LASA2000 MIAMI

Panel: Intregración, democracia y gobernabilidad en América Latina y el Caribe.

Chair: Dr. Jaime Preciado Coronado.
University of Guadalajara, Mexico.

Discussant: Dr. Alberto Rocha Valencia.
University of Guadalajara, Mexico


By Enrique Amayo-Zevallos, Ph.D.

Department of Economics
Area of Economic History
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Campus of Araraquara
University of the State of São Paulo - UNESP
14800-901
C.P. 174
Araraquara, SP
Brazil
Telfax: + 55 16 2320 444 branch 114
E-mail: eazamayo@fclar.unesp.br

WHY TO STUDY THE HISTORICAL FORMATION AND MAIN CURRENT PROBLEMS OF AMAZONIA? The Indigenous question, democracy, diversities, and biopiracy.

ABSTRACT. This paper refers to Amazonia as a South-American region, not taking into consideration the national borders. Such treatment is due to our methodological assumption that the complex history and problems of Amazonia as a totality surmount by far the mere adding of the histories and problems of the eight national Amazonian regions (belonging to Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Surinam and Venezuela). The growing economic and strategic importance of the Amazonia in the world arena is also pointed out. In this context, we focus on some main problems such as: the national differences when dealing with the native Amazonian peoples and cultures, the long term phenomenon of the “piracy” of resources of the rich Amazonian bio-diversity, and so on. It is assumed that the solutions for these problems involve the rising of a universalistic, democratic, preservationist and egalitarian consciousness.

PORQUE ESTUDIAR LA FORMACION HISTORICA Y LA PROBLEMÁTICA ACTUAL DE LA AMAZONIA? Cuestión indígena, democracia, diversidades y biopiratería.

RESUMEN. Este trabajo trata la Amazonía como una región sudamericana, o sea, la considera independientemente de sus fronteras nacionales. Eso es así porque su punto de partida metodológico asume que la historia y problemas de la totalidad amazónica trascienden y son más complejos que los que corresponden a la mera suma de las historias y problemas de las 8 regiones amazónicas nacionales (correspondientes a Bolivia, Brasil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Perú, Surinam y Venezuela). También hace referencia a la creciente importancia económica y estratégica de esa región en el escenario mundial. En ese cuadro destacan problemas como los siguientes: las diferencias nacionales al tratar sus pueblos y culturas indígenas amazónicos, la “piratería” de los recursos de su extraordinaria biodiversidad como fenómeno de larga duración, etc. En el trabajo se asume la posición que esos problemas podrán resolverse luchando por ampliar la conciencia democrática igualitaria, universalista y preservacionista.

PORQUE ESTUDAR A FORMAÇÃO HISTÓRICA E PROBLEMÁTICA ATUAL DA AMAZÔNIA? Questão indígena, democracia, diversidades e bio-pirataria.

RESUMO. O trabalho trata da Amazônia como uma região sul-americana, ou seja, não leva em conta as fronteiras nacionais. Isto porque seu ponto de partida metodológico é que a história e os problemas da totalidade amazônica trascendem e são mais complexos que a soma das histórias e problemas das 8 regiões amazônicas nacionais (correspondentes à Bolívia, Brasil, Colômbia, Equador, Guiana, Peru, Surinam e Venezuela). O trabalho também faz menção à crescente importância econômica e estratégica da região amazônica no cenário mundial. Nesse quadro destacam-se problemas como os seguintes: as diferenças nacionais no tratamento de seus povos e culturas amazônicas, a “pirataria” dos recursos da extraordinária bio-diversidade amazônica como fenômeno de longa duração etc. No trabalho se adota a posição de que esses problemas podem se resolver lutando pela ampliação de uma consciência democrática igualitária, universalizante e preservacionista.
WHY TO STUDY THE HISTORICAL FORMATION AND
MAIN CURRENT PROBLEMS OF AMAZONIA?

In several [Amazonian] languages we do not find the word “work”. Specifically they say “today I am going to till my farm”. Or “they are going to search for shebon [a tree] leaves to make a new roof for the house” or “they are weaving a hammock”. Duties are accomplished whenever necessary, at the right time. The concept of work, as an obligation, is not found. People living in harmony with their environment by no means should be considered as members of a “poor” culture or of societies “without ambition”. Such concepts belong to our way of life, not theirs.  

I. FOREWORD

Readers must be aware of some limits to this paper.

First: It was written by a historian, trained in Economics and Social Sciences, and interested in foreign relations and global impacts. He consider that to study Amazonia as a South American Region is of paramount importance. Because this region is not the mere aggregate of 8 national Amazonian portions (belonging to Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Surinam and Venezuela), as we shall see later on. He also considers that Amazonia has to be studied because, at the world level, its strategic relevance is increasing, to a great extent due to its location and resources. The economic and strategic meaning of Amazonia will increase even more after the building of direct connections with the Pacific Basin, an area which is currently essential for the realization of the World Gross Product. It is worth to remind that Amazonia does not have borders with the Pacific Basin but with the Atlantic. This is why this paper takes into account the following hypothesis: the current global dynamics of the capitalist economy will determine the establishment of direct links between the Amazonian Basin and the Pacific Basin.

It is known that Amazonia is of paramount importance for its bio-diversity and genetic resources; these could function as the basis for a new, big and diverse pharmaceutical industry, and other economic activities, sharing the ideals of preservation and improvement (rational management) of the many forms of vegetal and animal life. Besides, the following Amazonian resources are essential to the world: water; timber, pulp and cellulose, etc. A great deal of Amazonian products (fruits, barks, resins, oils, ointments, perfumes, etc.) are the foundation of several industries and business. This South American region also houses very large amounts of minerals, petroleum, gas, etc. Considerable quantities of these goods could be obtained from Amazonia if it is accepted, as a sine-qua-non

---

1 V. d’Achille: 173. Barbara d’Achille was a very well known journalist and researcher devoted to the environment preservation. While developing her activities, she was killed by the guerrilla movement Shinning Path. She was stoned to death for giving a lesson in the Andes of Huancavelica, Peru on May 29, 1989. She was born in Latvia and had taken the Peruvian nationality. This paper is dedicated to the indigenous peoples and to persons like Barbara whose work contributes to develop a critique to westernism.
condition, the goal of **integral development**. That means **preservation** (or non destructive economic use) and **benefits** (as an outcome of such **non destructive or sustained economic development**). Of course, the indigenous peoples and inhabitants of the region should be the first ones to benefit. Then, other social groups and/or regions in need of support as part of a re-distributive process. However, to reach such goals, we must have an **advancement of democracy** or the kind of democracy that accepts the **otherness**. That means accepting, in terms of **equality**, the ones who are culturally **different**, like the native Indians. I will go back to this subject.

The second limit is the data used to support the ideas in this paper; such information was obtained during the process of **collecting** materials for a large research project started in 1993 which refers **Amazonia as a totality**. Then, strictly speaking, the results are not definitive and they relate only to some important aspects of such totality.

### I.1. THE PROJECT STARTED IN 1993

In January 1994, the research project “A Amazônia Sul-Americana: formação histórica e problemática atual” was presented to the “Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo - FAPESP” (Research Support Foundation of the State of Sao Paulo). FAPESP accepted the project giving a six-months grant for post-doctoral research.

Since that project is essential for the understanding of this paper, I will summarize it.

The project wants to re-construct the historical framework (economic and social) in order to contribute to the comprehension of the essential problems of Amazonia today. In this sense it is very ambitious. But it is also a modest project since its stated purpose is not **to re-write the history of Amazonia using first hand references** collected in archives. Indeed, the project tries to build a historical synthesis having as its basis only **material already published**. Therefore, **almost all of its sources are secondary**, in fact, a selection of some basic analysis available in any good library. Some sources, though, are primary, formed by **interviews** with some well known researchers.

The project main assumption is that the way to understand the Amazonian problematic is to consider it as a **historically-structured totality**. In other words, Amazonia implies a South American region whose characteristics are a consequence of a specific historical process shared today by 8 independent countries and one colony, the French Guyana. The last one was not considered in this paper because it is not accepted by the 8 countries as part of the **Amazonian Cooperation Treaty – ACT –** due to its colonial status.

So, the project **central objective** is to recover the current Amazonic problematic as a whole. That also means to recover the regional common history. According to our methodology, the history of each Amazonian share belonging to

---


3 And **preparing** the project was the origin of another paper then published (see Amayo 1993).
the 8 countries can **only be understood through the analysis of the totality**. The common historical formation process will provide for a better understanding of the various national Amazonian histories and their singularities.

In chronological terms, the period covered by the project starts after the European “discovery” and Conquest. In this paper we do not attempt to reconstruct all the aspects of the common Amazonian history, but only the ones which have left permanent signs in the region. These signs are of two kinds: **direct and indirect**.

The direct ones refer to the phenomena which left their mark in the region **as a whole**. Among them we have the European entrance into Amazonia (as conquerors, explorers or travelers); the discovery, by the western history, of the “Amazon River”, its definition, origin and route; the consequences, for the native peoples, of their contacts with the westerners; the Rubber Cycle (“Ciclo da Borracha” in Brazil, “Ciclo del Cauco” in the Andean-Amazonian countries); the current period of frontiers expansion (farming and stockbreeding, mining, etc.) and its destructive impact on the forest and bio-diversity, at regional and global level; the Amazonian mega-diversity (biologic, etc.) and its meaning to the national, regional and international economy; the growing strategic importance of Amazonia and the interest of the big powers (mainly USA and Japan) in the area.

The **indirect signs** refer to the phenomena which left marks on **some parts** of Amazonia only, or in some parts **more in than others**. In this case we can mention: the Quinine Cycle (limited to the Andean-Amazonian countries); the “garimpo” (or searching for gold following the course of rivers, a phenomenon almost entirely Brazilian); today drug traffic (the coca plantations in the Andean Amazonian countries are a permanent worry for them). As the coca leaves are the raw material for **cocaine**, a far-reaching and growing international business complex with corrupting effects on the global society and economy, this is a big problem also for the USA and the main world powers (in general, the largest consuming markets).

From the above, it is possible to deduce that, in this project, one theme will continue to be explored: the relations between the USA and Latin America; for many years this has been a main interest for its author. **These relations have a prominent status in the research project since they are an essential component of the relationship Latin America has established with the other world powers (in this case through Amazonia).**

**Finally, the integration process is taken into account, as a very important element for South American future.** The integration could allow for more autonomy to South America, in the XXI Century world arena.

---

4 This is partially explored in the 1993 and 1995 papers (see bibliography: Amayo).
5 On that subject, besides the already mentioned papers, see Amayo: 1992, 1989 and 1982.
I.2. OBJECTIVES

To study the Amazonian history as a totality. By doing so, it will be possible to have a better understanding of the 8 national Amazonian histories and the region main problems (drug traffic, forest burning, chances of internationalization) and so on.

To continue the analysis of the relations between the USA and Latin America in general, and South America in particular. Special emphasis will be put on the relations of Amazonia with the world powers, especially the USA.

To contribute to the South American integration process. Brazil is a key country in this process, not only for its size, but because strategically it functions as a bridge between the two current South American integration movements: **Mercosur** (Market of the South) and **GRAN** (“Grupo Andino” or Andean Group, formed in 1969 by Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela). It is through Amazonia that Brazil limits with all the GRAN countries. In 1977, these countries, plus Guyana and Suriname, signed the **ACT**. In 1991, through the “Tratado de Asunción” (Asuncion Treaty), **Mercosur** was created, integrating Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. In other words, Brazil is the only South American country bordering all the other countries in the region which are politically engaged in the development of these two very important integration processes.

I.3. HIPOTHESIS.

They are the following:

1. Amazonia is a historically structured totality, shared by 8 South American countries. Such historical totality is not the mere result of adding the Amazonian national histories belonging to each of the 8 countries. The central hypothesis is: **Amazonia has in common a history and problems that TRASCEND the national borders.**

2. Amazonia is a region with increasing strategic importance at the planet level.

3. Amazonia has many possibilities for establishing efficient and direct links with the Pacific Basin, a key area in today world economy that probably will grow even more in the XXI Century.

4. The union of Amazonia with the Pacific coast, through the building of a big way, means also the union of the main South American land masses in the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. One possible meaning of this union for the future of South America could be similar to what happened in the USA history, around 1860, when their Atlantic and Pacific areas were connected by train. As it is known, this was an essential factor in the transformation of the USA from a continental power into a world power.

5. The “organic” intellectuals acting in the USA foreign policy (“The Policy Makers”) are aware of the possible consequences of that union. In order to keep the USA hegemony over South America in particular, and Latin America in
In general, they will do everything to prevent the transformation of that possibility into reality.

6. The USA will support the building of such a big way in South America only if they have the means to control it.

7. It is essential that the countries directly connected by this big way have the control on the resources needed to build it. Its construction could contribute to a less dependent South America in the future, within the frame of the XXI Century world economy.

8. For being true the South American control on the big way, it will be necessary to develop its integration process even more.

9. The USA policy for Amazonia determines to a large extent the kind of relations that this region establishes with other world powers.

I.4. METHODOLOGY

By its nature and in terms of methodology, this research project is multidisciplinary. Its accomplishment demands the use of concepts from economic and social history, international studies, history of the science and technology (for instance, agrarian), geography and ecology.

This project is in the area of comparative studies. Such approach is known to have produced great results by highlighting the similarities and differences among various national realities; in this sense history affairs appears as relatives.

Finally, one of the main methodological resources will be to submit the sources to a systematic content analysis.

I.5. THE LIMITS OF THE RESEARCH FIELD

In chronological terms, the project covers the period from the European conquest to present and also analyzes some possible future trends. Such a long period for an individual project could make it seem as not feasible. Aware of such risk, the author has established clear limits for the sources which will be used, to prove the project feasibility.

The primary sources are interviews, and the secondary are constituted by texts already published. For even more strict limits, the following criteria was established:

Texts: will be selected exclusively among the ones deemed as essential by general consensus. For this part of the research, the texts shall be the ones written by acknowledged authors from each of the 8 Amazonian countries. This information will be used to reconstruct the historical formation of the Amazonian region in general, and the particularities of each one of the eight national Amazonian shares. At this level, the research will be supported by the analysis of a set of classical texts about the region, whose authors may be from any country.
Hence it becomes clear that our intention is **not to rewrite the Amazonian history** departing from primary sources collected in archives. The goal is more moderate: **to write a historical synthesis based on works already published.**

**Interviews:** will be done with around 50 scholars researching Amazonia, including those living and working in the 8 countries. These **primary sources** will be used to compose a contemporary view of the local and regional problems, pointing out some potential future trends.

Up to this point, we have summarized the research project previously submitted to FAPESP. From now on we will present the discussion of some items that became noticeable as the project developed.

II. INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION OF SOME ITEMS

The acceptance and funding of the project by FAPESP allowed to select the sources needed for the research. During 6 months it was possible to collect the information in the Center for Latin American Studies – CLAS - of the University of Pittsburgh, and in Washington, D.C.

The bibliographical material was collected in the Hillman Library of the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt), after extensive search in the 1196 titles of Hillman’s Amazonian collection available in May 1994. From those, 221 titles were selected and copied around 20,000 pages.

In Washington D.C., some interviews were made. This city is known for having institutions of world importance, including some interested in researching Amazonia; for example: the World Wildlife Fund headquarters - WWF; Conservation International - CI; World Resources Institute - WRI; the National Museum of Natural History, etc. Also the headquarters of : the World Bank - WB; the Interamerican Development Bank - IDB (both have Amazonian programs), etc. Twenty internationally known researchers, some of them working in those institutions, were interviewed and their statements were recorded.

At the end of the 6-month period, a report was presented to FAPESP. The collected bibliography and the list of the interviewees were systematically organized in the report.

We will see now some of the results.

---

6 Report qualified as “very good” in a the letter sent by FAPESP’s Scientific Director to the author on 04.26.95.

7 The six-month period was the origin of both: the report and this paper. And also of the 1995 paper (a modified version of the first published in 1993). Almost the same can be said of the 1996, 1999a and 1999b papers (the last is the first version of this paper) and of “**La Amazonía en LA JANGADA de Julio Verne...**” (to be published). Similarly, the information obtained from the collected sources opened the doors for entering into several congresses in Brazil and abroad as lecturer. For example: the LASA’s congresses of 1995 in Washington and 1997 in Guadalajara; the international seminar “As relações inter-americanas. Continuidades e mudanças frente ao novo milênio” organized by UNESP, Campus of Araraquara, in November 1999. And also for being invited as Visiting Scholar for developing cycles of lectures devoted to Amazonia (in the: Central University of Venezuela, Caracas, April 1997; University of Santiago, Chile, January 1999 and University of Guadalajara, Mexico, March 1999). And the 1993 and 1995 papers were part of the
II.1. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE COLLECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Hillman Library is rich in resources, as the search of bibliographical sources has shown. Using the key word “Amazon”, it was possible to find 1196 titles; many of them were entire collections. For instance, under the title Revista Amazonía Peruana, 40 volumes were found, each one containing two yearly issues; in other words, under just one title, there were 80 issues.

The 1196 titles were counted in May; by September they were already 1243. In 5 months, Hillman Library had increased its Amazonian collection in 47 new titles, around 10 per month.

II.2. BIBLIOGRAPHIC PRODUCTION BY THE 8 AMAZONIAN COUNTRIES.

The bibliography produced in the 8 Amazonian countries is very important to this project. Under the key words “Bolivia and Amazon?”, 28 titles were found. Under “(Brazil or Brasil) and Amazon?”, 387 titles. “Colombia and Amazon?”, 69. “Ecuador and Amazon?”, 103. “Guyana and Amazon?”, 1 title. “Peru and Amazon?”, 245. “Surinam and Amazon?”, 1 title. “Venezuela and Amazon?”, 50. In total there were 864 titles. Based on this information, it was possible to organize the following table (see Statistical Table Amazonia).

Certainly, Hillman Library does not have everything that was published on the Amazonian region, either in the countries directly involved or elsewhere. However, this library is known to possess one of the best Latin American collections in the USA, a collection that grows systematically and permanently. We could say that if Hillman’s Amazonian collection is not the world’s best, it is undoubtedly a very important one. That is why the information included in the table has a relevant meaning.

Comparing columns 03 and 05 in the Table, Brazil has 42.50% of the titles, but that average does not correspond to the size of its Amazonian share (64.45% from the total surface). That is, the percentage of the Brazilian titles does not coincide with the proportion of its territorial share. The Bolivian case is very similar since this country owns 10.91% of the Amazonian region but has just 3.5% of the titles. For the other 6 countries, the situation is as follows. Colombia, with 6.01% of Amazonia, has 8.00% of the titles. Ecuador, with 2.05% of Amazonia, 12.00% of the titles. Peru respectively 14.60% and 28.50%. Venezuela, 0.86% and 6.00%. Guyana, 0.70% of Amazonia and one title. Surinam respectively 0.53% and one title.

---

selected works presented by the author in 1997 for obtaining the Brazilian post-doctoral degree “Livre-Docente” in the Department of Economics - UNESP, Campus of Araraquara. Finally, the item selected for examination by the “Livre-Docencia” Examiners Committee, whose Chairman was Professor Aziz Ab’Saber, was on Amazonia.
# AMAZONIA

## Titles in Hillman Library, Size and Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>01</th>
<th>02</th>
<th>03</th>
<th>04</th>
<th>05</th>
<th>06</th>
<th>07</th>
<th>08</th>
<th>09</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>03,50</td>
<td>1099</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>10.91</td>
<td>65.87</td>
<td>16.94</td>
<td>172.00</td>
<td>18,37</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>42,50</td>
<td>8500</td>
<td>4275</td>
<td>64.45</td>
<td>50.30</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>213.00</td>
<td>22,75</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>1140</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>9.33</td>
<td>70.00</td>
<td>7,48</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>12,00</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>46.83</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>95.00</td>
<td>10,15</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>28,50</td>
<td>1290</td>
<td>968</td>
<td>14.60</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>22.65</td>
<td>300.00</td>
<td>32,00</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>20.93</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>4,28</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>21.34</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>7,50</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>912</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>39.00</td>
<td>4,16</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>864</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>13604</td>
<td>6635</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>936.50</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### a. Hillman titles by Amazonian countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>01</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>02</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>03</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>03,50</td>
<td>1099</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>10.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>42,50</td>
<td>8500</td>
<td>4275</td>
<td>64.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>1140</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>6.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>12,00</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>28,50</td>
<td>1290</td>
<td>968</td>
<td>14.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>912</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### b. Total National Territorial Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>04</th>
<th>Thousands of Kms²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>1099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>8500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>1140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>1290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinam</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>912</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### c. Amazonia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>05</th>
<th>Thousands of Km²</th>
<th>06</th>
<th>National Amazonia/Total Amazonian Size</th>
<th>07</th>
<th>05/04</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>1099</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>8500</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>1140</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>1290</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinam</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>912</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Note:

It is very difficult to make precise comparisons among the 8 countries since data are difficult to find and the criteria vary a lot, when we are dealing with Amazonia. In column 05 for Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador & Venezuela the concept is *Amazonia Hidrográfica (Hydrographic Amazonia)* \(^9\); for Brazil *Amazonia Legal (Legal Amazonia)* \(^10\); for Peru *Cuenca Amazónica (Amazonian Bassin)* \(^11\) and for Guyana and Surinam there are only deductions \(^12\) done by the author.

---

\(^8\) See TCA: Amazonía sin Mitos: 28
\(^9\) See TCA: Diagnóstico de los Recursos Hidrobiológicos de la Amazonía: 3
\(^10\) See CIMA - *Subsídios técnicos para elaboração do Relatório Nacional do Brasil para a CNUMAD*: 106, table IV.I. “Amazônia Legal” is a Brazilian political definition which includes an extension larger than the Geographical Amazonia.
\(^11\) See Dourojeanni: 25.
\(^12\) Deductions done using his logic due the author’s great pain for trying to get accurate geographical information related to these two countries.
Considering the group of countries with more book titles in relation to the size of their Amazonian shares, Venezuela stands out because when both aspects are related, the proportion rate is almost 7. Ecuador is second, with a rate of almost 6; and then comes Peru with a rate of almost two. It is important to keep in mind that this is not the appropriate occasion to analyze the meaning of the percentages in terms of quality. Such analysis will be done by the author some time in the future to verify hypothesis as follows. A considerable amount of the Ecuadorian publications are merely ideological or declamatory, and do not pay attention to standard academic considerations.

However, in quantitative terms, the percentages call the attention. Although Brazil owns the largest Amazonian share, it is not the more important for publications. In number of titles, the Brazilian production is first in absolute terms, but not in relative terms. And that could be a trend indicator.

One could also notice that Brazil owns 4’275,000 Km² of the whole Amazonia (total of 6’635,000 Km²). Comparing the size of the Brazilian Amazonian share with the total of its territory (8’500,000 Kms.2), this share equals to 50.30% of the national surface. In the other five Amazonian countries, (Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Surinam and Venezuela; see column 07) the weight of their national Amazonian shares is much lesser than in the Brazilian case; in the other two (Bolivia and Peru) is greater. Now, from all of them, Peru calls the attention because its Amazonia is the equivalent to 75% of its national surface.

One could say that Brazil has the largest part of Amazonia, a very substantial portion of its national territory. However, for other two countries their Amazonias are even more substantial, in comparison to their total extensions. That could be considered as an indicator of the importance, greater or lesser, of this region for conforming their national histories.

II.3. FROM GEOGRAPHY TO DEMOGRAPHY REACHING DEMOCRACY.

From geography to demography, some observations can be done. The total native population, the more essential factor for understanding Amazonian history, is currently estimated in 936,500 (see column 09). From those, 213,000 live in Brazil. This country, in terms of absolute indigenous population living in the Amazonia, is the second; the first is Peru.

In relative terms (see column 11: native population/national Amazonian size), Brazil is by far the last, with 0.05 natives by Km² in its Amazonia. First comes Guyana with 0.89 natives by Km²; the second is Ecuador with 0.71; third is Venezuela with 0.70; and fourth is Peru with 0.31, etc. At this level, the following hypothesis is raised: these relative numbers are indicators of how the native population is treated by the national governments.

In Brazil, during slavery (ended in 1889), the natives submission was almost a regular business activity. Up to the point that an important Brazilian historian has considered that, during colonial Brazil, at one time the natives started running away, fearing to be enslaved, hiding each time deeper in the
countryside, trying to avoid any contact with the Portuguese. But these started to get organized in enterprises for hunting the natives, a process which impelled the Portuguese to travel always further away into the country. This process played a key role in the expansion of the Brazilian frontiers. The enterprises were named *bandeiras* and their members were the *bandeirantes*, “individuals belonging to one *bandeira* or association intended for enslaving natives or discovering mines.”

Such destructive contact with the indigenous peoples did not finished with the end of the slave system. For instance, in the newspaper report: “Indios pedem apoio contra invasão de seu território. Durante Conferência Continental das Américas, os enau-ene-nauê falaram dos problemas com os brancos”  

One can read the following. In the conference, native indians from the enau-ene-nauê tribe did an emotional presentation, playing flutes, and demanded to stop the entrance into their territory by farmers, timber exploiters and gold searchers, because: “if they come, illness will also arrive and then we will not be able to take the food from the land for feeding our people and those who are living under the ground, and for whom we play our flutes.” The note goes on saying that this native community does not speak Portuguese and has around 300 members who live in the Northeast of Mato Grosso state. From March 1998, the pressure from farmers, cattle raisers and timber exploiters increased on the borders of this tribe reservation. In April, the building of an illegal highway planned for cutting the reservation in two halves was interrupted; however the portion already built opened a way for entering the westerners “and that caused spurs of sickness as pneumonia that killed three [natives]”. The report also informs that the tribe’s contact with the Western culture has started in 1973 as a result of the work of Jesuit missionary Vicente Cañas who settled in the reservation as a way to prevent the natives from being exterminated due to the kind of economic exploitation in the region. But “in 1987 the priest was killed. Ten farmers were accused...”

The treatment given to the indigenous peoples in the Brazilian Amazonia is destructive in physical and cultural terms. And the author’s view is that the treatment received by them in the other Amazonian countries is not much better; it is only less bad. That is the only way for understanding the relative numbers already mentioned. The difference may be the result of a history marked by indigenous slavery. In the Amazonian countries conquered by the Spanish, slavery was not legal. The Spanish, during colonial times, and after independence, their descendents or “the criollos”, used other means to extract native labor, like for instance the kind of servitude named “mita”. However, in practice, slavery did exist among the Spanish, although illegal. That is evidenced by the survival of such barbarian activity up to the beginning of XXth Century. An example of enslavement of native Amazon people it was practiced by Peruvian extractors of rubber on the Putumayo region (see afterwards: Rubber

---

13 See Caio Prado Jr.
Cycle). But such an activity through history was illegal, as in the other Andean-
Amazonian countries.

Anyway, for the indigenous peoples (not only in Amazonia), the worst in
their histories was to get in contact with the Western Christian “civilization”.
The following quotation is crystal clear:

... at the moment of the conquest of America, Amazonia was populated by no less than 2
thousand indigenous tribes, and it has been estimated that its total population was over 7
million inhabitants. Today, in spite of confronting bad conditions for survival and
development, there are still around 400 ethnical groups in the area. In 1990, the indigenous
Amazonian inhabitants were estimated as 935,939. 16

The bottom line is that, from the moment the Westerners entered into
Amazonia (and the Americas), they never accepted the indigenous otherness. The
last ones were accepted in terms of inferiority, never of equality (an essential
condition for justifying limitless exploitation). Much later on part of the
remaining natives were recognized as equals in terms of the legal system, but with
one condition: their cultural adaptation. That implies to renounce to their own
culture for adopting the Western culture, besides accepting a status in the lower
levels of the social structure.

The expansion of the kind of democracy that accepts simultaneously the
equality and the difference (in terms of: ethnicity, culture, language, religion,
sexual options, etc.) could give a definitive and positive answer to the tragedy of
the Amazonian peoples and cultures. Such a democracy, that may be called
equalitarian, would be a way to build a society of equals in the difference.

To accept the indigenous otherness in terms of equality means to make
the option for a preservationist culture. Because, as history shows, the American
native societies are part of the few groups that have managed to organize their
social life while simultaneously adopting nature preservation, as an essential
aspect of their economic formation. This structural principle guides the
economic organization of all known historic formations of Indigenous America.
Only societies of this kind would be able to formulate principles as the following:

The Amazonia shall never be commanded by mankind. It is commanded by four
brothers: the forest, the river, the rain and the land. If one of them dies, all the rest will also
be dead and Amazonia shall die too. If the forest is destroyed, the rain will stop and the river
will dry. If the forest is naked, the rain will stop and the river shall dry. And if the river stops
flowing, the forest will die, the rain will stop and the land will become rock. 17

II.4. RELATIVIZING THE AMAZONIAN SIZE

It is interesting to consider some geographical data. The Brazilian
Amazonia may be considered as huge (v. column 05), but the shares belonging to
the other 7 countries cannot be deemed as small. A comparison shows (see
column 07) that the Peruvian portion is almost one fourth of the Brazilian. The
Bolivian is almost one tenth, etc. The last

17 Núñez Jiménez, A. “Contactos con los indios Ticuna de Colombia”. El Sol, México D.F.
29.10.93; quoted by Melgar (see bibliography).
country by size, Surinam, has an Amazonian extension that is almost one percent (exactly 0.82) of the Brazilian. However, such 0.82, corresponding to 35,000 Kms. 2, is more than the Belgian territory. The Peruvian Amazonia (968,000 Kms. 2) is larger than the territories of Portugal, Spain, Great Britain, Ireland and Denmark altogether. More interesting comparisons can be done.

So, if the Brazilian Amazonia can be considered as **gigantic**, other shares can be considered as **large** in most parts of the world (like the Peruvian, Bolivian and Colombian Amazonia), and still two others of **medium size** (Ecuador and Venezuela). Two shares can be considered as **small** (Guyana and Surinam). Nevertheless, all these extensions are important, even more so if other elements are taken into account. Example: the number of native inhabitants. Even in the small Guyana Amazonia (45,000 Kms. 2) there are 40,000 indigenous inhabitants.

Finally, it is important to point out that **one percent of the Amazonian region corresponds to 66,350 Kms. 2**, about the size of Holland and Belgium altogether.

**II.5. THE RELEVANCE OF OTHER SOURCES**

From the information obtained while selecting the bibliographical sources and interviewing the researchers, it was possible to establish the following. It is a fact that Brazilian Amazonia occupies the region’s largest portion. But some essential elements for explaining the conformation of Amazonia as a whole belongs to the other countries. It is important to say this because, for instance, in the public opinion of the largest South American country, there is a generalized idea that **Amazonia is Brazil’s synonymous**. Most people there, educated or not, perceive Amazonia as exclusively Brazilian.

There one often reads information as follows: the very important daily **O Estado de S. Paulo** devoted to Amazonia one of its special issues published on Sundays. On the top part of its central page, these words can be read: “Amazonia is a mankind patrimony under the control of Brazil.” And in this special issue (very similar to entire programs on Amazonia done by Globo TV, Manchete TV or Cultura TV), the fact that this region also belongs to other countries is never mentioned. That is, in Brazil, the opinion leaders hardly mention the fact that the existence of the Amazonian complex is determined by geological, tectonic, and hydrological phenomena located out of the Brazilian borders. A similar thing happens in relation to some essential events which are part of the historical formation of the region.

**II.6. AMAZON AND AMAZONIA: THE QUESTION OF THE NAME**

The original Spanish name for the river was “**Gran Río de las Amazonas**.” The author, in his 1993 paper, informed that the river was named Amazonas by accident during the enterprise of the Spanish conqueror **Francisco de Orellana**. This was the main result of such enterprise, ordered in 1541 by the **first European Governor of Peru, Francisco Pizarro**. It started in Cusco City,
under the command of Gonzalo Pizarro (Francisco’s brother), and counted on the compulsory support of thousands of Andean Indians. Then, inside Colonial Peru, they reached Quito City where re-organized themselves and got food supplies. Then they resumed what would be the essential part of this enterprise in terms of “discovering” the river by Westerners. Orellana, disobeying Gonzalo’s orders, was the first European to navigate the river from its origin, finally reaching the Atlantic. Then the river was called the Amazon River.  

The incursion during which the river and the basin became known was the result of a conquest enterprise ordered by the Peruvian Government, and started in its territory.

This enterprise, whose members systematically massacred the natives that were met, was marked by the conquerors’ extreme greed. They wanted to find the mythical and prodigal Lands of Cinnamon and Lands of Gold. They ended up reaching the “Apu-Mayu” (Father of the Rivers), as the Incas called it from immemorial times in their Quechua language. But the river, and its basin, entered into Western history and became known under the name of Amazon River after the Spanish priest Gaspar de Carvajal, the enterprise chronicler, recorded the events mentioned above.

The Carvajal chronic reveals many things. For instance, the location where the conquerors started navigating the river for the first time now belongs to Peru. An the name Amazon River was chosen because of the long-haired natives, who courageously resisted the Spanish conquerors, and were mistakenly taken as the mythical Greek Amazon warriors. This combat took place on a location that now belongs to Brazil. The chronic also shows that Orellana, as well as Gonzalo and the other European conquerors in general, had a genocide attitude toward the natives, who were considered as inferior, probably as no-humans. This is evidenced by the permanent and merciless attacks by the starving Spanish against the natives always searching for food. Another evidence refers to the trained dogs which were taken by the Spanish in order to help in the hunting and killing of natives. In several occasions the starving dogs were instigated against the natives to destroy and eat them.

Judging from facts like these, one could become astonished by some views expressed by historians as Albornoz. This traditionalist Ecuatorian historian, wrote an apologetic biography of Orellana, based mainly on Carvajal records. Albornoz tries to proof that Orellana was a real “Caballero” (Gentleman). That would only be possible if, as Albornoz did, the fate of the native peoples is not taken into account. Only ideological reasons would prevent the readers of Carvajal’s chronic from seeing that the incursion which opened Amazonia for Western exploitation had an exterminating effect on the native population. There, as in any other part of the Americas, the conquest produced the same impact: the wipe out of entire societies.

---

20 See INP: 54.
21 See Albornoz.
Now, moving on to cartography. It is generally known, at the international level, that the Amazon River starts in Peru from the union of two rivers: Marañón and Ucayali, at Nauta Port. A very well known Nordic Atlas acknowledges the fact that the Amazon River has its name changed to Solimões only at the point when it enters Brazil. The *Enciclopædia Britannica* does the same. However, Brazilian cartography usually does not accept the existence of the Amazon River out of its territory, as one can see in the following official maps. In the “Mapa de Vegetação do Brazil”, the same river, while flowing outside the Brazilian territory, is named Marañón. Almost the same thing happens in the map from *Projeto Radambrasil*. This situation is even more evident when we notice that in *Britannica Atlas* the river is named Amazon from its origin in Peru. Nevertheless in *Geopedia*, the Brazilian translation of *Britannica Atlas*, that Peruvian section of the river is called: “Amazonas (Marañon)”. In a very popular Brazilian notebook (agenda) edited in 1991 by “Industria Gráfica Faroni”, there is an attached map where you can see a river starting in Peru, by the union of Marañón and Ucayali, which does not have a name. But to the same river, already in Brazilian territory, is given the name Solimões; after passing Manaus, it is finally named Amazon River.

Why such discrepancies between the Brazilian and the international cartography? Why such contradiction between geography and history? It is well known that names are not given by chance; they have a meaning and a purpose. If neither geography nor history justify the Brazilian rejection for using the name Amazon River outside its territory, then, the answer may not be in these disciplines but in geopolitics. Unfortunately, this issue, which deserves a special treatment, cannot be discussed in this paper.

According to the international cartography, the Amazon River flows in Peru for about 700 Km; its last 150 Km are shared with Colombia before entering Brazil.

Finally, from the end of the XIXth Century, several expeditions have proved that the origin of the Amazon River is in the mountain Mismi. It is worthwhile to remind that geopolitics and strategy, throughout world history, consider the control of the origin as an essential factor. Let us to remind also that most of the Amazon huge tributaries start in the Andean-Amazonian countries.

22 The Marañón River is around 1,800 Km long; and it originates in Huanuco (in Central Peru) in the snow-covered Yarupá Mountain, at 5,800 mts. o.s.l. The Ucayali is almost 3,000 Km long and has a different name on its origin at Mismi Mountain at 5,597 mts. o.s.l in Arequipa, Southern Peru (see INP: 122). According to international rules, since its original source is the one localized at the greatest distance, Ucayali is the origin; after flowing a long way and receiving several tributaries, it is finally named as Amazon River.


25 See Secretaria de Planejamento.

26 See Ministerio das Minas e Energia.

II.7. THE RUBBER CYCLE.

The rubber period is an important chapter of Amazonian history. This is so for all the national histories of the Amazonian countries. This explains the use of the same meaning for referring to this period: “Ciclo da Borracha” in the Portuguese of Brazil and “Ciclo del Caucho” in the Spanish of the Andean-Amazonian countries.

This period left negative marks on the region as a whole. But in some Amazonian countries, that cycle has put deeper marks on their national histories than in Brazil. For instance, in Bolivia, the loss of its Acre Territory (today a Brazilian State) cannot be understood without the rubber. This land was Bolivia’s richest part until 1903. It gradually stopped being Bolivian from the moment that rubber became a raw material very important for the world market. Up to the First World War, Amazonia was the world’s main rubber producer and Acre was one of its richest parts, in terms of this valuable raw material.

Without the rubber it would be also very difficult to explain the military conflict between Colombia and Peru in the years 1932-33. The conflict ended with the cession by Peru of its Leticia Territory to Colombia.

One of the worst chapters of the rubber cycle history occurred in the Putumayo Valley, involving the systematic destruction of natives. That chapter was developed in the Colombian-Peruvian borders, and it entered into history under the name of Putumayo massacres. The Peruvian Arana played the main role in these sordid events. He built one of the largest fortunes in the region by enslaving tens of thousands of natives to work in his rubber business. Arana, also known as The Rubber Baron, through the control of huge territories, became so powerful to the point of trying to establish an independent country in the middle of Amazonia. Such dark period of Colombian and Peruvian histories gave origin to one classic of the Latin American literature of this century, “La Voragine”, novel of the Colombian Eustacio Rivera.

Brazil was the main rubber producer. However, there is the possibility that a sizable percentage of rubber, exported as Brazilian, indeed had its origin in the other Amazonian countries. Through the rivers of the Amazonian system, Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru have always had access to the Atlantic Brazilian ports (main places for exporting rubber to the main consumer markets, Europe and USA - East Coast). From the rubber production areas of Colombia and Venezuela, it was often easier to reach Brazilian ports, rather than their own in the Atlantic. Looking at a South American map, this becomes evident.

---

28 See Aramayo.
29 See Araujo.
30 See Hardenburg.
31 See Collier.
32 See Bonilla.
II.8. THE QUININE CYCLE

In the history of capitalism, this cycle is almost as important as the rubber cycle. Quinine is a raw material found in the Quino Tree Bark, a native of the Andean-Amazonian countries.

The quinine center was Peru. The Quino Tree it is one of the national symbols of that country up to the point it is stamped in its National Coat of Arms. The quinine, worldly famous by its English name Chinchona Bark, was essential for transforming into reality the chapter of world capitalism known as the opening of the interior of the tropical continents. Up to the first decades of this century, quinine was the only cure for malaria and other tropical diseases. After 1850 and thanks to quinine it was possible to keep alive great numbers of the heroic workers, mainly in Asia, Africa and Latin America, who built the railroad systems for reaching the countryside of those continents. Similar to what would happen to the rubber tree three decades later, England organized a scientific expedition in order to rob, from Peru and other Andean-Amazonian countries, the Quino Tree. The expedition ended up adapting the tree, for reproduction at an industrial scale, to the conditions of British India.

In the 1850’s, Sir Clement Markham, who became President of the Royal Geographical Society, directed a scientific team for systematically collecting seeds of all kinds of Quino Tree in the Andean-Amazonian region. Their operations were centered in Peru and the seeds were stored in especially conditioned ships anchored in Islay Port. Finally, the seeds were taken across the ocean, reaching the Royal Botanical Garden of Kew Gardens, in London. From there the small trees, duly treated and adapted, were moved to previously arranged plantations in India. And success was the result. Peru, from around 1830, had been the world’s first quinine producer. But in the 1860’s, when India as a British colony started entering quinine’s world market, Peru lost its positions (together with the other Andean-Amazonian countries) in the international statistics for exports. By the 1880’s, Peru and the Andean-Amazonian region no longer appear in such statistics related to quinine. That is the explanation for the destruction of quinine as a South American extractive economic sector.

The facts just described were reported by Markham himself, in a book. He shows, once more, that British piracy (as well as from other Western powers) towards all kinds of Latin American resources is an old and very greedy practice. Markham also said that, together with quinine, dozens of different kinds of seeds and animals were sacked, mainly from Peru. For instance, he took the Andean mammal Alpaca for adapting into Scotland and British Australia climates. Even the very well known curry, a mixture of spices, was enriched by Markham, who introduced into India dozens of Peruvian chili peppers. He also took rubber tree seeds (but, unfortunately for him, the seeds then did not flourish at Kew Gardens). That is why it is possible to say that, the great general rehearsal for the rubber trees expropriation by the British, was the Quino Tree robbery, also done by them.

33 See Markham.
The quinine is also relevant to the history of Western medicine. The traditional Andean methods of cure through the use of quinine was a contribution that helped the opening of a new medical area known as homeopathy. This product was introduced to Europe through Spain, in the middle of the 17th Century, by the Chinchon Countess, wife of the Peruvian Vice-King. In Peru, she became ill from malaria, and the physicians from the “Universidad Mayor de San Marcos of Lima”, the oldest university in the Americas, were unable to cure her. In danger of dying, the Countess ignored the physicians’ advice and made the decision to drink the infusion made from the Quino Tree bark (quinine) prescribed and prepared by her Andean servant. The lady was cured. The irony is that this native Andean-Amazonian tree and medicine became known all over the world by the Spanish Vice-Queen name (Chichona Tree). These facts, once more, confirm the permanent exploitation of native Americans of diverse kinds by Europeans. That is also even clearer by the fact that the Andean servant’s name was never recorded, although her initiative was essential for showing to the world the extraordinary quinine properties.

II.9. THE AMAZONIAN BIO-DIVERSITY QUESTION.

In Brazil, it is generally assumed that Brazilian Amazonia is the richest area of the world in terms of bio-diversity, germo-plasm, etc. The Brazilian press, during ECO-92 Conference, published several reports in the same line coinciding in this way with the already mentioned report “Amazônia”. However, several scientists who were interviewed for this project, mainly the ones researching biodiversity, expressed doubts. If it would be possible to synthesize the first impression, obtained after listening to 12 of them, the conclusion would be the following. It is not possible to know, at this point, which is the earth richer territory in terms of bio-diversity, germo-plasm and genetic resources in general. Scientific knowledge still lack research results for coming to a conclusion, mainly research in an exceptional area or the area of transition between the Andes and the Amazonia. The Amazonian part that goes down from the Andes, from 1500 to 300 m.s.o.l., seems to be very rich. Brazil, in spite of having the largest Amazonian share, has almost nothing of that transitional area.

Dr. Russell Mittermeier, one of the creators of the Biological Megadiversity concept, said that 12 countries (from a world total of more than 200) concentrate from 60% to 70% of the globe’s biological resources. Five are Latinamericans: Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru, and from these, 4 are Amazonian. He believes that Brazil or Colombia may be the richest country in land species. He considers that, according to current calculations, the total number of world species including: plants, animals, microorganisms, etc, is around 100 million. Of those, only around one million and a half (or 2%) were described by science. For that reason, and also because the discipline of species taxonomy is still very primitive, he concludes that to determine which one is the first among the megadiverse countries will be an item of academic discussion.

34 The interview with the Executive Director of Conservation International was in its headquarters, in Washington D.C. on 25.09.95
for the next one thousand years. He calls the attention to the fact that Ecuador, the smallest country from the 12, is the planet’s first in diversity per area unit.

Dr. Gary Hartshorn 35 said that still there are many things to be know for science, and that still there is a lack of information and of reliable figures related to the world’s big groups of flora and fauna. He concludes by saying that may be in the next 20 or 30 years, it will be possible to determine who is the first: Indonesia, Brazil, Colombia or Peru. He asserts that Peru, on the planet, is the country with the largest number of living-zones, more than 80.

Dr. Kenton Miller 36 considers Amazonia as the globe’s more important region in terms of species. He points out that is especially rich the arc formed by the higher part of Amazonia Basin, close to the Equator, a frontier territory shared by Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

Interviews with the above mentioned researchers were recorded for about one hour each and their points of view were carefully summarized.

III. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION.

Based on the previous information, the author expects to have clarify some of the reasons why it is important to study the historical formation and main problems of Amazonia. These are the first results of a research project in progress for a number of years, based mainly on the information obtained while selecting sources for the project. These sources were not yet deeply analyzed, but the author hope that in the near future such analysis may produce more definitive results. In other words, as the project progresses, several more definitive results may arise.

It is worthy to mention that these preliminary results do not deny the relevance of Brazilian Amazonia; the real intention is to put it out in a relative perspective. In other words, the information above shows that, within the Amazonian total history, the national histories become relatives and for this reason they may present a meaning that is different from what is usually accepted. In this context the phrase attributed to Marx that at the vulgar knowledge science often laughs, could be applied.

To this point, taking Amazonia as a whole, it was possible to determine the following. The impact generated by the entrance of the Western world into the region was general; then is when the massacres began. As a consequence, the native population started to disappear generating a long process that unfortunately still goes on. The depopulation had different intensities related to the peculiarities of each national Amazonia. Phenomena like the rubber cycle happened in the entire region. But others, like the quinine cycle, were limited to the Andean-Amazonian territory.

35 The interview was in 14.09.95, in Washington D.C., headquarters of The World Wildlife Fund. Hartshorn is Vice-President of the Research and Development Program
36 His words were recorded on 16.09.95 in the World Resources Institute, Washington D.C. He is the Director of Biological Resources and Institutional Programs.
Taken as a totality, Amazonia is probably the richest area on earth in terms of biodiversity, genetic and fresh water resources, etc. Besides, it is extraordinary to realize that to such South American region belongs, in its limits with the Atlantic, the fascinating Marajo Island and, in its limits with the Andes, Machu Pichu, the City in the Sky. In its Brazilian part, we find the unique phenomenon of the clear water from the Amazon River mixing with the dark water of its tributary, the Black River, whose origin is in Colombia and Venezuela.

The study of Amazonia as a total history opened the door for a better perception of both: the national peculiarities and of its main problems.

As egalitarian democracy advances, accepting other cultures as equals being different, it will be possible to deepen a preservationist and universalistic awareness.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


AMAYO Z., E. “La Amazonía en LA JANGADA de Julio Verne: una visión eurocéntrica. Relaciones entre historia y ficción”. (to be published).


BONILLA, H. Estructura y eslabonamiento de la explotación cauchera en Colombia, Perú, Bolivia y Brasil. Documento preparado para el Primer Congreso Brasileño de Historia Económica y Segunda Conferencia Internacional de Historia de las Empresas, São Paulo, 7 al 10 de Setiembre de 1993. FLACSO, Quito, Ecuador, 1993, pp. 16.


HARDENBURG, W.E. The Putumayo, the Devil’s Paradise. Travels in the Peruvian Amazon Region and an Account of the Atrocities Committed upon the Indians Therein. T.F. Unwin, Londres, 1912, pp. 347.


OESP. “Amazônia”. *O Estado de S. Paulo*. Caderno 2, Especial-Domingo, 30.11.97 (por Ulisses Capozoli, enviado especial).


