



Traditional Populations in the Upper and Middle Tapajós: Quilombo Remnants in the Itapiranga, Paredão, and Primavera Communities, City of Itaituba, State of Pará, Brazil

Populações tradicionais no Alto e no Médio Tapajós: os remanescentes de quilombo das comunidades Itapuranga, Paredão e Primavera no município de Itaituba, Pará

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ABSTRACT: Traditional peoples play a scientifically recognized role in environmental preservation through their ways of life, which also impact surrounding societies. Therefore, the state has a constitutional responsibility to protect these populations, including quilombo remnants. This study aimed to examine the quilombola communities in the Middle and Upper Tapajós region, within the municipality of Itaituba, Pará, focusing on key concepts, constitutional rights, legal recognition, and sustainable development. The research used an exploratory and qualitative approach, combining a literature review with fieldwork. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five quilombola descendants identified during field research conducted between April 2022 and March 2023. The findings confirm the presence of quilombo territories in Itapiranga and Paredão (Itaituba) and Primavera (currently part of Jacareacanga), in western Pará, even though official institutions such as the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) and the Palmares Foundation have not formally recognized them.

Keywords: traditional peoples; quilombo; Tapajós.

RESUMO:

Povos tradicionais possuem relevância cientificamente comprovada para o meio ambiente em seus sistemas de vida e, por conseguinte, para as sociedades envolventes. Assim, o Estado tem o dever constitucional de proteger essas populações, nas quais se enquadram as comunidades remanescentes de quilombo. O objetivo do estudo foi analisar as comunidades quilombolas do Médio e Alto Tapajós, no município de Itaituba, Pará, com ênfase nos conceitos; direitos constitucionais; reconhecimento jurídico; e do desenvolvimento sustentável. A metodologia adotada foi a pesquisa exploratória com abordagem qualitativa; de revisão bibliográfica; e pesquisa de campo. Os dados primários obtidos se deram por meio da aplicação de entrevistas semiestruturadas, com 05 (cinco) sujeitos descendentes de quilombolas, identificadas na pesquisa de campo, realizada entre os meses de abril de 2022 e março de 2023. Os resultados do estudo comprovam a existência dos territórios de remanescentes de quilombos em Itapuranga e Paredão do município Itaituba e Primavera, no atual município de Jacareacanga no oeste do estado do Pará, ainda que órgãos oficiais, como o Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística – IBGE e a Fundação Palmares, não os tenha oficializado.

Palavras-chave: povos tradicionais; quilombo; Tapajós.

1. Introduction

This study analyzes the quilombola communities in the Middle and Upper Tapajós region, located in the city of Itaituba, Pará, with a focus on constitutional rights, legal recognition, and sustainable development. Scientific research shows that traditional peoples play a vital role in environmental conservation and, as a result, contribute to the well-being of nearby communities. Their way of life is closely linked to the protection of natural resources (Arruda, 1999; Santilli, 2003). For this reason, it is essential that public policies are implemented to safeguard their rights.

Quilombola descendants are a group of traditional peoples whom the state is constitutionally required to protect. However, there is often a gap between what public policies promise and how they are actually implemented in society – frequently by the state itself. In the case of quilombola communities in Brazil, this contradiction is deepened by historical and ethnic-racial issues, which create major barriers to the full recognition and enforcement of their rights (Silva, 2019).

This paper presents an analytical discussion on traditional peoples and communities in western Pará, focusing on the presence of quilombola descendants in the Middle and Upper Tapajós region. The analysis includes a detailed examination of the concept of traditional communities as well as the historical, political, social, cultural, and legal context of quilombola peoples in Brazil. It also documents, through oral histories, the presence and experiences of self-identified Black quilombola descendants in the city of Itaituba, Pará.

The relevance of this study lies in the need to recognize and understand the role of traditional populations in protecting the environment and preserving biodiversity, especially in the context of the global climate crisis. It also seeks to explore resistance movements, the relationship between these communities and the forest, and the historical, social, legal, and environmental dimensions that shape the quilombola issue in Brazil.

2. Methodology

To explore the relationship between African and Indigenous cultures, this study draws on the debates presented by Goldman (2015), who builds on Bruno Latour's theoretical principle of irreduction. According to Goldman, comparing two specific ethnographic cases should not be reduced to a question of identity alone, nor should it dismiss the possibility that identity may be one aspect of the phenomenon. Therefore, in conducting a reflective analysis of different cultural ways of life, it is essential to recognize the inherent differences within each group, without reducing them to simple responses to white domination or to binary identity oppositions.

This study brings together ideas emerging from the subject of investigation through an in-depth review of scientific literature and preliminary exploratory fieldwork. As Gil (2002) explains, this type of research is intended to increase understanding of the issue, making it clearer and more defined.

Data were collected from individuals belonging to families that historically occupied the territories of the Itapuranga and Paredão communities in the Middle Tapajós as well as from descendants of families who settled in the Primavera community in the Upper Tapajós at the end of the 19th century and now live in the city of Itaituba, Pará.

This is a qualitative study that uses oral history as its main research method. According to Gonçalves & Lisboa (2007), oral histories are especially useful in exploratory research, particularly in areas where accessible and organized information is lacking. Semi-structured interviews

were conducted to trace the life stories of the families studied, with a focus on how these narratives relate to the territories formerly occupied by quilombola descendants.

Valuing orality and preserving collective memory are essential. According to Torres (2014), group memory represents the broadest form of tradition, and oral tradition is the foundation of collective memory and storytelling. An individual's memory is connected to the memory of the group they belong to. Torres (2014) also highlights the contrast between "official memory" and "underground memory." While official memory is shaped by the dominant culture, underground memory reflects the resistance of marginalized minorities. In the Amazon, the collective memory of traditional communities acts as a powerful barrier against the private and fraudulent appropriation of land. It reveals cases of land fraud and underscores the importance of territory in protecting legally recognized cultural differences.

In this context, it is important to consider the concept of the "total social fact" as defined by Marcel Mauss. According to Mauss, social phenomena are not limited to isolated aspects of institutions such as religion, law, or economics. Instead, they reflect entire social systems that capture and bring together the many dimensions of social life. In studies of peasant societies, however, the economic dimension has often been given priority (Godoi, 1993, p. 17). As the author states:

the privileged domain in the analysis of peasant societies has systematically been the economic one, although the abbreviated image of the economic man is incompatible with a Social Anthropology derived from Durkheim, Mauss, and Malinowski (Godoi, 1993, p. 17).

According to Halbwachs (2013), individuals who remember are always influenced by the reference groups to which they belong. Memory is therefore both a collective construction and an individual experience. It is essential to understand the role of groups in shaping memory. Within this framework, the study focused on investigating the total social fact, using collective memory – expressed through the participants’ oral accounts – as the primary source.

Research participants were selected at random based on information provided by the curator of the Aracy Paraguassú Museum and by community members who are quilombola descendants living in the city of Itaituba, in western Pará. The interviews were conducted in the urban area of Itaituba between April 2022 and March 2023, involving five quilombola descendants. Each interview lasted about one hour. Recordings were made using a portable device and later transcribed for analysis. Before each interview, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and asked to sign an informed consent form. Only after these steps were the interviews performed.

To generate the maps, ArcGIS Desktop 10.3 software was used, applying the SIRGAS 2000 Coordinate System and Datum. Cartographic data were obtained from IBGE (2021). Microsoft Excel was used to create the data tables.

3. Results and Discussion

Discussing the concept of traditional populations in Brazil is both relevant and necessary. However, it requires a historical overview and a social context to help frame the term and clarify the focus and specific characteristics of the subject.

Supporting this view, Moreira (2007, p. 2) notes that “talking about traditional populations is an absolutely challenging task. Not only because of the complexity, diversity and specificities of the societies involved in this concept, but also because of the profusion of semantic disagreements it arouses.”

According to the legal definition set by the National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities (Art. 3, item I, Decree No. 6.040 of February 7, 2007), traditional peoples and communities are:

culturally differentiated groups who recognize themselves as such, who possess unique forms of social organization, who occupy and use territories and natural resources as a condition for their cultural, social, religious, ancestral and economic reproduction, using knowledge, innovations and practices generated and transmitted by tradition (Brazil, 2007).

3.1 Traditional populations and their relationship with the environment

The concept of traditional populations continues to evolve, incorporating new social groups and expanding not only its definition but also its geographical scope – making it possible to identify traditional populations even in urban areas (Cañete & Ravena-Cañete, 2010). According to Wedig:

Traditional peoples and communities are recent, built up over the last few decades and associated with environmental and ethnic rights movements that are interconnected by various aspects related to

sustainable land use; production for social practices, self-consumption and the sale of surpluses, etc. (Wedig, 2020, p. 215).

Arruda (1999) explains that, starting in the second half of the 20th century, as environmental preservation campaigns gained momentum in developing countries, the ways in which traditional populations lived and used the land began to be criminalized under new conservation laws. This was the result of policies that failed to consider the deep connection between traditional populations and the land they occupy.

As a counterpoint to strict preservationist approaches, research in anthropology has shown that the relationship between traditional populations and the physical and natural environment is not only balanced but can also support a more sustainable model of human interaction with nature. As Arruda states:

Recent studies (...) enhance the knowledge previously accumulated in the field of ethnobiology (...) and indicate that human-induced variability in the tropical environment (mainly through shifting agriculture and the densification of useful species) has favored and favors biological diversity and the process of speciation. In other words, the “primary” forest as we know it today has co-evolved along with human societies and their distribution across the planet. It is a result of anthropogenic processes characteristic of traditional management systems (Arruda, 1999, p. 87).

In the same line of thought, Santilli (2003) argues that the genetic diversity of species and ecosystems is not solely a natural phenomenon. This variation also results from cultural dynamics – i.e., it is shaped by human activity. This idea forms the basis of fields such as historical ecology.

According to Moreira (2007), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) broadens the range of actors involved in efforts to protect biodiversity, recognizing traditional populations as part of this process. The CBD also enables the creation of a legal framework that guarantees these populations the right to their traditional knowledge of biodiversity, as established by Provisional Measure 2.186-16/01.¹

The National Coordination for the Articulation of Black Rural Quilombola Communities explains that the word *quilombo* comes from the African language *quimbunco*, meaning “a society formed by young warriors” who were separated from their original ethnic groups. Costa (2016) notes that, in Africa, Black communities lived by communal values, in which social and cultural life was shaped by collectivity, reciprocity, and shared daily practices. These values clashed with those of the colonial societies into which they were forced. In response, continuous and determined resistance became the means through which they sought to recover these values in a new social and geographic setting – specifically, Portuguese America. Amaral (2014) further explains that Black Africans developed multiple forms of resistance to the colonial system of forced labor, the most

¹ Moreira refers to Provisional Measure 2.186-16/01, as at the time his study was published, it had not yet been repealed by Law No. 13.123 of May 20, 2015. This law “establishes rules on access to genetic resources, the protection and use of associated traditional knowledge, and the sharing of benefits for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.”

significant being escape. Those who fled settled in various parts of what is now Brazil, where they formed *quilombos* or *mocambos*.

Thus, “the revelation of the liberating saga of Black people in Brazil is the element that demystifies the ideology of racial democracy, which has been used to preserve the social order established by the dominant classes” (Costa, 2016, p. 2). In light of the socio-political, legal, economic, and environmental context, “recognition requires the emergence of quilombola identity, meaning that communities shaped by exclusion and conflict must transform stigma into a symbol of resistance” (Arruti, 2006, p. 126). In this regard, Ferreira (2012) supports this view by stating:

In the emergence of new political subjects with differentiated rights, the space is marked by diverse voices and interests, where the presence of mediators stands out in order to deepen understanding of the established rules on which access to rights depends. However, intermediary relationships are sometimes asymmetrical in terms of the distribution of power (Ferreira, 2012, p. 346).

In this context, the formation of quilombos can be understood through the lens of the social production of space. Access to land – seen as the foundation for building territory – plays a central and highly significant role, as it is closely tied to the reproduction of identity and specific ways of life rooted in collective and family values (Costa, 2016).

3.2 *The quilombo and its re-signification*

The concept of quilombo that is most present in common sense and, to a certain extent, The concept of quilombo most commonly found in popular understanding – and even in some academic approaches – originates from ideas about quilombola life formed in the 18th century. As Marques (2009, p. 343) explains, classical thinking defined a quilombo as a geographically isolated space inhabited by a specific number of escaped slaves, culturally distinct, with an identity marked by tradition and supported by archaeological evidence. This view was largely shaped by the definition provided by the Overseas Council to the King of Portugal in 1740.

Along the same lines, Andrade & Treccani (2000, p. 595) corroborate that:

During the period of slavery, the legal definitions of “quilombo” varied over time and in different places. The commonly accepted notion dates back to a definition issued by the King of Portugal on December 2, 1740, which states that a quilombo is “any dwelling of escaped blacks that exceeds five in number, in an unpopulated part, even if they do not have raised ranches nor are there any mortars in them (Andrade & Treccani, 2000, p. 595).

These authors argue that this static view of quilombo is clearly inadequate for understanding the current reality of quilombola communities. It is a definition rooted in the past, which overlooks how these communities are shaped in the present. They also emphasize that ethnic identity is not limited to visible traits, exotic cultural expressions, or ties to

a centuries-old history. Ethnicity is also expressed in how these groups position themselves politically and interact with the state and the surrounding regional society (Andreade & Treccani, 2000).

Marques (2009, p. 339) highlights the importance of distinguishing between the concepts of *quilombo* and *quilombo remnants*. In his words:

(...) despite the need to know the historical definition of quilombo, it does not apply adequately to the category of quilombo remnants or quilombolas, since the latter refers to a process of self-recognition carried out by groups with ethnic characteristics that mobilize or are mobilized around conquests, including the definitive possession of their social territory (Marques, 2009, p. 339).

In this context, the legal regulation of quilombos, as Leite (2008, p. 277) states, “is a kind of power that crosses society and the state in its most diverse forms; it reconfigures fixed identities, the configuration of kinship, region and nation.” However, the exercise of this right is also affected by another factor: the state’s inefficiency in managing citizenship and organizing territorial space.

According to Ferreira (2012, p. 341), “the attribution of quilombola identity to a certain group and the rights that derive from it lead to a re-dimensioning of the very concept of quilombo, and of the concepts of identity, ethnicity and territoriality.” In this sense, the concept of quilombo remnants requires that these communities be studied not only based on how they were formed in the past, but more importantly, on what they represent today. It is essential to view the quilombo as a living community, rather than as an archaeological artifact (Marques, 2009).

The re-signification of the quilombo category is accepted by the Federal Constitution. Article 68 of the Transitional Constitutional Provisions Act (ADCT) moves beyond an essentialist understanding of quilombo and introduces a broader legal concept through the term “remaining quilombo communities.” Regarding this shift, O’Dwyer (2010, p. 41) argues:

According to this document (Article 68 of the ADCT of the 1988 Federal Constitution), the term Quilombo has taken on new meanings in specialized literature and also for groups, individuals and organizations. Although it has a historical content, it has been “resemanticized” to designate the present situation of black segments in different regions and contexts of Brazil. Definitions have been developed by non-governmental organizations, confessional entities and autonomous workers’ organizations, as well as by the black movement itself. An example of this is the term “quilombo remnant”, established by the 1988 Constitution, which has been used by groups to designate a legacy, a cultural and material heritage that gives them a present reference in the feeling of being and belonging to a specific place and group (O’dwyer, 2010, p. 41).

Andrade & Treccani (2000, p. 601) point out that history records many quilombos that “were made up of a few individuals, some had no fixed location, others were located near farms and settlements and several of the escaped slaves maintained periodic relations with different sectors of society.” The authors also emphasize that quilombos were never truly isolated. Scientific evidence shows that many were located near urban centers and maintained strong economic ties with these areas. This pattern was observed

near major cities in the states of Maranhão, Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Sul, and Minas Gerais.

Re-signifying the concept of quilombo – as a living, present-day reality – was essential for developing this study. This redefinition is particularly important given the “lingering legacy” that surrounds the communities examined. The remnants of the Itapuranga, Paredão, and Primavera quilombos no longer occupy their traditional territories. However, the oral histories passed down from their ancestors remain alive in the memories of their descendants.

3.3 Quilombola communities in Brazil: a brief overview

Article 68 of the ADCT/CF/88 recognizes quilombola identity as that of a social and political subject, ethnically distinct and entitled to specific rights. This new subject emerges within the broader context of social struggles, where the law is used as a tool, and the concept of quilombo is symbolically transformed to serve political purposes (Ferreira, 2012). According to IBGE (2021), Brazil has 5,972 quilombola localities. However, only 6.76% of these have officially demarcated lands, revealing the state’s inefficiency in managing citizenship and organizing territorial space. In the North Region, the state of Pará has 75 demarcated territories, which represents 18.56% of all such territories in that region.

This reality is clearly rooted in Brazil’s history of slavery, in which economic growth and wealth accumulation were driven primarily by enslaved labor. As Anjos (1999, p. 27) explains:

The *slave* trade from Africa to America was, for more than three centuries, one of the biggest and most profitable activities for European traders, to the point where it is impossible to determine the number of Africans taken from their habitat, with their cultural baggage, in order to be unfairly incorporated into the basic tasks for the formation of a new reality. Bloody struggles, violence, completely new situations of displacement and adaptation, death and cruelty all contributed to the multiplier effects of the great business that was the *slave* trade, such as the growth of the naval industry, the war industry, agriculture, mining, financial activity, closing the cycle of the primitive accumulation of capital (Anjos, 1999, p. 27).

In this context, quilombo remnants are entitled to land and cultural rights, as the legal category of “quilombo remnants” recognizes these communities as rights-bearing subjects (Arruti, 2003, apud Ferreira, 2012, p. 342). Almeida (2011) and Almeida & Pereira (2003) further argue that this category also represents an effort to formally acknowledge a social transformation that remains incomplete. It exposes the social distortions left behind by a partial and limited abolition of slavery. Silva (2019, p. 30) notes that the term *quilombo*, once present in colonial and slave-era legal frameworks, disappeared from Brazilian law with the arrival of the Republic. The assumption was that quilombos would no longer be a public issue, as slavery had been abolished. Within this discussion, the dialogue with Ilka Boaventura Leite brings the following perspective:

The legal, administrative and political implications, taking into account developments and reappropriations. This brings us to the social responsibility that the practice of anthropological expertise carries,

“especially that of making legally comprehensible the notions of law erected by social groups historically without access to justice” (Leite, 2008, p. 21).

In a context marked by multiple forms of inequality, it is widely recognized that certain groups have long been excluded from full citizenship. In Brazil, exclusion and discrimination have historically marginalized Black people, women, quilombolas, Indigenous peoples, and rural communities. These groups have been pushed to the margins by power structures that also erased them from the collective awareness of the broader society. As Gomes and Rodrigues (2018, p. 930) explain:

However, it was the very people who were excluded from the perspective of conservatives and the right-wing, as well as from various progressive debates on citizenship, which only looked at social class and imposed themselves on society, the state and science, who made themselves recognized as citizens with rights. However, not an abstract right, but a right that recognizes them in their difference (Gomes & Rodrigues, 2018, p. 930).

The democratization of Brazilian society has been shaped by a range of collectives, movements, social actors, and cultural groups who have played a key role in securing rights. Within this landscape, the issue of race gained visibility during the National Constituent Assembly (ANC), which drafted the 1988 Federal Constitution (CF/88) – known as the “Citizen’s Constitution” – marking Brazil’s return to democracy after the military dictatorship. “Black women and men who fought and fight against racism and the organized black movement are some of these socially active political subjects;

however, they are politically and epistemologically invisible” (Gomes & Rodrigues, 2018, p. 930).

Another important tool for guaranteeing rights is Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO), adopted at the General Conference held in Geneva in 1989. This convention builds on principles established in key international documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and several other instruments aimed at preventing discrimination.

In Brazil, Convention 169 was approved by Legislative Decree No. 143 of June 20, 2002, and came into force on July 25, 2023. The convention acknowledges the evolving situation of Indigenous and tribal peoples around the world and affirms their right to control their own institutions, ways of life, and economic development. It also supports their efforts to preserve and strengthen their identities, languages, and religions, within the national frameworks of the states in which they live. Decree No. 10.088 of November 5, 2019, consolidates the normative acts issued by Brazil’s Federal Executive Branch that regulate the promulgation of ILO Conventions and Recommendations ratified by the Federative Republic of Brazil (Brazil, 2019).

In this regard, Gomes and Rodrigues (2018, p. 930) state: “It is a fact that the rights guaranteed in the 1988 Federal Constitution signaled and contributed to Brazil’s redemocratization after the fall of the military dictatorship. We have built a democracy that remains fragile, but it is the result of intense social struggles, and one we will not give up.” The organized Black movement and the mobilization of Indigenous communities are

examples of socially active political actors. In this context, there is a political subject who opposed the system established during the Military Dictatorship and continues to resist, both in the past and in the present.

Within this socio-political sphere, often operating underground, activists from various organizations led multiple struggles against racism. As the authors emphasize, “politically organized Black men and women in Brazil have always recognized that the struggle against racism could not be separated from the struggle for democracy” (Idem).

3.4 Quilombolas in Amazonia and Tapajós

In post-democratization Brazil, some political changes have represented progressive movements that support the construction of a fairer, more egalitarian, and more pluralistic society. However, despite these advances, significant progress is still needed – particularly in areas such as civil rights, access to land, health care, and public safety. In recent Brazilian history, the 1980s marked a turning point for democracy, as the country experienced major political and institutional transformations, driven by organized civil society and the enactment of the CF/88.

In the Amazon region, records indicate that quilombos existed throughout the area during the colonial period, with evidence even found in Tabatinga, in the far west of the state of Amazonas. In the state of Pará, as early as the 18th century, there were reports of quilombos and of state actions aimed at repressing them. As Salles (1971, p. 204) notes:

In the mid-18th century, when the chronicles of slavery had not yet revealed a large enslaved population in Pará, reports of quilombos and measures to destroy them already existed. It must be acknowledged that Black individuals, although few in number and officially almost unnoticed, were introduced gradually but increasingly, until they, along with the enslaved Indigenous population, formed the foundation upon which the colonial production system rested (Salles, 1971, p. 204).

In the 19th century, quilombola resistance in Pará led to a significant process of territorial occupation, often overlapping with the unrest sparked by the Cabanagem revolt. Gomes (2006) points out that in the first half of that century, quilombos emerged in the Tocantins River basin, in towns such as Mocajuba, Cametá, Baião, and Oeiras, and were harshly repressed by the dominant society. Numerous military missions were launched to suppress these resistance centers. During this period, violent tactics such as corporal punishment and public executions were commonly used to combat the uprising of escaped slaves.

Concerning the quilombola presence in Pará, Silva (2019, p. 22) explains that “a significant concentration of enslaved Black men and women lived in areas dominated by agricultural and pastoral activities, such as the Lower Amazon, particularly the micro-region of Santarém,” located in the lower Tapajós. According to Silva (2019), there are currently 112 quilombola localities in the Lower Amazon, but only 17.86% of them have officially demarcated territories.

According to Silva (2019, p. 23), citing Dias (1970), between 1757 and 1778, a total of 25,365 Africans were brought to the states of Pará and

Maranhão as enslaved people. Of this number, 14,749 were sent to Pará. This reflects a significant migration flow between Africa and Pará, primarily involving groups from Angola and Bissau, driven by the demand for slave labor in the state. As Silva notes, this was clearly a coordinated and systemic process. In this context, Silva (2019, p. 24) emphasizes that the emergence of quilombos in the Legal Amazon “became a continuous, routine and to a certain extent uncontrollable process, gaining even greater prominence with the propaganda of independence that awakened in the *slaves* the desire for freedom.”

Regarding the dynamics of quilombola populations in the Tapajós basin, Acevedo & Castro (1998, p. 68) report:

Through the tributaries on the left bank of the Amazon River, communications with the mining regions were sealed. The intensification of trade between Santarém, Cuiabá, and Diamantino also increased the flow of slaves traded, recruited, and escaped in those directions (Acevedo & Castro, 1998, p. 68).

In this context, Gomes (1996, p. 49) notes that, in the 18th century, it was said that runaway slaves² from Pará “passed through to the Mato Grosso side.” This historical evidence supports the plausibility of quilombola movement and possible settlement in the upper and middle Tapajós region, as this part of the basin forms a connection between western Pará and northwestern Mato Grosso.

3.5 Quilombolas in the cities of Itaituba and Jacareacanga in the middle and upper Tapajós

In the Tapajós region – particularly in the municipalities of Itaituba and Jacareacanga – the situation is similar, as shown in the mapped area (Figure 1), especially in relation to the territories of Indigenous peoples living in the region. This concern is well-founded: memories of invasions of Indigenous lands by loggers and miners remain vivid.

3.6 Quilombolas of the Primavera Community in the upper Tapajós

When we look at the Brazilian situation, the immediate feeling is that we are living in a scenario of scorched earth, in which the recent and fragile democracy and the prospect of social justice in our society have been blocked by the interests of a privileged ruling class mobilized to safeguard capital amid economic, political, social, and environmental crises (Ferreira, 2019, p. 3).

In this context, more than 30 years after the CF/88 recognized the right to traditional quilombola territory, only 6.76% of quilombos in Brazil have received full or partial land titles from the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA). This percentage is minimal when

² Escape was a strategy used by many enslaved people to seek freedom, even if that freedom was never fully realized. Escapes occurred in all environments where slave labor existed. Whether in urban or rural settings, enslaved individuals used escape as an immediate way to break free from captivity. However, fleeing did not guarantee legal freedom – it was a precarious option, always shadowed by the fear of being captured (Silva & Silva, 2016, p. 192).

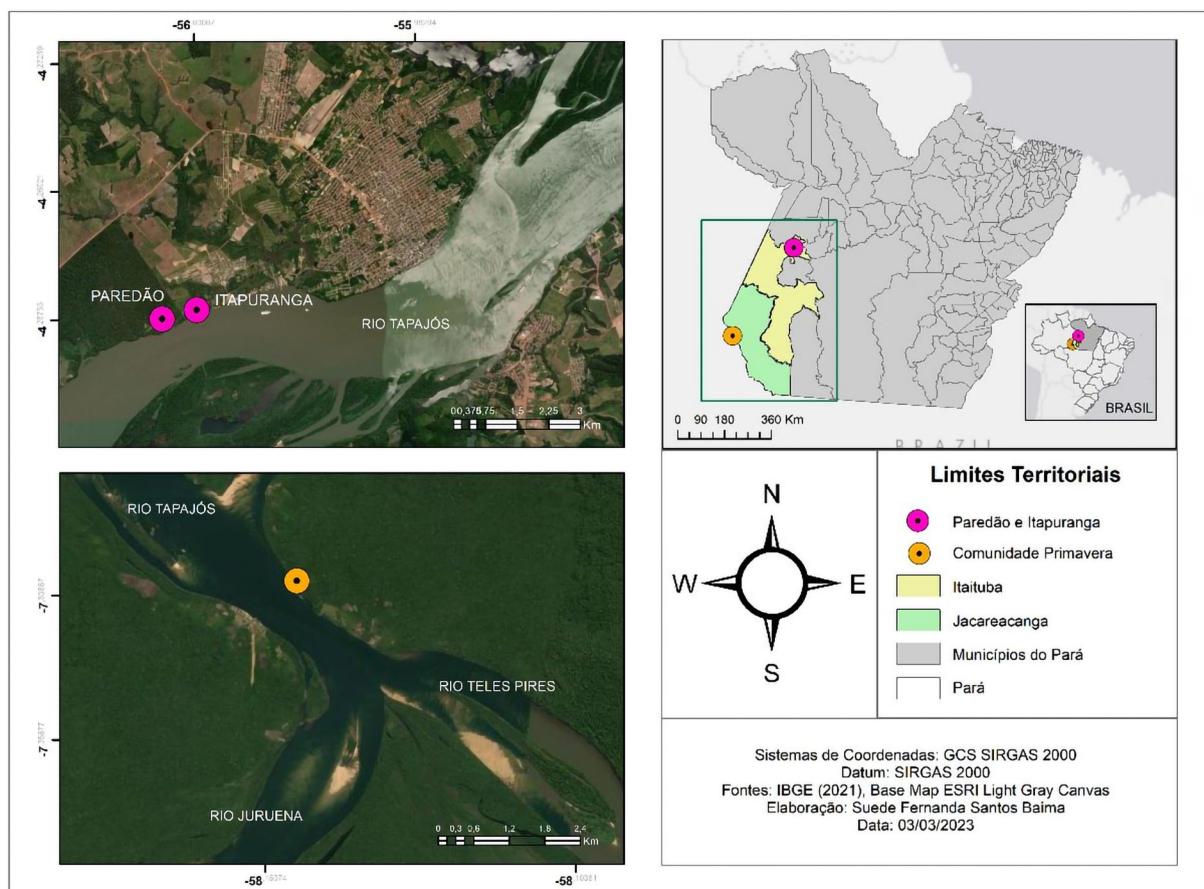


FIGURE 1 - Map of the study area. Translation of labels: rio = river, limites territoriais = (community) territorial limits, sistema de coordenadas = coordinate system, fontes = sources, elaboração = elaboration, data = date.

SOURCE: Research collection (2023).

compared to the total number of open titling cases at the institution (Rênero & Dias, 2019).

In this sense, the remaining quilombolas now living in the city of Itaituba, such as Dona Regina, report that their paternal grandparents came from the Upper Tapajós, and that their ancestors were runaway slaves. These memories are believed to have been passed down from the African continent

to Brazil aboard slave ships. In her account, the participant states that her great-grandmother's parents had escaped slavery in the state of Mato Grosso and settled in the Primavera community, located upstream from the center of what is now the municipality of Jacareacanga, in the Upper Tapajós (Figure 2). Memories of Dona Regina:

This story has stayed with me because I was very fond of my great-grandmother. She wore those big skirts, those ruffled blouses, and it was like that – just printed stuff. And I was curious about that. I'd ask her, and I'll never forget what she said. "My grandparents are quilombolas who came on slave ships and fled to Mato Grosso, and from Mato Grosso to Primavera." I've never forgotten that (Dona Regina).

In her account, the participant notes that her great-grandmother died at the age of 90 in the early 1970s, and her mother passed away in June 1998 at the age of 82. Based on this information, it is estimated that her ancestry dates back to between 1880 and 1916. This suggests that her family fled at the end of the 19th century. It can also be inferred that the parents of her great-grandmother, who settled in the Primavera community, belonged to a generation born in the second half of the 19th century, when slavery was still widespread in Brazil. The legal abolition of slavery occurred only in 1888. Therefore, the participant is part of the fourth generation of direct descendants of enslaved individuals.

The quilombola presence in Mato Grosso – the state from which the participant's great-great-grandparents came – is also confirmed by IBGE data (2019). According to the participant, 17 municipalities in Mato Grosso report the existence of quilombola localities, which are organized into 77 communities. However, only 5.19% of these communities occupy territories officially demarcated by INCRA.

Machado (2006), in discussing the strong Black resistance in Mato Grosso during the period of slavery, explains that by the end of the 18th century, the Captaincy had made numerous attempts



FIGURE 2 - Quilombola descendants of the Primavera Community.
SOURCE: Personal collection (Macedo). Field research (2023).

to destroy the quilombos that had formed in the western part of the state. The author identifies the Guaporé River region as an area densely populated by quilombolas, frequently targeted by the repressive forces of slaveholding society. One example is the Quilombo do Quariterê – also known today as Quilombo do Piolho – which was

organized under a form of royalty. At the time of its first destruction, it was led by a woman, Tereza de Benguela, who was referred to as the Queen of the nation. Supporting this account, Machado (2006, p. 9-10) writes that: “In Vila Bela, in its mining settlements, at the Príncipe da Beira Fort, and in the Indigenous missions along the border with Bolivia, there was, according to Luiz d’Albuquerque, a total population of 5,994 inhabitants.”

This scientific evidence supports the participant’s account of quilombola presence in the Primavera community. However, none of the participant’s relatives currently live there, as they migrated many decades ago – first to São Luís do Tapajós, a district of Itaituba, Pará, and later to the urban center of the city of Itaituba.

Primavera is located within the Munduruku Indigenous Land and is currently inhabited by members of the Munduruku ethnic group. According to Machado (2006), in Mato Grosso there was significant territorial interaction between quilombola communities and Indigenous peoples such as the Pareci and Nambicuara. However, it is not known whether such interaction occurred in the case of Primavera, between the participant’s family and the Munduruku, who now occupy the area. The demarcation of the Munduruku Indigenous Land was finalized in 2004.

3.7 Quilombolas from the Paredão and Itapuranga communities in Itaituba

The presence of migrants from Maranhão in the Middle and Upper Tapajós is historically documented in the work of Henri Coudreau (1977), *Viagem ao Tapajós* (“Journey to the Tapajós”), in

which he estimated that around a thousand people from Maranhão were living in the region. Regarding this occupation dynamic, Salles (1971) explains:

In Maranhão, the presence of Black people soon became significant. Until the early 18th century, the slave trade was almost entirely directed to that captaincy (...). Until that time, Pará did not have a large enslaved population. São Luís, being better located and more developed, dominated the basin of several navigable rivers and absorbed nearly all imports to the far north, populating the banks of the Pindaré, Mearim, and Itapicuru rivers with Black people. From the farms in these areas, escaped slaves would head in various directions: the backlands of the mid-north, the central plateau, and the forests of Pará (Salles, 1971, p. 204).

The presence of quilombolas in the municipality of Itaituba is also confirmed through the memories and self-identification of quilombola descendants who participated in this research. Although they no longer occupy their original territories, their life stories are deeply connected to the communities of Itapocu, Paredão, and Itapuranga, in the city of Itaituba, Pará.

Fieldwork identified three families whose memories are closely tied to these communities: the Rocha family, river dwellers from São Luís do Tapajós who lived in the Paredão community; the Oliveira das Chagas family, original quilombolas from Itapocu who also settled in Paredão; and the Cajazeiras family, quilombolas from Itapuranga, whose patriarch originated from the state of Maranhão.

3.8 Memories of the Rocha family

Memory is a form of historical reconstruction. However, to contextualize this history, it is important to understand how residents of a relocated community organize both personal and collective memories of that place. From this perspective, the story of the Rocha family, as presented in this study, was shared by Interviewee 2. Although he may not fully recognize his ancestry in historical terms and does not identify as a quilombo descendant, he is a living witness to the quilombola presence in the Paredão community.

According to the interviewee, who was born in São Luís do Tapajós – a riverside town along the Tapajós River, upstream from the city of Itaituba – at the end of the 1950s, his father, Manoel Rocha, a rubber tapper and farmer, moved the entire family from São Luís do Tapajós to the Paredão community. At the time, Paredão was already inhabited by other riverside families, including the Cajazeira and Oliveira families. The connection between the Rocha and Cajazeira families was strengthened through marriage: Luís Rocha, brother of Euridice, married Maria Cajazeira, the daughter of Francisco Cajazeira.

Euridice recalls that the Cajazeiras were a Black family, with dark skin, curly hair, and clothing that stood out from what was typically worn by other families in the region. She adds that the Cajazeiras dressed like *baianas*, wearing flowing dresses and fabric wrapped around their heads.

The Rocha family remained in the Paredão community until the late 1960s, when they, along with other resident families, were forced to leave. The area became part of a federal land appropriation

initiative under the National Integration Program.

According to the interviewee, community residents were approached by government representatives who gave them a deadline to leave the area, with the promise that other land would be provided for their families. Her memories are shared as follows:

We stayed there for many years, and then, one fine day, a helicopter landed, and it was the people who came to tell us we had to leave the area – they needed it to build a barracks. Then my father asked, “Where are you going to put us? Me and my children?” The answer was that they would give my father a plot of land along the Transamazon Highway, at kilometer 13. INCRA went to measure the land, and my father went along and received a new piece of land (Dona Euridice).

By reflecting on this experience, it is possible to understand how the actions of government intermediaries shaped residents’ perceptions of the state. In this sense, rather than portraying land occupation as a spontaneous or disorderly act, the residents’ memories consistently recall the state as a regulatory presence.

3.9 Memories of the Oliveira Chagas family

The Oliveira das Chagas family experienced a similar trajectory. The main contributors to this research were Mrs. Maria Chagas and her son, Wilson Chagas, descendants of escaped slaves from Codó, Maranhão, who self-identify as quilombo remnants.

Maria Chagas was born on June 15, 1938, in a riverside community along the Tapajós River called

Nova Vida. She is the daughter of Manoel Ulisses das Chagas and Raimunda Oliveira das Chagas and came from another riverside community, Itapocu, located upstream from the Paredão community.

Maria Elisa's quilombola origins trace back to her maternal grandfather, Mr. Alexandre Oliveira, who had been enslaved and came from Codó, Maranhão, to the community of Itapocu, in the Tapajós region. Maranhão is known for its strong Afro-Brazilian heritage, with 866 registered quilombola localities – of which only 6.93% have officially delimited territories. The Codó region itself contains four officially delimited territories, which represents 6.67% of Maranhão's total (IBGE, 2021).

Codó is located in the Itapecuru River basin, a region where enslaved Africans were heavily trafficked to work on cotton and rice plantations, as well as in mills and cattle ranches. Sousa (2021, p. 21) explains:

The influx of Africans to Codó was even more significant, as can still be seen today, since the municipality's population is made up of Afro-descendants whose origins trace back to African peoples brought there in the mid-18th century. At that time, the Itapecuru Valley had become a major center for rice and cotton – Maranhão's two greatest sources of wealth – with cotton exported to foreign markets. This made Codó an important production and industrial hub, becoming the third most important city in the province (Sousa, 2021, p. 21).

Regarding the migration of people from Maranhão to the Tapajós region, it is worth noting that this movement has been documented for a long time. In his 1897 book, French traveler Henri

Coudreau made the following observation about the Tapajós:

With regard to the Tapajós itself, of the two hundred or so houses on its banks, I know of only one owned by a man from Mato Grosso, who has been settled in the region for 35 years and maintains relations only with Pará. The 3,000 civilized people who populate the entire Tapajós Basin, from Salto Augusto to Itaituba, including both the left and right tributaries, are all from Pará, Maranhão, or Ceará, and they work for and with Pará. I think it would be difficult to find a dozen Mato Grosso residents there. The colonization resulting from the penetration of Mato Grosso is therefore a mixture; the colonization of the Tapajós is in the hands of the Pará people and their Maranhão and Ceará auxiliaries (Coudreau, 1977, p. 82).

Mr. Alexandre Oliveira, the father of Dona Brígida and Raimunda, belongs to a generation prior to Mrs. Elisa, who was born in 1938. His origins in Maranhão date to the end of the 19th century – a period when slavery was still a common practice. This allows us to infer that the riverside community of Itapocu, where Elisa's mother came from, was also a territory traditionally occupied by quilombolas, even though it was not the direct focus of this research.

To support this hypothesis, Itapocu is mentioned in the book *Os sertões do rio Tapajós: Itaituba*, by Raimundo Pereira Brasil, published in 1910, as a rubber trading center located between the towns of Itaituba and Jacaré. According to the publication, Jacaré was situated near the Tracua River (Brasil, 1910, p. 89), which serves as the natural boundary of the Amazon National Park,

approximately 60 kilometers from the urban center of Itaituba.

Maria Elisa's connection to the Paredão community began when she was between 15 and 17 years old, between 1953 and 1955. When her family arrived in Paredão, the family of Francisco Cajazeira was already living downstream on a farm called Itapuranga. Francisco was married to her mother's sister, Brígida.

Maria Elisa moved from Nova Vida to Paredão following the death of her mother, which left her and her nine siblings in need of care. This led them to settle near their aunt, Brígida Cajazeira, who had already been living in Itapuranga for some time. Itapuranga was located near the road between Paredão and Itaituba, adjacent to the area now occupied by the 53rd Infantry and Jungle Battalion. Elisa later moved to the nearby Paredão community.

Elisa recalls that, after her mother's death, her biological father did not help raise the children, as he had another family in a distant community called Boa Hora. As a result, she took on the responsibility of caring for her siblings and relied on the material support of her uncle, Francisco Cajazeira, who was an accomplished farmer. *"That's when I lost my mother, when my father abandoned us. I would break corn, soak manioc, and make flour to support my brothers"* (Maria Chagas).

According to Elisa, even with the support of her uncle, it was not enough to feed so many people. As a teenager, she was forced to work as a day laborer in the fields of families who lived near her home. In 1966, when Elisa was 28 years old, her family was removed from the area and was not offered any land by the government for

resettlement – unlike Mr. Rocha's family, who received a plot along the Transamazon Highway. Without assistance and lacking a male head of household, Elisa and her siblings – led by an unmarried Woman – were considered dependents within the Cajazeira family group.

Francisco Wilson Chagas, one of Elisa's sons, has expressed a strong interest in having his identity as a member of a traditional population recognized by society. His heritage reflects a close connection to the Munduruku people as well as African ancestry through his mother. Wilson shared his experience with the Indigenous movement in the Lower Tapajós, particularly with the Borari people, and expressed his desire for official recognition of his ethnic identity, given his Indigenous and African roots, as recorded in the interview.

In this regard, O'Dwyer (2010) notes that self-identification is supported by the Brazilian Anthropology Association (ABA) as a key element in recognizing quilombo remnant groups. According to this position, there is no requirement for a technical certificate issued by specialists; it is sufficient for the group to identify itself as such. This process of self-recognition ensures access to constitutional rights and is supported by Decree No. 4.887 of November 20, 2003, whose Article 2 states that:

For the purposes of this Decree, quilombo remnant communities are defined as ethnic-racial groups identified through self-attribution. These groups have their own historical trajectory, maintain specific territorial connections, and are presumed to have Black ancestry linked to resistance against historical oppression (BRASIL, 2003).

3.10. Memories of the Cajazeira family

The history of the Cajazeira family was documented through interviews with two family members: Mr. Zacarias Oliveira Cajazeira, an 80-year-old retired prospector and son of Francisco Cajazeira, and Mercê Santos, daughter of Maria de Oliveira Cajazeira, making her the granddaughter of Francisco and Brígida Cajazeira, niece of Maria Elisa de Oliveira das Chagas, and great-granddaughter of Alexandre Oliveira. Mr. Zacarias is a self-identified quilombo descendant who lived in the area identified in this study as the Itapuranga and Paredão communities. Although directly connected to Itapuranga, where her mother was born, Mercê herself was born in the city of Itaituba.

According to Mr. Zacarias, Francisco Cajazeira arrived in the Tapajós region in 1910 and initially settled in the community of Itapocu. He was taken in by the family of Mr. Alexandre Oliveira – Brígida's Father – whom Francisco would later marry, 27 years after his arrival. Mr. Zacarias shares his memory of his father as a significant figure:

I recorded the story he told, right? My father left Maranhão, leaving behind two sisters, Brígida and Alexandrina, in 1910. When he arrived, he stayed at my grandfather's house – his name was Alexandre – and he lived there for 17 years, practically like a son of the house. That's when he got close to my mother. After all those years, in 1927, he went back to Maranhão and returned. When he got back, he told my mother he was dating her; and that's when they got married, in 1937. She was 27 when she got married (Zacarias Cajazeira).

In their accounts, Mercê and Zacarias explained that Francisco and Brígida had five children while living in Itapuranga: Rosalina Cajazeira, Marina Cajazeira, Maria Cajazeira, Marino Cajazeira – known as Popoca – and Zacarias Cajazeira. Of these, only Marino and Zacarias are still living. They noted that Itapuranga was located near the present-day site of the Associação Atlética Banco do Brasil (AABB).

The area where the AABB is located is very close to the entrance of the 53rd Infantry and Jungle Battalion (53rd BIS). The Cajazeira family left Itapuranga under the same circumstances that forced the Chagas and Rocha families to leave. According to Mrs. Mercê:

My mother also said – they expropriated the land, they asked for it. It was a commander, she even knew his name, and I think we still have his signature. He told the family they could choose another area. They were going to move the people out and relocate them somewhere else. The Cajazeira family could choose a plot of land – the town already existed, right? (Mercê Santos)

Zacarias explained that his family was not able to be resettled by INCRA due to bureaucratic obstacles. As a result, from the late 1960s onward, he lived on land donated by his godmother, in the area where Avenida Nova de Santana is located today. The memories shared by the residents interviewed link a series of events connected to both daily life in the city and broader issues related to land ownership and conflict in Brazil and the Amazon.

Mr. Zacarias also noted that his father's farm was located where the Quinta do BIS housing

development now stands. According to Mercê, the process of removing the Cajazeira family was deeply traumatic for Mr. Francisco, who was then over 90 years old. He witnessed the destruction of his crops with great sorrow.

The removal of these communities is a striking example of how “the social definition of interest is a complex social process” (Jobert & Muller, 1987, p. 37). The translation of social tensions into political interests involves processes that are often masked by how self-evident those interests appear to be. As Mercê explains:

During that time, they gave us a deadline to leave, and the land for resettlement was offered on the other side of the Transamazon Highway, across from Fonte Azul. Grandpa was there, but we didn't agree to go – Mom didn't want to go. She came here (Itaituba); they bought land and settled here. The other grandpa went over there (Transamazon). That other grandpa is Dad's father (Mercê's paternal grandfather). Elton said that when they arrived, the machines came in because there was no BIS road yet, you know? They sent in the machines through the fields, destroying corn, Grandpa's crops... Grandpa cried. Then he got very upset. To make matters worse, he stepped on a thorn – something in the bush – and never recovered. He started dragging his leg, you know? He got sick and died. He used to sit there saying that if his foot got better, he'd shoot the operators, the men driving the tractors and taking his things away. I didn't know that! (Mercê Santos)

The other grandfather Mercê refers to is Manoel Francisco Rocha, father of her father, Luiz Rocha, who was married to Maria Cajazeira. Eurídice, Manoel Rocha's daughter, confirms that her family was resettled as promised. In Mr. Francisco's case, it is understood that he was already

in poor health at the time of the forced removal from Itapuranga. This situation prevented him from advocating for his land, and the expropriation ultimately worsened his condition – a circumstance that contributed to his death in 1972.

Regarding the idea of belonging to a quilombo remnant group, Mercê explains that this was not something explicitly discussed within her family. However, today she accepts and identifies herself as quilombola. Her interest in her family's origins and her process of self-identification began after meeting a man named José, who lived in the Bom Jardim neighborhood – an area close to the former villages of Itapuranga and Paredão. Mr. José was a bricklayer who helped build the house of Maria Cajazeira on Avenida Nova de Santana, where Mercê was raised. During his visits to the Cajazeira home, José would share that he had fled from Maranhão to Pará because his family had lived in slavery in Maranhão. Mercê's memories are more recent, but she reflects on some key moments:

I don't remember my family talking about it. Maybe my grandfather, but he never spoke about it. I learned about it later, when I was at my mother's house in Nova de Santana. There was a man – he's passed away now – who lived in Bom Jardim and sometimes came to do some work that my father asked him to do. When my father was building that house in Nova de Santana, this man came to help, and they used to talk a lot. I listened. He said he had run away, that he hated talking about Maranhão. He said he had suffered a lot, even been tied up. At the time, I thought it was hard to believe – “How could someone be tied up?” – but that's when I started to understand things. I was already a big girl. That's why, when I told you I didn't remember much about Paredão, it's because I didn't live there, you know? Maybe even

people who didn't know each other came around the same time. Look, Aunt Elisa... Aunt Elisa's mother was my grandmother's sister, so we're very close. So that's what happened. These stories I'm telling you about Mr. José – my mother and father said my grandfather, my mother's father, had been through the same thing: they came from there, in that situation, you know? Fleeing (Mercê).

In talking with Mercê, it became clear that the family's awareness of Mr. Francisco's origins was shaped by the stories shared by Mr. José from Bom Jardim. According to Maria Cajazeira, José's experiences mirrored those of her father. From that point forward, Mercê, although she never lived in Itapuranga, came to identify herself as a member of a quilombo remnant community in Itaituba, Pará. Within this socio-political and territorial context – from captivity to flight – escape became a concrete form of resistance to slavery, undermining the system in daily life.

Mr. Zacarias, for his part, expressed deep frustration with the way his family was treated by the federal government. He highlighted the contradiction in the logic of urban occupation, where an area once inhabited solely by traditional populations was later taken over by others. In his words:

Excuse me for a moment. What was missing was a bit of understanding and consideration, which the government didn't have. Because how is it that wealthy people can move in – there are lots of houses there now – and we, who are the children of that place, aren't even allowed to build a small hut to live in? I thought that was wrong, right? We should have been allowed to stay there. Living there. I wasn't harming anything; I could've stayed. But

everyone had to leave. And why did the people with money move in? There was a lack of consideration, a lack of vision... That's what happened. At the very least, we could've stayed there. The barracks are still there – we could've done what my father did: lots of planting, lots of things. We would've had something there. Then at least we'd have our rights (Zacarias Cajazeira).

Mr. Zacarias' reflections are meaningful and resonate with the broader accounts shared by others interviewed in this research. His words express a historical reality in Brazil, where expropriation and land grabbing have left deep marks on the processes of territorialization. According to Fuini (2014), territorialization refers to the action, movement, or process of building and shaping territories through appropriation, use, identification, and connection to specific spaces – driven by political, economic, or cultural logics. It is also associated with the organization or qualification of territory. In this context, the African diaspora reshaped the destiny of enslaved men and women who arrived in Brazil and who, under the weight of trafficking and slavery, “had to find ways of belonging somewhere” (Silva Filho & Lisboa, 2012, p. 6).

In this context, the central notion of the subject under investigation – a quilombo – offers strong evidence that the meaning of this category has evolved over time. It is no longer limited to cases of escape and refuge for enslaved individuals. Instead, the concept has incorporated an identity dimension, which suggests a sustainable basis for the formation and continued existence of quilombos. In this regard, Silva & Silva (2016) argue that this identity component becomes essential in the struggle not only to maintain or reclaim

a material territory, but also a symbolic one. On this point, Mello (2012), as cited by Brandão et al. (2021), adds:

Quilombos have always been sources of inspiration and spaces that fuel the imagination of the Brazilian nation, serving as content or themes transformed into narratives. These narratives became the backdrop and ornament in various contexts of the sophistication of slave society, where the *senzala* framed the surroundings of the *casa grande*, the symbol of the masters' power (Mello, 2012, apud Brandão et al., 2021, p. 6).

In the Tapajós region, the participants' accounts affirm these characteristics of quilombo territories. Mercê's vivid narrative recalls that the Cajazeira women wore traditional *baiana*-style clothing. She notes that the women in her family often wore flared skirts like those of the *baianas*. Mercê specifically remembers her mother wearing them frequently and still recalls the lightweight, flowing waistband that defined the look.

Within this socio-political, spatial, and cultural context, Brandão (2012) explains that traditional communities are marked by their contrast with modern regional societies. These communities generally maintain simple subsistence practices, often relying on family-based agriculture as their primary source of income. Their relationship with the forest and the environment is characterized by harmony and respect, rooted in cultural, religious, and social values, and based on a sustainable system of production.

4. Final considerations

The controversies that arise in everyday life regarding the fragility of the “Amazonian ecosystem” and possible “development alternatives” have become central topics in major global political debates. In this context, the growing influence of social movements has played a key role in shaping legislation – particularly since the CF/88 – by advancing initiatives in defense of the forest, the forest peoples, and their traditional ways of life, which have been shaped over centuries in these territories. Although progress has been slow, these efforts have contributed to the development of mechanisms aimed at promoting a more balanced and respectful relationship between traditional populations and the physical and natural environment. For this reason, preserving the ways of life of these populations is a fundamental responsibility for the societies that surround them. It is therefore essential to consolidate public policies and uphold the rights established in Brazil's CF/88, known as the Citizen Constitution.

In this socio-political context, quilombola communities – as ethnically distinct groups recognized under the category of traditional peoples – require the immediate demarcation of their territories. Officially demarcated territories ensure both social and legal protection, while also upholding citizenship through the enforcement of rights guaranteed to traditional populations.

As of the date of this research, there are no quilombola communities officially recognized in the city of Itaituba, Pará. However, based on the oral histories shared by local social actors, it is important to highlight that quilombola populations historically

formed communities in both the municipality of Itaituba and the municipality of Jacareacanga.

In terms of territorial rights, the remnants of the identified areas remain in a state of vulnerability and social exclusion, as their rights were historically denied by the Brazilian state. This reality was made clear by the participants in this research – remnants and descendants of families who lived in quilombo territories. The expulsions from their lands, carried out by the state itself, occurred decades before the constitutional guarantees now in place that recognize their right to definitive land ownership.

However, the challenges related to land tenure should not discourage the political engagement of these quilombo remnants in defending the other rights guaranteed by the Federal Constitution, particularly those set out in Articles 215 and 216. Moreover, considering that ethnic self-identification is a right protected under Brazilian law, and that society must be made aware of the evolving meanings of the terms *quilombo* and *quilombo remnant communities*, further research is necessary. This opens the way for new studies on the subject.

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