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“It Tells All Of Our History!”

The *Boi-Bumbá* Festival of Manaus

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This article examines the discourse on modernity and nostalgia in Manaus, the capital of the Brazilian state of Amazonas, with a focus on the *boi-bumbá* festival, a folkloric dramatic dance that tells the story of the death and resurrection of a rancher's beloved bull. Although most of the population lives in urban areas and engages in wage labor, the region is still popularly imagined as a “place that time forgot”: a natural area largely free of modern human intervention. This paper discusses how the *boi-bumbá* of Amazonas rose to stratospheric popularity in the context of urbanization, industrialization, political change, and the “greening” of the region. I conclude by suggesting that the *boi-bumbá*'s rise is not unconnected to these larger demographic, socioeconomic, and political events and demonstrate how it has come to serve as a vehicle for collective memory and nostalgia.

Key words: Brazil, caboclo, folklore, Manaus, nostalgia, urbanization

Manaus is the tenth largest city in Brazil, with a population of more than two million inhabitants (roughly 2.5 million in the greater metropolitan area). The capital of Amazonas state, in 2014 it had the sixth largest economy of Brazilian cities (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE] 2014). Nevertheless, during that year's preparations for the FIFA World Cup, national and international discourse focused on Manaus's perceived exotic, dangerous nature, questioning whether it was even capable of performing as a host city. Manaus was labeled as “the place to avoid” by England's coach Roy Hodgson, which the press gleefully seized upon.

The purple prose of the *New York Times* article “The Snakes May Not Bite, But the Humidity Devours” featured descriptions of “creepy crawlies,” including “tiny vampire catfish” that swim up unsuspecting penises. The article was accompanied by a picture of dark-skinned youths clinging to fences to watch the World Cup, captioned, “Local residents in Manaus say that the Amazonian city has two seasons, summer and hell” (Longman 2014). The photograph which heads the article is of an adorable three-year-old girl posing for the camera in flowered shorts and princess shirt, a sizable boa constrictor draped around her tiny shoulders. Even while reinforcing such stereotypes, author Jeré Longman laments:

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The put-upon mayor of Manaus, Arthur Virgílio Neto, has reminded everyone that he runs a city of two million people, one with a celebrated opera house, a vital industrial zone, sumptuous cuisine and a thriving base for eco-tourism. Surely no other mayor of a World Cup city has felt the need to say, "There are not poisonous snakes and tarantulas roaming around the streets and falling from the trees" (Longman 2014:D1).

Even when the evidence clearly shows the opposite, this narrative of Amazonia as "Green Hell" appears impossible to resist. It is hard, it seems, to see the city in the forest for the trees.

This is not an isolated example. Discourses about the Amazon tend to focus on the area as something extraordinary, frozen in what McClintock (1995) calls "anachronistic space." Amazonia is imagined to be forever a place of nature, rather than culture, largely immune to transformation through human intervention. In popular imagination, it remains outside the market economy, and even as a place where the nation-state barely penetrates. Urban areas are not excluded from such discourse, and as the press for the World Cup shows, the narrative of "Amazon as space of uncontrollable wildness" extends there as well. Manauaras (inhabitants of Manaus) have not remained ignorant of the way that their country and the world sees them. They are a diverse group of people, and their reactions have taken form in complicated and sometimes contradictory ways.¹

In this article I demonstrate how some people in the city of Manaus reframe narratives of Amazonian backwardness through the *boi-bumbá*, a regional version of the *brincadeira do boi* (bull festival), locating themselves in the nation's historical narrative on their own terms. I show how the *boi-bumbá* and the nostalgia it generates has become a powerful space for people in Manaus to comment on their changing, complex relationship to themselves, to their place in national history, and to their regional image. I situate this cultural practice in the context of other emerging discourses in Manaus that demonstrate this to be part of a larger shift toward valorizing an Amazonian identity. Finally, I suggest a connection between the growth of the festival's popularity and the Zona Franca de Manaus, a tax-free assembly and manufacturing zone whose establishment precipitated a marked increase in rural-to-urban migration in the region around Manaus.

This paper is based on ethnographic research conducted from 2010 to 2014 in Manaus. In those four years, I lived in the neighborhood of Educandos, close to the square where the rehearsals of the neighborhood's *boi-bumbá* group, Boi-bumbá Garanhão, take place (Figure 1). Through participant observation of the daily life of the neighborhood as well as at more than fifty *boi-bumbá* general rehearsals, dozens of dance practices, four competition performances, one spectacle performance, three victory celebrations, numerous organizational meetings, two elections, hundreds of informal get-togethers, and a large number of other *boi-bumbá*-related concerts and events (such as the annual multiday Boi Manaus and CarNaBoi celebrations and their related weeks of pre-shows



Figure 1. View of Educandos from city center, across the Igarapé de Educandos.

at which local and regional boi-bumbá music is played for enthusiastic crowds). I performed both as a member of Boi-bumbá Garanhão's *tribo feminina* (the "female tribe" dancers, one of the many specific elements of the performance stipulated in the yearly revised festival rules, the *Regulamento*), and as a musician in the *batucada*, the percussion corps. I also documented the festival extensively through photography and videography.

I conducted in-depth life history interviews with 70 festival organizers, participants, artists, musicians, and set- and costume-makers, as well as local politicians and *caboclo* (mestizo or mixed race) identity activists. Interviews focused on individual and family histories of participation in the boi-bumbá. These interviews were guided toward stories of past boi-bumbá participation and the retrospective meaning they have for people, paying close attention to the varying backgrounds of each participant. This approach was chosen in order to understand participation in folkloric performance as embedded in the real spaces and times of people's lived experiences.

In addition to the Manaus festival, I also visited the much larger and more famous festival in Parintins, in 2010. The Parintins and Manaus boi-bumbá competitions are only two of a growing number of folklore festivals throughout Brazilian Amazonia (see Watson 2015). Cities and towns have used the competitive folklore festivals to create a marketable brand to attract tourists, and I was able to visit four such festivals. Boi-bumbá Brilhante, Boi-bumbá Corre Campo, and Garanhão are the three best-known bois-bumbás of Manaus,² but many smaller groups exist, and I was able to attend and

document several of these neighborhood and school performances through fieldnotes, photography, videography, and interviews.

MANAUS: FROM RUBBER CITY TO HOME OF THE ZONA FRANCA

Manaus was a principal urban center of Brazil's *ciclo da borracha* (rubber era),³ as people from around the country came to Amazonia in droves from 1870 to 1920 (Browder and Godfrey 1997). That phase of population growth, however, chiefly brought new migrants into rural areas, as would-be rubber tappers made their way into the forests, where *Hevea brasiliensis*, the Brazilian rubber tree, could be found. What turn-of-the-twentieth-century Manaus lacked in population growth it made up for in wealth, as the new regional elite remade the town into the "Paris of the Tropics," with electric lights, a modern floating port, and genteel society whose members emerged in the cool evenings to promenade around the city square. After the rubber market crashed, rubber workers slowly filtered out of the forests and into urban centers, with those most in need of medical assistance landing in the capital city. Life in the Amazon returned nearly to pre-rubber era standards, with many of the great works of the capital city falling into disrepair (Despres 1991; Nugent 1993; Slater 1994; Wagley 1976). The rubber era caused a significant and enduring shift in the region's demography, as many of the rubber workers came from the country's northeast, bringing with them the cultural practices of that region, including variations of the northeastern *brincadeira do boi*.

This city that was built on rubber—and which fell into disrepair when the market crashed in 1912—today is home to the 10,000-square-kilometer Zona Franca de Manaus (ZFM), a federally subsidized tax-free assembly and manufacturing zone housing hundreds of businesses and employing more than 100,000 workers, which has led to its being dubbed (with obvious hyperbole) "Brazil's China" (Cooke 2006). Under the 1964–1985 military regime, the ZFM became a national shopping destination for the Brazilian elite, with each visitor allowed to purchase up to \$2000 in imported goods, duty-free, avoiding the high tariffs levied on foreign products (Chernela 2000). In 2017 Manaus celebrates the golden anniversary of the ZFM. The state of Amazonas was already in a process of urbanization when the ZFM was established, but the new assembly and manufacturing complex sharply accelerated that process (Browder and Godfrey 1997; Corrêa 1991; Despres 1991). According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, in 1960, only 35.5% of residents of Amazonas lived in urban areas.⁴ After the ZFM's 1967 establishment, the urban population of Amazonas reached 42.6% in 1970, 50.2% in 1980, 57.8% in 1991, and 69.8% in 2000. By the most recent census in 2010, the state of Amazonas had a population of 3,483,985 inhabitants, with 79% living in urban areas—51.7% in the capital city of Manaus alone (IBGE 2010). At the same time that Manaus was developing into the concrete jungle it is today, another phenomenon was coming into its own: the *boi-bumbá*, the Amazonian version of the eighteenth-century Brazilian bull festival.

THE BOI-BUMBÁ

Manauaras told me the story of the boi-bumbá as follows: a humble laborer (generally of African descent) lives and works with his consort on the cattle ranch of a wealthy landowner (of European descent). The wife becomes pregnant and has a craving for bull tongue (or sometimes bull liver). To satisfy her desires, the husband kills the ranch owner's favorite bull and then, panicking, flees to the forest to hide. The ranch owner brings in the local Indian tribe, administered by the Jesuits, to help root the evildoer out of the forest. Confronting him, the patron orders the poor African man to bring the bull back to life. A variety of bumbling healers (a priest, a *curandeiro*, doctors) try to restore the bull to life, until at last a *pajé* (shaman) from the local tribe performs a miraculously successful ritual, and the bull is at last resurrected (Figure 2). Although Manauaras generally agreed on this storyline, all folklore is characterized by its variability. At each place where the bull festival is practiced, the details vary, whether in lyrics, costumes, characters, plot, or other details. This variability allows the bull festival to reflect local concerns, understandings, and preoccupations.

The Brazilian writer, artist, and musicologist Mário de Andrade classified the brincadeira do boi as a part of the folkloric phenomena he called *danças dramáticas* or "dramatic dances."⁵ Mário de Andrade defined the *danças dramáticas* as comprising the *pastoris*, the *cheganças*, and the *reisados* (Cavalcanti 2004:66).⁶ The *reisados* are distinguished by a unique theme: the magical resurrection of an animal or plant. Folklor-



Figure 2. Fabiano Alencar, representing the character of the *pajé* (shaman), performing the ritual dance which will bring the bull back to life at a rehearsal in the *curral* of Boi Garanhão in Educandos, 2011.

ist Luís da Câmara Cascudo believed that the brincadeira do boi was created by the bringing together of various bull-themed reisados (Gottheim 1984:30; see also Queiroz 1967:88). Since reisados (despite their underlying theme of death and resurrection) are small plays celebrating the coming of the three kings to bring gifts to the infant Jesus, they are associated with the Christmas season. In some areas of the country, the brincadeira do boi is still associated with Christmas celebrations.

Many reisados may have been created as part of the semipopular religious theater of the Jesuit priests of the time, intended to catechize the masses (Assayag 1995; Farias 2005). We can see the Christian theme of death and resurrection in the bull's demise and revival. Catirina plays Eve to Francisco's Adam, tempting her husband to snatch the forbidden fruit of the master's bull on an Edenic ranch. In some versions of the brincadeira do boi, either the Indians, the bull, or both, are baptized.

The first published mention of the brincadeira do boi appears in 1829, in a brief letter to the editor of the newspaper *O Farol Maranhense* [The Maranhão Torch], in which the writer reports that the bumba-meu-boi had attracted bands of people who roamed the streets, setting off fireworks, "all very happy" and without any arrests (Cavalcanti 2006: 91). The first real written description of the brincadeira do boi appeared in the periodical *O Carapuceiro* [The Hoodmaker], in an opinion piece written by priest Miguel do Sacramento Lopes da Gama, published on January 11, 1840, in Recife. His piece carried the title: "*A estultice do Bumba Meu Boi*," or "The Folly of the Bumba Meu Boi," and reflected his trademark irreverent style:

Of all the diversions, frolics, and popular amusements in our Pernambuco, I know not one as foolish, as stupid, and as lacking in humor as the well-known *Bumba-meu-boi*. A black man placed under a cloth is the bull; a rogue inserted into the bottom of a large, old, wicker basket calls himself the seahorse; another screwball, under some sheets, is named the little donkey; a boy with two skirts, one from the waist down, the other from the waist up, ending at the head with a manioc sieve, is what is called the *caipora*; besides these there is also another rogue that they call Father Mateus (Gama 1996 [1840] as quoted in Assunção 2008:36–37).⁷

The third written account of the brincadeira do boi (and the first outside the northeast region) is from Manaus, in 1859. Robert Christian Berthold Avé-Lallemant, a medical doctor and world traveler from Germany, recorded the following performance:

I saw another procession shortly after I arrived, this time in honor of St. Peter and St. Paul. They called it '*bumba*.' From afar I heard from my window a singular singing and syncopated drumming. In the dark, coming up the street, arose a great multitude that stopped in front of the police chief's house, and seemed to organize itself, without doing anything that I could recognize. Suddenly the flames from some torches illuminated the street and the entire scene. Two lines

of people of color, in the most varied apparel of masqueraders, but without masks—because dusky faces were better—placed themselves one across from another, thus leaving a free space. At one end, wearing an Indian's party costume, was the *tuxaua*, or chief, with his wife; this was a big, well-proportioned youth, because no woman or girl appeared to take part in the celebration. This chieftainess exhibited a beautiful costume, with a short, many-colored skirt and a pretty feathered crown. If you adorned the head and hips of a saucy dancer in Paris or Berlin with this costume, it would certainly knock down a whole audience. In front of the couple was stationed a shaman, the *pajé*; in front of him, at the other end of the line, a bull. Not a real bull, but rather an enormous and light framework of a bull, on whose sides hung pieces of cloth, with two real horns at the front. A man carried this carcass on his head, thus creating the figure of a bull of great dimensions (Avé-Lallemant 1980:106).

The many commonalities between the events make it clear that we are reading about variations of the same performance: the bull costume that is worn by a man; the primary performers are dark-skinned; it is performed outside; the large and varied cast of characters in fantastical costumes; it is a performance for the common people.

Probably because of its association with the poor and with people of color, the practice of the *brincadeira do boi* was frowned upon by authorities. In the 1850s and 1860s such performances throughout Brazil were often banned entirely by the police, or confined to closed spaces to avoid social disorder (Gottheim 1984). In the Amazon region this was no different; in Manaus, *boi-bumbá* folklore groups were essentially gangs that met in frequent, violent street brawls. Manaus *boi-bumbá* enthusiast, historian, and folklorist Mário Ypiranga Monteiro (1964:70) described a street fight between *Boi-bumbá* Mina de Ouro ("Goldmine") and *Boi-bumbá* Corre Campo ("Runs in the Field"):

Early this morning, there was a clash between '*bumbás*,' in Epaminondas Avenue. . . . Panic among the participants of the *Boi-bumbá*. Screams and running around. The incident had already grown to gigantic proportions when, opportunely, the Military Police and the Civil Police authorities arrived on the scene, fenced the group in, and took *amos*,⁸ *vaqueiros*,⁹ Catirinas and Father Franciscos, along with a large number of *Boi-bumbá* fans, to the government jail on Marechal Deodoro Street, where they spent the rest of the night.

The fight left two wounded.

Study participants remembered such fights from their childhood. Zé Maria Guedes, the first president of *Boi-bumbá* Garanhão, recalled the following:

our parents, they didn't let us go out, because in those days there were a lot of fights. . . . there were a lot of fights. In the past, we didn't have those front

walls of brick and concrete, you know, they were board fences. And so, when there had been a fight, in the morning we would see that they'd pulled up the boards of those fences to fight with one another. And so our parents wouldn't let us [go out to join the *boi-bumbá*].

The association of the *boi-bumbá* with the *povão*, the common masses, still follows it today, though it has been remade for middle-class consumption, as I will touch on below.

FIELDSITE: EDUCANDOS

Educandos is a largely working-class neighborhood located east of Manaus's downtown, across the Igarapé de Educandos, a seasonal river channel which the rising Rio Negro fills during the rainy season. Educandos was the first area to be settled after what is today the city center; it got its name from the Estabelecimento dos Educandos Artífices (Establishment of Student Craftsmen), the first provincial school in the region, established in 1856 (Amazonas 1996:65). This school was one of many that were founded throughout the country around this time to provide the nation with trained workers. In the mid-1800s, finding laborers to maintain the city's infrastructure and man its industries was an ongoing problem in and around Manaus (Mesquita 1999: 129–32). The British naturalist Henry Bates, passing through the area at this time, noted that this was largely because Indians who had been kidnapped by slavers had begun to learn of their rights, and "having got to know that the laws protected them against forced servitude, were rapidly withdrawing themselves from the place" (Bates 1921:176).

Most people who arrive in Manaus by boat do so coming up the Amazon, from the east, to its junction with the Rio Negro at the edge of the city. The neighborhood of Educandos can be seen today on a high bluff that appears just before the tall buildings of downtown. Known as the *Cidade Alta*, or "High City," residents consider it to be where the city begins, and indeed, inscribed on the wall of that bluff, in white cement letters against an overgrown tangle of green weeds, appears "*BEM-VINDO A MANAUS*." Educandos is a study in contrasts: it is home to a few millionaires, whose multistory homes command the best views of the river, as well as favelas of auto-constructed houses and shacks that perch and lean impossibly, clinging to each other and the hill that descends to the *igarapé*. The most notorious of these areas is that which contains the *Igapó* and *Bodozal* favelas, neighborhood centers of poverty and drug trafficking. In severe weather, entire sections of precariously situated dwellings have been known to slide down into the water as rain erodes the mud upon which they are built.

Educandos is known in the city for a plenitude of factors: the bright blue church of *Nossa Senhora do Perpétuo Socorro* (Our Lady of Perpetual Help); the drug-related violence that all too often fills the viewing room of the church with the bodies of the neighborhood's young men and boys; its convenient proximity to the *Zona Franca*; its past as the city's red light district; its nightly fish market, built at the site of the de-

funct Panair floatplane airport; the yearly river procession of decorated fishing boats dedicated to St. Peter (Figure 3); and its dedication to the preservation and promotion of *folclore*. Educandos has long been known for its popular folklore groups, such as the “Caninha Verde,” a dance from the sugarcane regions of the Northeast. These no longer exist, having disappeared along with many other folkloric manifestations throughout the city. These groups, I was told, have died out in large part because their elderly *donos* (founders; literally, ‘owners’) had become too old or died. Young people were losing interest in folkloric dances. They lost their interest, that is, until the *boi-bumbá* craze began in the 1990s. To understand why a centuries-old dramatic dance about a bull took Manaus by storm, we need to look at the greater economic and political context of the time.

The late 1980s was a period of national self-reinvention as the New Republic replaced Brazil’s repressive military regime, bringing a process of re-democratization that led to the adoption of the current constitution in 1988. In 1991, President Fernando Collor de Mello removed the import bans intended to lessen reliance on foreign products, and the flow of rich shoppers to Manaus abruptly ceased. The ZFM reinvented itself, shifting to what Rivas et al. (2009:33–34) describe as “hightech industrial modernization in an internationalized capitalist environment.” At this time as well began the process of the “greening” of the ZFM and the region, with a focus on forest preservation, ecotourism, and sustainable development (Chernela 2000). Today, the ZFM



Figure 3. Decorated boats move up the Rio Negro in the annual procession dedicated to St. Peter, patron saint of fishermen. Educandos can be seen in the background.

is touted as a green triumph: the Manaus free trade zone allows Amazonenses to earn their money in the city rather than relying on ranching, farming, or the extraction of forest products. The success of the free trade zone has even been linked to a sharp deceleration in deforestation (Rivas et al. 2009).

The neighborhood of Educandos is tightly connected to the ZFM. As the city's population swelled after the tax-free zone's 1967 establishment, Educandos absorbed many of the newcomers from the surrounding region. The population of Educandos today is largely made up of residents who consider themselves to have strong ties to the rural Amazon. Some are individuals like my father-in-law who woke up at 4:00 every morning as a child to trek through the forest to work on his family's *roça*, or small subsistence farm; as a teenager he left this way of life to seek his fortune in the state capital. Others are those whose parents brought them to Manaus as they sought new career opportunities, or to provide better schooling and healthcare for their families. It is not uncommon for individuals to return to visit family holdings during school holidays; I was frequently regaled with nostalgic stories of summers of fun and hard work at grandparents' farms and was lucky enough to have friends who brought me to such rural communities in the interior to meet their families. Some people from Educandos have reached a level of socioeconomic success marked by the purchase not of a simple rural farm, but of a *sítio*, a weekend getaway in the countryside. However, the majority of those from Educandos have a personal and familial relationship with a rural, agricultural life that is not of this kind of luxury.

Today, most, if not all, households in Educandos contain individuals who work either directly for companies in the ZFM (colloquially known as O Distrito, short for O Distrito Industrial, the Industrial District). In addition to the air-conditioned corporate buses and the overfull public buses, legal and illegal taxis circulate through the neighborhood night and day, bringing the unending shifts of workers to and from their places of employment. Employment in the district affords an opportunity for young working-class men to rise in social status, leaving the ranks of the unemployed, "irregularly" employed (those who are paid under the table), and the illegally employed (especially in the drug trade). Key to this is the *carteira de trabalho assinada*, an officially signed worker's document that indicates the bearer is legally employed with all the accompanying rights and benefits. A carteira assinada is seen as proof above all that the young man is not a *marginal*, a poor person involved in illegal activities, but a hard-working, law-abiding citizen. Earning a regular paycheck opens a magical passageway to the middle class through consumption: the first step a bank account, then a credit card that allows one to pay for items in easy monthly installments: designer clothes, flat-screen TVs, motorcycles, washing machines, and frost-free refrigerators. Thus, as work in the ZFM and exposure to such commodities creates consumer desires, the district provides the financial means to satisfy these desires as well. Employment in the district also brought the ability to travel, and for young men in Educandos in the 1990s and 2000s, one destination trumped them all: Parintins.

FROM EDUCANDOS TO PARINTINS

Parintins is a small town located roughly 250 miles downriver from Manaus, on the island of Tupinambarana, near the border of the neighboring state of Pará. Before its rise to fame, Parintins was an unassuming Amazonian town much like any other, with a local economy based on fishing and farming. As in Manaus, *boi-bumbá* performances were largely informal affairs, performed by amateurs, with the groups having formed as a result of promises, *promessas*, made to St. John in hopes of successful recuperation from disease (Assayag 1997; Braga 2002; Gottheim 1984). Although there were many *bois-bumbás* in Parintins, the two that elevated the town to fame are the Boi Garantido, founded in June of 1913 by Lindolfo Monteverde, and his rival, Boi Caprichoso, founded later the same year by three brothers:¹⁰ Raimundo, Pedro, and Félix Cid.¹¹ As in Manaus, *boi-bumbá* groups in Parintins frequently met in the streets in encounters that ended in physical altercations (Silva 2007, 2009). When the *brincadeira do boi* was outlawed in many cities throughout the country, in Parintins things took a different turn. There, the Juventude Alegre Católica, a local church youth group, created the Folklore Festival of Parintins in 1965, partly to contain the violence of folklore groups.

In 1966, the *bois-bumbás* Garantido and Caprichoso were invited to participate, and the rest is history. Removed from the streets, the newly “domesticated” bulls changed Parintins and the *boi-bumbá* forever (Braga 2002:28). Rather than fighting each other in the streets, the folklore groups channeled their powers into defeating each other at the festival. The fact that there were two rival groups in Parintins created a powerful rivalry that bifurcated the town into those who supported the red team (Garatido) and those who cheered for the blue team (Caprichoso) (Braga 2002). The competitive festival became popular locally, and in the 1980s it caught the attention of Amazonas Governor Gilberto Mestrinho. In 1984, the Sambódromo, the Rio de Janeiro arena for the Carnival festivities, was built, and Mestrinho promised an arena for the cultural sensation of Amazonas. Mestrinho left office without having fulfilled his promise, but the *Bumbódromo* was inaugurated in 1988 as the Amazonino Mendes Center for Culture and Sports, named after the then governor (Rodrigues 2006:90). With its own arena, the *boi-bumbá* became three-dimensional; local artist Jair Mendes adapted the moving floats from the Carnival parades in Rio de Janeiro into movable set pieces, or *alegorias* (Figure 4). A distinctive style of festival songs, or *toadas*, emerged, with songs extolling the need to preserve the beauty of the Amazon region. The Parintins Folklore Festival became a regional sensation overnight, and the city of Manaus was fully in the grip of *boi-bumbá* fever.

The newly modernized *boi-bumbá* existed at a powerful nexus of conspicuous consumption, regional pride, green discourse, and a nostalgic desire for authentic experiences. Beginning in the 1990s, attendance at the Parintins festival became (and, to an extent, remains so today) a significant status symbol, especially for young men in *Educandos*, who used their money earned in the district to finance such trips. “If they don’t let me take the time off from work to go to Parintins, I’m just going to quit,” I frequently heard young men boast. Heroic stories of friends who had spent minor fortunes on private cabins on the festival-bound riverboats, endless bottles of Johnnie Walker, and the



Figure 4. Alegorias from the 2011 Boi Garanhão competition performance. From left can be seen: a boat representing the St. Peter's procession; the Amarelinho district of Educandos with the Bem-Vindo a Manaus sign; the Teatro Amazonas, symbol of Manaus; the blue church of Nossa Senhora do Perpétuo Socorro, principal Catholic church of Educandos, located near the *curral* of Boi Garanhão. (Photo by and courtesy of Yan Brener dos Santos Pinto)

company of delightful and willing women were numerous. “Just look at all the sad faces on the boats back,” a friend commented with a laugh. “Hungover, unemployed, and broke.”

THE FOUNDING OF BOI GARANHÃO

On June 16, 1991, a group of friends from Educandos, all folklore enthusiasts, met to discuss the possibility of founding a new folklore organization. The Caninha Verde and others had disappeared, and no new folkloric manifestations had taken their place. As the story goes:

In the beginning, no one suggested a boi-bumbá group, as no one of the united friends had ever participated in the brincadeira do boi, though in 1991 the Garantido and Caprichoso groups of Parintins were making a name for themselves throughout the region. So one friend suggested a *quadrilha*, while another thought a *ciranda* would be a good idea. Finally someone suggested a boi-bumbá, and after much lively discussion, the matter was decided. Ivo Moraes proposed the name “*Garanhão*,”¹² in homage to the Parintins group Garantido, and the bull's

color was decided to be black, as Boi Caprichoso from Parintins is black as well. More friends and associates were added to the founders of Boi Garanhão, and the project was announced to the neighborhood. José Maria Guedes de Souza and Paulo Fernandes were dispatched to Parintins to learn about the business of putting on a boi-bumbá group, and returned full of material and ideas (Watson 2015: 132–33).

Boi Garanhão made its debut and achieved immediate success, beating the leading Manaus bois-bumbás, Corre Campo and Brilhante, both of which at that time followed a mode of performance unaffected by the spectacles of Parintins. The other Manaus bois-bumbás soon followed suit.

Neighborhood son Renato Freitas told me that he first heard the new style boi-bumbá music on a *bolachão* (vinyl record) that some university students in Manaus had brought from their hometown in Parintins. He was there in 1991 at Garanhão's debut, and in 1993 he was invited to sing: "To tell the truth, I had been attending the practices there, and as there wasn't anyone to sing, because I'd already heard some [music of] the boi-bumbá, and I was familiar with Garanhão's songs, I was invited to sing, and I went." Renato, who liked singing but had had no formal training, was a natural; he led Garanhão to success as lead singer (*Levantador de Toadas*) for many following years (and later, Parintins Boi Caprichoso as well). For the following decade, Garanhão's *curral* ('corral,' the official practice area) became a home in Manaus for boi-bumbá musicians, often visited by leading lights such as Arlindo Jr. (a Manaus native who was an official singer for Parintins Boi Caprichoso) and David Assayag (the "king" of the Parintins boi-bumbá, who has sung for both the Parintins bois-bumbás over his long career). Enjoying the cool breezes that bathed the Cidade Alta in the evenings, these famous musicians gave impromptu performances and swapped tall tales over countless bottles of beer at the local sidewalk bars.

Despite the close ties to Parintins, the Manaus festival is not a carbon copy. The Parintins festival has departed so far from the "traditional" boi-bumbá that the central story (*auto do boi*) of the death and resurrection of the bull is not a required element of the performance. The Manaus competition, however, showcases the *auto do boi* (Figure 5), and its inclusion is important in local discussions of the festival. Although the Parintins boi is much more famous, local folklorists maintain that the Manaus boi-bumbá groups are dedicated to preserving the *brincadeira do boi*'s rich musical and dramatic tradition.

RACE AND AUTHENTICITY IN THE BOI-BUMBÁ

The *brincadeira do boi* has played an important role not only in the Amazon. Writers and folklorists working to define the outlines of a new, modern national identity in the first half of the twentieth century promoted the *brincadeira do boi* as a symbol of racial harmony. This is due in part to the quest for *brasilidade*, or Brazilianness, undertaken by intellectuals under the Estado Novo regime of Getúlio Vargas (1937–1945). A met-



Figure 5. Boi Garanhão dances in front of an alegoria representing the Teatro Amazonas, the pink opera house that is a symbol of Manaus, in the 2011 competition of the bois-bumbás in Manaus. (Photo by and courtesy of Yan Brener dos Santos Pinto)

aphor for the national history of *mestiçagem* (racial mixing), the bull festivals present a depiction of Brazilian colonial social relations in the context of African slavery, the control and “civilization” of indigenous peoples by the church, and the creation of the *latifúndia* system, or the administration of large parcels of land by wealthy white friends of the crown. Whereas the bumbá-meu-boi bull festival Mario de Andrade famously described during this period depicted a particular moment in Brazilian history and society, the current boi-bumbá of the state of Amazonas depicts another romanticized complex of social relations, focusing on the contributions of indigenous and mixed-race Amazonians. Today, while the bumba-meu-boi festival remains a symbol of the venerable folkloric spirit of the Northeast, the boi-bumbá has taken on new significance as a focal symbol of Amazonian regional pride.

The new-style bull festival of Amazonas is particularly focused on celebrating the way of life of the Amazonian mixed-race rural fishers and cultivators known as *caboclos*. Layered on top of the existing Francisco-and-the-bull story are dramatized scenes of caboclos conducting the business of everyday rural life: fishing, cultivating manioc, tapping rubber, mending nets, collecting Brazil nuts, weaving baskets. I believe that this new focus cannot be understood as separate from the political and economic context in which it arose, characterized by regional urbanization accelerated by the ZFM, the rise of environmentalist discourse, and political and economic *abertura* (opening up). This folkloric performance has become a way for people from Amazonas to re-

frame, contextualize, and comment on the changing socioeconomic, racial, political, and environmental realities of their lives.

Amazonas, obviously, does not have São Paulo's economic clout, or Rio's famous samba schools, or even a respected soccer team. The power of Amazonas state's *boi-bumbá*, however, is that it looks not to the cultural hegemony of the country's southeast but instead valorizes the lives of the humblest citizens of the region. When Amazonenses claim the *boi-bumbá* as "their culture," they mean not only that the folklore groups' performances are cultural performances, but that the subject matter of the *boi-bumbá* is the everyday culture of the rural Amazon itself. What complicates this is that the *boi-bumbá* is not just performed for Amazonenses, but also packaged for cultural tourists—both from inside and outside the region.

Graburn (1989) has explained cultural tourism as a search for the experience of authenticity, a desire to leave the everyday behind and spend time in the sacred. It is not at all unusual that a cultural performance such as the *boi-bumbá* would be commodified and neatly packaged for tourist consummation (e.g., Bruner 2005; Graburn 1976). However, it does not follow that such commodification lessens the value of the performance for those whose culture it purportedly represents. On the contrary, such performances may play an important part in the process of self-definition and self-construction of an ethnic or cultural group (Halter 2000; Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Xie 2003). In *Ethnicity, Inc.*, John and Jean Comaroff (2009:9) discuss how the commodification of Tswana identity and heritage has affected what it means to be Tswana: "The commercialization of identity . . . does *not* necessarily cheapen it or reduce it to a brute commodity. Quite the opposite: marketing what is 'authentically Tswana' is also a mode of reflection, of self-construction, of *producing* and *feeling* Tswana-ness."

Similarly, while some Amazonas folklore traditionalists mourn the steady disappearance of the prior form of the festival, today's *boi-bumbá* has not lost its cultural significance. This new *boi-bumbá* is not a cheap knock-off and its production is not a blind process of pastiche, a pulling together of a miscellany of saleable images and symbols. Rather, it is a conscious and purposeful process by the thousands of artists, songwriters, scenographers, musicians, and performers who each year create the *boi-bumbá* anew. As this is an ongoing practice of deciding what belongs to Amazonas "culture," or of "producing and feeling" what it is to be Amazonense, it is infinitely flexible. What *felt* Amazonense in 1990 might not be the same in 2000, or 2010, or 2020. Additionally, what might feel Amazonense in the capital city of Manaus might not be the same as in the towns of Parintins or Manacapuru. This flexibility brings the *boi-bumbá* continuing relevance through time, and through geographical space as well.

THE CABOCLO

Brazilian nationalist discourse has long valued the Caboclo as a symbol of *mestiçagem* (racial mixing), both biological and cultural. In spite of this, actual mixed-race Amazonians have struggled to be viewed as more than barely civilized second-class citizens, invisible next to more "genuine" tribal indigenous peoples of the region (Nugent

1993). Throughout the Brazilian Amazon, "caboclo" has come to be seen by social scientists as at best a mildly pejorative label, at worst a racial slur (Harris 2000; Nugent 1993; Pace 1997; Parker 1985; Slater 1994, 2002; Wagley 1976).

This appears to be shifting in Manaus. The valorization of caboclos in the *boi-bumbá* is not an isolated phenomenon. Disparate groups have claimed and sometimes sought to recuperate—politically, ironically, jokingly, self-deprecatingly—the regional label of "caboc(l)o," a pejorative phrase for rural, mixed race Amazonians. Politically oriented NGOs in Manaus such as Nação Mestiça (Mestizo Nation) and the Associação dos Caboclos e Ribeirinhos da Amazônia (ACRA, the Association of Caboclos and Riverine Peoples of Amazonia) seek to promote and defend "caboclo identity," even successfully lobbying the state legislature to recognize June 24 as the Day of the Caboclo. Dictionaries of "Caboquês" (the Caboclo language) and "Amazonês" (the Amazonas language) have been published (see Freire de Souza 2011).

The *boi-bumbá* has been a force for the reclaiming of the term "caboclo" and the valorization of caboclo identity, in large folkloric manifestations such as the Parintins festival (Cavalcanti 2001) as well as in smaller festivals in Manaus and other cities. In my research I confirmed what Cavalcanti (2001) suggested: the *boi-bumbá*, through its positive depictions of caboclos in its musical and visual imagery, has become a vehicle through which people from Amazonas have renovated and created a new, modern identity from what was once a reviled social category (Watson 2015).

Life history interviews I conducted with *boi-bumbá* participants in the Manaus working-class neighborhood of Educandos indicated that people involved in the *boi-bumbá* generally held a very positive view toward caboclo (that is, mixed race, rural) identity. They viewed caboclos as courageous protectors of the environment who kept capitalist interests from cutting down forests and polluting the rivers and the air. This is reflected, for example, in the 2008 Boi Garanhão theme song, "*Terra Cabocla, Santuário da Vida*" (Caboclo Land, Sanctuary of Life), which tells a story of how the gods Curiari and Yacy created Amazonia for "the Caboclo, its lord . . . tutor and guardian," teaching that "the forest can survive . . . if man preserves it" (portalamazonia.com 2008, my translation). This introduction of the discourse of conservation and preservation into the *boi-bumbá* runs parallel to the "greening" of business and politics throughout the Amazon region (Chernela 2000) and indeed Brazil (Hochstetler and Keck 2007).

Manaus urbanites are constantly confronted with media representations coming out of the country's southeast that depict the Amazon as a place where civilization struggles to gain a foothold against the overwhelming strength of nature. Such representations focus on exoticized depictions of nature, with indigenous peoples little more than part of the flora and fauna of the jungle.

The *boi-bumbá* of Amazonas today is a highly mediated folkloric manifestation. The Parintins festival is broadcast nationally, the Manaus festival appears on local TV, and enthusiasts can listen to *boi-bumbá* music on the radio year round. In 2011, I saw principal dancers in the Boi Garanhão performance giving TV interviews between performances at the Manaus Sambódromo. Study participants indicated that in contrast to

images of the Amazon produced by national media, the *boi-bumbá* portrays life in the Amazon in a more realistic and less exoticized manner. The *boi-bumbá*'s interpretation of Amazonian life is deliberately nostalgic, the celebration of a lifeway that is steadily becoming a thing of the past. The bulk of people participating in this new *boi-bumbá* are not the rural cultivators themselves, but urbanites who grew up spending summers on their grandparents' humble farms, consciously bearing witness to the passing of this way of life. This means that while the *boi-bumbá* is treasured as a traditional national folkloric festival, it also represents a modern, urban Amazonian identity for many people from Manaus.

I also found that festival participants viewed the narrative of the *boi-bumbá* as reflective of their own history. The *Caboclo* appears in the *boi-bumbá* as he completes quotidian tasks familiar to most Amazonians: catching fish, rowing on the river, making *farinha*,¹³ planting and harvesting manioc, collecting fruits and nuts, and tapping rubber. These may not be activities in which festival participants have personally taken part, but their parents or grandparents may have. These activities are described in *boi-bumbá* songs, or *toadas*, which narratively form a bridge between the action unfolding on the floor of the arena and the viewers in the stands. These are not mere onlookers; they participate in the performance by singing, dancing, and rhythmically manipulating props such as flags, lighted candles, and pom-poms, as directed by individuals from the competing teams. *Toadas* often evoke emotionally charged memories of bucolic experiences. One 30-year-old Manaus fan of the Parintins folkloric group *Boi-bumbá Caprichoso* described what his teenaged visits to Parintins meant to him:

I saw everyone there singing the *toadas*. One *toada* really touched me, from *Caprichoso*, it's the one that goes: [singing] "A boatsman goes, on the branches of the river, old boatsman. . . ." Man, that's from our region, and I always liked boats. It's connected to our everyday life. I used to travel a lot by boat with my dad, you know? And Dad, his whole life, Dad talked about how he always went by boat, by canoe, traveling, carrying small boats, understand? And I thought, man, Dad traveled in that? And Mom said that she traveled by boat, got stuck in thunderstorms . . . and [singing] "on the branches of the river, old boatsman, go, there goes the boatsman."

Marcelo Diogo, long-time *boi-bumbá* musician and current public relations man for Manaus *Boi-bumbá* *Garanhão*, also connected *caboclo* imagery in the festival to his own family history:

We would go to the arena, and we would see all that was staged: the *Caboclo*, making the *farinha*, the lyrics of the music, all that went together, David Assayag singing over there . . . and at this time Arlindo [Jr.] sang . . . oh, my goodness! This is a wonder. It tells all of our history. My father was from there, my grandfather also, my great-great-grandfather. It's all *caboclo* roots, my goodness. . . .

Boi-bumbá participants see their own personal and family history inscribed in the lyrics and scenes of festival performances. Lyrics are especially able to evoke emotional reactions to shared regional experiences, as Manaus history teacher Erick Nogueira points out:

I don't know if you know [the boi-bumbá song] "Senhora Vazante."¹⁴ [singing] "Lady of the Dry Season, don't punish the land of the water people anymore. . . ." It's a beautiful song . . . that talks about our reality, you know? When the dry period arrives, the period of drought that dries everything up, understand? But there are people who have never seen it, were never there to see it. That person isn't going to be able to imagine how it is, or at least the reality of it.

We can see here that it is not only that the festival displays the reality of everyday life in Amazonia. Nogueira's words suggest that only those who have lived that reality are truly able to understand the festival and experience it fully. The implication is that the festival has a deeper purpose: for Amazonians to see their reality reflected, to behold themselves in the only mirror that shows them as they themselves see themselves.

Manauaras have not remained ignorant of the way that their country and the world sees them. Since they are a diverse group of people, their reactions have taken form in complicated and sometimes contradictory ways. Tourism agencies tout the modern luxury suites they offer, while they play on well-worn tropes of the rainforest paradise. On social media sites, thousands share memes entitled "No Amazonas é Assim" ("What it's like in Amazonas"), ranging from the silly (a young girl sitting on an anaconda is subtitled: "Because riding a pony is for the weak"; Pelamordi 2011) to the wryly resigned (a picture of riders trying to shove their way onto an overcrowded bus reads, "Where there's always room for one more"; No Amazonas é Assim 2013) to the defiant (on top, pictures of Indian villages, captioned: "When I say that I'm from/live in Manaus. . . . What Brazil thinks: Manaus, My house." Below this, aerial shots of Manaus luxury high-rises with the ironic captions, "And in reality: Want to stop being ignorant? Go study!!!").¹⁵ In 2011, activists protested Restart, a national boy band whose drummer commented to national media about their upcoming Manaus concert, "Imagine playing in the middle of the jungle like that, well, I don't know the audience there, I don't know if there are people, [if there is] civilization. For me it would be really cool to play there, in part because we think there's nothing there." Responses included death threats, and the show was cancelled due to "security concerns."¹⁶

MODERNITY AND NOSTALGIA

Amazonians are well aware that their region has long served as a foil by which others can measure their own modernity. Amazonia has served for outsiders (both national and international) as a repository for the primitive, the "traditional," the premodern, the backwards, the raw, the natural, and the past. Where, then, does this leave the residents of Amazonas when 79% live in urban areas and most are employed in wage-

earning jobs; own (often several) cellular telephones; surf the Internet; follow international soccer on their locally manufactured flat-screen, high-definition TVs; and in general consider themselves citizens of the global age?

Widespread rural-to-urban migration often provokes surges in nostalgia for rural life. Frequently, this nostalgia takes musical form, often as folk, country, or folkloric music, or music as part of folkloric performance. Aaron Fox (2004:74) contextualizes the rise of US country music in the “liminal industrial-agricultural wasteland” of post-industrial, globalized America. Similarly, Brazilian *música sertaneja* and *música caipira* are two types of “country” music that look backwards to a happier rural life, contrasted to the difficulties of life in the city (Dent 2007; Ulhoa Carvalho 1993). Brazilian *forró* music is similarly characterized by the particularly Brazilian *saudades*, or bittersweet nostalgic longing, and carries a critique of the alienated nature of life in the urban Southeast (Draper 2011). Music is also key in remembering and preserving the culture of the Gaúcho movement of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, described as the “largest popular culture movement in the western world” (Oliveira 2000). Australian anthropologist Jane Ferguson (2010:237) points out that such nostalgia is often mediated through consumption, and that “certain places in spatial geography become flash points for mediated manifestations of ‘authentic’ images and sounds.” I assert that the *boi-bumbá* of Amazonas is one of these “flash points,” where a particular vision of an authentic past has become a commodity.

The *boi-bumbá* of Amazonas is nostalgic for a constellation of activities and items. A visit to a performance of the festival engages the senses, evoking memories of the past. In Manaus, the main competition of the *bois-bumbás* is part of the Folklore Festival of Amazonas, generally held at the arena of the Bola da Suframa amphitheatre. On the flag-festooned pedestrian walkway, vendors crowded shoulder-to-shoulder sell an array of *comidas típicas*, the “typical dishes” of the June festival: *vatapá*, *tacacá*, *pamonha*, *canjica*, *pé-de-moleque*, fried bananas, grilled meats, rubbery cakes made with manioc or tapioca flour, and buttered corn on the cob. The smells are intoxicating and heavy in the hot, humid air. Children and adults in glittering costumes dodge through the gathering crowds, their faces beaded with sweat as they grab a quick bite before their performance. A deafening barrage of music pours from the arena: electric guitars, folk songs, and hundreds of insistent drums, punctuated by the screech of the public address system extolling the virtues of Amazonas state’s Ministry of Culture. Grandparents, teenagers, families with small children, and groups of male transvestites fill the giant concrete steps that make up the bleachers. They wave green-and-white flags, pom-poms, and colored balloons, hug friends and acquaintances, and buy icy beers and sodas, paper cones of roasted peanuts, grease-stained bags of popcorn, crispy fried bananas, and homemade potato chips from the hawkers that hoist their Styrofoam coolers up and down the giant stairs. Girls and boys clamor for helium-filled Mylar cartoon character balloons and cotton candy, churros, and chocolate-covered strawberries. The food, the crowds, the costumed children, the music, the smells and sounds: all these

evoke memories of past June festivals, both rural and urban, when people returned to sociality after the separation caused by the rainy season.

The nostalgia of the *boi-bumbá* is not a monolithic entity, as those involved in the *boi-bumbá* are not just one kind of person. For some, surely, it is the desire to return to a place and a way of life that no longer exists. Low-tech agricultural work is especially romanticized in the *boi-bumbá*, planting and processing manioc in particular. Older Amazonians may see the *boi-bumbá* as showing respect for what they know as a brutally hard way of life. For the younger generations, however, the nostalgia may be of a more sentimental kind that glamorizes the backbreaking work they have never personally known. This second type of nostalgia has indeed turned the past into what Seremetakis (1994:4) described as an "isolatable and consumable unit of time," and the lucrative *boi-bumbá* industry has grown up around its production and consumption. This is not to say that young Amazonenses' strong affective attachment to the imagined rural life of their forebears is not genuine. As with Italian-Americans who have never been to Europe or Irish-Americans who have never visited the Emerald Isle, feeling a part of a particular ethnic group can be a potent experience that brings meaning to life. People whose families were uprooted after generations spent connected to a particular geographical place may feel that their new urban life has dangerously shallow roots, as "a shift has been accomplished from sedimented depth to surface with no past" (Seremetakis 1994:2). This type of nostalgia is a symptom of the existential disorientation brought on by the sweeping changes that have taken place globally in the wake of the implantation of industrial capitalism. The nostalgia of the *boi-bumbá*, then, should not be seen as a kind of self-delusion in which urbanites convince themselves they are actually country folk, or as a condescending play-acting, in which idealized rural identities are tried on for a time and then discarded when the festival ends. Instead, it is a deep existential ache for a perceived paradise lost, viewed from the far side of the gulf imagined between those who live what are considered "modern" lives and those who live what are considered "traditional" lives.

Within Brazil, Amazonia occupies a symbolic space of premodernity despite its long history of integration into national and global economies. Within Amazonia itself, state capitals such as Belém and Manaus occupy the highest levels of perceived modernity on the regional level. The small town of Parintins, the home of the largest Amazonian *boi-bumbá* festival, represents a seat of authenticity in the public imaginary of Manaus, and travel from Manaus to Parintins for the festival is often explicitly framed as a journey back in time. It is "turtles all the way down": this pursuit of an elusive authenticity in a previous era permeates also those locations deemed by others to be holders of the "traditional," as this fetishization of the past is a symptom of capitalism itself (Chakrabarty 2000; Ferguson 2010). MacCannell (1989) contends that such nostalgia has become a way of life for those living in the modern age, turning us all into tourists seeking to encounter the "authentic" experiences we crave. Itself considered a representation of authenticity and tradition, the Manaus *boi-bumbá*

mines the past to create an idealized presentation of Amazonian society. As urban folklorists recreate the festival each year, it becomes a vehicle through which they both assert a connection to their own rural past and present a uniquely Amazonian conception of modernity.

In spite of their role in quite literally producing the goods that have become symbols of middle-class status and “modernity” itself, Amazonians are still considered at best “consumers” rather than “producers of modernity,” forever shopping in a “supermarket of foreign goods” (Chatterjee 1997:20). Consumers of national and international media on the very televisions and smart phones they produce in the Zona Franca, Manaus are painfully aware of how they are evaluated by this outside gaze. On social media sites such as Facebook, stories are often published and then endlessly forwarded that tell variations of the following story: when asked by a smug outsider if people from Manaus earn their living by making native handicrafts to sell, the Manauara replies, “Yes, asshole. In Manaus, the natives make such handicrafts as the 90-inch high-definition flat screen television” (Watson 2015).

In the “messiness” of global capitalism, the particularities of cultures are created in the “friction” generated by encounters of disparate elements, or “the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference” (Tsing 2004:4). Through these encounters, Anna Tsing asserts, cultures transform the universals of capitalism into something no longer alien, but local and particular, while allowing disparate areas to participate in what has become a global phenomenon. In the *boi-bumbá*, we find a particular manifestation of modernity that has arisen through the friction of the encounter between the overdeterminedly natural space of Amazonia and the urbanization and industrialization brought by global capitalism. In this space, urban people from Amazonas have created a modern version of the *boi-bumbá* that commemorates the rural lives of their *caboclo* parents and grandparents, mourns the passing of that way of life, and lays claim to a new “*caboclo*” identity that, while located in urban spaces, remains firmly rooted in remembrance of a rural life. This nostalgia both springs from and is a symptom of their modernity. Along with *música sertaneja*, *música caipira*, and *forró*, the *boi-bumbá* of Amazonas, I propose, is yet one more creative expression of Brazilian nostalgia brought on by a sudden, unexpected, and unprecedented industrialization and urbanization.

CONCLUSION

I assert that it is no coincidence that the nostalgic and spectacular form of the *boi-bumbá* of the state of Amazonas arose at the end of the twentieth century as the state underwent rapid urbanization as well as significant social, political, and economic changes. Rather, it is a direct reaction to this widespread shift to urban ways of living and the intensified presence of industrial capitalism in the Amazon region. While people from Amazonas are creating a *boi-bumbá* that expresses their pride in, nostalgia for, and growing distance from a rural life, these same people are packaging this festival as an authentic manifestation of jungle folklore. The *boi-bumbá* has become an impor-

tant site of producing and feeling what it is to be Amazonense, both for those from the area and for tourist consumption. As urban Brazilians from beyond the Amazon (as well as foreigners) flock to the festival to experience an authentic jungle spectacle, they only consume the nostalgia of other urbanites.

There is much to be said for the Amazonas boi-bumbá as a positive force. Resisting the mediated images of the region, people from Amazonas are able to exert control over how they are perceived through the constant recreation of the boi-bumbá. The boi-bumbá today has come to validate the personal and shared regional history of those who participate in the festival, as it makes visible and valorizes caboclo lifeways. However, the idealization of the Caboclo in the boi-bumbá as a noble forest guardian may simultaneously contribute to the ongoing invisibility of the actual rural residents it purports to acclaim. The framing of the boi-bumbá as a "spectacle in the jungle" one reaches through a journey "back in time" reinforces deeply ingrained hegemonic racial beliefs. In this article, I have sought to lay bare the fissures in Brazilian culture that leave these Amazonians trapped between a desire to be recognized as fully modern citizens and a national culture that views them as mere consumers, and not producers, of modernity. However, it remains to be seen in what direction its creators will take it in the next years and decades, as it continues to adapt to the changing social and economic conditions of Amazonas.

NOTES

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1. This societal diversity is consistent with the way Stephen Nugent (1993) has described the population of the Amazon more generally.

2. *Bois-bumbás* is the plural of *boi-bumbá*.
3. Another major urban center of the rubber era was the city of Belém do Pará, located near where the Amazon River empties into the Atlantic.
4. According to Brazilian Federal City Statute 10.257, established July 10, 2001, which set the minimum number of inhabitants for a *município*, the smallest unit of urban organization, at 20,000.
5. For more, see Andrade 1982.
6. The term *reisados* is derived from *reis* (kings), the *reisados* being customarily performed around the festival of the Three Kings, or Epiphany, celebrated at the beginning of January.
7. This and all translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.
8. “*Amos*” = *amos do boi*, or persons playing the ranch owner or the caretaker of the bull.
9. “*Vaqueiros*” = persons playing cowboys.
10. This would make 2013 the 100-year-anniversary of the founding of both *boi-bumbá* groups. Interestingly, in 2012, as the groups announced their plans for celebrations, the two folklore associations denounced each other as not really having been founded in 1913. See Seixas 2012 and Rodrigues 2006:59–77 for a more in-depth discussion of competing origin stories.
11. Other versions of Caprichoso’s founding story indicate that this *boi* actually was created in the mid-to-late 1920s as a group that splintered from the *Boi Galante* after an internal dispute.
12. *Garanhão* literally means ‘stallion,’ though it is also used to refer to a “ladies’ man” or “woman chaser.”
13. Toasted manioc meal, a traditional food of the region.
14. *Vazante* is the time during the dry season when the river is at its lowest. *Senhora Vazante* means roughly “Lady of the Dry Season.”
15. No Amazonas e assim 1. <https://miquels777.wordpress.com/no-amazonas-e-assim-1/>
16. “Show da banda Restart é cancelado em Manaus.” Accessed November 29, 2012. http://acritica.uol.com.br/buzz/Show-banda-Restart-cancelado-Manaus_0_450555254.html.

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