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John D. Browder, Brian J. Godfrey. *Rainforest Cities: Urbanization, Development and Globalization of the Brazilian Amazon.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. xxiv + 429 pp. $38.50 (paper), ISBN 978-0-231-10655-9; $85.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-231-10654-2.

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The dominant image of Amazonia is the great rainforest, punctuated by sleepy river towns and populated by ranchers, rubber tappers, gold miners, and Indians. Yet the region has been changing rapidly since the Second World War. During the past thirty years, Amazonian cities have grown even more quickly than those in Brazil at large. By 1991, most of the population of Amazonia was urban, not rural. Browder and Godfrey, a geographer and an urban planner, seek to explain the patterns of urbanization in Amazonia since World War Two.

For historians, the chief value of this innovative study is that it provides a thoughtful, nuanced overview of urbanization in Amazonia, with a focus on the recent past. Browder and Godfrey identify three earlier phases of urbanization in Amazonia. During the colonial period, Portuguese settlers founded the cities that came to dominate Amazonia: Belem, at the mouth of the Amazon, and Manaus, much farther inland. These and other cities along the Amazon were primarily ports, fortifications, missions. They were early centers for the trade of the *drogas do sertao*, commodities such as hardwoods and guarana.

The second phase began with the Pombaline reforms of the late eighteenth century. Much of Amazonia was placed under the jurisdiction of the Companhia Grao Para e Maranhao. The company emphasized cattle ranching and the cultivation and export of commodities such as coffee, cacao, tobacco. The authors argue that "the era of Portuguese colonial rule shaped the general contours of the Brazilian national territory, provided an enduring tendency to rely on boom-and-bust cycles in natural resources, and established settlements according to mercantile principles of location" (p. 59).

These economic and political tendencies were reflected in the hierarchical urban system that emerged during the third period: the Amazonian Rubber Boom, which lasted roughly from 1850 to 1920. The rubber economy linked the remotest rural settlements on the upper reaches of the tributaries of the Amazon to trading posts, then to river ports (such as Porto Velho and Santarem), to the cities of Manaus and Belem, and ultimately to the centers of national and international capital, such as Rio and Sao Paulo, but more directly to London. These patterns persisted after the collapse of the rubber boom.

Rainforest Cities focuses on the fourth period of urbanization in Amazonia, which began after World War Two and has been accelerating since the 1960s. Federally-sponsored regional development programs have been central to shaping patterns of urbanization in this period. Getulio Vargas's efforts to promote national unity in the 1940s included plans to integrate Amazonia into the national infrastructure. Concrete efforts of national integration began in earnest during the Kubitschek administration in the late 1950s. The Kubitschek government moved the national capital to Brasilia and built the Belem-Brasilia Highway, the first land link between southern Brazil and Amazonia. The military regimes that ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985 made the integration of Amazonia into Brazilian economic and political life one of their chief goals. The national government promoted the development of the Amazon through "the imposition of centralized taxes, regulatory agencies, policies of import substitution and export promotion, free trade zones, and favored development poles" (p. 68). The Brazilian government did not, however, act as a homogeneous force in the urbanization of Amazonia (p. 69). Agencies within the same government often clashed over development policy. These policies were often implemented sporadically, with mixed success. The return to civilian government after 1985 further complicated the patterns of regional development. Their fieldwork reveals Amazonia to be "a rich and colorful medley of social and institutional forces interacting simultaneously and sequentially in a mosaic of historically associated common spaces" (p.

250).

The authors develop a theoretical framework for mapping the complex patterns of urbanization. First, they turn to the established theoretical tools of geography. They review traditional models of frontier urbanization, which they group under the categories of spatial economics (such as central place theory), cultural geography (including models by Frederick Jackson Turner and Carl Sauer), and political economy (for example, "capitalist penetration" and world-systems models). Although each of these models provides some useful insights into urbanization in Amazonia, none can adequately explain it completely. The authors reject these "hegemonic master theories of explanation" as inadequate (p. xx). They "call into question the entire class of theorizing that presupposes the macro-structuration of space and therefore of human social behavior around a single master principle" (p. 275). Rather, they argue, "*a priori* multiple explanations of a phenomenon exist simultaneously" (p. 348). To explain urbanization in Amazonia, they propose a "pluralistic theory of disarticulated urbanization."

Their theory of disarticulated frontier urbanization rests on seven principles, all of which stress the variety, irregularity, and contingency of the patterns of development in Amazonia. The principles are worth listing here: 1) The Amazon is a heterogeneous social space; 2) The configuration of settlement systems in Amazonia is irregular and polymorphous, disarticulated from any single master principle of spatial organization; 3) Urbanization in Brazilian Amazonia is functionally disarticulated from both regional agricultural development and industrialization; 4) Urbanization in Brazilian Amazonia is variously linked to global economic forces but is not subordinated to the world economic system; 5) The contemporary Amazonian urban frontier is largely a geopolitical creation but remains politically disarticulated within the central state; 6) Established dichotomous categories of rural and urban become problematic when applied to Amazonia; 7) Environmental change in Amazonia is increasingly mediated by urban-based interests (pp. 361-365).

Browder and Godfrey study urbanization using three levels of analysis: local, regional/national, and global (p. 92). They identify two primary patterns of urbanization: the "corporate frontier," and the "populist frontier." These frontiers represent ideal types at the ends of a continuum, not two distinct categories. The populist frontier is characterized by "colonization by small farmers, independent miners, petty merchants, and others engaged in various forms of labor-intensive activity" (p. 70). In the corporatist frontier, "spatial organization is dominated by capitalized enterprises, both in public and private hands, pursuing such activities as corporate cattle ranching, agribusiness, large-scale resource extraction and mining, and hydroelectric projects" (p. 70). The diversity of the Amazonian frontier can be explained by the intermixing of these two patterns of organization.

Much of the data for the book came from surveys taken during the summer of 1990. The authors did their fieldwork in two regions of frontier settlement: the "instant cities" of Xinguara corridor in eastern Amazonia, which represent the corporatist frontier; and the crossroads town of Rolim de Moura in the southwestern state of Rondonia, which represents the populist frontier. They devote a chapter to each of these settlements, and then chapters on migration, the impact of the global economy on Amazonia, and environmental change. The conclusion of each chapter emphasizes the absence of any monolithic explanation for the observed changes, which are themselves quite complicated. Although the authors resist monolithic explanations, they do make generalizations. They note, for example, that the predominant type of migration in the states of Rondonia and Para has been from one urban area to another, which calls into question the traditional image of rainforest cities as "growing urban agglomerations of the dispossessed rural poor" (p. 272). Urbanization has also brought significant environmental change, through a variety of processes. Deforestation by small farmers is perhaps the most familiar kind of environmental destruction, but Browder and Godfrey observe several others. Dam-building, corporatist and populist mining, and pollution in the shanty towns surrounding the cities are among the more serious environmental consequences of urbanization (pp. 342-344).

Rainforest Cities illustrates the different theoretical tendencies of geographers and historians. Browder and Godfrey present their work as a significant methodological innovation for geographers. The "pluralistic" approach that they advocate repeatedly, the "new and integrated ways of constructing knowledge in a post-postmodern era" (p. xx), may be new to geographers, but it is less new to most historians, who have long used theories as heuristics or tools to explain their evidence, rather than as conceptual strait-jackets. The authors note that "recent work in urban geography reflects a growing interest in the explanation of process and less so in the traditional description and classification of pattern" (p. 52). This "explanation of process" has long been at the heart of

historical research and writing. The book's repetitive insistence on its conceptual novelty at times overshadows valuable insights worth further exploration by historians and geographers alike.

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