Rebellion on the Amazon
The Cabanagem, Race, and Popular Culture in the North of Brazil, 1798–1840

The Brazilian Amazon experienced, in the late 1830s, one of Brazil’s largest peasant and urban-poor insurrections, known as the Cabanagem. Uniquely, rebels succeeded in controlling provincial government and town councils for more than a year. In this first book-length study in English, the rebellion is placed in the context of late colonial and early national society and economy. It compares the Cabanagem with contemporary Latin American peasant rebellions and challenges to centralized authority in Brazil. Using unpublished documentation, it reveals – contrary to other studies – that insurgents were not seeking revolutionary change or separation from the rest of Brazil. Rather, rebels wanted to promote their vision of a newly independent nation and an end to exploitation by a distant power. The Cabanagem is critical to understanding why the Amazon came to be perceived as a land without history.

Mark Harris is based at the University of St Andrews. He was awarded a British Academy postdoctoral fellowship, 1996–1999, and the Philip Leverhulme Prize in 2004. He is the author of Life on the Amazon: The Anthropology of a Brazilian Peasant Village (2000), editor of Ways of Knowing (2007), and coeditor (with Stephen Nugent) of Some Other Amazonians (2006). He has also taught at the Federal University of Pará in Belém, Brazil, and the London School of Economics.
Rebellion on the Amazon

The Cabanagem, Race, and Popular Culture in the North of Brazil, 1798–1840

MARK HARRIS

University of St Andrews
## Contents

*List of Illustrations*  page viii  
*List of Tables*  x  
*Abbreviations*  xi  
*Preface and Acknowledgments*  xiii  

**Introduction: Divergent Amazonia**  
1 Pará in the Age of Revolution: History and Historiography  10  
2 Life on the River  31  
3 The Family and Its Means in the Lower Amazon  71  
4 Some of the Origins of Peasant Rebellion in Pará and the Agrarian Sector  104  
5 Forms of Resistance in the Late Colonial Period  142  
6 Independence, Liberalism, and Changing Social and Racial Relations, 1820–1835  176  
7 The United Brazilian Encampment at Ecuipiranga, 1833–1837  221  
8 “Vengeance on Innocence”: The Repression and Continuing Rebellion, 1837–1840  255  
Conclusion: The Making of the Brazilian Amazon  287  

*Glossary of Terms in Portuguese and English*  303  
*Key Events*  307  
*List of Significant People*  311  
*References*  315  
*Index*  329
List of Illustrations

Maps

1.1 Map of South America, 1799  
1.2 Grão-Pará and the Rio Negro province, c. 1820  
3.1 Land grants in the Lower Amazon, 1740 and 1821  
7.1 The Lower and Upper Amazon during the Cabanagem

Images

2.1 A view of Santarém by Hercule Florence, 1828  
2.2 View of the riverside village of Monforte, c. 1785  
2.3 Montaria, dugout canoe, c. 1840  
2.4 A study of the sky, made from memory two or three months after seeing it. A view of the Amazon River is presented near Monte Alegre, in Portuguese Guyana (São Carlos, March 9, 1935), watercolor by Hercule Florence, c. 1828 [two igarités]  
2.5 Amazonian canoe, river sailing vessel, c. 1840  
2.6 View of the Praça das Mercês with market, Belém, c. 1792  
4.1 Collecting expeditions and hunting for turtles, c. 1785  
4.2 Topographic map of the land grant belonging to Francisco José de Faria, 1814  
5.1 A Mura Indian snorting tobacco (paricá), c. 1785  
5.2 The use of a trumpet by an Amazonian Indian [Mundurucu?], c. 1785  
5.3 A Mundurucu Indian on the Tapajós River by Hercule Florence, 1828  
6.1 Profile of Belém, by E. F. North [inset to River Pará, Image 8.1], 1835  
8.1 River Pará surveyed by Captain Sir Everard Home, Baronet and Mr. Byron Drury, Mate of HMS Racehorse, 1835 (published 1836)
List of Illustrations

Figures

3.1 Comparison of the free population of selected towns in the Lower Amazon  
4.1 Cacao production in the Amazon, 1794–1822  
4.2 Relative value of exports from Pará, 1794–1822
List of Tables

2.1 Population of Monte Alegre, Óbidos, and Santarém, 1827–1828  page 59
2.2 Numbers of boat owners in Óbidos and Monte Alegre, 1827  59
2.3 Main use of boats in Óbidos and Monte Alegre, 1827  60
2.4 Types of labor on boats in Óbidos and Monte Alegre, 1827  60
3.1 Land grant holders (sesmeiros) in the Lower Amazon, 1740–1821  88
4.1 Employment of militia in selected towns in the Lower Amazon, 1799  120
8.1 Changes in population for towns of the Lower and Upper Amazon before and after the Cabanagem  281
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABAPP</td>
<td><em>Annaes da Biblioteca e Archivo Publico do Pará</em> (a periodical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABNRJ</td>
<td><em>Anais da Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro</em> (a periodical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHI</td>
<td>Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty, Rio de Janeiro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHU</td>
<td>Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APEP</td>
<td>Arquivo Público do Estado do Pará, Belém</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APOEP</td>
<td>Arquivo de Prelazia de Óbidos, Estado do Pará</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSEP</td>
<td>Arquivo de Prelazia de Santarém, Estado do Pará</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIHGB</td>
<td>Biblioteca do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, Rio de Janeiro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNRJ</td>
<td>Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAL</td>
<td>National Archives, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIHGB</td>
<td><em>Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro</em> (a periodical)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface and Acknowledgments

Most people will not associate the Amazon with what was arguably the largest peasant rebellion in the history of Brazil. The Amazon is known for reasons other than insurrections. Its indigenous people, lush forests, and profuse wildlife normally dominate popular and academic representations. This book tells another story. It seeks to recover the lives and demands of Amazonian rebels. Mostly peasants living near towns along the river, they sought to defend their livelihood from land-grabbing élites and their political exclusion from a newly independent nation. The defense of a way of life was as much about protecting their environment as advancing an ideological vision. The challenge of this book is to bring together these various histories in one study: the exotic and the mundane, the peasant and the Indian, the historical and the ethnographic, the political and the cultural. Known as the Cabanagem, the rebellion occurred during a time of general social upheaval in Brazil in the 1830s and affected much of the Brazilian Amazon.

The study is aimed at contributing to a new wave of scholarship on the region. Led by scholars who largely work and live in the Amazon, new understandings are emerging. The huge quantity of the material housed locally and nationally as well as in archives in Europe and North America is coming under greater scrutiny. More critical positions concerning the place of the Amazon in the context of the nation and Latin America are coming to the forefront. The hold of perceiving the region apart from, and yet dominated by, the rest of Brazil and as a land without a history of its own is loosenig. I was fortunate to get to know some of these scholars while I taught anthropology in Belém at the Federal University of Pará, 2003–2004, and in a subsequent visit in 2006. Supported by the Leverhulme Trust, the British Academy, and the Arts and Humanities Research Council, I was able to steep my anthropological training in a thorough historical immersion.

In Belém, Manuel Dutra, Décio Gúzman, Magda Ricci, Aldrin Figueiredo, Geraldo Mártires Coelho, Heraldo Maués, Rafael Chambouleyron, Lúcio Flávio Pinto, and Wilma Leitão patiently answered my questions. They helped expand my understanding of Pará. Special thanks to Dutra and Rafael for their continuing generosity. The postgraduate students on my “500 anos do pensamento mestiço na Amazônia” ended up also teaching me a great deal, especially
Roseanne Pinto and Carmen Izabel. My transcribers in Belém were history students Leiticia Barriga, Alanna Souto Cardoso, and Paulo Barreto. They were prepared to spend uncountable hours in the archive and loyally sent transcribed documents to me across the Atlantic. The staff at the Arquivo Público do Pará, especially Guarete, provided invaluable assistance. In Rio, Otávio Vehlo, Claudia Barcellos Rezende, and Benjamin Bucelot offered hospitality and good conversation. Back in Óbidos, Edson Gomes and Raimundo and Ana Côrrea wanted me to write about their histories. I hope this goes some way to addressing that request. Marta Amoroso and Leandro Mahalem de Lima, in São Paulo, shared their ideas and work with me. A brief meeting with André Machado was more than lucky. Conversations with David Cleary, mostly in Belém, were critical in developing my understanding of the material I was reading. His insights were always sharp and welcome.

Across the north Atlantic, Heather Flynn Roller and Barbara Sommer were invaluable interlocutors. Both pointed me toward numerous sources and made important observations that helped to contain some of my more far-flung interpretations. At St Andrews, Peter Clark generously supported the writing of this book by giving me time to think and write. Paloma Gay y Blasco, Will Fowler, James Harris, Tristan Platt, Nigel Rapport, and Huon Wardle have made comments (sometimes offhand) that, in various ways, found their way into the writing of this book. Tristan has constantly pushed forward my intellectual horizons. Graeme Sandeman drew the maps. In London, Stephen Nugent has helped me frame the pertinent questions and encouraged my interest in an historical anthropology of Amazonia.

Jim Hunter and Pat Stocker commented on a first draft of the manuscript. Their readings not only improved some of the poor expression but sharpened the argument. Herbert Klein and two reviewers for Cambridge University Press read a subsequent version and forced me to cast the net more widely. Without question, they have contributed to making this book better than it was. Any factual errors or misunderstandings are mine alone. All translations are mine unless stated otherwise.

My sincere gratitude goes to all these people. Lastly, and far from least, I thank my family. Their part in bringing this book to its conclusion is immeasurable — as is my appreciation.

Permission to reproduce images is gratefully acknowledged from the following:

The Academy of Sciences Library, St Petersburg:

Image 2.1 A view of Santarém by Hercule Florence, 1828
Image 5.3 A Mundurucu Indian on the Tapajós River by Hercule Florence, 1828
Preface and Acknowledgments

Acervo da Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – Brazil:

Image 2.2 View of the riverside village of Monforte, c. 1785
Image 2.6 View of the Praça das Mercês with market, Belém, c. 1792
Image 4.1 Collecting expeditions and hunting for turtles, c. 1785
Image 5.1 A Mura Indian snorting tobacco (paricá), c. 1785
Image 5.2 The use of a trumpet by an Amazonian Indian [Mundurucu?], c. 1785

From Daniel Kidder and James Fletcher, Brazil and the Brazilians, 1865:

Image 2.3 Montaria, dugout canoe, c. 1840
Image 2.5 Amazonian canoe, river sailing vessel, c. 1840

Cyrillo Hercules Florence Collection – São Paulo, Brazil:

Image 2.4 A study of the sky, made from memory two or three months after seeing it. A view of the Amazon River is presented near Monte Alegre, in Portuguese Guyana (São Carlos, March 9, 1935), water-color by Hercule Florence, c. 1828 [two igarités]

Portugal, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino – PT, AHU:

Image 4.2 Topographic map of the land grant belonging to Francisco José de Faria, 1814

© British Library Board. All Rights Reserved, Maps SEC. 9 (1179):

Image 6.1 Profile of Belém, by E. F. North [inset to River Pará, Image 8.1], 1835
Image 8.1 River Pará surveyed by Captain Sir Everard Home, Baronet and Mr. Byron Drury, Mate of HMS Racehorse, 1835 (published 1836)