

RECONSTRUCTING INDIGENOUS ETHNICITIES

The Arapium and Jaraqui Peoples of the Lower Amazon, Brazil

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Abstract: In Latin America, indigenous identity claims among people not previously recognized as such by the state have become a key topic of anthropological and sociological research. Scholars have analyzed the motivations and political implications of this trend and the impacts of indigenous population's growth on national demographic indicators. However, little is known about how people claiming indigenous status constructs the meaning of their indigenous ethnicity. Drawing from sixty-four in-depth interviews, focus-group analyses, and participant observation, this article explores the double process of identity construction: the reconstruction of the Arapium indigenous identity and the creation of the Jaraqui indigenous identity in Brazil's Lower Amazon. The findings reveal six themes that contribute to the embodiment of a definition of indigenous identity and the establishment of a discursive basis to claim recognition: sense of rootedness, historical memory, historical transformation, consciousness, social exclusion, and identity politics.

INTRODUCTION

Latin American Indigenous Movements

During the 1980s and 1990s, the rapid rise of neoliberal policies produced responses from several civil society organizations that challenged the ability of the state to address pressing societal problems. In that context, the rise of Latin American indigenous mobilizations generated major struggles and achievements over representation and indigenous peoples' human rights (Posterios 2007; Yashar 2005). However, as Hale (2002) has asserted, none of these achievements would have been possible without the previous strengthening of indigenous organizations at different levels, especially community-wide, where processes of re-Indianization created new patterns of indigenous mobilization. Indigenous peoples' political mobilization came in conjunction with claims of indigenous identity from

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different groups reaffirming forgotten ethnic identities and assertions of rights over land to secure cultural continuity (Occhipinti 2003; J. Oliveira 1999). A major concern of this phenomenon is the cultural assimilation processes that many indigenous groups experienced, which apparently made them similar to the dominant Western society. In many cases, this is the primary issue governments have used to argue against the legal recognition of indigenous status and associated rights for certain groups (Santos and Oliveira 2003; Warren 2001).

Although this identity-based political mobilization has gained increased attention, analysis has tended to focus on the understanding of the material forces that motivate identity claims and the national and international political conditions and legislative reforms that have favored their expression. Little is known about how people construct the meaning of the indigenous identity they claim. In this article, I offer an analysis from within and below, referring to the internal dynamics indigenous communities use to reconstruct their sense of indigeness and their articulation into external political rights struggles. My intent is to understand how indigenous peoples, whom outsiders consider acculturated or assimilated, have resignified their sense of indigeness and positioned it as their political flag. In this sense, I am concerned with the intertwining of the material, symbolic, and historical means that contribute to the embodiment of ethnic identification. I place this analysis within the recent political mobilization of nonrecognized indigenous groups in Brazil who claim indigenous status and land rights.

Rise of Indigenous Peoples' Claims for Recognition

Across Latin America there has been a dramatic change in demographic recovery of indigenous populations. For instance, using statistics reflecting high fertility rates and a decline in infant mortality, McSweeney and Arps (2005) show the rapid growth of lowland indigenous groups over the past two decades. Besides the improvement in health and living conditions, scholars have predicted that the trend to shift self-definition is another factor that has contributed to this demographic recovery (Perz, Warren, and Kennedy 2008). Even Argentina, which traditionally had a "taken-for-granted indigenous absence" (Gordillo and Hirsch 2003, 6) in the formation of the nation-state, experienced a rapid rise in indigenous populations as a result of claims for recognition (Occhipinti 2003). What is interesting is that groups considered extinct or assimilated have participated in this ethnic mobilization.

Scholars have argued that these presumably extinct groups have found a legal base to reassert their hidden indigenous identities and recuperate their territorial rights in international and national indigenous rights legislation (Warren 2001; Yashar 2005). Others assert that the democrati-

zation process in Latin America in the past three decades has favored the public reclaiming of indigenous identity and collective rights (Brysk 2000; Posteris 2007; Yashar 2005). With the consolidation of neoliberal policies, macroeconomic changes, and structural reforms of state institutions, indigenous peoples have undertaken major political mobilizations to challenge structural forms of inequality that have traditionally defined the relationship between the nation-state and indigenous peoples (Posteris 2007; Yashar 2005). In Bolivia and Ecuador, indigenous movements have skillfully used the discourses of social exclusion and dominate-subordinate relationships to pressure constitutional reforms and create a new set of democratic principles and inclusive citizenship rights that promote respect for ethnic and racial diversity (Canessa 2007; Yashar 2005). In Colombia, different forms of interethnic dialogues and regional activism among indigenous intellectuals, local indigenous leaders, native politicians, civil society, and anthropologists have created a way to negotiate diversity and operate creative tactics of indigenous politics (Rappaport 2005).

Brazil regained democracy in 1985 after twenty-one years of authoritarian rule, and with it, the restoration of political freedom, citizenship rights, the revitalization of political institutions, and a new cycle of economic growth. The 1988 Brazilian Constitution modified the assimilationist indigenous policy that for five centuries had defined the relationship between the state and indigenous peoples. The new constitution recognized indigenous peoples' rights to their own institutions, social organizations, languages, cultural traditions, and their original lands (Ramos 2003). Under this new climate of human rights legislation, Brazil has experienced a remarkable increase in its indigenous population, contrary to what had been predicted—a progressive decline and extinction of indigenous groups. For example, Ribeiro (1996) presented figures that demonstrated the continuous decline of the indigenous population and predicted they would eventually become totally acculturated and assimilated into the national society. In the 2000 national census, however, seven hundred thousand people reportedly identified themselves as indigenous peoples (Kennedy and Perz 2000; Ramos 2003). The explanations for this population growth are complex and diverse, but among them, the assertion of indigenous identity is one of the most contentious.

The emergence of several indigenous groups claiming recognition of indigenous status started in northeastern Brazil during the 1970s (J. Oliveira 1999), reached the Southeast during the 1980s (Santos and Oliveira 2003; Warren 2001), and in the late 1990s emerged in the Lower Amazon in the state of Pará (Bolaños 2008; Ioris 2005; Vaz 2004). Scholars have shown that, during the 1950s, there were roughly ten indigenous groups in the Northeast, but by 1994, that number had increased to twenty-three (J. Oliveira 1999). What makes the movement controversial

is the lack of cultural distinctiveness, cultural mixing, and the recent emergence as indigenous peoples in an area of major cultural changes due to European colonization and subsequent national development initiatives.

The indigenous movement of the Lower Amazon has developed in a region considered among the most highly affected by the processes of colonial expansion, devastation, and miscegenation. Indigenous populations were thought to have been assimilated or extinct, and cultural and racial mixture was considered a distinctive trait of the region's population (Moraireira 1988). People of the region have been traditionally defined as *caboclo*, the mixed blood offspring of indigenous populations and Portuguese settlers (Parker 1989; Wagley 1976). In this sense, *caboclo* is the counterpart of the *mestizo* category of the Spanish-speaking countries, which refers to the "mixing" of "races" and "cultures" (Whitten 2007, 359). On the basis of a linear historical notion, the *caboclo* is considered the direct result of a series of events and conditions that destroyed the Amazonian indigenous population (Ross 1978) through a process referred to as "cabocloization" (Parker 1989, 251).

However, Amazonian populations rarely use "*caboclo*" as a category of self-definition (Pace 2006). It has not constituted a form of collective or ethnic identification (Harris 2003). Instead, most people tend to identify themselves through geographical reference or by the types of activities they do (Harris 2000). The term *caboclo* is generally considered derogatory, usually meaning "a person without social value." However, some scholars have highlighted *caboclo* as a symbol of adaptation and knowledge of the Amazonian ecosystem (Moran 1993; Parker 1989). In the Lower Amazon's Tapajós-Arapiuns region, *caboclo* is not used, not only because of its connotation but also because people do not consider that the term defines them (Vaz 1997). Instead, the term *índio* constitutes an important concept in the evolving process of self-definition: from a stigmatized and hidden identity to a category of ethnic pride (Bolaños 2008). The term *índio*,¹ in Latin America considered a colonially assigned identity symbolizing the removal of indigenous peoples from their own history (Wade 1997; Whitten 2007), became in the mid-1970s in Brazil a new unifying identity category that emerged from the indigenous peoples' political practice (R. Oliveira 1988). In the lower Tapajós-Arapiuns region, the term *índio* also became a political rallying point represented through the slogan, "I am an *índio* and I am not ashamed of it" (Bolaños 2008).

The Indigenous Council Tapajós-Arapiuns (CITA) currently represents twelve indigenous groups of the lower Tapajós-Arapiuns region that claim

1. I use the term *índio* with its new implied positive and political meaning. To be coherent and respectful of people's own interpretations of their history and identities, I do not postulate the idea that they have shifted identity from *caboclo* to *índio*.

the recognition of their indigenous status and land rights². The CITA is associated with the Coordenação das Organizações Indígenas da Amazônia Brasileira (COIAB), which have jointly participated in several national indigenous rights demonstrations. Members of CITA have lost fundamental characteristics such as language, religious beliefs, and traditional social structures that distinguish them as indigenous peoples. Thus, CITA is making efforts to recuperate the *língua geral*, or Nheengatú, considered their native language. Nheengatú was the primary language Jesuit missionaries used during colonial times to evangelize and “civilize” indigenous populations. Borges (1994) has asserted that, since the eighteenth century, Nheengatú has become the main language and symbol of new identity formation for some indigenous groups. This is particularly true for indigenous peoples of mixed descent, such as the Baré and Baniwa of the Negro River (Borges 1994). In 2004, CITA contacted an indigenous Baniwa from the Negro River to help rescue the language. In addition, CITA has been encouraging the use of Nheengatú in special celebrations, meetings, and at schools.

In this article, I examine how the people of the lower Tapajós-Arapium region construct the meaning of their indigenous identity and the sources that contribute to the embodiment of their ethnicity. I specifically provide analysis of the double process of identity construction, that is, the reconstruction of the Arapium indigenous identity and the creation of the Jaraqui ethnic indigenous identity. These groups share the same territory and descend from one major family that split to form two communities, Lago da Praia and Caruci, in the municipality of Santarém, in the state of Pará. The two communities have maintained a close but competitive relationship. When they joined CITA, people from Lago da Praia decided to self-define as Jaraqui, which is the name of the most common fish in the region. The other group maintained their identity as Arapium. The Arapium community interpreted self-definition as Jaraqui as a form of betrayal to their people and an erroneous political strategy that might complicate the process of land demarcation. None of the Arapium communities of the region recognizes the Lago da Praia people as of Arapium descent. Nevertheless, this has not constituted a conflict for the Jaraqui people’s membership and active involvement in CITA’s ethnic politics. In fact, this decision has given the Jaraqui a unique position in the indigenous movement, because their self-definition represents a new form of resistance—that of not fitting into the identity categories to which they are supposed to relate.

The analysis here is based on sixty-four in-depth interviews, focus-group analyses, and participant observation carried out during fourteen months of field research between 2004 and 2007. In this article, I show

2. These indigenous groups are Munduruku, Maytapú, Arapium, Tapajó, Jaraqui, Cara-Preta, Borari, Tupinambá, Cumaruaara, Arara-Vermelha, Apiaká, and Tapuia.

how both identities are both joined and differentiated. The identities are based on historical practices and relationship with the land. The reconstruction of Arapium identity is based on the recovery of old memories of a neglected ethnicity, whereas the Jaraqui identity appears as a way to value people's essential practices of survival and as a form of distinction between the two communities. I argue that indigenous identity and land rights claims are not just the products of present sociopolitical struggles. Instead, they are founded on collective historical memories and territorial meanings that have enabled the Arapium and Jaraqui peoples to recover and imbue their sense of indigenosity with new meaning. Both the political struggle to resolve land conflict and the symbolic and cultural meanings constructed through historical interaction with their territory frame the claims for recognition.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Arapium People in History: From Assumed Disintegration to Revitalization

In colonial history and in the contemporary literature focusing on Amazonian indigenous populations, the extinction or assimilation of indigenous people is generally presumed to be inevitable. However, contemporary expressions of ethnic assertion by presumably assimilated, or extinct, indigenous groups question linear historical conceptions of colonial domination and ethnic and cultural change as a uniform and uncontested process. Particularly, I refer to the notion of change as a single, one-way process that anticipates that the fate of indigenous peoples is only to become progressively acculturated and assimilated. The social transformations that Amazonian indigenous peoples have experienced have been interpreted as indicators of cultural disintegration, which implies that the colonial social-political organizations and later dominant national societies absorbed, nonetheless, indigenous peoples who had managed to survive the effects of colonization. Cabocization refers largely to this idea, which assumes that indigenous peoples adopted national identities and disregarded their own ethnicities (Parker 1989; Ross 1978). Little attention has been given to processes of accommodation and re-creation of social-cultural expressions emerging from long-term forms of interaction and cultural mixture (Whitehead 1993).

There is also a tendency to reproduce historical interpretations that privilege and exclude certain regions and social groups and often ignore the struggles for survival, the persistent attempt to resist, the overthrowing of hegemonic control, and strategic forms of accommodation (Sweet and Nash 1981). Priori and Gomes (2004) talk about the notion of margins, meaning the need to decentralize the history by placing value on

the understanding of local histories as part of the nation-state formation and allowing different interpretations of the diverse sociocultural process of territorial occupation. In this sense, the contemporary assertion of indigenosity indicates the need to review official historical interpretations that assumed a homogenizing process of change. More important, it shows the need to understand how the loss of traditional cultures does not translate into a loss of ethnic identity (Ramos 2003).

In general, little evidence of indigenous group names exists in the colonial written record. When indigenous peoples are mentioned, they are mostly referred to as *indios*, meaning Christianized Indians, or in other cases as *tapuio*, *livres* (free), or *escravos* (slaves) (Daniel 2004 [1841]; Penna 1869). This is the case of the Arapium, whose name seldom appeared in the Brazilian historical record. Among the scarce information available, it is known that the Jesuit missionary Manuel Rebelo first contacted the Arapium at the beginning of the eighteenth century. They were gathered at the Jesuit mission Nossa Senhora da Asunção dos Arapiuns, located at the confluence of the Tapajós and Arapiuns rivers (Daniel 2004 [1841]; Leite 1943). Jesuit missions constituted centers for detribalization, native language loss, and cultural transformation. Jesuits reinforced the adoption of the *língua geral*, or Nheengatú, a language derived from Tupi-Guarani. For at least two centuries, this language represented the Portuguese domination in the Amazon region (Borges 1994).

The presumed disintegration of the Arapium culture coincides with one of the major colonial reforms in Portuguese indigenous policy, aimed to integrate indigenous populations into the colonial economic and social systems. The Directorate Policy of 1757–1798, better known as the Directory of Pombal, stated that the Jesuits no longer had spiritual and economic control over the indigenous population and expelled the order from the Brazilian territory. The law eliminated Indian slavery and replaced it with a system of government-administered forced labor, promoted miscegenation to “civilize” the indigenous population, and made the use of the Portuguese language mandatory (Almeida 1997; Moreira 1988). According to Nimuendaju (1963), the indigenous Arapium were last reported in 1762. Scholars argue that the directory worsened indigenous peoples’ condition. They continued to be enslaved and forced to provide military services (Hemming 2008; Sampaio 2004). It is believed that these processes gave origin to the *tapuio*, a generic, detribalized indigenous person, who became the main source of forced labor (Moreira 1988). “*Tapuio*” was a social category that represented the process of disintegration of indigenous cultures and ethnicities.

Other historical events, such as the Cabanagem, also contributed to the notion of the disappearance of the Arapium. The Cabanagem, a popular revolt against the tyranny, socioeconomic injustice, and deprivation of the local and regional power, devastated many Amazonian indigenous

groups (Priori and Gomes 2004). The revolt, which developed in the Amazon region from Belém to the margins of Negro River during 1835–1841, caused a major genocide of indigenous peoples, black slaves, and people of mixed descent (Cleary 1998). The revolt was a “genuine and deeply violent rising of oppressed masses” and the governmental reaction to control it created racial hatred (Hemming 2008, 121). The campaign to regain military control proposed the extermination of all those considered suspicious of rebellion, such as the tapuios, and indigenous tribes that assisted the rebels, black slaves, and others of colored skin (Cleary 1998). The effect of the population reduction was felt for many years after the revolt, especially and more severely in the Santarém area (Hemming 2008).

Subsequent economic developments in the region, such as the rubber boom of the late nineteenth century, are considered to have consolidated the transformation of the remaining indigenous population into a peasant-type society (Parker 1989; Ross 1978; Wagley 1976). Amazon peasantry has traditionally been portrayed as the direct antagonist of Amerindian society and as being at the forefront of colonial and postcolonial economic development expansion. Contemporary analysis suggests that the penetration of merchant capital and availability of land and other resources had been what has contributed to the formation of the Amazon peasantry, not the alteration of indigenous social formation (Nugent 1993). Harris (2000, 2003) has asserted that the traditional representation of Amazonian peasantry ignores the complex and diverse social reality and the local forms of relations with capitalist forces through informal economy, petty commodity, migration, and conflict. He also has pointed out that it is through such dynamic interactions that the identity of the Amazon peasantry has evolved.

For these reasons, withdrawal of the Arapium people from the official written record became a taken-for-granted confirmation of their disappearance as a distinctive people. However, 239 years later, the Arapium have reappeared in the regional and national context of political struggle for recognition. To date, sixteen communities in the region assert Arapium identity and seek state recognition.

The Emerging Movement

The indigenous movement of the lower Tapajós-Arapiuns region became known in 1998, when the community of Takaura, located along the Tapajós River, claimed recognition as indigenous Munduruku and the demarcation of their lands (Ioris 2005; Vaz 2004). This claim for recognition created concerns because it appeared in the context of negotiations between the Brazilian Institute for Renewable Natural Resources and the Environment (Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis, or IBAMA) and local communities to clarify land rights within the Flona Tapajós forest reserve (Ioris 2005). After Takaura’s

claim, the indigenous movement rapidly spread over the lower Tapajós and Arapiuns rivers' region—thirty-eight communities have since claimed their indigenous status and land rights. In 2000, CITA was founded, representing indigenous peoples from the municipalities of Santarém, Aveiro, and Belterra in the state of Pará.

In 2001 and 2003, respectively, the Arapium and Jaraqui peoples of the communities of Caruci and Lago da Praia joined the regional indigenous movement. Both communities are located along the left bank of the lower Arapiuns River and share a territory known as Cobra Grande. Caruci has a population of 89 people, whereas Lago da Praia has 146. The first phase of the process of land demarcation, which corresponds to the definition of territorial limits, was initiated by the Fundação Nacional do Índio (FUNAI) in 2008. The proposal for land demarcation includes an area of 8,840.25 hectares. Recognition of the land rights has not yet been decided. Although the Arapium and Jaraqui people have established well-coordinated efforts in their struggle for land rights, the situation is not reflected when they seek governmental services, such as indigenous education. It is here that there are highly marked differences and competing interests between the groups. The selection of the location of an indigenous educational center has become an ongoing conflict between the two groups. The Arapium, who consider themselves a better-organized community with stronger leadership, have managed to retain the center. Meanwhile, the Jaraqui have managed to delay the initiation of the educational program until the center is relocated to their community.

The collective struggle in CITA for land rights confronts not only a long and complex administrative process of land demarcation but also ongoing developmental and environmental disputes that envision the Amazon region as an area of economic potential and an ecological hot spot of global concern. In the current context of Brazilian economic growth, the Lower Tapajós constitutes a key region for the integration of Amazonia into the global economy and the consolidation of Brazil's commercial leadership in South America (Coelho, Castro, and Hurtienne 2001). This is expected to happen through the consolidation of the soybean industry and the improvement of the national transportation system (the paving of Highway BR-163). In contrast, the creation of new protected and extractive reserve areas constitutes an environmental strategy to contain further pressures from development. In this context, the indigenous movement is considered a new, unwanted political actor that has complicated negotiations among environmentalists, development agents, and the government. The cultural and racial mixture of CITA members has been one of the main issues on which opposition to their rights claims are based.³

3. For a detailed discussion of this issue, which is not the subject of this article, see Bolaños (2008).

UNDERSTANDING THE RECONSTRUCTION OF INDIGENOUS IDENTITIES

Methodology

I used grounded theory methodology to analyze data from the interviews and field notes of this study (Charmaz 2006; Strauss and Corbin 1998). This method allowed for the study of people in their natural setting and a focus on meaning. I followed the constructivist approach of grounded theory, which assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims for the interpretative understanding of the subject's meanings (Charmaz 2006). To develop the interviews, I used a topic guide from which I asked questions to help elucidate topics of interest related to self-definition as indigenous peoples. I also collected personal conversations and recorded observations that helped contextualize the content of the interviews. I recorded and conducted all interviews with the informed consent of the informants. Focus groups provided a space to develop in-depth discussions about emerging issues from the interviews.

My analysis produced six major themes that constitute the conceptual sources through which the material and symbolic meanings of the Arapium and Jaraqui ethnicities are explained: (1) sense of rootedness, (2) historical memory, (3) historical transformation, (4) consciousness, (5) social exclusion, and (6) identity politics. Table 1 presents the themes and the categories that explain the meaning of the indigenous ethnicities. As a way to develop the analysis, I present each theme in a separate section to focus on the internal relationships of the categories of each theme. However, this strategy does not mean that each theme is independent or unrelated to the others. The order of presentation also is not intended to indicate a hierarchy or ranking of themes. It is simply a writing strategy that permits the narrative flow. In practice, the themes and their categories fit together, and their relationship and importance vary according to context.

Sense of Rootedness

The unique relationship of indigenous peoples with their land has been invoked as a critical issue and an irrefutable moral argument to support claims of indigenous identity (Occhipinti 2003). Sense of rootedness has been considered the special relationship and emotional attachments that indigenous peoples have developed for their homelands through long processes of experience and acquired knowledge (Feld and Basso 1996; Stewart and Strathern 2003). The way indigenous peoples feel attached to land has taken on a central discursive role in Arapium and Jaraqui peoples' claims for recognition. This is especially important for them because they are not simply claiming a piece of land; they are claiming the rights over the land to which they feel emotionally embedded, which holds past

Table 1 Themes and Categories Emerging from Indigenous Peoples' Narratives

Themes	Categories
Sense of rootedness	Place of origin Attachment to land Perception and experience of land Territoriality
Historical memory	Indian descent Family memories Local history Authenticity
Historical transformation	Racial/cultural mixture Enforced assimilation Differentiation from ancestors
Consciousness	Restrictive knowledge Acquiring knowledge Indian pride
Social exclusion	Indian stigma Discrimination
Identity politics	Symbolic representation Indigenous movement influence Indigenous rights Access and allocation of resources

and present memories, communities' histories, and myths. Armed with international and national legislations on indigenous peoples' rights, such as International Labour Organization Convention 169 and the National Constitution, CITA members have emphasized their attachment to their lands and their original rights to their territories on their claims.

When talking about the formation of the two communities, people always emphasize two conditions: being natives of the Arapiuns River region and being the original people who settled the area and constituted the two communities. Here, *native* is related to the internal movement of population and to kinship relations established throughout the region. This network of kinship relations has given them a sense of territoriality, that is, the interpretation of the Arapiuns River region as Arapium territory:

Being Arapium means that I was born in the Arapiuns, I am *nativo* of Arapiuns, and I live in the Arapiuns region . . . [T]hus, for us, our people is Arapium. . . . [W]e discovered we are Arapium, because we have families in the high part of the river in the community of Mentai, and the indios who lived there were the Arapium. . . . [W]e are Arapium because of our region and because it is known that here, Caruci and the other side of the river, belonged to the Arapium people. . . . [W]e had the privilege of inheriting this land—that is why we are Arapium!

The land of the Arapium and Jaraqui embraces three interrelated spaces, the *roça* (area in the forest cleared for a garden), the forest, and the river. These are not totally separate entities. They provide the sources for making people's identity and reinforcing kinship and social relations. The *roça* constitutes a place in which interpersonal, community, and cultural relationships occur. Among the products of the *roça*, manioc flour, or *farinha*, constitutes the staple food and holds important symbolic and political meanings. *Farinha* is defined as Indian food. This makes the manioc and *farinha* more than a social crop and product. They both are invested with political meaning originating from their association with Indian food and culture. They are reinterpreted and highlighted as symbols of indigenosity.

In both communities, fishing is the main source of subsistence and cash income. However, it is through the meaning of the fishing activity that the Arapium and Jaraqui mark their differences as indigenous peoples. The Jaraqui emphasize that their identity is particularly tied to the river and the *jaraqui* fish, which constitutes their main source of protein. They interpret their community as "the place of jaraqui fish," and the fish as the main source of their indigenous identity:

People say that Lago da Praia is the place of the jaraqui fish . . . the typical fish of the region. When the school of fish comes, we get a lot of jaraqui. The fish is what identifies this place; that is the reason for us to be *índio Jaraqui*. . . [T]he fish is our subsistence. . . [W]e took its name, because fishing is what we do, jaraqui is what we eat. . . [W]e are Jaraqui!"

For the Jaraqui people, the mixture of boiled or roasted jaraqui fish with *farinha* represents a symbolic way of nurturing their identity: by eating, they invigorate their body and their soul with the essential substance that constitutes what they are—*índios Jaraqui*. Examples of the relationship between food and constitution of identity can be found in other cases among Amazonian indigenous peoples. For example, Vilaça (2007) found that among the Wari' of the state of Rondonia, Brazil, food was central to the constitution of physical identity. For the Wari', social relationships, physical proximity, and commensality construct the body throughout life. By adopting the Jaraqui identity, people from Lago da Praia manage to represent the symbolic and political meanings that contribute to their self-definition and differentiate them from their Arapium neighbors. This is important because, in their political struggle, the Jaraqui people display a complex sense of who they are by essentializing their identity as rooted in the land and/or river, but they detach themselves from local history. Their identity is tied not to the Arapium people, who were in the territory before the colonial regime, but to their own lived historical experience.

Historical Memory

Memory constitutes a crucial element in the construction of identity. It is a powerful source of knowledge and emotions that helps shape identities. Memory is the product of social and cultural experience embedded in objects, places, and practices. Scholars argue that memory as a product of historical social experience involves processes of remembering and forgetting (Middleton and Edwards 1990; Misztal 2003). Memory is crucial to our understanding of present circumstances—it helps us not only explain the past but also understand the present.

From the interviews, one way to express historical memory is through the recognition of indigenous descent, which implies looking back into the family history for a fact, event, or memory that links the person to the notion of indigenoussness. The generational component is among the key factors that nurture peoples' sense of indigenoussness, because it places them in history as indigenous peoples. Remembering past generations constitutes a key element in the effort to legitimize peoples' political claims. In the process of remembering and sharing memories, people reinterpret and rediscover features of the past that give new meanings to their own identity:

I knew about my ancestors through my grandmother; she told me that her parents were Indians. She talked about the *índios*, the names of the *índios* that I do not remember any more. . . . [S]he said that they used to visit her there in the place she lived . . . that place was inhabited by *índios*. . . . [S]he told me that she was an *índia mesma* [authentic Indian].

In the analysis of identity claims by the indigenous Pataxó of eastern Brazil, Warren (2001) shows how family memory helps construct the concept of indigenoussness by evoking and stressing indigenous ancestry in their genealogy. Those family memories also revolve around histories of conquest, race exploitation, and anti-Indian racism that ancestors suffered. Hoffmann (2002), analyzing the case of Afro-descendants in the Pacific region of Colombia, found that memory and ethnicity were associated with the definition of belonging and the shared historical experience of discrimination and exclusion among people of different racial and cultural ancestry. This association facilitated their land rights claim.

The term *índio mesmo*, which constantly emerged in the narratives, contains a depth and critical meaning in the assertion of indigenous identity. In this case, the term not only explains genealogical indigenous descent but also is intended to mean "authentic" *índio*. This notion gives people legitimacy in a context that questions racial and cultural mixture as an expression of indigenoussness:

Here *índio mesmo* used to live, true *índios*! Wild *índios* as some people say . . . [T]hey were the real *índios*, the ancestors of our families. . . . [W]e are from the

same root, but we have changed, though we continue to do the same things they used to do.

Family memories are full of images of the *índio mesmo*, from which the meaning of the present condition as indigenous peoples is derived. Moreover, in the context of the political struggle for indigenous rights, the term *índio mesmo* broadens its meaning to refer to political commitment to the indigenous movement. *Índio mesmo* is the individual who stands up and struggles for his or her rights, who self-identifies as *índio* without shame, and who speaks out for the indigenous movement. Through this term, individuals acquire a privileged status that distinguishes them from those who do not belong to the group and cannot be trusted.

Historical Transformation

Historical transformation refers to the different events and social-political conditions that induce processes of cultural and ethnic change. When talking about their sense of indigenousness, the Arapium and Jaraqui place themselves in an ambiguous condition. That is, they recognize that their experience as indigenous peoples is contemporary and differs from that of past generations. Their assertion of ethnic identity is based not on concepts of continuity, as if they were the same as those indigenous people from centuries ago, but on change. Historical changes gave origin to new forms, meanings, and understandings of what it means to be indigenous. The construction of Arapium and Jaraqui ethnic identities encompass apparently contradictory images, traits, and stereotypes that, however, do not exclude them from definitions of indigenousness. The historical transformation contains explanations that depart from what they interpret as racial and cultural mixture:

Here in the Amazon, there was a mixture of races, especially the mixture of whites with other different indigenous groups. That is why people call us *caboclo* . . . but for us a *caboclo* is not much different from an *índio*, it is just the name that is different. In fact, we are considered as *tapuios*; the true *tapuios* of the Amazonian region. *Tapuio* is an *índio* mixed with black, white, and other *índios* . . . the current Arapium is not a "pure" *índio*. Moreover, the current Arapium varies in term of skin color, whether brown or almost black, and the type of hair . . . but what really matters is that the current Arapium believes in his culture, believes that he is an *índio*, and behaves as an *índio mesmo*.

Important issues emerge from this description, such as the categorization of ethnicity through phenotype features and the use of intermediate categories of definition. The use of the terms *caboclo* and *tapuio* signal important questions about the nature of ambiguity and the significance of the relationship between racial and social relations. This significance, derived from historical and political factors, establishes conditions for social and cultural change. In the Brazilian anthropological understanding

of the presumed inevitable extinction of indigenous cultures, the terms *caboclo* and *tapuio* explain the process of cultural disintegration and represent a continuum in the acculturation process. In this continuum, *tapuio* comes first and refers to an Indian who has lost his or her original ethnic identity and the normative system of his or her original culture. *Tapuios* represent the homogenization of diverse indigenous cultures (Moreira 1988; Ribeiro 1996).

Although the term *tapuio* in Brazilian literature specifically refers to a descendant of different detribalized indigenous groups, peoples' narratives include a new feature—mixture with blacks—which provides an added controversy to the indigenosity claim. Warren (2001) refers to the case of the indigenous Xacriabá in Brazil who are not generally viewed as *índios mesmos* by non-Indians because their mixed descent resembles the phenotype of Afro-descendants. Whitten (2007) talks about a third category of mixture in Spanish Latin America: *zambaje*, a person of indigenous and African descent, which in some Central American countries is known as Miskito or Garifuna (Pineda 2001; Whitten 2007), and in Brazil as *cafuso* (Moreira 1988). *Zambaje* is considered a counterhegemonic category that challenges the idea of *mestizaje* as a homogenizing form of whitening (Whitten 2007).

Caboclo, in contrast, represents the historical, economic, and political forces that consolidate the transformation of indigenous populations (Parker 1989; Ross 1978; Wagley 1976). *Caboclo* has a remote indigenous ancestry, meaning that the *caboclo* is an acculturated Indian. Until quite recently, in Brazilian anthropological thinking, the term *caboclo* referred to a benevolent fate reserved for indigenous peoples; their only chance for survival (Gomes 2000). However, what emerged from the narratives is that the terms *caboclo* and *tapuio* have been reinterpreted as forms of indigenous persistence.

Moreover, the notion of mixture expressed in the narratives challenges the official conception on which it is based. In Latin American countries, mixture, or *mestizaje*, emerged as an official discourse and nation-building ideology that supposedly dismantled colonial forms of racial and ethnic differentiation and oppression (Wade 1997; Whitten 2007). Mixture, as the key symbol of national identity, promoted the idea that mixed peoples constituted a homogeneous subject. That is, by the very process of mixing, its constitutive parts, the Indian and the black, would disappear through the whitening process. Biological miscegenation and cultural assimilation were considered the way up in the social hierarchy. In other words, mixture was a form of “de-Indianization” of the stigmatized Indian cultural traits and Indian blood (Field 2002, 15). The idea of disappearance implies that Indians and blacks in the long term would not represent significant referents of identity. In the present case, these social categories not only did not disappear but also are being actively reconstructed as key ele-

ments of their political claims. Cultural and racial mixture, then, is reinterpreted as a form of continuity rather than as disappearance. This is an assertion that emphasizes change as a critical element of ethnic identity. Indeed, these ideas remind us that cultural change does not necessarily generate change of ethnic identities, as if it were a linear cause-effect action (R. Oliveira 2006). Whitten (2007) asserts that the phenomenon of interculturality offers a new alternative to the racial fixity of the mestizaje ideology. Interculturality, which stresses movement from one cultural system to another, valorizes indigenusness and blackness and permits the confrontation of racial categories born in colonial times.

Consciousness

Consciousness is the process of coming into existence and becoming active as indigenous peoples. Consciousness includes the task of recapturing peoples' history by dismantling imposed restrictive knowledge that distorted the understanding of their history. Restrictive knowledge removed indigenous peoples from their own history and inscribed in peoples' minds that they were no longer indigenous. Embedded in social structures of power, this restrictive knowledge worked as an explanatory framework of indigenous peoples' history and fate. These ideas interpreted indigenous peoples not only as inferior but also as subjects of imminent extinction:

Although we were *indios*, although we were born *indios*, and our parents and grandparents were *indios*, we did not have knowledge of that. . . . [W]e thought that we were whites, but now we know that *indio* is what we really are.

Consciousness also includes the task of acquiring knowledge to provide new value to their role in history as indigenous peoples. Hill (1996) asserts that the first task for disempowered people to resist domination and ethnic stereotyping is the construction of a shared understanding of the historical past that enables them to understand their present conditions. Analysis of indigenous Wakuénai's narratives shows that these are not "folkloristic representation of a pristine indigenous past" but a way to reinterpret their historical struggle and change as rooted in the history of expansion of colonial and current globalizing forces (Hill 2008, xix). Acquiring knowledge and a new understanding of their past and present reality has helped the Arapium and Jaraqui self-define as *indio* and reinterpret both where they came from and who they are:

I was thirteen years old when I self-identified as *india* and began to search for information about *indios*. I asserted my identity and strengthened my relation with the indigenous movement and with the people of the region. We are *resistant people* that after many years of suffering discrimination, massacres, and invisibility got the courage to claim what was ours.

This act of self-recognition, then, constituted the basis of their struggle for legal recognition. Taylor (1994) points out that people do not acquire the language of self-definition on their own but through dialogue with, and sometimes in struggle against, others. The struggle for recognition involves the validation of peoples' self-definition and the recognition of difference, which in practice seeks to confirm the uniqueness of the identity claim. The new knowledge that helped dismantle inscribed ideas or historical truths also emerges in relation to a concrete problem and the possibilities for negotiation through political struggle. Moreover, as resistant people who got together to claim their identity and rights, they constitute what Whitten (2007; 368) defines as emergent culture, which refers to the way people represent themselves in various settings. As an emergent culture, they confront and reject historically ascribed categories of definition and create their own. Their identity is a renewed and politicized one that not only serves the symbolic value of being indigenous but also helps in the political struggle to secure rights.

Social Exclusion

Social exclusion in the narratives refers to the negative experiences that the Arapium and Jaraqui suffered as a result of their ascription to a stigmatized índio category. In the Brazilian context, a stigmatized or generic índio constituted an Indian detached from his or her culture and ethnic identity (Ribeiro 1996). This category placed the Arapium and Jaraqui in a disadvantageous position that limited their potential to become full human agents in their own society. They interpret their exclusion as a product of the lack of legal recognition of their ethnicity. That is, they suffered exclusion and discrimination because they were categorized as merely generic índio. When talking about the many forms of exclusion, stereotypical definitions of the generic índio category appeared in the narratives:

Some people said that índios were lazy and that índios never constructed anything for Brazil, and it was only because the Portuguese came that we have a country. . . . Before if we said we were índio, we had difficulty even getting into a school; that is why I was ashamed of being índio. In Santarém, I never said I was índio, because of the discrimination we suffered.

Interviewees mentioned stereotypes in connection with racism and discrimination. In Brazil, ethnic and racial prejudice continues to be a factor of social discrimination, and skin color determines the degree of social insertion into the mainstream society, as shown in the report "Racial Inequalities in Brazil" (Paixão and Carvano 2008). People's ascription to the stigmatized índio category implied not only their removal from their history but also their reduction to stereotypical symbols of isolation, inferiority, and alienation. The stigmatization of the índio category placed indigenous populations in an undesirable subordinate condition with few

legal rights. To be an *índio* was to be inferior and to have little social value and citizenship rights. This practice of discrimination and stereotyping prevented the self-identification as indigenous peoples. Field (2002) asserts that, because of this discrimination, *índios* in either colonial or independent Latin America would have had no reason to assert their indigenousness. Canessa (2007) shows how in Ecuador more people are identifying themselves as indigenous, whereas in the past they would have avoided such a definition. As national and international legislation changed, indigenous peoples were able to assert their rights. Self-definition as indigenous has become a claim to difference, a claim to rights, and a claim to moral authority in the face of globalization (Canessa 2007):

In every meeting, in every regional gathering of indigenous peoples, we acquire more knowledge about our rights. . . . [W]e are discovering our rights; we are putting them out to be known by our people, . . . by knowing our rights, we are more certain about our indigenous identity. In the meetings, we learned that, like the whites, we have rights, but we have more; we have rights only for us.

Ramos (2003) explains that for reemerging indigenous groups, the fulfillment of rights as citizens has great value because it represents a political instrument to transform generic exclusion into ethnic reinclusion. In this case, the assertion of indigenous identity seeks to legitimize their ethnic distinction and to suppress the vulnerability and limitations they have in the access to public services and fundamental rights. The reconstruction of their ethnic identity allows them to be more than mere *índios*. They became a people with a particular ethnic identity. People define themselves not only as *índio* but also as *índio Arapium*, *Jaraqui*, and so on. The *Arapium* and *Jaraqui* not only have rejected previous negative connotations of the term *índio* but also have empowered it with a new positive and political meaning. In doing so, they challenged homogenizing regimes of citizenship and positioned themselves in a special category of citizens with special rights, as Posteris (2007) has shown in other Latin American countries. Rappaport (2005) has shown how the *Nasa* people of Colombia experienced a transformation from a generic identity as indigenous people to a reaffirmation of the *Nasa* ethnicity through a process of revitalization of their ancestral knowledge.

Identity Politics

Identity politics refers to the political meaning of the *Arapium* and *Jaraqui* ethnicities. Identity politics implies the use of ethnic identity, its symbols, and cultural practices to politically mobilize and claim rights (Brysk 2000; Posteris 2007). In Latin America, the recent emergence of the indigenous rights movement and the consequent politicization of indigenous identity are considered a result of the changes in citizenship regimes and a defensive reaction against external threats to local autonomy and

land rights (Yashar 2005). Yashar (2005, 71) argues that indigenous identity politics have been possible through “transcommunity networks and political associational space” that permit mobilization among previously dispersed communities. Arapium and Jaraqui identity politics are not an individual process. They constitute a collective action through which they seek to join efforts with other indigenous groups to speak out and claim their indigenous rights. Identity politics shows how people feel empowered to negotiate identity and contest power structures that constrain their sociocultural life and self-definition.

In identity politics, symbols of ethnic identity such as history, land, culture, and belonging play an important role because they contain and display elements that contribute to their collective definition. The Arapium and Jaraqui use these meaningful icons to articulate their claims to the state and to civil society, and to reinforce their identity in the communities. Belonging to CITA is an important step toward recognition, defense of their rights, and becoming visible political actors. Through the indigenous movement, they have worked to raise political consciousness by emphasizing two aspects, renewed pride of being *índio* and political activism, to achieve improvements in their lives by securing their homelands and gaining access to governmental services such as education and health:

After I started participating in the meetings of the indigenous movement, I perceived and reflected on where I came from, my real origin, and my ancestors. All these things made me think about and believe I am an *indio*.

We [people of Caruci] received an invitation to participate in a meeting in Vila Franca and we went. There, [CITA] explained how and what we needed to do to assert our indigenous identity . . . then we got together here and we all recognized that we were *índios* and decided to assert our identity.

Throughout Latin America, indigenous identity politics have pressured for important changes in national legislations regarding indigenous land rights. In Bolivia, the new land reform law of 1996, known as the INRA law for the institution it created, the Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria, established collective land titling for indigenous territories as a result of indigenous mobilization that started in 1990 (Posteros 2007). In the present case, land constitutes the main symbolic and material concern through which the collective struggle is oriented. Scholars argue that the establishment of indigenous territories is not just about the claiming of rights; rather, indigenous territories are a lived reality that contain symbolic meanings. In this sense, land rights claims intend to defend and revitalize people’s ethnic identity and the collective spaces of social and cultural production and reproduction (Dávalos 2005). Killick (2008) has highlighted the importance of the process of land titling in the opposition of centuries of domination and in the assertion of self-determination rights of indigenous peoples in Peruvian Amazonia. By comparing the land-titling processes of two different indigenous groups, Killick shows

how land title claims respond to different perceptions and needs. The desire to control territory and the defense of their collective identity motivated the land claims of one group; for the other, it was the need to secure education for their children.

In the lower Tapajós region, the promotion of economic development via the expansion of the agricultural frontier through soybean production has generated great concern among rural and indigenous communities. They see this development as a threat to their land rights:

We hope that with the demarcation of our land, everything is going to be peaceful. We struggle for land demarcation to end the risk of losing our lands . . . with the demarcation, the whites cannot enter our lands, because like those *grileiros*,⁴ soybean producers, and private loggers, they constitute a big threat for us.

The defense of their lands against this potential threat has inundated the discursive appeal of the indigenous movement. The symbolic and economic meanings of their land as the main source of identity and subsistence became the essential language used to urge the demarcation of their lands. As in the Arapium and Jaraqui case, indigenous peoples elsewhere have stressed the importance of their land as part of their own history and as a way to ensure the continuity of their culture (Occhipinti 2003).

CONCLUSIONS

The variety of themes found throughout the interviews demonstrated that the construction of indigenous identity is a complex and dynamic process that requires permanent interpretation. The meanings of the Arapium and Jaraqui ethnicities evolved from the same historical conditions that brought the two groups to experience radical changes, cultural mixture, discrimination, stigmatization, and social exclusion. Although land represented a symbolic and material historical record of their indigeness, they applied different values to their land in the process of constructing their identities. For the Arapium, the sociocultural history inscribed in their land is what legitimizes their sense of ethnicity. For the Jaraqui, the significance of the river and the jaraqui fish as the basis of their subsistence is what provides the foundation for theirs. This makes the Arapium and Jaraqui different from each other. Their collective recognizes them as belonging to two different ethnic groups.

Through identity politics, land is claimed as an inseparable condition for their own definition as indigenous peoples. Securing land rights represents a hope to guarantee the continuation of their own way of life and

4. In Portuguese, *grilagem* refers to the illegal seizure and appropriation of public lands. *Grileiros* are the people who illegally take over the lands of other people.

permanent access to resources. As Occhipinti (2003) has shown in the case of the Kolla and Wichi people in Argentina, land constitutes a moral and political discursive tool to achieve recognition as indigenous peoples. Recognition guarantees not only land but also special citizenship rights. The hope to achieve these special rights, in practice, represents a challenge to the long history of discrimination and marginalization that has denied them the most basic rights as Brazilian citizens. This is also a challenge to historical and dominant forms of sociocultural definition and a way to become what they feel they are, indigenous peoples. This case shows how people elaborate, from within and below, their own interpretation of history, what is valued within that history that gives meaning to their identity, and the way they articulate it to present forms of self-definition and representation.

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