Introduction

In 1997, I was talking to a *dirigente* (local religious leader) of the Assembly of God in a hamlet a few hours by boat from the small town of Tefé, in the state of Amazonas. Seated on the large sacks of cassava flour with which his congregation paid their tithes, Isac told me about the circumstances in which his father had decided to settle on this side of the Solimões River some twenty years earlier. After first giving an ecological explanation (annual flooding that had driven many farmers to take refuge on dry land—*terra firma*), and then a religious motive (it may not have been easy for an evangelical to live his faith in a place that was essentially Catholic), the religious leader dwelt on what he considered to be the main reason for his father's departure: his refusal to "pretend to be something he was not." At the time, according to Isac, the inhabitants of the hamlet where his father lived had been persuaded by the parish priest to request the demarcation of their lands as Indigenous. His father, however, did not want to be "Indigenous."[1] First of all, as he had arrived as a very young man from the neighboring state of Pará, he did not see himself as a "native." Moreover, having taken a wife from the kin of the "legitimate" owners of the place, he was integrated as a dependent but one whose presence was merely tolerated. Lastly, he apparently spoke only Portuguese. Bundling his meagre personal effects into a pirogue, he signaled his disagreement by leaving the area with his wife and children. He did not, however, stray too far from his allies, as his new house was almost opposite his former place of residence. This decision was not without consequences for his descendants, however: while Isac's cousins who remained on the other bank benefited from public policies aimed at Indigenous populations, the religious leader and his relatives found themselves excluded at the time of our conversation.

At the time that Isac recollected his father's movements, many rural populations in the region were taking the exact opposite route. Instead of trying to avoid being referred to as Indian or as Black, names that were both previously considered derogatory, they took advantage of a provision in the new Constitution of 1988 that allowed them to request recognition from the state as culturally differentiated social groups, able as such to enjoy specific territorial rights: either as "Traditional populations,"[2] or as "Indigenous peoples"[3] or even "*Quilombola* communities,"[4] that is, descendants of Brazilian Maroons.[5] This change in the reading of family histories as well as in the form of ethnic naming was also observable in Amazonian cities, where a growing number of people

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belonging to the middle classes no longer hesitated to assert their Black or Indian origin, which was unimaginable only a decade earlier. After a long period in which Indianness and Blackness were kept at a distance—even completely denied—a time had come in which they were valued.

Several ethnographic studies have nevertheless revealed that these signs of belonging were sometimes articulated in unexpected configurations. In a locality in the state of Amapá, which the authorities had made the symbol of a Black "identity," it turned out that the inhabitants were equally strongly attached to a Portuguese past represented by the feast of Saint George, and that they did not rule out acknowledging an Indian "root" (*raiz*) by reviving the Sairé dance.[6] The observation of another situation in the neighboring state of Pará[7] highlighted that what was conceivable on a collective level was also conceivable for individuals. In a group of neighboring hamlets that had not opted for the same "ethnic self-definition" (some declaring themselves *Quilombolas*, others Indians), it was accepted that the villagers could change their category when they changed residence, for instance by moving to a locality associated with another label.[8]

There is a vast literature on the new social mobilizations in the name of ethnicity within the framework of different populations' fight to defend their territory or obtain inclusion in targeted public policies.[9] From this perspective, authors rightly underline the territorial attacks, threats to ownership, and multiple, even sometimes physical, intimidations that these populations face. The fact remains that although we have extensive knowledge of the often violent sociological contexts in which ethnic claims emerged, little has been written about the categories of thought and the local concepts that made it conceivable to convert sociopolitical problems into identity particularisms. Even if we adhere to the concept of "strategic essentialism" (Spivak 1988), which assumes that in order to access rights, one has to present an "identity," it remains unclear in what terms and under what conditions a public declaration of Indianness or *Quilombolity* (if you will pardon the neologism), and *a fortiori* the transition from one to the other, is envisaged. These questions are sensitive and, as we will see, they involve concealing certain filiations for the sake of bringing others to light, but also negotiating with friends and relatives in order to define a common position. In this context, "identity," "choice," and "mixture," at the very least, are recurring notions that need defining.

Repositionings That Often Go Unnoticed

While ethnic positionings always clearly manifest themselves in the public space, the possibility of envisaging classificatory repositionings is most often concealed from external actors—be they institutional representatives, members of non-

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governmental organizations, or visiting anthropologists. In the Brazilian Amazon, very few inhabitants openly express their doubts as to the current ethnic profile of the hamlet where they live, and few mention the fact of being able to change or of having already changed their "self-definition." At best, people sometimes mention that before the "mobilizations" they did not consider themselves Indians or *Quilombolas*. In this case, their remarks aim to underline their state of "ignorance" of their true nature in which they were unfortunately immersed, and in doing so, to allow their interlocutor to measure the road traveled to recover their culture and memory. And if, for various reasons, an identity requalification were to be considered, it would again be formulated under cover of this same argument of the rediscovery of their true "identity"—as if the register of certainty and clarity was the only one acceptable to foreign ears.

On the other hand, more divided opinions, even questionings, often surface when the moment of political and collective expression of ethnic demands has passed and more personal subjects are broached in the privacy of the home. It is there that comments are made about ancestors whose origins do not fit the label adopted by the village. These comments are always followed by the obvious point that: "There's a mixture [*mistura*] in the family. After all, I could have been this or that." In the local language, it would thus seem sufficient to privilege such or such a forbear to present another self-image to the world. In other conversations, the claim of a territorial right conferred by kinship in the surrounding villages may also be reinterpreted in the sense of a right to change one's official status: "I inherited a plot of land there. I could be like them." These few examples show that it is not the register of ethnicity and the perception of differences that make identity differences intelligible. Understanding these situations requires referring to shared rules whose application is urgently demanded, or conversely, vigorously contested. Depending on the circumstances, a kinship relation will either be concealed, or attributed to a neighbor to smooth over disputes or to forge alliances. Despite the appearance of new terms, disagreements arise from relationships embedded in the local social fabric.

Two elements largely explain the discretion about the possibility of these shifts in identity affiliation. The first is directly linked to a political context that favors the development of agribusiness and livestock farming through legal and illegal seizure of land. To prevent the application of the territorial rights guaranteed by the Constitution of 1988 to groups recognized as Black, Indian, and Traditional, the defenders of this predatory model, who, as we know, have powerful allies in Congress and in the government, do not hesitate to use the services of private companies responsible for gathering evidence of so-called "ethnic fraud" and "lies." The objective of such offensives is, of course, to disqualify the territorial demands made on behalf of ethnic minorities in order to promote the expulsion of populations.

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The second element concerns governmental tactics and the administrative organization of the Brazilian state. Declared "ethnic identities" correspond to ethno-legal categories that distinct institutional agencies are responsible for: the National Foundation of the Indigenous People (Fundação Nacional dos Povos Indígenas, FUNAI) handles Indigenous people; the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária, INCRA) handles *Quilombolas*; and the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (Instituto Chico Mendes da Conversação da Biodiversidade, ICMBio) handles so-called Traditional populations. The fact that these administrations specialize in the management of a particular type of population imposes a certain stability not only in their classification, but also in the lists of beneficiaries that are then constituted. The effectiveness of the deployment of targeted public policies depends on these two operations.

In this context, it is clear that any fuzziness in the projected "identities," any hesitation in the statement of "what one is," but also any performance that is out of step with the images associated with Blacks and Indians or even any violation of the virtuous environmental behavior expected of Traditional populations, risks delaying or, worse, totally compromising the already very slim chances in the normal course of bureaucracy of obtaining official recognition of the ethnic "identity" of a given group and therefore envisaging the demarcation of its territory.[10]

Identity as a Given versus Identification as "Choice"

In a landmark article, Rogers Brubaker lists the uses that the social sciences have made of the term "identity" by showing that both the "strong conceptions," which insist "on similarity across time or between people" and assume homogeneity and persistence, and the "weak conceptions [emphasizing malleability and multiplicity, that] might be 'too' weak to fulfill any useful theoretical function," result in an impasse (Brubaker 2001: 74). This criticism is particularly relevant to the study of complex Amazonian situations, where ethnic movements sometimes occur. It is indeed difficult to think of these situations in terms of stable prior "identities" without immediately having to grapple with assumptions of fickleness, loss of bearings, or, worse, dishonesty. As for the "weak" conception of identity, which undoubtedly accounts for identity better, it does not constitute a sufficient basis to favor a systematic comparison between the processes at work in collectives that are labeled differently. There will therefore be no question, in these pages, of "identity" as an analytical concept likely to shed light on the classificatory transformations of the Amazonian scene examined, whether from the angle of resurgences of a vanished past, or even that of contemporary cultural inventions.

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This term, as well as that of "ethnic group," will instead be used here as "categories of social and political *practice*" (Brubaker 2001: 69, original italics), that is to say, as notions that can guide and support action. Although the different actors involved have integrated these terms into their respective lexicons as quasi-synonyms, they do not give them exactly the same meaning or the same interest. For activists and members of NGOs, identity is what gives substance to social mobilizations. It makes it possible to restore the idea of unanimity in principle concerning the battles to be waged and the way to conduct them, whereas ethnicity clarifies vis-à-vis the outside the nature of the "political subjects" that are constituted. Institutional representatives apprehend them above all as administrative categories that mark the boundaries of their interventions. While they recognize that an ethnic group presupposes an identity, institutional representatives endeavor above all to give these terms a certain density so that they can serve as guides for the implementation of targeted redistribution programs.

Lastly, for the populations concerned, it is essentially a matter of notions that must be constructed in order to establish a dialogue with all parties concerned. Their approach is twofold. They must first obtain information from various external sources about what the proposed terms signify, imply, and are likely to afford them as possible "identities," that is to say, as official labels giving them a social existence in the eyes of the institutions. They must also try their hand at reflexivity in order to discern the elements in their daily actions and gestures, even in their phenotypes, that can support the declaration of their difference. Far from "inventing" "identities" ex nihilo for themselves, populations draw on family histories and lived social experiences for material to develop motifs that support their current struggles.

Ultimately, local people must reconcile two distinct perspectives about what confers rights: their own perspective (which holds that the right to use a plot of land derives, first and foremost, from descent and from alliance) and that of external actors (for whom the recognition of territorial rights is also conditioned on a kind of categorial determination). In other words, the search for a local consensus occurs at a frontier. It must be respectful of village principles while remaining audible to Others, so that what is usually held to be legitimate can converge with what is considered legal. As far as form is concerned, ethnographic observation reveals the very voluntarist and convinced nature of ethnic claims, as well as the recurrence of declarations always made in the name of a collective of people. Far from the intimate feeling usually associated with "identity," the systematic use of action verbs is indicative of the importance of the political dimension: "we have **decided** [*resolvemos*] to be *Quilombolas*," "we have **chosen** [*escolhemos*] to be Indians," "we have **opted** [*optamos*] to be Traditional" (my emphasis). This preeminence of "choice" and "decision" in the representa-

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tions of social trajectories punctuated by positionings and repositionings seems to me to be rendered by the notion of identification, which makes do with successive temporary arrangements, and hence with plurality.

"Mixture" versus "Miscegenation"

In a fascinating article published in 2013, the Brazilian anthropologist Mariana Pantoja analyzed the profound destabilization that she suffered after the "ethnic transfiguration" of a group in the state of Acre (in the Upper Juruá) with which she had worked for quite a time. She gives an enlightening example of these processual constructions. During an investigation that she conducted as part of her doctorate, she followed the process of political organization of a group of rubber collectors (*seringueiros*) as they managed to become recognized as a "Traditional population." In 1990, after a hard fight, they won the creation of an Extractivist Reserve (RESEX), a type of territory associated with this category (Pantoja 2008). However, in the mid-2000s, the ethnologist noted that some members of the group vigorously rejected this designation, and declared themselves to be Kuntanawa Indians.[11] The break therefore seemed clear and sudden and had very concrete consequences: not only did the supporters of Indianness demand the application of other rights and support from FUNAI—and no longer from ICMBio—but the demarcation of the Indian land requested was superimposed on the space of the RESEX, thus threatening its integrity.

What captures our attention in this example is the comments made by the young Kuntanawa on their "identity." Pantoja (2013: 41) reports that they "challenged the idea of an ethnic 'emergence' . . . They objected that they were not 'seeds' that had been dormant underground and [had] suddenly surfaced . . . They were indeed 'existing, non-emerging Indians'; in other words, they had always been Indians." Mindful of rendering their current point of view without obliterating their recent past as *seringueiros*, the anthropologist argued that the Kuntanawa "operated in duality. *They claimed to have existed forever, and had put mixture on the back burner*" (ibid.: 42, my emphasis).

The term "mixture" (*mistura*) that Pantoja employs is extremely common among these populations. In the literature, it is generally held to be a popular version of the scholarly term "miscegenation" (*mesticagem* or *miscigenação*), and similarly implies crossings, mergings, and recompositions that are both biological and cultural. In this proposal of equivalence between these two notions, "mixture" is endowed with the same properties as "miscegenation," and in particular it refers to the "degeneration" that has long been an obsession of Brazilian intellectuals.[12] The affirmation of a "pure" Indianness can then only be done

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by denying any possibility of mixed blood. Indians can only claim to have been Indian for all eternity by excluding all contacts and other contributions.

Most Amazonian populations seem to subscribe to a similar exclusivist postulate: "We are either one thing or another," it is frequently said. They also often mention a problem of "confusion" that has had to be cleared up. But they also articulate, and without great difficulty, the claim to an intrinsic quality of the political principle of identification as "choice." To avoid a seeming contradiction, it must be admitted that even if the two terms designate analogous phenomena, "mixture" is not exactly "miscegenation." The zoological or botanical metaphor (the production of something new by crossbreeding or hybridization) that is commonly associated with the latter term seems to me to poorly account for the specificity of "mixture," which is better perceived if one adopts a physical or chemical approach, according to which the "constituents of the mixture are without any profound reciprocal physical or chemical action" (*Encyclopædia Universalis*). In this sense, the concept indicates, first of all, that different elements, possibly held to be of a different nature or origin, have been placed in the same container.

This conception opens the way to a duality that contents itself with coexistence, but not to dualism, which implies antagonism. Being truly Indian or Black does not depend on a pure and simple denial of "mixture," or even on relegating it to the background. It means exploring the possibilities it carries, letting matrices reemerge, or expressing "existing ones" as the Kuntanawa—who in fact never disappeared—do. In a certain sense, the aptitude for "purity" is constitutive here of "mixture." Therefore, the relationship between the local categories of "decision" and "mixing" can be understood as a way of highlighting certain attributes while others remain latent, nevertheless persisting as virtualities in the collective imagination.

The Power of Metamorphosis: The Echoes of a Religious System?

By positing the resolutely open, constantly negotiated, and possibly divergent features of current identifications, the Amazonian ethnographic situation presented here is a perfect illustration of the analyses of Anthony P. Cohen: "The ethnic group is an aggregate of selves each of whom produces ethnicity for itself" (Cohen 1994: 76). In a rural locality, three brothers consider their ethnic inscription in distinct ways in genealogies that from an administrative point of view are assumed to be mutually exclusive. While they recognize that they come from the same family "mixture," born of a Black great-grandfather and an Indian great-grandmother, one brother declared himself Black, the other Indian, and the third to be "both one and the other." These differences never-

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theless in no way affect their agreement to declare themselves all *Quilombolas* at this precise moment in their trajectory, confirming the political nature of "choice" and the importance of the territorial context and land issues (Chapter 1).[13]

Still taking this ethnographic example as a point of departure, I argue that the formulation of collective projects under the seal of ethnicity is nourished by the personal experiences that each individual has experienced and shared with the others. Rather than sticking to the version of primordial unanimity and demands that are claimed to manifest the resurgence of a forgotten past, this political reading of social demands seeks to stress the importance of creativity stemming from secondary socializations, capable of reinjecting hope in contexts marked by the failures and uncertainties of everyday life (Chapter 2).

A brief reminder of regional history places this precise situation in a more general context, marked by the density of exchanges between rural and urban areas as people, objects, and ideas circulate. However, despite its dynamism, the social formation established over the centuries arouses the mistrust of the authorities and elites, who consider that those whom they designate as *caboclos* are marked by negative characteristics: idleness, ignorance, superstition, resignation, and undifferentiated origins (Chapter 3).

This pejorative exogenous designation is rejected by many local populations, who then sink into a kind of nominal invisibility despite the evidence of their presence. In the 1980s, the success of cultural promotion did little to change the way in which these *caboclos*, as in-between and "mixed," did not seem able to embody a "pure" type like the Indians or the *Quilombolas*. The creation of the institutional expression "Traditional populations" aimed to break with the negative stereotype of the *caboclo*, but its success was only partial because the adjective chosen tended to maintain the local populations in a premodern but also timeless limbo. On the other hand, another interpretation of the *caboclo* around the same period has enjoyed an undisputed fortune until today: as a figure of the invisible world, the *caboclo*-spirit embodies a transgressive omnipotence and relieves human beings of the weight of the traits associated with the *caboclo*-man by concentrating them on him. In other words, it is less a question of affirming an identity between the medium and the spirit than of the existence of certain affinities.[14]

The *caboclo* of possession cults not only confirms the importance of this reference in the Amazonian imagination. By embodying the possibility of transgressing established rules, it also succeeds in symbolizing openness to the world, to multiplicity and the freedom to be what one wants, that is to say, openness to "choice." Such a representation is a kind of inverted mirror of the social order imposed on the *caboclos*-men, who seem to suffer their "mixture" and their dominated status (Chapter 4).

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The establishment of the new constitutional framework and the attribution of specific rights to ethno-legal categories indicated a way to break with this inferiorizing association. Without, of course, guaranteeing inclusion in preferential programs, and sometimes even unleashing the anger of the ruling classes, the decision to attach oneself to a single "root" nevertheless changes the way in which outsiders consider these populations who now claim "authenticity." Yet even though the ways in which the components of "mixture" are disentangled are a recent phenomenon, the ethnic transfigurations that it entails are not new. I will therefore propose two comparisons: on the one hand, with the conceptions of metamorphosis documented by anthropology for the Amerindian universes and, on the other hand, with the transformation device called *virada* that the Amazonian spirit possession cults admit for the *caboclo*. Of particular interest are the counterpoints that these models provide that allow us to better understand how the repositioning of local populations on the ethno-legal scene mobilizes the representation of an "unstable mixture" where "confusion" gives way to articulation (Chapter 5).

As a final point, the comparison with the field of possession is likely to shed light on current concerns about the "ethnic" origins of social groups. Indeed, the great divide, which is now a matter of broad consensus, between rural religious practices of Amerindian origin and urban spirit possession cults of African origin was largely constructed according to the interest of intellectuals concerned with the "mixed-race problem." Convinced that religion revealed race (Figueiredo 2009: 85), by separating cultic elements, they sought a way of avoiding contamination by preserving the purity of origins. However, chronologically, the injunction to authenticity, which led cult leaders to embrace a proposal of de-syncretism (they undertook nevertheless the necessary ritual adjustments to show the extent of their skills), predates the impetus for the un-mixing of real populations by some ten years. These populations reposition themselves with respect to ethno-legal categories in order to avoid being qualified as *caboclos*, while creating new escape routes by way of their "mixture" (Chapter 6).

While remaining as close as possible to the conceptions of local actors, this book thus seeks to reconstitute the way in which they anchor their current political positions in a specific cosmovision that authorizes alterations and transformations. Ethnography reveals a very clear gap between a multivocal reading of contact phenomena, which accepts several registers in the treatment of otherness, and the scholarly interpretations organized around "miscegenation," which suggest convergence and homogenization. Therefore, while this book is concerned with the processes of miscegenation through the material it contributes to the local elaboration of *mistura*, it is also an invitation to put this concept into perspective.

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This remark also spurs us to resist the temptation of a decontextualized definition of ontology: as Africanists such as Jean-Paul Colleyn (2006: 309) have already pointed out, the renewal of the question of the variability of the conception of reality[15] cannot operate to the detriment of taking contexts and diachrony into account. From this perspective, the fluidities and circulations between ethno-legal categorizations, which can be observed in the situation in question and in many others in the Brazilian Amazon, and which are inconceivable from a legal point of view, owe as much to the historical processes of which the modes of classification and interaction with beings and things are a product as to the way in which these modes in turn support social transformations. When we question both *longue durée* history and political sociology today, but also the relationship between individual experiences and the enrichment of collective repertoires or the different local and regional scales, it appears that rather than being sealed off from each other, the ontological and sociological dimensions are in constant communication. This book thus contributes to the reflection on the historical and social conditions of the situated production of "ways of acting, thinking, [and] feeling," to borrow Durkheim's (1998: 97) words.

Notes

I warmly thank Odile Hoffmann for having encouraged me to explore a barely sketched idea that I had submitted to her, as well as Roberto Araújo, Anath Ariel de Vidas, Agnès Clerc-Renaud, Nicolas Ellison, Peter Fry, David Lehmann, Anne-Marie Losonczy, Philippe Léna, Deborah Lima, and Cédric Yvinec, who, through their critical reading, enabled me to refine the analyses proposed here. I remain solely responsible for any errors and omissions and for the views expressed here.

1. From the strict point of view of usage, índio should be translated as "native" and *indígena* as "Indian," since the first Portuguese term has pejorative connotations that bring it closer to the English notion of "native." The local populations who most often call themselves *indígenas* nevertheless refer in certain circumstances to the word índio to better underline their difference. Because of these contextual usages, I adopt the convention of a literal translation for ease of reading.
2. "Populações tradicionais": https://www.gov.br/icmbio/pt-br/assuntos/populacoes-tradicionais.
3. "Quem São": https://www.gov.br/funai/pt-br/atuacao/povos-indigenas/quem-sao.
4. "Informações Quilombolas": http://www.palmares.gov.br/?page_id=52126.
5. I have chosen to respect English typographical conventions by capitalizing White, Black, and Indian, but adding quotation marks on the first occurrence to emphasize that these are social categories. Except when referring to the literature, I have adopted the same convention for *Quilombolas*, Indigenous peoples, and Traditional populations to indicate that these are administrative categories with the potential for distinction vis-à-vis the state, but I have used lowercase for *caboclo* because it does not exist as an administrative category.

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Finally, I capitalize the territorial designations to indicate that they correspond to different land statuses.

6. Boyer (2009).
7. Boyer (2015, 2017).
8. In addition to the ethnography that will be presented in the first chapter, and the two situations briefly mentioned in this paragraph, this research is based on three other surveys. The first was carried out in the suburbs of the capital of the state of Amapá, Macapá: the analysis of an internal conflict in a *Quilombola* community allowed me to suggest that this refers to struggles of influence between dominant kin groups to maintain control over their poorer kin (Boyer 2014). The other two were carried out in the neighboring state of Pará: the study of another internal conflict, in a hamlet about 20 kilometers as the crow flies from the city of Óbidos, led me to suggest that the fears raised by the political *Quilombola* project promoted by the local authorities were expressed using a new religious language, that is, Pentecostal language (Boyer 2002); the second study, conducted in a small town about 30 kilometers from the city of Santarém, allowed me to understand the heritage dimension of these labeled identities (Boyer 2018).
9. This literature is too abundant to be quoted *in extenso*. The reference list therefore only includes the sources used in this book to analyze the situation studied.
10. The pace of land approvals was particularly fast during the two mandates of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995–99, 1999–2003), but slowed down as the ruralist bloc favorable to agribusiness and the mining industry rose in Congress. According to the anthropologist Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (2017), Cardoso's successor, Inácio Lula da Silva (2003–7, 2007–11), favored the creation of conservation units intended for "Traditional populations" rather than the regularization of Indian and *Quilombola* lands, which aroused great frustration very early on (Lima 2015: 445), while Lula's successor, Dilma Rousseff (2011–14, 2015–May 2016), then adopted a very wait-and-see position. The climate worsened even further under the presidency of Michel Temer and of course under that of Jair Bolsonaro, who fully supported the ruralist bloc advocating economic development at all costs. Social mobilizations therefore took place in a context of very real threats of infringement of the constitutional rights of the Indian, *Quilombola*, and Traditional populations, which was reflected in the endless delays of the administration in carrying out land demarcations, and thus in validating the legal transformations of the territorial landscape. In 2020, 1,914 lands had been identified as *Quilombola* by state institutions, including 170 in the northern region, but only 134 *Quilombola* Territories (67 in the Amazon) had been titularized ("Quilombolas no Brasil": https://cpisp.org.br/direitosquilombolas/observatorio-terras-quilombolas/quilombolas-brasil/). Also in 2020, the FUNAI counted 749 registers of Indigenous Lands (369 in the Amazon) but only 473 regularized, including 259 in the northern region ("Terras indígenas": https://www.gov.br/funai/pt-br/atuacao/terras-indigenas). Lastly, concerning the Conservation Units for Sustainable Use, the former site of the Ministry of the Environment indicated that 134 had been created in the country, including 91 in the Amazon ("Populações tradicionais": https://www.gov.br/icmbio/pt-br/assuntos/populacoes-tradicionais).
11. Pantoja points to sociological explanations for this repositioning: the return of clientelism in the association managing the Extractivist Reserve, the development of predatory practices (commercial hunting and creation of pastures), the marginalization of historical leaders, and lastly a territorial dispute (Pantoja 2013: 38–39).
12. Between 1870 and 1930, the Brazilian intellectuals—including Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, who will feature again below—who held that interbreeding condemned the Bra-

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zilian population to "degeneration" (Rodrigues 2008) constituted the dominant current of thought in the country. In the name of Darwin's evolutionary theory and in the wake of Italian criminologists such as Lombroso, they claimed that Blacks and mestizos were physically and morally inferior and advocated implementing eugenic practices as a protective measure. For an analysis of the hegemony of these discourses in academic institutions of the period, see Schwarcz (1993).

13. I decided to focus the ethnography on the case of these three brothers because of its exemplarity. Their voices are therefore the only ones that will be heard directly in this book. For other examples, I will refer to the analyses that I have developed elsewhere and that are listed in the References.
14. The role attributed to their *caboclo* by mediums, mostly poor women living in the outskirts of cities, attests to the prevalence of affinity over identity. The construction of this character is in fact carried out in accordance with the sexual division of labor opposing male production and female management within domestic groups. All the stories attempt to describe the process of transformation of an authoritarian relationship into a harmonious relationship, a process at the end of which the spirit is established in the role of companion of the possessed woman. By placing themselves under the symbolic protection of the *caboclo*, the mediums become autonomous in relation to their real spouses and consolidate their position within the networks of the neighborhood and the religious community (Boyer 1993a).
15. See Erwan Dianteill's (2015) article for an excellent analysis of the heated debates sparked by this notion after the publication of Philippe Descola's (2005) book *Par-delà nature et culture*.

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