peoples. The presence of the kingdoms of Spain and Portugal, but also, to a lesser extent, of France, Holland, and England, was decisive in the configuration of the region in political, administrative, jurisdictional, economic, legal, linguistic, social, and cultural terms.

From the beginning, the Amazon was viewed by Europeans as a space with inexhaustible riches ready to be extracted. This imagery, which intensely circulated in Europe, referred to fables about places and objects of gold and to myths of Greek origin, such as that of the warrior women that would end up giving the entire region its name. Colonial agents (state officials, soldiers, adventurers, clergymen, and scientists) were essential emissaries of these kingdoms for the knowledge and control of the Amazon's inhabitants and their territories.

Navigable rivers, from the Andes or the Atlantic coast, allowed European exploration, exploitation of natural resources, and the enslavement of Indigenous peoples. These activities further reaffirmed the territorial claims of each crown over this "new" space. Europeans settled across the Amazon. Formal institutions of colonial origin such as the *encomiendas* and the captaincies of the early 16th century later led to the erection of towns and cities of different types; some of Iberian civil and military populations, African slaves, and Indigenous slaves, and others of missionary origin with mainly native populations. These cities were footholds for expeditions of the basin beyond the great central river, in search of new Indigenous peoples, natural and mineral wealth, and territories. Rivers were the most used routes. Disputes on access to Amazonian heritage resulted in border conflicts due to imprecise, fragile, and changing treaties between the crowns. Expeditions, especially in the 18th century, increased geographical knowledge and improved regional cartography, making it possible to more precisely define those boundaries.

Domination of native populations was carried out with the power of the sword and firearms, the liturgy, and agricultural tools. The main objectives were to control people as a workforce and to ensure the productivity of the "discovered" lands. Relations were built on the roots of the "civilization/barbarism" dichotomy, founded on the presence (or absence) of certain forms of culture, both urban and agricultural. Indigenous peoples were portrayed as being in the process of "civilization" and were gathered whenever possible in urban and religious mission centers where they participated in activities associated with colonial interests. Autonomous people living in the forest were labeled "barbarians" or "savages." This classification generated a chain of "staggered disparagements" that has lasted to today and can be seen in relations between national societies and Indigenous peoples, and frequently between Indigenous peoples themselves, and have been shaping social relations and public policies since the colonial period.

The *encomienda*, mission villages, and slavery forced natives to participate in European economic activities and favored the spread of disease, with the consequence of demographic decline and extermination. Depopulation reinforced the myth of the great Amazonian emptiness, justifying its occupation by Europeans. Missionary organizations also led to the territorial and demographic fragmentation of groups as they left their traditional lands to migrate elsewhere or accepted the new social, economic, political, and labor order. The concentration of Indigenous peoples in urban centers with relatively different cultures and their contact with Europeans led to ethnogenesis processes, with the display of missionary dimensions within their cultures and diverse crossbreeding. As a result, many of them are now considered “less Indigenous” in an attempt to disregard their rights as such.

Reformist policies of the mid-18th century detached Indigenous peoples from missionary tutelage and incorporated them into the general colonial regime, subjecting them to the payment of taxes and the provision of labor, both for the colonial state and its economic agents. Since the 19th century, control of the native labor force mutated into practices such as *habilito* or *enganche*, perpetuating colonial structures. Republican rulers promoted policies to open roads and waterways, establish urban centers and, in particular, control and exploit populations and biodiversity.

Indigenous peoples responded to the different forms of colonial domination through various forms of adaptation, resistance, and revolt. Their strategies included a combination of searching for refuge in inland regions, harassment of expeditions and boats of the settlers, destruction of colonial urban centers, and the formation of confederations among different Indigenous peoples, who succeeded in overcoming their inter-ethnic conflicts to carry out unified actions. On many occasions, they managed to maintain autonomous spaces free from colonial domination for relatively long periods, in some cases up to the first half of the 20th century.

In short, the European presence in the Amazon introduced a series of ideas and practices of a colonial nature that persist to this day.

9.12 Recommendations

- Various appropriation practices of the Amazon region and its peoples have appeared since the arrival of Europeans. The transformation of these practices, at times related to layers of colonialism over long periods, must be signified and acted on through the breaking of historical racism, deterministic ideas of “civilization” or “barbarism,” and violent and exploitative human relations of power. Policies for the present socio-ecological system require permanent critical approaches to prevent the reproduction of colonial myths and stereotypes.
- Avoid the continuous building of multiple “borders,” e.g., between the policies of national States; between spaces and/or activities considered more or less “civilized” (for example between urban centers and more dispersed settlements in the forests and savannas); between agriculture and other activities carried out by Indigenous peoples and local populations; or between the Amazon and the Andes.
- Andean and Amazonian Indigenous peoples had permanently tense relations with colonial kingdoms, traceable in various forms of resistance. Overcoming these tensions, which have lasted until the 21st century, requires building respectful relations that address the needs of local populations and avoid the imposition of agendas from external actors that could, as in the past, generate conflict, dispossession, loss, extermination, violence, and other negative consequences.
- Several contemporary actors, like previous military explorers, missionaries, or scientists, continue to generate knowledges in and about the territory. It seems necessary to ensure that this information is used by and for the well-being of Amazonian populations, not to encourage new, violent, or improper appropriations by internal and external actors.

- More exhaustive research is required on the colonial history of the Amazon, especially during the 16th century.

9.13 References

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