

About this book

It is now – in 2022 – half a century ago that the first section of the Transamazônica was opened. And it was also fifty years ago that a start was made with a rapid and complete economic conquest of the Brazilian North, once the “green hell” and the “demographic vacuum.” It is now time to look back at how the process of integration started, to assess the results of later developments and to give a picture of the current situation. In other words, it is time for another book on Amazônia.

Jan Kleinpenning, then Professor of Human Geography of Developing Countries at the University of Nijmegen, The Netherlands, was one of the many scholars who started to concern themselves in the 1970s with the attempts of the Brazilian government to stimulate the development of the Amazon region and to integrate it more closely into the national economy. He carried out field research in the area in 1973 and 1976 and has now adapted the publications which first appeared in the 1970s and integrated them into one document, which forms the content of Part 2 of this book. This re-editing of texts is intended to give a retrospective summary of how the integration and colonisation of the Brazilian Amazon started.

Part 3 of the book contains an adapted version of two case studies from the early 1980s: The first one is a chapter that Jan Kleinpenning wrote on population change in the Amazon region in the period 1970–1980, and the second is a summary of parts of Ron Milder's Master's thesis on the town of Altamira, before and after the building of the Transamazônica. Both studies further illustrate the developments that took place during the initial phase of large scale colonisation of the Amazon area.

Part 1 includes a summary of the development of the Brazilian Amazon up to 1970 and is intended to give a background for the parts of this volume which are concerned with the subsequent period.

In Volume 2 – *Five decades of exploitation, deforestation and attempts at sustainable development*– Gerd Kohlhepp gives a detailed assessment of five decades of state-controlled and private exploitation, deforestation, mega-projects and attempts at sustainable development.

This book has become a sad history of what has happened in the Brazilian North during the past fifty years. It tells how use, misuse, plunder and deforestation have changed the largest tropical rain forest area in the world. Sometimes, sad histories have to be written.

