

# TERRITORIES, KINSHIP AND STRATEGIES FOR THE CONTROL OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE REGION OF JAPURÁ-MARAÃ, AMAZONAS.

## TERRITÓRIOS, PARENTESCO E ESTRATÉGIAS DE CONTROLE DE RECURSOS NATURAIS NA REGIÃO DO JAPURÁ-MARAÃ, AM.

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### KEY WORDS:

Human occupation;  
Kinship;  
Territoriality;  
Natural resources;  
Social conflicts.

### ABSTRACT

This article highlights the main features of the territoriality of social groups that occupy the communities located in the Japura-Maraã region, which encompasses part of the territories of the Mamirauá and Amanã SDRs, AM, and the strategies used by households to guarantee access to natural resources. The analysed data are the result of research that aimed to map the territories occupied by different social groups that form communities, seeking to identify situations of conflict and their relation to the control of access to natural resources in areas where fishing resource management activities are being undertaken. The analysis shows that, in the last one hundred years, the geographic mobility of families in search of natural resources has contributed to the formation of territories that have lakes and land rich in forest resources. These families, who settled in several villages, built social relationships and a large territory, and exercised control over access to natural resources, giving priority to members of their kinship group. It was concluded that competition for territories with former residents who migrated to urban areas, and alliances with external actors, such as fishing entrepreneurs, hinder the work of building territorial pacts and generate conflicts.

### PALAVRAS - CHAVE:

Ocupação humana;  
Parentesco;  
Territorialidade;  
Recursos naturais;  
Conflitos sociais.

### RESUMO

O artigo destaca as principais características da territorialidade de grupos sociais que ocupam as comunidades situadas na região do Japurá-Maraã que engloba parte dos territórios das RDS Mamirauá e Amanã, AM, e as estratégias utilizadas pelas famílias para garantir o acesso a recursos naturais. Os dados analisados resultam de pesquisa que teve como objetivo mapear os territórios ocupados por diferentes grupos sociais que formam as comunidades, procurando identificar situações de conflitos e sua relação com o controle do acesso a recursos naturais em áreas onde estão sendo realizadas atividades de manejo de recursos pesqueiros. A análise mostra que nos últimos cem anos a mobilidade geográfica das famílias em busca de recursos naturais contribuiu para a formação de territórios que possuem lagos e terras ricas em recursos vegetais; estas famílias estabelecidas em vários povoados construíram relações de sociabilidade e um amplo território; e exerceram o controle do acesso aos recursos naturais, priorizando os membros de seu grupo de parentesco. Conclui que a disputa por territórios com ex-moradores que migraram para a área urbana, e as alianças com atores externos, como empresários de pesca, dificultam o trabalho de construção de pactos territoriais e geram conflitos.

## INTRODUCTION

This article highlights the principal characteristics of the territoriality of families who form social groups that occupy communities situated in the border region between the Mamirauá and Amanã SDRs, called Japurá-Maraã, in the state of Amazonas, as well as their strategies for building territories and controlling access to natural resources. The data analysed here are the result of research conducted between 2010 and 2012, with the objective of understanding the territoriality characteristics of populations that live in this region, as well as factors related to site development, family mobility and migration, and to forms of controlling territories and access to natural resources (ALENCAR; SOUSA, 2012). The research involved residents of 14 communities located within the Amanã and Mamirauá SDRs and the area around the two SDRs, which make use of the natural resources found in the territories of these CUs (conservation units), and participate in fishing and forestry resource management projects in partnership with local residents. It also involved former residents of this region who live in the cities of Maraã and Tefé. Some of them have a temporary dwelling located within the two SDRs, and others only extract natural resources from these SDRs and often enter into conflict with the residents of the communities.

The study identified the key social and economic factors that would contribute to configuring the characteristics of the process of territory formation and historical events that play a role in the history of recent occupation of this region during the last 100 years, from 1900 to 2012, which is the period of memory recall for the residents. It should be noted that the individuals who were interviewed consider that the occupation began at the time of arrival of their ancestors, whose influence is preserved in the memories of current generations.

The evidence of this influence is more prevalent in the landscape and in places developed on dry land where there are cultivated plants, cemeteries, and old gardens. This story began by identifying the origin of the predominant families, that is, those of traditional occupation or of longest duration, who formed these places and originated the social groups that today inhabit the communities. Our research the based fo our project are the life stories of the life stories of some individuals who made themselves available to narrate the history of their ancestors, highlighting the most relevant events, migratory processes or mobility related to carrying out a family project. The set of narratives allowed for the identification of specific historical facts and the environmental, social and economic factors that influenced the choice of places and imprinted particular characteristics on the territoriality of the residents, and on the social groups' way of life.

The existence of various lake systems with an abundance of fishery resources and forest areas rich in natural resources – wood, nuts, service trees (also known as the true service tree), rubber trees (also known as the sharinga tree) and hunted animals – attract families from various regions who, upon establishing themselves, formed the places and later the communities (ALENCAR; SOUSA, 2012). On the other hand, environmental factors, such as landslides and frequent flooding, were pointed out as having been responsible for the migration of families between places situated in this region, or to the urban areas of Tefé and Maraã. We will now discuss the key aspects of the recent process of human occupation of this region, beginning with a presentation of the characteristics of territoriality of the families, the pattern of population distribution and the factors related to the mobility and migration of the families. Finally, we will briefly address the social conflicts related to the control of access to natural resources, the groups involved and the interests of each.

## **Characteristics of the process of human occupation and pattern of population distribution of the Japurá-Maraã region between 1900 and 2012**

The region called Japurá-Maraã is situated in the municipality of Maraã in the state of Amazonas, cut by the Japurá River, and by the paranás (river branch that is separated from the main watercourse by one or more islands; channel between two rivers) of Aranapu, Joacaca, Mapixari, and Jaraqui-Mutum. It includes a small section of the territories of two environmental conservation units, the Mamirauá and Amanã SDRs, which are separated by the Japurá River. In the section located in the Mamirauá SDR, the typical ecosystem of the flooded várzea is predominant, with the presence of sandbanks and igapó forests (flooded forests), and various lake systems that are interconnected by paranás and channels that are linked to the Japurá and Solimões Rivers. In the part located in the Amanã SDR, including its buffer zone, the dry land forest ecosystem predominates, with terrain that was geologically formed in the Tertiary period, with others formed more recently (AYRES, 1993; SCM/MCT/CNPq, 1996). There are various communities in this region and they are situated within the two SDRs and their surrounding area. They are occupied by families who use the natural resources within these reserves (ALENCAR; SOUSA, 2012).

Based on the residents' accounts, it was possible to develop a map of the trajectory of the families and the main locations chosen for permanent residence. The majority were migrating from areas of ancient rubber trees located along the Juruá, Purus, Solimões and Japurá Rivers, with the paranás of the Aranapu and Auatí-Paraná as one of the primary water courses providing access to this region. Before the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the pattern of occupation was marked by small population nuclei formed by large families who

lived in isolation and who controlled access to the existing resources in their territories. The areas of greatest occupation were characterised by high agricultural land, fish-abundant lakes, and ease of communication with and access to the market, that is, where there were means to transport products and commodities. The oldest sites were established in dryland areas.

In the várzea areas, the settlements were located on islands or at the entrance to paranás and channels that gave access to lakes with an abundance of fishery resources, a pattern that continues to this day. The families that resided in these settlements controlled the extraction of fishery resources, impeding access by individuals who were not part of their kinship group in the same way that they controlled the extraction of other natural resources. This is similar to what occurs today in other areas of the Mamirauá and Amanã SDRs (LIMA-AYRES, 1992; ALENCAR, 2007, 2010).

In the dryland areas, cut by extensive and wide blackwater igarapés (small watercourse - stream – that starts on dry land and drains into a river), the houses were situated in strategic locations to facilitate the control of natural resource extraction. They were generally at the entrance of the igarapés, which were used to access more central areas where there is land rich in nut trees, rubber trees and hardwood (ALENCAR, 2007). The more settled areas were situated along the paraná of the Jacitara, which runs parallel to the Japurá River, near the location where Vila de Maraã, the first municipal headquarters of Maraã, was built in the 1950s. Some families that lived in this urban centre, or in its vicinity, could make use of some State services, such as a health clinic, collections office, city hall, police station, and some urban infrastructure, such as paved roads, wholesale commerce, as well as a Catholic church. The families who lived in settlements near to this centre exchanged commodities with

local businesspeople, thus facilitating access to manufactured goods. However, the landslide phenomenon, little by little, destroyed the houses of the villa, and at the end of the 1950s, the municipal headquarters was moved to a location where the city of Maraã is found today.

The occupation of the oldest places, which gave rise to the settlements located on dry land, dates back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1970s, the settlements were included in the category of community, based on the political organisation promoted by the Catholic Church or by the municipal power (ALENCAR; SOUSA, 2012). Close to 80% of the studied communities were formed between the beginning of the 1970s and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and are located in várzea and dryland environments. Some emerged after the division of the social groups that occupied the oldest locations, resulting from internal conflicts, a phenomenon highlighted in studies undertaken in other areas of the Amanã and Mamirauá SDRs (GILINGHAM, 1999; REIS, 2005; FURTADO, 2005; ALENCAR, 2007).

The oldest families that opened the places and controlled the territories rich in natural resources also featured facts that marked the history of the most recent occupation of this region (ALENCAR; SOUSA, 2012). Some environmental factors, such as environment seasonality and landslides, linked to social factors, such as public policies created by new municipalities, and the formation of communities that offer State services, were listed as having been responsible for family mobility and for influencing the way in which the space was occupied. Until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, mobility occurred within the same environment, that is, between places situated in a várzea area, where there are more fish-abundant lakes, and between dryland locations with forests of nut trees and rubber trees. But there was also seasonal mobility between distinct environments,

that is, from várzea areas to dry land or the reverse. The temporality of this mobility was marked by the supply of natural resources or by the large floods that covered the várzea land and invaded the houses. In some várzea areas, occupation was discontinuous and of short duration, following the seasonality of the environment. On the other hand, in dryland areas, with more stable terrain, such as those situated along the Jacitara paraná and that of Araucá and Joacaca, occupation was long-lasting and the same location was occupied successively by different residents (CORPS 2013; ALENCAR; SOUSA, 2012).

In várzea areas, the discontinuity of occupation of the places is associated with environmental and social factors. Severe flooding was raised as the environmental factor that most stimulated the mobility of families toward dry land; while the landslide phenomenon, which destroys the terrain and prevents the continuity of occupation of a place, was raised as the primary factor in family mobility within várzea areas. Another factor that stimulated the migratory process was the lack of natural resources whose extraction sustained the local and regional economies, such as hardwood and some fish species like pirarucu (*Arapaima gigas*) and tambaqui (*Colossoma macropomum*). The lack of resources reached a critical point in the last three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and caused the bankruptcy of small businesses which financed family-related production and which provided a support base for rural commerce. Production diversification, the search for economic alternatives by families, and the lack of equipment in a condition that guarantees basic social services in rural areas, such as community infrastructure, health care and schools (LIMA-AYRES, 1992; LIMA, 2005; ALENCAR, 2007), are factors that intensified migration to urban areas at the beginning of the 1960s and 1970s. This migration was also stimulated by public

policies implemented in the 1960s, among which we highlight the formation of the municipality of Maraã (ALENCAR; SOUSA, 2012), part of the Manaus Free-trade Zone (ALENCAR, 2011).

By plotting a map of family mobility, it becomes clear that there are two types of migratory movement, which are responsible for the construction of a broad territory whose limits are established on one side by the paranás of Aranapu and Panauã, and on another side by the paranás of Mapixari, Jacitara, Mojui Joacaca, and on the far side by the paraná of Mutun, with the three sides being connected by the Japurá River. The first type of movement refers to families leaving rural zones for urban areas at the end of the 1960s, particularly after the creation of the municipality of Maraã. The change of location of the municipality's headquarters, which was formerly in the paraná of Jacitara, as previously mentioned, triggered a migratory process that involved families that resided in the area of influence of this urban centre, as they were encouraged to move their homes and thus participate in the construction of a new city. Some of these families continued to extract fishery resources in the territories that they had controlled – especially those that were home to lakes rich in fishery resources -, and also maintained social ties with members of their kinship groups. In the years that followed, municipal administrators, such as Benedito Ramos, encouraged the migration of families that lived in other areas, such as Auati-Paraná, to the new headquarters, offering terrain and financial support (ALENCAR; SOUSA, 2012). Throughout the 1970s, various families that resided in várzea and dryland areas situated within the Auati-Paraná faced difficulties in guaranteeing their social reproduction due to the lack of natural resources and a reduction in tradespeople – the *regatões* (merchant who used a boat as his store and travelled the rivers of the Amazon trading merchandise – sugar, salt, fabrics, medicines, work

materials, etc. – for natural products extracted by families who lived on the riverbanks or in more distant regions, at the mouth of igarapés or smaller rivers, in a market where money did not exist) – who covered the region trading commodities for natural products. Thus, the opportunities for access to manufactured goods – commodities – and to production commercialisation were also reduced, resulting in many families migrating to the new municipality headquarters, Maraã.

The other type of movement refers to the mobility of families within the rural area, between settlements situated within the Japurá-Maraã region, such as the paraná of Mapixari and of Mojui, or dryland areas, and which is related to the extraction of fish, iservice trees, and rubber trees, as well as cattle raising (ALENCAR; SOUSA, 2012; CORPS, 2013). Other families migrated from the Auati-Paraná region and established residence in the Japurá-Maraã region, and ended up fighting for territory with pre-established families.

Therefore, we are considering that, in the last 30 years, these families began to share the same territory when participating in social events, whether linked to activities related to removal of key extraction products, such as feitorias (term used to refer to seasonal extraction activities related to the fishing of pirarucu, which until the end of the 1970s, were done intensively in the summer (ALENCAR, 2007, 2010), or festive events, such as religious parties in honour of a patron saint of the place, promoted by a family and around which families of their social and kinship circle reunited. These social events reinforced relationships between the main families, and they allowed for the construction of an intricate network of exchange of materials, both matrimonial and symbolic, and marked by reciprocity. Therefore, we can consider the existence of a territory of sociability and of kinship (WOORTMAN, 1985) because we have identified the existence of strong

kinship ties, of affinity and solidarity, uniting families that reside in various communities in this region, including those that migrated to the urban area. However, such relations are also marked by conflict, considering that conflict is a characteristic of human sociability (SIMMEL, 1983). In order to understand these conflicts, the strategies for the construction of the places and the characteristics of territoriality of these families must be understood.

### **Extraction of natural resources and formation of territories**

In the last 100 years, the families who reside in the Japurá-Maraã region have guaranteed their social reproduction by extracting various natural resources – fishing, animal hunting for the sale of skins, extraction of latex and collection of Brazil nuts -, and by cultivating farmland, particularly for harvesting manioc for flour production and fruit trees like banana. Some families were taken to this region by tradespeople, the *regatões*, with the promise of guaranteed control of broad areas of land and fish-abundant lakes and, at the same time, regularity in natural resource supply (ALENCAR, 2007, 2010), while others were motivated to move by already established relatives. Once established, they built places and territories that were linked to their identity through the attribution of meaning that translates personal forms of perception of the world (AUGÉ, 2012; LITTLE, 2002). Territory and place, therefore, are concepts that help with the understanding of territoriality characteristics of families of this region.

From an anthropological perspective, ‘place’ is the space that is symbolically constructed and which becomes a reference of identity for an individual or group (AUGÉ, 2012; TUAN, 1983). From a local perspective, the place that was opened by founding families (ALENCAR, 2002; CORPS, 2013) refers to the space that was occupied and given meaning through its transformation by human action, that is,

by a family that brought new social and symbolic order and gave rise to the social group (ALENCAR, 2002). The ties established by the social group with the place are maintained, including in situations where constant transformation of the landscape is verified (ALENCAR, 2002, 2008), or migration to an urban area, when the place takes on the role of place of memories (NORA, 1993). Starting with their places, these families also built their territories and established boundaries as they carried out economic and symbolic activities, with the goal of social reproduction. Therefore, territory is the result of a set of practical, as well as symbolic, actions, that a group develops around a certain space, upon which its cosmography (LITTLE, 2002) is built and to which it also link its identity.

In this médio Solimões region, territories have characteristics that vary according to the environment and to the type of economic production that predominates. In dryland areas, located in the Amanã SDR, activities such as farm harvesting and animal husbandry contribute to the permanency of families, while the extraction of rubber trees (*Hevea brasiliensis*) and service trees (*Sorbus domestica* L.), of legalised wood and the collection of Brazil nuts (*Bertholletia excelsa*), allowed for the amplification of territories of production beyond the dryland areas located along the margins of the Japurá River. Recently, these lands have passed through a land registry process, and some older families now have land ownership documents (FURTADO, 2005).

One dominant characteristic of the várzea environment is the existence of seasonality that is strongly distinguished by two periods, the high-water period or winter, and the drought period when the rains diminish and the rivers dry out. This impacts certain ways of life of the population in terms of economic activity and social events. Economic activities are well defined and have

little variation, centred around agriculture and fishing, with the use of some strategies that aim to overcome or mitigate the limitations of the environment. In the várzea, the agricultural cycle of maturation of manioc farms is six months, which is equivalent to the drought period of the rivers, and on dry land where the farm areas are not subject to flooding, the maturation of the farms occurs 10 months after plantation.

In várzea areas, access to land used to be free, that is, a family could establish residence in any location that was not occupied by another family. The act of occupying a space and opening a place created necessary conditions whereby this family could exercise control over access to natural resources available in the territory they built through the development of subsistence activities. But, this right over the territory also was given through sales agreements, when a family “bought” the land, that is, the benefactors – house, cultivated plants, farms, etc. – also assuming control of the lakes located in the territory. In some cases, this land was bought by a tradesperson from the urban area and, through customer relationships based on long-term debt and social obligations, he/she would assign a family to take control of the extraction of natural resources, assuming the role of “manager”. They also motivated the families to live in other areas, moving seasonally to extract natural resources in these areas, using the system of advance payment and creating a relationship of gifting and exchange with these families (TAUSSIG, 1993). Using this strategy, they were able to make use of the surplus that they were obligated to produce, in a system where the prices of the commodities they supplied were inflated, and where regional products they received as payment for commodities were undervalued – fish, skins of different animal species, rubber tree and service tree, as well as wood. This is called an “economy of procurement” as attributed by

Sahlins (1970), since there is advance payment for products, in the form of commodities and work materials supplied by the boss, and because it is related to production that is not essentially destined for use or consumption, but rather for exchange. In other words, they trade natural products for commodities, and thus, they are able to indirectly obtain what they need. Therefore, if, in an economy of subsistence, there is continuous work and poor capacity to meet the consumption needs of the families, in an economy of supply, “it is what they need that governs production, and not the profit that they can acquire. Interest in exchange remains as an interest of consumption and not as an interest of capitalism” (SAHLINS, 1970:118).

The main territories formed through the actions of families established in the main settled areas span the five largest lake systems in this region: the Acãuera lake system, the Jutai-Cleto lake system, the Caruara lake system, the Acapu and Preto (Black) lake system; among other lake systems that communicate with these systems through the paran of Mapixari. The main feature of these lakes is the abundance of fishery resources, and the fact that they are controlled by tradespeople from the urban areas of Tef, Manacapuru and Mara, or by families that live in the region (FURTADO 2005; ALENCAR; SOUSA, 2012). In this region of Amazonian várzea, fishing follows a calendar that is determined by the variation in water levels and by the reproductive cycle of target species, two factors that are interconnected since certain species reach sexual maturation at the beginning of winter, while others enter into the reproductive phase at the beginning or at the end of summer (QUEIROZ; SARDINHA 1999; VIANNA et al., 2007). Fishing is carried out in different environments, such as lakes, rivers and igaps. Fishing in lakes takes place primarily in summer, when there is capture of fish species that

remain in these environments to reproduce, such as pirarucu.

The lakes in this region have been exploited by families that are spread across a vast working and kinship territory, including settlement residents located in the Aranapu paraná, Jacitara paraná, on the islands of Maripi and Mutun, and in the area of the Japurá River, where the Jubará and Paraiso communities are located. Also included are families that live in the area of Costa do Jacaré (today, Porto Alegre), and also in the region of the Cururu paraná, located closer to the mouth of the Japurá River (ALENCAR, 2009). They exercise control over the territories, restricting access to natural resources by people who are not part of their kinship group, or who do not follow the rules they have established. Therefore, the control of access to common resources, for the private use of a few individuals, is an ancient practice in this region and is not considered a recent phenomenon (ALENCAR, 2010; ALENCAR; SOUSA, 2012). In the last 100 years, some tradespeople have stood out in this region because they have taken control of the local market, as well as vast territories rich in natural resources, particularly fishers and loggers (ALENCAR, 2012).

Beginning in the 1970s, the arrival of new families, stimulated by tradespeople who work in this region, changed the local social and political scenes, as they fought for fishery resources that were controlled by older families, in the Acãuera, Caruara and Mojui lakes, for example. Some had commercial ties with tradespeople from other regions who had control over natural resource extraction in areas that had fish-abundant lakes and wood resources, or who leased these areas for extraction by third parties (ALENCAR, 2009). The families signed all kinds of agreements with these merchants, including relationships of commercial exchange and, more recently, symbolic exchange, considering they function as political capital

for those merchants who run for public office in systems of representation of legislative or executive power.

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the growth of fishing species, such as pirarucu, tambaqui, and other more commercially-valued species, fostered primarily by the commercial fishing boats, the pressure on stocks caused a drastic reduction in these fishery resources. As a result, families sought economic production alternatives, dedicating themselves to fishing flatfish present in rivers during summer, and the extraction of wood resources. There was a new form of work-related mobility as timber extractors, for example, as the more valuable wood species ran out, would move to other areas, such as the region of the high Japurá or the Jutai River, while other families migrated to the urban area.

The new political juncture in the environmental area, which took shape at the end of the 1980s and throughout the 1990s, and resulted in the prohibition of fishing pirarucu (QUEIROZ; SARDINHA, 1999) and timber extraction, caused an immediate negative impact on the lives of the families that lived in the Japurá-Maraã region. Thus, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the various lake systems of the Japurá-Maraã region were abandoned. The lack of fish, caused by the intense fish extraction, led families to leave the region and migrate to the cities of Tefé, Maraã and Manaus, due to insufficient resources to guarantee their sustenance (FURTADO, 2005; ALENCAR; SOUSA, 2012). Those that remained diversified their subsistence activities, such as farm harvesting, as extractive activities related to timber logging and fishing certain species were reduced. As a result, they maintained ties with the territories.

With the formation of the Mamirauá and Amanã SDRs in the 1990s (MOURA, 2007; REIS, 2005), some families began to carry out natural resource management activities, such as fishery resource

management, thus contributing to the recuperation of stocks that had been more intensely exploited, and which were already considered sparse in the early 1990s, such as pirarucu and tambaqui (QUEIROZ, 2005; AYRES; MOURA; LIMA-AYRES, 1994; ALENCAR, 2010). The creation of protected areas, like the SDRs, guaranteed the development of agreements for local populations, aiming for equal access to natural resources, such as the fishery resource management projects.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the increase in supply of fishery resources attracted fishers and families who had migrated to the urban area, and they began to claim back rights over territories that had been built by their ancestors. These territories, which had been abandoned, were then reoccupied by the families who remained in the area and who maintained control of the fishing activities in the more fish-abundant lakes. Thus, in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the former residents or their descendants, who had migrated to the urban area when fishing production had collapsed, began to complain about the presence of these families in these territories, claiming that they had documents proving their property rights, particularly regarding the lakes. This right had been obtained through some kind of commercial transaction, that is, someone who was considered the owner of a public area, of a lake situated in a várzea area that is governed by a specific law (FURTADO, 2005; ALENCAR; SOUSA, 2012), decided to sell the lake when there was no longer any financial return.

The key argument used by the descendants of those who had migrated to the urban area is that their families had founded the places that gave rise to the communities, and over many years, they had “guarded” the lakes where the residents of the communities that remained in the area began to undertake fishery resource management activities. These also claimed customary rights to

territories, based on the criteria of ownership by families who formed the places and, primarily, because they maintained ties to the territories. In this sense, both those who migrated, as well as those who remained, reclaimed their rights over the same territory, based on ownership by a family who had founded the places. But, for those who remained, the right would be legitimised because they provided continuity to the actions of their ancestors, while the others preferred to leave, thus breaking symbolic ties with the territory (ALENCAR, 2002, 2007). Therefore, the characteristics of territoriality of the families who live in the Japurá-Maraã region, and which were identified in other contexts (LIMA; ALENCAR, 2000; ALENCAR, 2002, 2009), indicate that the territorial right, both for those who migrated and for those who remained, is not given only because of ownership to a family who opened the place and developed the territory, but because of continuity of actions by present-day generations. This reinforces the link with the territory and with the kinship group, and guarantees to its descendants the right to the territory and to the use of natural resources. The history of occupation of this region, which occurred over the last 100 years, using some dominant or traditional families as a reference, helps with the understanding of these conflicts since, in many cases, they tend to continue historical tensions. In other words, they show that there are accumulated motives (BARBANTI Jr, 2006; LITTLE, 2005), and they tend to be triggers for conflicts today.

## CONCLUSION

Understanding the characteristics of territoriality of the residents of the Japurá-Maraã region requires knowledge of the way in which different social groups build their territories and the strategies used to manage, control and maintain these territories. It also requires knowledge of the economic production strategies, the relationship they have

with an environment marked by seasonality and landscape transformations, and the strategies used to maintain and manage the territories. This knowledge is fundamental for the understanding of current socio-environmental conflicts that involve a dispute regarding access to natural resources. To achieve this, we seek to understand the process of the formation of social groups that gave rise to the communities, and the unique aspects of their territoriality, in particular, the criteria that define the boundaries of these territories, and the rules of access to available natural resources.

Marriage between members of principal families helped to weave an intricate kinship network and to form a broad kinship territory; its mapping is important for understanding certain claims for territorial rights put forward by its members and which involve the control of key natural resources. This broad social territory is shared by families that reside either in the communities located in the Mamirauá and Amanã SDRs, or by families who reside in municipal headquarters and in the surrounding area around the two SDRs. These families develop activities in a collaborative manner, which are fishery resource management projects, in particular pirarucu. Placed in different contexts and reclaiming historically referenced rights to a place and a territory, and to a kinship group, these families sometimes work in collaboration, and other times enter into situations of dispute.

The conflicts expose historical disagreements and the different actors mobilised by distinct interests, with different positions of power within the communities. Among these, we highlight the former residents who migrated to Maraã and work as fishers, the political leaders with ties to the community residents, the buyers of fish and wood in the urban area, the established families, that is, those who arrived in the region at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and families who migrated more recently, arriving in the 70s. Some of these families

have strategic alliances with fishing entrepreneurs who have businesses established in cities, such as Manacapuru, Tefé, Maraã and Manaus (ALENCAR, 2012), and while they are not part of the conflict scenarios, they have significant power to influence local actors.

But significant changes are happening with the fishery resource management projects being carried out by fisher collectives formed by fishers who live in the communities, and fishers who live in urban areas, organised as fisher settlements and unions. The signed agreements in these projects, which aim to establish territorial agreements and rules of access to resources, tend to democratise access to resources and break historically established alliances that favoured only one group, jeopardising the majority of families who live in this region.

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