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Tamed Frontiers: Economy, Society, and Civil Rights in Upper  
Amazonia (review)

Thomas Albert Perreault

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allow the reader to follow the detailed intricacies elaborated. Second, although Burnett suggests his book explores the cross-cultural encounter between Schomburgk's survey party and the Amerindians who made it possible, the book does not live up to its claim. The presence of Amerindians are ubiquitous throughout the book but they receive little of the detailed attention Burnett devotes to Europeans. (Africans are completely absent.) Although Burnett apologizes for this lacuna, I expected more from an expanded dissertation whose title included "the Amerindians of British Guiana." Third, the periodic but constant digressions to deconstructivist theory in each chapter prevented a rich narrative from being even richer. By invoking theory so often I felt Burnett was prone to the same "metaleptic cycles" he so astutely described. Finally, the book seems to collapse the multifaceted notion of territorial possession into the discursive act of producing a map. While this is an important part of the picture, how cartographic possession relates to demonstrated land uses, contemporary notions of property rights, counter-claims or even activities on the ground, are all themes most conspicuous by their absence.

These caveats aside, this is an excellent study of cartographic history and the nuanced workings of colonialism in British Guiana. The book also includes an understated wealth of information about how boundary disputes are contested, as well as some of the recent diplomatic intrigues underscoring the Venezuela-Guyana dispute. As a historian of science, Burnett shows geographers the power, but also the limitations, of looking for geography in imperial archives, mundane correspondence, and forgotten maps.

*Tamed Frontiers: Economy, Society, and Civil Rights in Upper Amazonia.* Fernando Santos-Granero and Frederica Barclay. Boulder: Westview Press, 2000. xiv and 386 pp., maps, tables, photos, glossary, appendices, and index. \$88 cloth (ISBN 0-8133-3717-8).

Reviewed by Thomas Perreault, Geography Department, Syracuse University

In this important and engaging book, Fernando Santos-Granero and Frederica Barclay set out to dispel some widely held "myths" about the social, economic, and political histories of the northern-eastern Peruvian department of Loreto. These myths, based on studies of other, mainly Brazilian, portions of the Amazon Basin, hold that Amazonia's economy is highly dependent on extractive industries, a condition that has perpetuated both the region's underdevelopment and its pre-capitalist relations of production. Moreover, the myth holds that state presence in the region is either weak or subservient to the interests of local elites, compounding the region's economic marginalization. By contrast, in *Tamed Frontiers* Santos-Granero and Barclay assert that the history of Loreto is much too diverse economically and socially to fit into these simple, monolithic characterizations, and that the region's development has been marked by considerable, if spatially and temporally uneven, state involvement. Of central importance to their argument is the assertion that, "The process we are calling the 'taming of the frontier'...implies the suppression or containment of the worse [sic] traits identified with frontier economies. Above all, it involves the extension of civil rights and the empowerment of previously disenfranchised and oppressed sectors of the population, such as took place in Loreto beginning in the 1960s" (p. 5).

In the book's introduction, the authors juxtapose the case of Loreto to what they term the 'violent frontier' approach to Amazonian studies which, they claim, has become the dominant perspective owing to the tendency among scholars to privilege areas of recent colonization, social conflict, and environmental degradation. This

view, they argue, contributes to the belief that processes of settlement in Amazonia lead inescapably to underdeveloped and politically unstable societies. "The history of Loreto's economy demonstrates," the authors counter, "that this need not be the case; that Amazonian regional economies are not doomed to continuously reproduce their violent and transient 'frontier' character" (p. 5). In the remainder of the book, Santos-Granero and Barclay present an impressive amount of historical data, largely of an economic nature, to support this proposition.

*Tamed Frontiers* is organized into three sections, each concerned with a different period in Loreto's economic and political history. The book begins with the period 1851-1914, with an in-depth examination of the rubber boom, from the establishment of the earliest extraction and trading enterprises through the collapse of Amazonia's rubber economy. The following section focuses on the period 1915-1962, during the post-rubber period marked by economic diversification and cycles based on the production (and mostly export) of various agricultural and extractive goods. The book then explores the period 1963-1990, a time of vast economic, social, and political transformation in Loreto, as the region underwent economic modernization and more complete political integration with the rest of Peruvian society. Finally, the authors provide an epilogue, written in the late 1990s, that discusses the effects of liberalization under the Fujimori regime, as well as the resolution of Peru's border conflict with Ecuador. Throughout each section, the authors maintain a focus on the nature of the region's economy, the social relations of production fostered by that economy, and the state's role in facilitating, regulating, and/or transforming these processes. If viewed strictly as an economic history of Loreto, *Tamed Frontiers* succeeds admirably. Santos-Granero and Barclay marshal a diverse array of data, gleaned from archival materials, historical documents, and close readings of secondary sources, in order to detail the evolution of the region's economy and governance. It is a thorough and integrative work that will be of immense interest to anyone concerned with the history of the northern Peruvian Amazon, and represents an important, if limited, contribution to our understanding of the region's complexities and diversity.

The book's narrow focus, however, is at once its primary strength and its greatest weakness. By insisting throughout that Loreto's Amazonian frontier has been 'tamed' by the civilizing forces of state integration and modern capitalism, the authors fail to analyze critically the negative aspects of these processes, let alone the questions of who was taming whom, for whose benefit, and at what cost? The conceptual dichotomies implicit in the book's title and premise – civilization/savagery, progress/backwardness, modern society/frontier society – are left un-interrogated.

*Tamed Frontiers* also fails in its treatment of non-economic processes and relationships, despite the fact that these are central to the story the authors tell. Too little attention is paid by Santos-Granero and Barclay to Loreto's environmental history during the period in question. Although the authors present a brief but illuminating discussion of the ecological conditions for rubber extraction and their implications for the organization of labor, this discussion is presented solely in economic terms. Absent from the book are detailed discussions of the over-hunting, deforestation, and water pollution wrought by Loreto's settlement and exploitation, greater attention to which would have added significantly to the book's depth and texture. Similarly, despite the book's subtitle, there is very little analysis of civil rights, and remarkably little discussion of political processes beyond the regional scale. Important connections between Loreto's political-economic transformations and broader processes of state formation, capital accumulation, and economic and political liberalization, though acknowledged, remain underdeveloped.

Moreover, Loreto's indigenous peoples appear for the most part as either peons or catechists, and with the exception of a two-page description of recent indigenous organizing in the book's penultimate chapter, are discussed solely in terms of their relationship to the region's economic and political elites. This treatment stands in stark contrast to the in-depth – indeed, at times excruciating – detail provided about individual capitalists, merchant houses, and entrepreneurs. For instance, rubber baron Julio César Arana merits 24 separate index entries including a five-page detailed discussion, whereas the Huitoto people, who suffered grotesque abuses laboring in his service, are discussed only briefly (and only in reference to their participation in the rubber economy), and do not appear in the index at all. This disparity leaves little doubt that the history that counts for the authors is that of the elite.

Furthermore, the authors refuse to engage with some of the very theoretical debates their book takes on. Michael Taussig's cultural analysis of atrocities in the Putumayo region is dismissed in one sentence. Stephen Bunker's thesis on the underdevelopment of the Amazon receives scarcely more attention, despite the fact that the central argument of *Tamed Frontiers* is in large part directed against it. Particularly in the case of Bunker and others who have taken a dependency approach to the analysis of Amazonian economies, a more in-depth and nuanced treatment is warranted. This is especially true since the data that Santos-Granero and Barclay themselves present seem to support the notion that much of the Amazon Basin, Loreto included, has indeed been underdeveloped by successive waves of capital accumulation. Although the authors refute this position, they never quite manage to provide a convincing counter-argument. Their unwillingness to engage at any depth with these conceptual questions means that *Tamed Frontiers*, while providing a wealth of regionally specific historical data, remains a parochial study that will be of limited interest to scholars not directly concerned with frontier settlement in the Amazon.