Amazonian peasants, conflicts over land and the river in the Lower Amazon, state of Pará, Brazil.

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Abstract: This presentation will discuss the general context in which an Amazonian historical peasantry emerged on the riverbanks in the early nineteenth century. It will address the development and transformations of this peasantry in the Lower Amazon area in early twentieth century and its contemporary character and fate in the early twenty first century. One set of themes to be addressed across these periods include the role of state policies in shaping the activities of riverine peasants and the role of town elites in determining what actually happens locally. Another set is the influence of economic cycles and the changing demands on land and labour. Above all this presentation will seek to identify the historical and anthropological specificity of the Amazonian peasantry; a task that is complicated by its lack of fit with Latin American, and other parts of the world, counterparts for it is neither a new peasantry made up of European migrants nor a poor indigenous peasantry. Agrarian capitalism in the form of plantations never developed in the region, at least until very recently.