

Introduction

This research began after my first encounter with stoneware and glass bottles found next to native rubber trees in Boim village, Lower Amazon, Pará State, Brazil. Subsequently, I sought more information about Boim as a part of Santarém's history. However, despite the region's significant local, regional, and international relevance during the rubber boom, little is published about it, as will be presented later (Chapter 1). The objective of this book is to explore the discussion surrounding the contemporary past through the archaeological, historical, and contemporary data organized into three chapters: 1) historical context; 2) materiality of the rubber period, and 3) rubber heritage and local knowledge.

The first chapter aims to situate the reader about Wickham's act and the history of Boim, including Wickham's role during the rubber boom. To better understand the subject, it is necessary to describe the period in which the Englishman passed through Santarém. In 1876, Wickham collected 70,000 rubber tree seeds from the village and sent them to Kew Gardens, London. Thereafter, *Hevea brasiliensis* was introduced in Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka), collapsing the Brazilian rubber economy in the following years. In this chapter, I will present historical aspects explaining the foundation of villages in the Amazon region, Boim's history, travelers' reports, the materiality of ways of life in the lower Amazon during the mid-19th Century, the imperial/colonial context of the first rubber economic cycle (1850–1920), and information about the region.

The second chapter analyzes the materiality and narratives related to rubber. Its products, such as gloves, snow boots, tires, gaskets, and industrial items, were fundamental at the turn of the 20th century, leading the world into so-called "modernity." However, the place where native rubber tree seeds were collected was left behind. The historical data and the material culture of the rubber period – one of the black boxes of modernity – taking the Latourian perspective into account, will be discussed through the evaluation of archaeological materials found in the village of Boim. This analysis of archaeological materials discusses the materiality of rubber and focuses on the analysis of bottles and other items associated with rubber production. Additionally, the creation and transformation of techniques to produce latex and its processing will be analyzed. Here, the argument about the status of modernity or the human condition itself are primarily based on the works of Bruno Latour and Anna Tsing.

The third chapter aims to integrate information regarding the heritage of rubber, spanning from its application for listing Fordlândia with the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN), to the methods used by local people for rubber production. Both aspects are integral to the materiality and heritage of the rubber period, whether

tangible or intangible. Therefore, I intend to incorporate ethnoknowledge in constructing academic knowledge to better comprehend rubber tapping practices. This knowledge manifests silently through materiality and orally through the transmission of traditional knowledge. It is important to highlight that all interlocutors that contributed to this research have been anonymized here.

Presently, some rubber tapper communities in the Lower Amazon still lack electricity and rely on traditional livelihood practices such as hunting, fishing, and producing cassava flour and other forest-based products on a smaller scale. Just a few communities still produce latex, not for export, but for crafting. They utilize local recipes to coagulate and dye the latex with local substances. Thus, this study seeks to explore beyond existing narratives about Wickham's act, considering its local-global significance for the materiality of rubber in the Amazon region and globally. In doing so, it introduces the concept of the "materiality of the rubber period." This theme is further explored through local knowledge and heritage practices, highlighting the resilience and significance of local communities and rubber tapping agencies, rather than relegating them to "solitude in the jungle."

Enjoy.

