

Trade, Exchange and Markets in Amazonia

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Resumen / Abstract:

Even as Amazonia has usually be seen to stand at the periphery of world economic relations, from trade with the Incas through the rubber epoch and to the current timber and agricultural industries, Amazonian goods and products have always formed part of wider trade networks. Equally, from even before direct contact with European peoples Amerindians have been involved with Western trade goods, including clothing and beads, hunting and fishing equipment and now, radios, bicycles, and motors. Amazonian societies have thus continually entered into relationships of exchange and trade with outsiders, obtaining goods on which they place value and providing global markets with various important commodities.

This symposium seeks to consider these relationships from a variety of perspectives. Included papers will cover both the importance that local groups place on the acquisition of non-Amazonian goods as well as the enduring desire of non-Amazonian peoples for Amazonian products. They will consider the meanings and importance of both the articles exchanged and the relationships involved. They might also consider the consequences of participation in such trade for the people involved. In this context Amazonian groups are understood to include not only indigenous groups but also the various mixed-heritage and peasant populations that play a central role in contemporary exchange relations both as go-betweens for indigenous people as well as producers and traders in their own right. We are also interested in studies examining the integration of Amazonian production into world markets through the spread of new forms of agricultural production.

Overall, the panel will seek to interrogate a number of divisions implicit in the anthropology of Lowland South America: between indigenous and non-indigenous populations of the region; 'traditional' versus 'modern' material objects and gift versus commodity exchanges.