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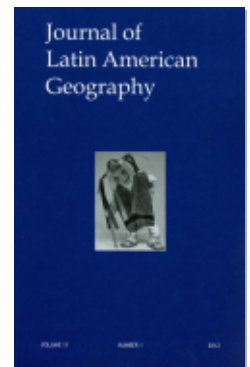
*The Unconquered: In search of the Amazon's Last  
Uncontacted Tribes* (review)

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Journal of Latin American Geography, Volume 11, Number 1, 2012, pp.  
188-190 (Review)

Published by University of Texas Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/lag.2012.0008>



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monopoly was eliminated, allowing Cuba also to trade directly with British and French merchants and whetting the appetite of Cubans to free trade.

Equally thoughtful and innovative chapters explore the climatic context to changes in trade policies of Colonial powers vis-à-vis their American colonies that eliminated or eased monopolies, the Haitian revolution, and the impetus for increased trade between Spain/the Spanish colonies, particularly Cuba, and the young United States. Particularly interesting is the key role of Philadelphia flour as a countercyclical factor in supplying the Spanish colonies; Johnson points out by around the time of its Declaration of Independence, the United States had become the breadbasket of the Spanish colonies, a condition that is the case still today in the case of Cuba.

To conclude, Johnson's volume is a notable contribution to the environmental history of the Greater Caribbean and deserves attention by historians, economists, climatologists and political scientists. Even if at times Johnson may overstate the weight of environmental events in her analysis, unquestionably her study makes a strong case for the consideration of environmental stress in historical research in the Greater Caribbean and elsewhere.

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*The Unconquered: In search of the Amazon's Last Uncontacted Tribes.* Scott Wallace. New York: Crown Publishers. 2011. xvi + 439 pp., map, photos, notes, glossary and pronunciation guide, bibliography, index. \$26.00 cloth (ISBN 978-0-307-46296-1).

*The Unconquered* is a story about a recent attempt to locate an "uncontacted" tribe in Amazonia. Author Wallace (a self described "adventure journalist") takes a journey with a team led by the charismatic Sydney Possuelo to find a group of Indians known as the *flecheiros*, or "People of the Arrow" in the Vale do Javari Indigenous Lands of Brazil. The purpose of the Fundação Nacional do Índio (FUNAI) expedition was to find these natives but avoid direct contact with them, while gathering "practical information" on the location of their villages, their annual migrations, and the status of wildlife where the Arrow People live in order to convince authorities that they should remain uncontacted in this special protected area.

Wallace joins the expedition as they travel up the Itaquai River by boat for two weeks to a strategic point in the protected indigenous lands. They then embark on a grueling hike of 21 days through the forest that is meant to circumvent the Arrow Peoples' territory, returning by canoe down the Jutai River where they are finally picked up by motorboat. The expedition uses GPS to pinpoint locations that were previously mapped by overflights.

The expedition team is made up mostly of natives and *mateiros* (backwoodsmen) who inhabit different parts of the Javari Valley. The book describes the journey and the difficulties Wallace and the expedition encounter as they attempt to achieve their objectives. He emphasizes the demanding and fearful nature of the overland hike for himself, as well as for other members of the team. The personalities and interesting personal histories of different team members are presented as he gets to know them along the way. The natural world, which envelops the expedition and seems to disturb the author, is at times of secondary importance in the narrative. The same is true for the tribal

world that they traverse. Instead, hardships and hard feelings of the expedition members fostered by the physical and mental demands of the trip are portrayed in detail.

Many brief natural history lessons and extractive histories from Amazonia are woven into the 28-chapter text and will be familiar to those who have studied the region. Added to this are many of Possuelo's personal experiences, as well as those of the author himself. Readers will find themselves jumping from reading an adventure story to lessons on Amazonia, and then to the experiences of specific individuals within almost every chapter. I found myself interested in the numerous accounts of Possuelo's extraordinary life and achievements. His striking personality, courage and tenacity, and the important need for these personal attributes to help directly protect threatened tribes in Brazil are obvious, regardless if readers share his opinions or approve of his tactics. A map of the area that shows the expedition route, along with 16 pages of color photographs, are necessary additions to the book that enhance the written account of the expedition.

What does this book offer to Latin Americanist geographers? Not as much as I was hoping for. While the book is very informative, it is written much like a novel that is designed to capture the imagination of a wide audience. The descriptions of flora, fauna and landscapes are usually meant to at first impress rather than educate the reader. This is true whether describing animals, trees or simple problems with navigation along a river. Wallace often follows with an actual lesson on the topic or species in an attempt to educate readers. It is usually unclear if he knows more of the actual facts than he provides, or is just trying to appeal to his audience. Geographers would no doubt suggest improvements to the bibliography.

Less known to Latin Americanists, the book provides details about specific encounters with isolated or uncontacted Indians during the 1950s-1990s as Brazil opened different areas of the Amazon. The author obtained much of this information from Possuelo himself, who was a FUNAI leader involved in many of these missions. Members of the three different tribes in the expedition party also gave Wallace their own accounts of their first encounters with "White men." This book provides enough information to give the reader a basic assessment of the relative location of the Arrow People and the threats that surround them.

Despite the book's many lessons on flora and fauna for the reader, scientific names are rarely used for identification. Wallace repeatedly and incorrectly describes peccaries (*Tayassu spp.*) that they hunt for food as "boars" and "wild pigs" (which are Asian species), before finally using the correct term "peccary. Exaggerations about the rainforest abound in the pages, even where numerous studies exist to dispel them. For example, Wallace states that "every acre of Amazonian rainforest holds an average of 250 trees from at least 80 different species" (p. 187) when it is well known that the region's forests vary greatly in tree diversity, with large expanses of oligarchic forest. He describes the canoe building undertaken by the expedition (using numerous steel tools), as "an ancient art all but vanished from the face of the Earth" (p. 289), when thousands of *ribeirinho* families still make canoes in the same way today. The author is clearly uncomfortable in this environment, where "everything about the forest ...that would finally, at the time of its choosing, swallow us whole" (p. 303). The narrative is often melodramatic and overemphasizes dangers that are described as present, but are mainly absent during the expedition. While Wallace kept a list of "the panoply of horrors that lurked in the jungle" (p. 84), he reports just two direct encounters with poisonous snakes, and a single run-in with a group of peccaries as his guides were hunting them.

The last chapters of the book are both disturbing and sad, where the vulnerabilities of the tribal lands, expedition members, and Possuelo himself are clearly

revealed. While this is a serious attempt to report on important issues concerning the future of Amazonia, the book does rather little to dispel myths about the Amazon.

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