

# The pristine and *devenir* in long-term indigenous history in the Amazon

## O prístino e o devir na história indígena de longa duração na Amazônia

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**Abstract:** In discussions of the Amazon's lengthy indigenous history, the narrative that considers temporal landmarks generally remains tied to Western chronology. In other words, although most researchers consider indigenous history to be an important reality, the very epistemological scope of the human sciences forces indigenous temporalities to fit into the chronological paradigms of the west. To avoid this epistemological pitfall, historical time must be narrated according to the emergence and duration of events, going beyond their pristine origins and seeking their *devenir* instead of manifestations of these events. Based on the work of authors such as Bergson, Deleuze and Braudel, in this essay we propose that indigenous history in the Amazon unfolds along two structuring processes that evolved over time according to the persistence and resilience of this history in the proper place for Amerindian social and cultural experiences.

**Keywords:** Indigenous history. Duration. Amazon. Decoloniality. Chronology.

**Resumo:** Geralmente, quando se fala sobre a longa história indígena na Amazônia, a narrativa que considera os marcos temporais continua atrelada à cronologia ocidental. Isto é, embora a maioria dos pesquisadores considere a história indígena uma realidade importante, o próprio escopo epistemológico das ciências humanas 'cola' as temporalidades indígenas aos paradigmas cronológicos do Ocidente. Para romper essa cilada epistemológica, é necessário narrar o tempo histórico segundo a emergência e a duração dos acontecimentos, indo além de suas origens prístinas, e buscar seu *devenir* no lugar das manifestações de seus eventos. Tendo por base autores como Bergson, Deleuze e Braudel, este ensaio propõe que a história indígena na Amazônia se desenrola ao longo de dois processos estruturantes, que evoluíram no tempo conforme a persistência e a resiliência dela no lugar próprio das experiências sociais e culturais ameríndias.

**Palavras-chave:** História indígena. Duração. Amazônia. Decolonialidade. Cronologia.

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## INTRODUCTION

This text aims to discuss, especially if we consider the place of humanity in historical time, that far beyond the origin (abstract and immutable at the level of primordial ideas) the most important thing is not the pristine manifestation, the unalterable and exact moment when *Homo sapiens* emerged on Earth or began to express itself through cultural manifestations. But how, through the senses, we interpret the historical space and time experienced by the human species. In other words, how do we interpret historical time according to the knowledge and expertise of the interpreter who, necessarily, is always a moving and current subject. The event, even from the most distant past, is not a ready-made and immutable thing that preceded everyone who mirrors it, but something remade by a subject that in history is in permanent construction. In short, it is not the original essence, but the originality of its historical, social and anthropological meaning now that it is necessarily defined by what we seek in '*devenir*' (Descola, 2002).

Therefore, it does not matter if human arrived in the Amazon 50,000 or 30,000 years ago, but the historical events that resulted in the cultural heritages that we have inherited. In other words, although we know that around the Amazon region there are signs of human occupation dating back more than 30,000 years (Bueno et al., 2020; Lourdeau & Bueno, 2022; V. Vialou & D. Vialou, 2019), here we seek to understand the bases of the historical, social and cultural formation of Holocene indigenous populations. Populations that were later conquered and disfigured by the European invader, in the 16th century. Apparently, it was populations that arrived at the end of the Pleistocene, but whose historical processes were only consolidated and characterized as original during the early Holocene, who founded these bases. Thus, when talking about 'original peoples' it must be understood that their historical processes have a temporally identifiable beginning, and that this temporality has its own territoriality and duration.

In addition, beyond this territoriality and duration, there are other parallel histories, with their particular processes, whether contemporary or not (Magalhães, 1993).

This means that, despite being long, indigenous history in the Amazon has a duration with a particular beginning and end, regardless of the historical events that occur not only in other regions of the world, as well as in the same continent shared by different civilizations, such as the Andes and the Caribbean, with whom they even maintained contact, but not influences of political domination or cultural colonization (Aceituno et al., 2012).

As they are distinct historical events, even though they may have common cultural traits due to different cultural diffusions (Steward, 1948; Meggers, 1971), the societies that make up a regional civilization share historical events that are much more related to each other than to the events of the societies of other civilizations (Magalhães, 2016). In fact, different civilizations will each have their own processes and structural systems, each with specific sets of historical events. Therefore, there is no point in counting the historical time of Amazonian indigenous societies according to the historical time of Western societies. The long duration<sup>1</sup> of indigenous history should not be tied to the Christian calendar or punctuated by the European conquest of the American continents. This is nothing more than maintaining colonialist practices, which in essence continue to deny indigenous histories and cosmogonies. The intention, therefore, is to decolonize the time of indigenous history (Porto-Gonçalves, 2005; Salles & Feitosa, 2019).

It should be noted that in order to understand Amerindian historical time, as we have formulated it, it's necessary to understand that in addition to the interpretation of social and cultural times there is entropy, the dynamics of physical time (which necessarily runs from the past to the future) and the perspective evolutionary of historical development (which starts from the simplest to the most complex). Finally, there are different parallel temporal lines,

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<sup>1</sup> According to Fernand Braudel's concept of '*longue durée*' – see Grote (2015).



which over the course of historical durations intersect, cancel each other out or interact. None of them can be interpreted as the main historical line, under which all the others submit and organize themselves hierarchically. However, as none of the temporal lines are isolated or constitute unilateral hegemonic historical processes, it is not the particular cosmogonies of a society that will represent the structuring historical processes of a region, but the set of ontologies of the different peoples that live in it<sup>2</sup>. This is where the concept of civilization we employ is based. That is, every region, through the set of peoples that live in it, presents its own civilizing foundations.

It is well known that the colonialist methods implemented by the European conquerors of the 17th century were based on intimidation and social deconstruction through force, including bacteriological warfare (such as the spread of the smallpox virus) and mainly, on the fundamentalist denial of all religious or ritualistic expression of native peoples (Dobyns, 1993; Roosevelt, 1994; Ribeiro, 1995). Peoples that were not entirely extinct, because Europeans needed the labor power of native populations, who were then enslaved, and also they forced miscegenation to settle settlers, as there were no women among the colonists, especially during the first 150 years of invasion, as occurred in Brazil (Little, 2018). Methods which, even in different ways, are still effective and continue to cause victims among indigenous populations: either eliminating rebel groups or subjects through weapons and the invasion of lands carried out by land grabbers protected by police authorities; or by the criminal evangelization implanted by Catholic and Evangelical Christians. Consequently, today's Amazonian indigenous peoples, without land, leaders and spirit, continue to be relegated to the margins of Brazilian history.

Consequently, the insistence on the use of the Christian calendar and the time frame of the conquest, in addition to the obvious denial of indigenous societies as a historical reality, generates superficial exotic solutions, such as the regularly used pre-colonial term, or other generalizers, such as history 'deep'. The terms 'pre-colonial' and 'deep history'<sup>3</sup> (the latter defined by Smail and Shryock, 2013 and by McGrath, 2015), place all possible histories in the same process, ignoring that every civilization has its own duration and set of events. Thus, it is also ignored that the history of ancient Amazonian societies would have begun during the transition from the Pleistocene to the Holocene and ended precisely with the invasion and subsequent European colonization. That is, indigenous history prior to colonization ends precisely with the implementation of the colonial system. There are archaeological studies that show how the social, political and cultural structures of the Amazonian Amerindians suffered devastating impacts with colonization, leading to the collapse of all complex societies in the region. One of these studies is by Heckenberger (2001), whose arguments show how Xingu societies have radically regressed since contact with Europeans.

In the specific case of deep History, supported by disciplines such as anthropology, archeology, genetics, linguistics and even primatology, for some people it is a discipline with a broad approach, which studies a very distant past of the human species. It aims to write a common narrative about the beginnings of *Homo sapiens*, starting from the time when humans existed even further back than the time of so-called prehistory (Smail, 2008; Cohen, 2021; Guldi & Armitage, 2014). In other words, for the adherents of these terms, the origin is more important than the original. What matters more is a supposed pristine beginning (Pleistocene) than the actual historical formation of the peoples studied (Holocene).

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<sup>2</sup> For more details, see Magalhães (2016), where these issues are deepened in the chapter entitled "A simultaneidade generalizada dos acontecimentos".

<sup>3</sup> Deep time is a concept equivalent to the geological time scale and was first used in the 18th century by the Scottish geologist James Hutton (1726-1797). It is, therefore, a concept formulated in geology. Since the time scale of geology is immensely larger than that of archeology, this concept includes, at a minimum, Pleistocene populations whose remains are found in the regional periphery of Amazonia.



Interestingly, in Brazil, the concept of deep history was a model of historical writing proposed at the end of the 19th century, which was opposed to a so-called superficial history, sometimes being linked to the opposition between artificiality and authenticity. According to Turin (2009, p. 3), “the past narrated by history, and which became common in the texts of the late 19th century, was qualified as a ‘deep and authentic past’” of the nation. For intellectuals like Euclides da Cunha and Capistrano de Abreu, Brazil would have two histories, one rhetorical and empty, and another yet to be made, deep and authentic, which should go beyond documentary history and gain the depth of “broader and more radical facts” (Turin, 2009, p. 4). Also, according to Turin (2009), these authors were promoting something similar to what happened in the French scenario of the 1830s, when the conjunction between ethnography and history was used in an effort to reach the deep past of France, not accessible from what they understood as pure documentary research of facts and characters. According to the observations above, we can conclude that, in general, the concept of Deep History applied in the archeology of the Amazon circulates between authenticity and the first manifestation, becoming, itself, a superficial concept. Consequently, in one way or another, no chronology is found in it that narrates the long indigenous history according to the succession of events.

In short, historical events are not a linear and hierarchical numerical ruler, an infinite return circle, or a mosaic of pristine events disconnected in time. Its geometry, not being rectilinear and much less circular, is, as suggested by Deleuze (2018), a spiral whose possible return only occurs in difference and its parallel events only meet in the future. They have a beginning, a middle and an end, and it is in the events of a historical duration where their original particularities reside, since everything that returns in them, returns as a distinct event. In other words, history follows a succession of distinct conditions, whose events do not

repeat except in difference. As the poet would say, history is only infinite while it lasts! And duration only prevails, evolves and persists according to the set of events that emerged and collapsed along the historical events that brought them to life.

Considering that historical time must be analyzed according to the perspective of the place – the site of manifestation of an event that marks the passage from one condition to another and where strategies are projected and articulated in structuring and persistent systems – two long processes took place in the Amazon intrinsically related histories, which were developed by different societies spread across different locations in the region. Historical processes that present ruptures and continuities, particularities and similarities. In this text, the theory formulated understands that the original peoples of the territory now known as the Amazon had regional historical evolution for more than 10,000 years (Roosevelt et al., 1996). And in it they developed their cosmogonies and alterities, in addition to specific social and political relations. It also understands that the processes of historical formation of the peoples of the West and of the ‘Amazon’ were parallel spiral historical lines in space and time, they did not succeed one another hierarchically, and only came to become common with the implantation of European colonization, 32 years after the conquest that took place in the year 1500<sup>4</sup> (Magalhães, 2016; Magalhães et al., 2019, 2018).

In summary, according to the perspective of duration understood here and developed according to the thinking of Bergson (2006a [1934], 2006b [1932]), the chronological evolution of indigenous history in the Amazon presented two long processes of structuring historical development: that of Tropical Culture and that of Antropical Culture. The first began around 12,000 years ago, when people arrived in the region, who were successful in exploiting natural resources and occupying different regional environments (mountains, fields, forests, riverbanks and the coast). In this case, it does not matter whether these populations

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<sup>4</sup> Colonization in Brazil began with the first colonizing expedition, commanded by Martim Afonso de Souza. It was he who founded the first village, Vila de São Vicente in 1532, on the coast of the state of São Paulo, aiming at the extensive planting of cane to produce sugar. But it should be noted that in the Amazon, European colonization began much later, after 1600.



were preceded by older ones. The important thing is that they were the ones who were successful in colonizing the Amazon. The great achievement of the pioneer colonizers was the anthropogenesis of pristine forests, when successful populations began to select, distribute and domesticate various plants, for different purposes, whether food, medicinal, ritualistic, artisanal, etc. (Santos et al., 2019a). Tropical Culture, despite the early manipulation of plants, was based on a generalist economy stuck on hunting and gathering. This 'mode of production' lasted until the end of the Middle Holocene, when historical and climatic events favored the emergence of a new civilizing process, that of the Antropical Culture, much more complex, whose economic base was the systematic cultivation of domesticated plants and the management of extensive anthropized forests.

However, these structuring historical processes are civilizing, but not homogenizing, since societies developed their particularities according to their own cultural experiences and cosmogonic narratives. The oldest of these concepts, the Antropical Culture, formulated in the 1990s and then named Neotropical Culture (Magalhães, 1993, 1994, 2006), was the one that underwent the most changes, especially due to advances in archaeological research. However, this initial name tolerated some criticism for the use of the term Neotropical, typical of Biogeography. Despite appearing to be a misappropriation, the use of this term aimed to draw attention to the fact that Biogeography ignored the human influence on the geographic distribution of species, a commonplace fact at the time. That said, it is worth mentioning that both chronological concepts were based on human interaction with Amazonian ecosystems, in which the continuous relationship between them occurs, topologically, in both directions: human/environment – environment/human (Hornborg, 2005). And their evolution was supported by technical development and the intensity of resource use and plant management, also of the increasingly complex influence of this action on social organization (Neves & Petersen, 2006; Magalhães, 2013; Neves, 2020; Choi et al., 2020; Clement et al., 2021).

The historical processes of Tropical Culture and Antropical Culture are contiguous and of a civilizational character, each with its own 'mode of production', but triggering culturally different responses between societies. In other words, its origins are autochthonous and the result of the integration of different ethnicities, social and cultural experiences that were successful during the long indigenous historical evolution, whose autonomy was finalized with the arrival of the European conqueror, about 520 years ago.

## CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BASIS

These concepts (Tropical Culture and Antropical Culture) are theoretically based on Historical Ecology defined by Balée (1994, 2013), but also and mainly on landscape archeology, especially that defended, among others, by Criado-Boado (Criado-Boado, 1999; Criado-Boado et al., 2013), when he states that every landscape is of anthropic origin and, consequently, a social artifact. Philosophical and historical concepts are based on Bergson (2006a [1934], 2006b [1932]), Deleuze (2018), Braudel (1992) and Porto-Gonçalves (2005). Already the concept of '*devenir*' (change through which things pass) applied, is based on Nietzsche and Deleuze. In summary, this concept states that historical reality depends on transformation through becoming and that, consequently, it can only be known when we identify the experimentation of being in duration. Therefore, when we speak of duration here, it is being understood that it is in it that historical processes emerge, prevail and transform. On the other hand, understanding that duration is time and, therefore, space, it only happens in the place (place or region) where its events emerge.

The methods applied in basic research came from archeology (predictive modeling, spatial studies and material culture: ceramics and lithics), ethnobotany, anthracology, carpology, posology and graph theory. The latter can be inferred in Magalhães (2016) and Magalhães et al. (2019), Fonseca (2018), Barbosa (2021), Schmidt et al. (2014), Schmidt (2016), Oliveira (2020), and in Santos et al. (2019a, 2019b). The research, whose



formulated hypotheses could be tested, were carried out in Porto Trombetas (Oriximiná, Baixo Amazonas, PA) and in Carajás (Southeast of Pará, Eastern Amazon).

In Porto Trombetas, district of Oriximiná located on the Nhamundá/Trombetas interfluve (lower Amazon), sites on the banks of rivers and lakes, as well as in valleys and plateaus, were studied, where anthropic forests were identified around archaeological sites of the Konduri ceramic styles (Kondurí ceramist culture) and Pocó (from the Pocó-Açutuba ceramist tradition), both associated with the Antropical Culture (Guapindaia & Lopes, 2011; Guapindaia & Fonseca Júnior, 2013). The results of these studies showed that the level of anthropization of native forests was quite high, both around the sites and in areas far from them, as well as along the paths that connected

them (Magalhães et al., 2015; Schmidt, 2016). Given the unquestionable evidence of the great intensity and extent of forests of anthropic origin, associated with identified archaeologically complex populations, it became clear that the term Neotropical Culture was not the most appropriate to refer to the historical process that resulted in this period. Thus, the term Antropical Culture was suggested, in short, refers to a historical phase of Amazonian societies, whose emergence took place in a tropic already culturally anthropized (Santos et al., 2019a). That is, in addition to the different explored ecosystems being already anthropized, they carried cultural identity marks, that related a certain territory to a certain ethnicity or cultural tradition (Figure 1).

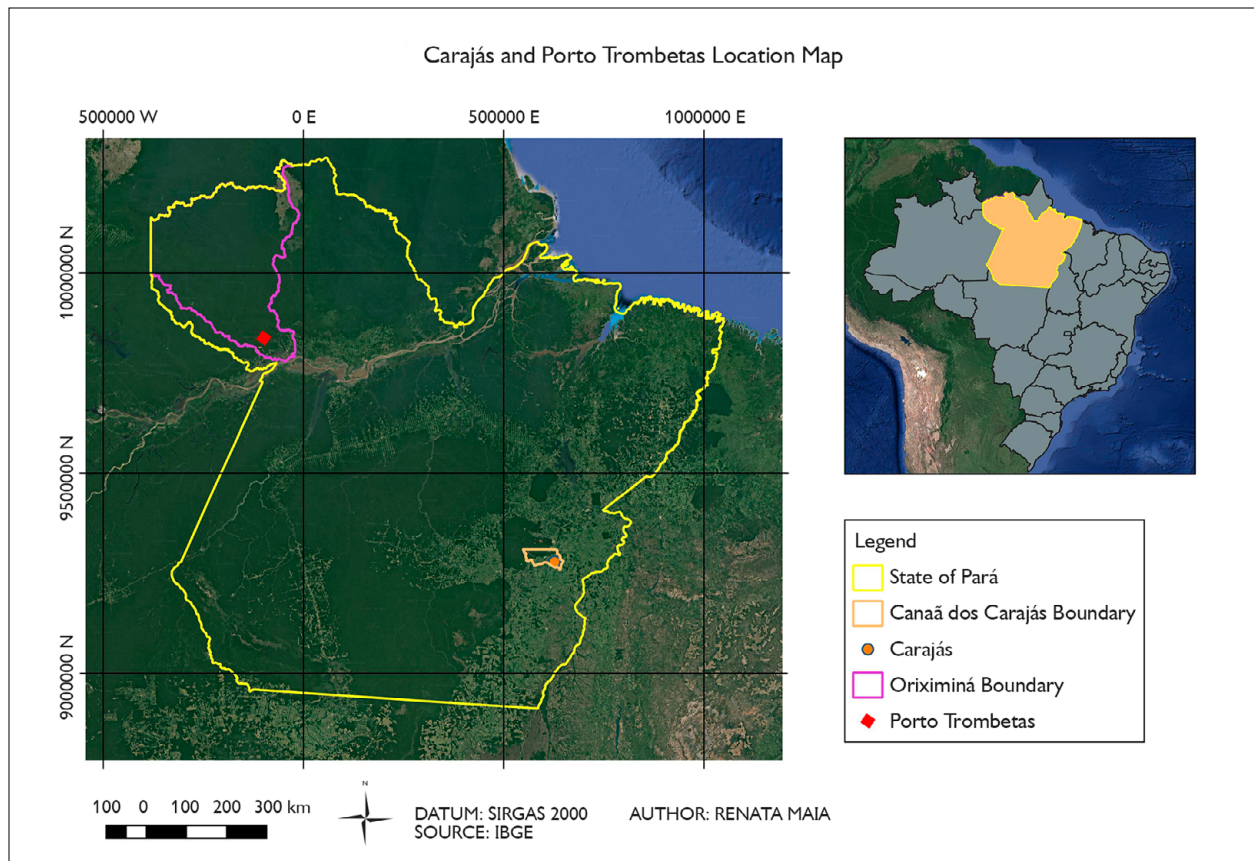


Figure 1. Location of the districts of Porto Trombetas in Oriximiná, on the right bank of the Trombetas River, and Carajás (Serra Sul) in Canaã dos Carajás, Pará, Brazil. Map: Renata Maia (2023).





In Carajás (southeast eastern Amazon), a mountainous complex (Serra Norte, Serra Sul and Serra Leste) composed of several plateaus, the most significant sites are found on its edges (plateaus N1, N2, N3, N4 and N5 - Serra Norte; and plateau S11D - Serra Sul), sheltered in grottos and caves. The local archaeological evidence reached more than 11,600 years of antiquity and comes from dozens of sites from which more than 400 radiocarbon dates were obtained (Magalhães et al., 2019). These evidences are composed of numerous botanical remains (seeds and coals) associated with various lithic instruments (usually unifacial) and rare ceramic fragments. Developed by researchers from the *Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi* (Belém, PA), field and laboratory studies revealed that the vegetation around these sites was already being anthropized through the disposal (consciously or not) of culturally selected seeds, since the beginning of the local occupation. Around 9,000 BP, all plants identified in the refuse were also found at superficial levels, including manioc seeds (sp.) (Santos et al., 2019a, 2019b). An site in an open area, called Mangangá, on the right bank of the Sossego River, whose source is located at the top of the S11D plateau – (Serra Sul), to having an occupation with more than 10,000 years, also presents a more recent ceramic occupation situated between 6,000 and 400 years old and an environment covered by anthropic forest full of diverse useful plants (Magalhães et al., 2018).

The Mangangá site (Figure 2) is a striking example that the eastern region of the Amazon supported populations related to two distinct historical processes, the Tropical Culture and the Antropical Culture. The economy of the populations of the Antropical Culture was based on the exploitation of the same plant resources, which were culturally selected from time immemorial by the Tropical Culture. Thus, if we can attribute to the populations of the Tropical Culture the beginning of the selection, management and domestication of diverse useful plants, we can attribute to the populations of the Antropical Culture the change in the mode of production previously



Figure 2. Mangangá site covered with anthropic vegetation. Photo: Marcos P. Magalhães (2015).

based on hunting, fishing, gathering and small crops by sowing, for the intensive cultivation of the same plants, now fully domesticated. But without abandoning the hunting and fishing, practicing more extensive and intense the manipulation of diversified forests previously anthropized.

Carajás, despite not being able to be considered a central location for the domestication of plants, nor for the evolution of the social complexity of Amazonian populations generally, shows how decentralization (cultural and social) may have been a common historical pattern in the Amazon. Hence the Carajás and Trombetas cases (the first showing the beginning of Amazonian anthropogenesis, and the second showing the fullness of the intensive use of domestic plants and the broad management of anthropic forests), characterize the evolution of two long complementary historical processes, emerged, evolved and established during the indigenous colonization of the Holocene Amazon.

## LET'S THE POINT

When we confirm that the Amazonian indigenous populations developed their own historical processes over more than 10,000 years, it makes no sense for these processes to suggest a supposed 'common era', based on the Christian calendar. However, if there is a common era, it would have started with the beginning

of European colonization. That is, from the 16th century onwards. But, this time, without being related to Antropical societies, because these have been culturally, politically and socially destabilized since the European invasion. Brazilian society, where the descendants of the first populations are included, is what connects them, through national policies of integration, to the common post-colonial era.

Nevertheless, the current paradigm, recognized by most researchers (archaeologists and anthropologists), is based on a long-term narrative, but whose beginnings predate by millennia the arrival of the European conqueror. Meanwhile, in common sense it is customary to begin the history of human occupation of the Amazon only after the conquest. Among historians, it is common to consider regional human antiquity with reference to Western traditions and customs. But just as in the West there were different historical eras, the historical evolution of the autochthonous societies of the South American lowlands (the Amazon) also presented its own eras. In fact, in human science, while we have advanced spectacularly in the way in which the relationship of native peoples with Amazonian nature is perceived, the diachronic narrative of this relationship remains tied to Western principles of historical sequencing.

As previously proposed (Magalhães, 2019), there is a plausible argument that explains the deficiency in the diachronic narrative about the ancient historical relationships of human populations in the Amazon. Firstly, the studies that focus on the evolution of the long regional human history are quite timid. Second, consequently, these studies present little evidence and few syntheses. This situation is the result of the limited number of studies and, fundamentally, of the constant gaps in the arguments presented. It is possible that this is an effect of the challenge of researching a region of continental proportions dependent on complex logistics. A fact that justifies the small volume of existing research, and the privilege of riverside areas with easy access for the studies carried out. It is these areas, where the sites of sedentary populations

producing ceramics are located, which have monopolized archaeological research in the Amazon.

Nowadays, the situation remains the same. That is, even updating the data in 2021, when we seek studies on the beginning of regional human colonization, which occurred between the end of the Pleistocene and the beginning of the Holocene (beginning of Tropical Culture), research is rare and territorially sparse. For example (Figure 3),

... of the 2,209 archaeological sites identified and/or studied by archaeologists from the Museu Goeldi 32 or less than 2% showed traces of "hunter-gatherers". And of the 32 knowns, only 25 have been fully or partially studied. And of these, 23 are in Carajás, which is, therefore, the area that presents the most significant results (Magalhães, 2019, p. 197).

When we include sites studied by other institutions and researchers in the Amazon, this scenario remains stable.

To cite an example of this small number of studies, the last publication aimed at quantifying the occurrences of sites from the aforementioned period, but including areas outside the legal Amazon under the influence of the Tocantins river basin (high, medium and low course), Bueno (2019) counted 48 sites, of these 25 come from Carajás (Figure 4). But, if we are to count only the sites located in the legal Amazon and dating between 12,000 and 9,000 years, except for those in Carajás

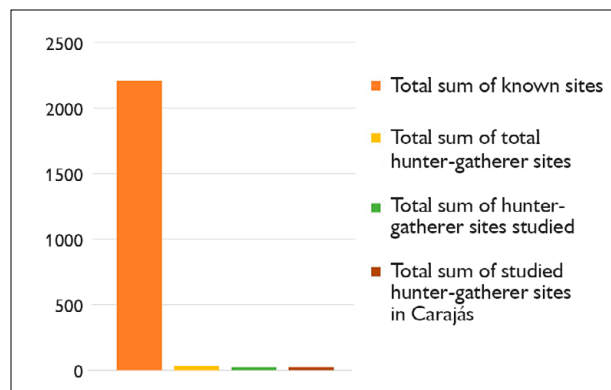
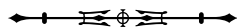


Figure 3. Quantitative variation between the hunter-gatherer sites studied and the total number of known and registered sites at the Goeldi Museum (base year 2021).





(Magalhães, 2016; Magalhães et al., 2019), their number, in addition to not reaching a dozen, is irregularly dispersed throughout the region. That is, as well as in 2019, in 2021, Carajás in particular and the Eastern Amazon as a whole present the largest volume of studies on the period corresponding to Tropical Culture. With this, it is the archaeological territory of the Amazon that presents the largest volume of studies on this period. Therefore, it continues to be the archaeological territory that allows theoretical speculations that can have their hypotheses tested. In fact, the data generated by the research carried out there were fundamental for us to understand this historical phase of regional human occupation (Magalhães, 2005, 2016; Magalhães et al., 2018, 2019; Santos et al., 2016, 2018, 2019a, 2019b; Maia et al., 2022).

In Carajás, since the studies started in the 1990s and intensified between 2011 and 2018, has been improved and tested the idea that human waves related to the Pleistocene/Holocene passage were the most successful in regional colonization and those that inaugurated a resilient and uninterrupted long duration historical process. It was the societies formed by these populations waves that gave rise to autochthonous cultures, flourishing and collapsing of their own accord. The greatest legacy left, in addition to the anthropogenesis of the Amazon forests (the anthropogenic forests), was the fluid organization of political systems, in

which the interests of the social collective predominate over coercive power relations (Baniwa, 2019). It was based on these premises that the concept of Tropical Culture was formulated as a historical process, which emerged around 12,000 years ago, reached its peak around 9,000 years ago and collapsed in the mid of the Middle Holocene, with the rise of a new historical process derived from it, that of the Antropical Culture (Santos et al., 2019a; Magalhães et al., 2019).

However, some observations are constantly repeated without any apparent logic, except the one that hides behind a supposed desire to dominate the epistemological course of the discipline. This occurs more clearly when the subject talks about some radiocarbon dating. Or else, when one is silent about some concepts, while others, from similar contexts, but not necessarily exclusive, are constantly replicated and considered irreplaceable.

Today, the attempts (by omission or contestation) that eminent scientists made to control the dating of human migrations in the Americas are well known, particularly if these dating contradicted the theoretical assumptions implicit in the Clovis First model (Dias, 2019). However, this also occurs in the 'small streak'. For example, the archeology of Carajás has more than 400 dating's by C<sup>14</sup>, with a margin of error of around 30 years (Magalhães, 2016; Magalhães et al., 2019). Among these, more than a dozen, coming from combustion structures or not, have dates over 11,000 years old. However, publications after the publication of these dates (Magalhães, 2005, 2016; Magalhães et al., 2018) still insist on repeating the dating of 8,000 BP (Lopes et al., 1993) or 8,800 Cal BP. This fact is very strange, since this dating is one of only three, whose margin of error is significantly compromising (> 300 years), compared to the most recent, which are the result of much more precise methodologies.

Generally, the populations that generated the historical processes of Tropical Culture were relatively nomadic (the degree of mobility varied according to the local availability of resources) and had as their economic base the resources of the tropical forest, such as hunting

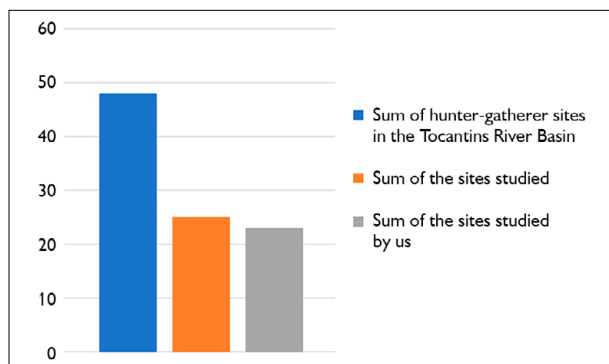


Figure 4. Quantitative variation between known hunter-gatherer sites in the Tocantins River Basin (Southeast of Pará - Eastern Amazon), the sites studied by researchers from the Goeldi Museum (base year 2021).

(generally of small scale), fishing and the handling and collection of plants and fruits (from herbs to large trees). The latter formed a group of culturally selected plants (for food, crafts, construction, rites, medicine, etc.), which, amalgamated from generation to generation in social and cultural structures, were gradually expanded and their use intensified (Magalhães, 2016; Magalhães et al., 2018). Consequently, unlike other concepts that attributed dependence on the availability of natural resources or the advent of agricultural societies to these populations, so that through exchange they could live in the tropical forest, they were already capable of making, through the management and manipulation of plants, naturally poor environments in culturally rich niches (Fausto & Neves, 2018). As a result, it is possible to speculate that over time, some human groups maintained the regular cultivation of plants, well before the advent of agriculture related to sedentary societies.

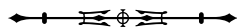
As highlighted by Bueno et al. (2020), in Brazil, Pleistocene populations reach more than 30,000 years old (Lourdeau, 2019) in São Raimundo Nonato (PI), and more than 25,000 years old (V. Vialou & D. Vialou, 2019) in Santa Elina (MT). Therefore, most likely, these populations would not be the ancestors of the Amerindians. The Amerindian populations, in fact, are heirs of those who initiated the successful colonization of the Amazon in the Pleistocene/Holocene passage, and whose current genetic studies point to being the same since their arrival in the Americas about 18,000 years ago (Da-Glória, 2019). On the other hand and in general, in addition to the Amazon, in Brazil there are more than three hundred dates corresponding to the interval between the late Pleistocene and early Holocene (Bueno et al., 2020).

In the Amazon, according to Magalhães (2019, p. 119), it is understood that the sedentary agricultural populations of the tropical forest would be descendants of the diverse social and historical evolution of populations of the Tropical Culture. However, these descendant populations constitute a new historical process, that of Antropical Culture, whose social complexity resulted in great cultural

and spatial variability. With the exponential expansion of the use and consumption of plant resources, the populations of the Antropical Culture developed technologies for the intensive management of several plants and for the systematic cultivation of domesticated plants. These plants were already known and used by the populations of the Tropical Culture (pioneers in the consumption and manipulation of them). Thus, the difference between these two historical periods is fundamentally based on the mode of production (Magalhães, 2016). However, it should be noted that some researchers point out, and rightly so, that over time and space, there was a certain fluidity in the use of domesticated plants (Neves & Heckenberger, 2019), so that there would be no rigidity in the mode of production, but only general aspects that would prevail from a given time onwards, without one or the other being in fact abandoned, especially in the long historical intercession (during the Middle Holocene) in which the two historical processes coexisted.

## CONCLUSION: CAN LANDSCAPE FORMAT THE HISTORY?

As Santos et al. (2016, 2019b), Lima et al. (2018) showed in Carajás several evidences of use and management of plants were found since 11,600 years ago. At the beginning of the intensive manipulation of the Amazonian flora, most plant products were derived from palm trees. But, over time, there was a gradual growth in the diversification of the plants used. Growth that stabilized around 9,000 years ago, when the group of plants (for food, crafts, construction, medicine, etc.) then consumed became, for later populations, basic in the use of plant resources (Magalhães, 2019). That is, the plants consumed by the populations of the Antropical Culture, and even by the current populations that inherited them, were already known for a long time (Lima et al., 2018). And, possibly, they were even more diversified than those known today, including, among others, manioc (*Manihot* sp.) and *açaí* (*Euterpe oleracea*).



Santos et al. (2019b), when studying the botanical inventory carried out in woods (*capões*)<sup>5</sup> located around the archaeological sites of Carajás, concluded that the vegetation in these environments is of anthropic origin, thus being culturally constructed landscapes (Magalhães, 2019; Magalhães et al., 2018). These landscapes had large trees, such as *Bertholletia excelsa* (nut tree) and *Caryocar villosum* (*pequiá*), and concentrations of palm trees, such as *açaí* (*Euterpe oleracea*) and *bacaba* (*Oenocarpus bacaba*), whose remains were also found in ancient archaeological strata (Magalhães et al., 2019). These vegetations are not only resilient testimonies of forests that have been managed over thousands of years, but also cultural landscapes that did not depend on human beings to maintain and expand.

In the Amazon, *Homo sapiens* as a historical being was formed from the experience arising from the integration between humans and plants, only possible because it enjoyed a long historical process of interactive development, whose complete cycle had emergence, prevalence and collapse. The long duration, expansion and human evolution in the Amazon proved to be directly related to the aspects and diversity of the regional natural domains, as well as to the *Homo sapiens* ability to interact, adapt and often overcome the adversities imposed by the conditions of the tropical forest. But the chronology of this process there is no with the linear periodization of historical culturalism, which, once applied by Roosevelt (1992) in the Amazon, distributed the cultural evolution of societies according to hierarchically defined periods, such as Paleo-Indian, Archaic, Formative and Cacicado. This periodization, supposedly initiated in the Pleistocene, followed a hierarchy defined according to Western historical experiences, as if it were a universal truth.

However, in a different and asymmetrical way, the emergence and collapse of Tropical Culture was the result of human relations with the environmental reality of the Amazon, thus becoming a unique regional historical

experience. The beginning of another endogenously engendered historical process (that of the Antropical Culture, also historically unique), beginning with the collapse of the previous one, will develop a much greater level of social complexity, implying the generalized emergence of the systematic cultivation of domesticated plants, and in the greater sedentary lifestyle and densification of their populations. This new historical process expands and intensifies the use and manipulation of plants, resulting in large managed forests, and was developed by populations with a high level of sedentary lifestyle, environmental knowledge and political organization. Although new, this historical process was the resilience of relationships structured over thousands of years, which, when inherited, underwent transformations, changes and adaptations in their forms of sociability.

The interaction between people and forests for indigenous societies was so significant that it is still present today in many of their descendants. According to an ethnohistorical example presented by Santos-Granero (1998), the Yanéscha 'wrote' history in the landscape, attributing to individual elements found in it meanings expressed through their myths and rituals. This 'pedagogical' practice not only guided the dissemination of social customs, but also preserved the environments where they lived and with which they interacted.

Population density and sedentarism resulted in the construction of urban works associated with earth structures such as mounds, ditches, wells and other different types of earthworks, as well as roads that connected distant territories (Stenberg, 2016). The densification implied in interethnic relations and diverse social exchanges, in addition to having generated the disposal of large amounts of organic matter on the soil. The result of this disposal were chemically modified and fertile soils, known as TPA – *terra preta arqueológica* (archaeological black earth), when perceived, began to be used for cultivation, and are

<sup>5</sup> Portion of isolated bush that appears in the field.

still important today (Schmidt, 2016; Schmidt et al., 2022; Lombardo et al., 2022).

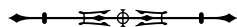
A sedentary lifestyle also favored the sophistication and social expansion of the pottery industry. However, like the management and cultivation, this technology was, most likely, developed by populations of Tropical Culture, making the Amazon, among the regions of the American continents, a pioneer in its production. This argument is supported by the ancient dating's related to ceramics, which reach more than 6,000 years BP in different parts of the Amazon and therefore are not initially associated with a sedentary lifestyle (Roosevelt et al., 2009; Neves & Heckenberger, 2019); in fact, just as the domestication of plants is not with agriculture either (Fausto & Neves, 2018). On the other hand, the diffusion of the pottery industry in the Amazon is situated in a period of entropy, corresponding to the transition between the Tropical Culture and the Antropical Culture, which took place in some millennium of the Middle Holocene, when the cultivation of domesticated plants began to be associated with a sedentary lifestyle (Magalhães, 2016; Magalhães et al., 2018, 2019).

By focusing on pottery and/or '*terra preta*' (TPA) sites, abundant on the banks of the accessible floodplains of large rivers, archaeologists have studied the Antropical Culture regularly, since the first half of the 20th century. As a result, this is a well-known historical time span in Amazonian archaeological studies. There is a very different situation regarding studies of Tropical Culture sites. However, the knowledge produced about the sites of the Antropical Culture because it is dominated by a narrative that disregards the contextual dynamics of the history of the first peoples, ties the diachronic trajectory of their societies to the broader process of Western history. This is because indigenous history continues to be interpreted according to Western historiographical categories and according to what it considers central, important and true as a universal form. Consequently, indigenous history is embedded within a universalist timeline, where it occupies a narrow swath between colonial and pre-colonial.

As Little (2018) pointed out, this perspective began to be imposed when the European conqueror generally denied the validity and usefulness of indigenous knowledge systems, while imposing European systems as superior and unquestionable.

So, unlike what happens with the time band related to Tropical Culture, whose deviation from the historical course is the result of the small volume of existing research, the deviation from the historical course of the time band corresponding to the Antropical Culture is due to reasons of ideological order. This fact is established because, consciously or unconsciously, we still try to understand the social and cultural phenomena of ancient indigenous populations, according to their contextual meanings, but aligned with an evolutionary process that, politically speaking, always flows into Western historical and scientific establishments.

But, as Bueno (2019) noted, the history of ancient Amerindian peoples must be understood as a narrative about their own origins, myths and cosmogonies. Therefore, its historical processes have initial and final temporal limits. Also, the Amazonian historical context presents a set of human evidence, which characterizes its ecosystems as a great anthropogenic 'capital'. This is because this region has revealed an environmental spectrum that is confused with the beginning of the Holocene, where the evolutionary history of its natural systems begins to intertwine with the development of human beings as a social and cultural being. However, the historical decontextualization of Amazonian human with the environment was contemporary with the implementation of the Portuguese colonial project (Magalhães, 2019). Furthermore, as the rise and success of this project have exogenous roots, without any contextual link with local historical processes, this event resulted in the end of the autochthonous history of Amazonian cultures. It is from the implantation of colonization that an Era historically common to descendants of Indians, Europeans, Africans, etc. was inaugurated. Ground zero of this common Era, in short, was during the establishment of Brazil, a geopolitical event sponsored



by the Portuguese royalty and supported by the sale of wood, spices and people, then managed by Portuguese traders known as Brazilians (Carneiro & Schaan, 2007).

The apparent multiethnic harmony that Brazilian society reflects today is the result of European survival practices, in part, depended on the use of indigenous foods, medicines and technologies. It was then that some important exchanges of knowledge and technology took place in both directions (Little, 2018). Associated with this, in the Amazon, indigenous resistance did not allow, as stated by Meira (2018), their ancestral way of life to completely succumb to the crushing colonialist actions, unfortunately accessed again by the fascist government (in Brazil remained in power between 2018/2022). With a pseudo-nationalist discourse, the ideological bases of this government were essentially neocolonialists and supremacists.

In the Amazon, from the conquest that took place between the second half of the 16th century, until the implantation of the colonial system (from the first decades of the 17th century onwards) a limbo oscillating between resistance and diaspora prevailed, whose motivations and consequences were narrated in diaries and books by several European travelers (Roosevelt, 1992; Magalhães, 2005; Heckenberger, 2005; Schmidt, 2016). It was during this limbo that a long-term historical process, with indigenous roots and evolution, began to be replaced by another extremely excluding one, whose eccentric conception was negation by force of arms, faith and disease, of everything that there was before (Koch et al., 2019). Then, the colonizer introduced into regional history, through the Gregorian calendar inaugurated on October 15, 1582, the universalist Christian Era, its landmark is a messianic mythology and its chronological beginning rooted in the supposed birth date of Jesus, the anointed. This event happened on the other side of the world, among peoples and cultures that are absolutely different from the Amerindians.

On the other hand, as a side effect of the scientific establishment, through its academic machines of exclusion and acceptance, in the archeology of the South American

lowlands, the influence of certain axioms and their corollaries, that is, their theories, methods and ideas have formed, as observed by Fleck (2010) for science in general, a coercion of thought and disposition, so that one and not another way of perceiving and acting predominates over scientific production. Thus, despite the interrupted history, represented by the discontinuous passage from Antropical Culture to the 'History of Brazil', 'fake narratives' are created and repeated that try to frame the indigenous eras in the ontology of the eras of the western white man. Consequently, the narratives that seek indigenous historical foundations are situated as pre-Columbian or pre-colonial; that is, as preconditioned by everything that is recognized as essentially Western, including its myths, legends and gods. These consequences can be said to be the insistence on slowing down to retain a singular time, whose originality is not aligned with the temporal epistemological contexts that archaeologists try to analyze. For the objects, or rather, the subjects framed as inert objects of observation are, in fact, the mobile producers of themselves and, therefore, the products, in time and in space, of their own becoming.

The ontology of Amerindian historical events, as Viveiros de Castro (2002, 2011), Fausto (2008) and Descola (2006) have been showing, generates cosmogonic knowledge that is completely different from the Greco/Roman/Jewish cosmogony. This cosmogony has nothing to do with Greek ethics and Paideia, nothing with Roman polis and law, even less with Jewish cosmological myths. In it, the 'self' and the 'other' are confused, permeable, interpenetrating, fluid and open (Wright, 1999). There is no dichotomy or distinction between the natural and the human, but reciprocity. And before any anthropocentricity, the beings of the world (people, animals or plants) are essentially anthropic (Fausto & Neves, 2018). Consequently, anthropogenic forests are not just built landscapes. They are also a craft universe inhabited by historical social and spiritual meanings, projecting them beyond their materiality. Anthropogenic forests, in short, are social artifacts composed of culturally selected plants, whose geographic





distribution is the result of human diffusion, where beings, human or not, are their anthropo-builders.

Finally, answering the question raised by the subtitle (Can landscape format the history?) yes, landscape can format the history. It defines the structural arrangement of the social and cultural aspects of the experienced history. But the perception of the formatting of indigenous historical duration by the landscape is only possible when we observe its structuring processes from a decolonial perspective (Porto-Gonçalves, 2005; Ballestrin, 2013; Coli, 2022). The singular events of the processes of Tropical Culture and Antropical Culture emerged in the proper place of their manifestations. Throughout their historical durations, they identified regionally and integrated spatio-temporally. In any case, there is no supposedly absolute beginning of everything, because there is not just a beginning, much less nothingness before that; but many beginnings and the parallel emergence of different histories, including those that came before us, and those that are yet to come.

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