

Cláudia City Colonization, Mato Grosso, Brazil, based on its Residents' Testimonials

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Abstract

This study analyzed the settlement process of Cláudia city, Mato Grosso state – Brazil, between the years 1978 and 1988, based on its residents' testimonials. The selected time period is due to the fact that in 1978 there was the foundation of the city and, in 1988, is created Cláudia Municipal. During this period there is the colonization process, with the settlers' arrival from the Southern Region, with the economic attempts of production in the land, in agriculture, in the cattle raising, and with the vegetal extractivism made by the loggers. The school assumes an important role in this period, being its existence imperative for the settler's settlement in the place, since the migrant families were constituted with children in the school age. The political-emancipatory process between the years 1986 and 1988 had as objective to convince the population from Cláudia that the political elevation to Municipality was viable. The colonization of uninhabited or sparsely populated land was part of a Federal Government Project that encouraged private settlers to settle on Midwest lands. Among these, was the "SINOP S.A. Settler", owner of the region called Gleba Celeste, in which was Cláudia city.

Keywords: Colonization process; Political-emancipatory process; The residents' testimonials; Cláudia - Mato Grosso socioeconomical sectors.

1. Introduction

In 1971, the SINOP S. A. Settler, belonging to the SINOP Group, purchased from the Federal Government an area of approximately 600,000 hectares in the interior of Mato Grosso (Brazil) and aimed the construction of four new cities: Sinop, Vera, Carmem and Cláudia.

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The Settler SINOP (Sociedade Imobiliária do Noroeste do Paraná) – in English (Real State Company of Northwest of Paraná) took the opportunity to become involved in the Federal Government's Project of colonization of empty spaces or of low population density in the center-west of Brazil and acquired lands in the Amazon Forest, which it called Gleba Celeste . The purpose of the Federal Government's Project was to make it possible to settle man in the Amazon region by selling land at more affordable prices than in other Brazilian states, and also to facilitate the people's displacement that lived near the Paraná River in areas that were expropriated for the construction of the Itaipu Binational Hydroelectric Plant (Brazil-Paraguay) [1].

The SINOP Settler, owned by Enio Pipino and João Pedro Moreira de Carvalho, established as a model of colonization the proposal which he called the "SINOP Colonization Project in Amazon" with four essential objectives: 1) food production; 2) fuel energy; 3) Brazilians' settlement in new areas and 4) distribution of wealth due to economic development in this part of the national territory. The food production in Gleba Celeste had as support the Cooperativa Agrícola Mista Celeste Ltda. (in English – Celeste Limited Mixed Agricultural Cooperative), which included nurseries and experimental fields. This cooperative considered the Amazon particular characteristics in relation to the soil and climate and, from this, it provided technical assistance to the farmers and assisted in the agricultural projects elaboration for the new landowners [2].

The production of fuel energy by SINOP AGRO QUÍMICA S. A., a SINOP Group company, was part of the Alcohol National Program (1975), which had as its proposal to produce ethanol as fuel for the automobile industry in order to compete with the OPEP (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) high price. The AGRO QUÍMICA industry produced ethanol from the cassava, carbonic gas (dry ice) for the refrigerators, fúzel oil (organic solvent) and animal feed. Man's landholding was based on the lands affordable price and jobs created in the industrial and commercial sectors that would enable a better distribution of income among settlers [1].

The cities construction (deforestation, street layout and roads, demarcations, etc.) first began in Vera city, founded on July 27, 1972; followed by Sinop city, founded on September 14, 1974; after Santa Carmem city on September 15, 1974 and Cláudia city, in 1978 [3], all of them belonging to Chapada dos Guimarães Municipality. At the end of the 1970s, there were territorial dismemberments in Mato Grosso State due to the constant creations of cities that followed within the Federal Government's colonization project. First, in 1977, the division of the State took place with the creation of Mato Grosso do Sul as a new state. [4]; in 1979, there was the dismemberment of Chapada dos Guimarães Municipality with the creation of Sinop Municipality, formed by Sinop, Vera, Santa Carmem, Claudia and Marcelândia cities [5].

The objective of this research is to present the colonization process in Cláudia city between the years of 1978 and 1988 from the settlers' testimonials. Cláudia city belonged to Chapada dos Guimarães Municipality in 1978. In the next year, it passed to belong to Sinop. On July 4, 1988, it was created Cláudia Municipality, after the dismemberment of Sinop, Itaúba and Marcelândia Municipalities [6]. In figure 1 we see Cláudia map and its neighboring cities currently:

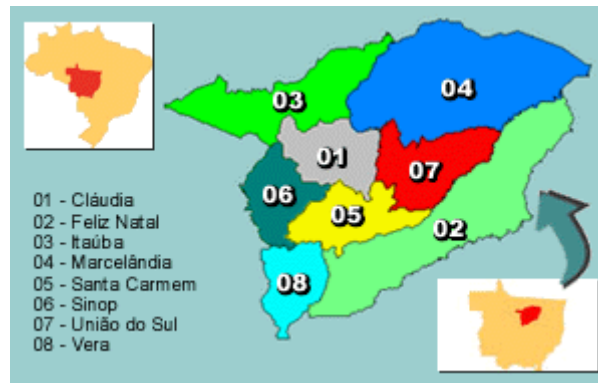


Figure 1: Cláudia map and its neighboring cities

Next, we will present how the research methodology was organized in order to verify how the settlers who migrated to Cláudia discuss the colonization process based on their experiences.

2. Methods

This study had as organizational support the methodology of Thematic Oral History. According to Meihy [7], this methodology is based on a specific and established subject, dialoguing between oral and written documentation. In this specificity, the research is constructed with other documents that help in formulating the guiding questions of the interview, so that the complexity of the historical cut is better understood. The collaborator, in oral history, is more than an informant or interviewee, is a person committed to the study project itself. This character of commitment assumed with the research is based on the relationships established between the two: interviewer and collaborator. It was conducted a total of 26 interviews with Cláudia's first residents or with people who knew its colonization history.

In addition to the interviews, the corpus for analysis also included written documents that covering the decades 1978 and 1988. The Written Documents were collected from the SINOP S.A. Settler, responsible for the opening of the cities and allotment; for Cláudia Municipal Secretaries; for state and federal offices; for current newspapers and journals about the region, for dissertations and theses that tell the Gleba Celeste colonization history.

3. Cláudia's colonization from the residents' testimonials

The date presented in the Urban Development Project for Cláudia's foundation brings us the day of August 5, 1978, with a total area of 4,400,980.00 m², or 440,098 hectares. That same year, the settlers' first families arrived, as Mrs. Roseli de Moral Maldonado's family. Mrs. Roseli was a teacher and educated a great part of Cláudia inhabitants. The Maldonados soon began the family's economic activity with the wood extraction and cutting, opening the first Cláudia logging company, called Madeireira Cláudia Ltda. The first supplier of raw material for the houses construction in the community. While the Maldonados worked in the wood cutting, Mrs. Roseli began the teacher's work at her own home. Her home had only two-rooms and was divided into a third one with an area of about 7m x 5m for the classroom with desks and the school benches of a disabled school [8].

Mrs. Roseli said that at this time "there must have been eight houses. But the people here did not stay at home, they stayed in the tarpaulin tents. Until they knocked down the bush, which first needed to clear the bush, and made the wood and everything to build, the people stayed in the tarpaulin tents. "They opened and extended the tarpaulin and entered under it. "With only a sawmill in town, the preparation of the boards for the houses construction took about six months -" or more", "Roseli added. It was the estimated time of waiting for your own house. The families settled in tarpaulin tents, temporarily, while the men went to the forests to knock down the wood, usually chestnuts, for the house constructions. In the figure below, we see a family newly arrived in 1979, still living in precarious conditions before the house construction:



Figure 2: Anderle Family in 1979

Families arrived in their cars and trucks, with furniture and children, sometimes even cattle, departing mainly from Paraná State and settled down with the purpose of settling, enriching and prospering. The settlers, remembering the past, usually elaborate a principle of reflective-historical act organizing the lived situations in social, economical and historical moments. The first moment, which concerns to the people who arrived to Cláudia, we will call the colonization process, organizing these settlers in three socioeconomic sectors: the farmers / ranchers, the loggers and the liberal professionals / other professions. The parameter to organize this first colonizing moment within a socioeconomic conception, was due to the fact of the own characteristics of this settlement.

The colonization, also understood as settlement, both urban and rural, had as social characteristics the history of a group of people who lived in the same region of Paraná and presented similar culture, formed by small landowners and businessmen of the logger sector. Later, the search for labor in the Southern Region of Brazil was encouraged to work in these rural sectors and in the incipient urban activities, responsible for keeping the

city at a stabilized occupational / employment level. Social concepts of settlement and economic market can not be separated at this time, since the interviewees were unanimous in affirming that the trip to Mato Grosso was to reorganize and improve economically their lives (fourth objective of the SINOP Settler Project) . Thus, we can classify the characteristics of Cláudia's settlement as follows:

- The socioeconomic sector of agricultural and livestock: 1) started with farmers who maintained the same agricultural production already known in their homelands; 2) with the lack of knowledge of soil and climate many settlers failed to grow typical products of cold regions; 3) the settlers start investing in the livestock sector;
- The loggers socioeconomic sector had as characteristic the forest extractivism;
- The liberal professional and other professions socioeconomic sector, which presented the characteristic of migratory mobility and a spontaneous and voluntarist professional performance.

The second moment was a political-emancipatory process, a period in which Claudia reached a level whose economy was near or in the process of stabilization, with an urban center that presented possibilities for the citizens' survival, as sectors of health, education, trade and others. At this moment, the community began to think about the possibility of separating from Sinop Municipality and forming an own municipality. This political separation occurred in 1988, with the first City Hall in 1989.

Mr. Luís Antônio Coelho Campana [politician and professor], in presenting the colonization process characteristics, stated that "the economy in the city of Cláudia, since the beginning of its colonization, was initially guided by the arrival of small farmers from the Southern region of the country, mainly from Paraná State and, above all, farmers who lived on the banks of the Itaipu Lake. For the dam formation, the Federal Government made the indemnities [of the land properties] and many people from that region came to Claudia and they bought, acquired their lands here, intending to continue working in agriculture. And there were also some entrepreneurs, already at the time, as lumbermen, behind the wood, since the potential logger here was and still is very strong. "

The settlers who came to invest in agriculture were mostly from the western region of Paraná State, which had their land purchased by the Federal Government for the Itaipu Hydroelectric Power Plant construction. In their homecities, they were considered small farmers who had as economic model the subsistence. As a social characteristic, these families had a large number of children, a small land to distribute among them, and sometimes the work carried out by contractors on other farms. These families were able to survive economically through planted food, animals raised and occasional work on other rural properties or even in cities. When they moved to Claudia, these families changed from small farmers in Paraná to middle or large landowners. In the interviews, the settlers confirmed that "we bought more land here" as a way to reaffirm their social ascent taken away from home. Mrs. Maria Aparecida Rocha Figueiredo [teacher] reported that her father "sold three bushels there and bought twelve bushels here".

The farmers' first tried in Claudia was to plant in the same way they were accustomed, with the same seeds,

with the same agricultural products, many of them brought when they moved to another house. These farmers were faced with different soil conditions to which they were accustomed, with a sandy land that needed acidity control, special fertilizers and that accepted only a few seeds without preparing the soil. In addition to soil, the climate was another unknown factor for the South man. In this part of the country, the rainy season and the dry one were divided into two periods, which are well defined chronologically: the rainy season occurs from October to April, while The drought extends from May to September. Warm days, with an average of 24 ° degrees Celsius daily, without winter (cold) or summer (hot) as occurs in the South Region. The sequence of days of heat, with little variation of temperature, made this man adapts quickly to this new model of plantation to survive economically. In data provided by the SINOP Settler [9], after a soil study in Cláudia Municipality, a series of limitations for planting in the region were presented, as follows: - Acid soils with a toxicity problem of aluminum; - Low levels of phosphorus, calcium, magnesium and zinc; - Low cation exchange; - Compaction ease, requiring deep plowing; - Reduced organic matter content; - Water deficit in the dry, etc. The initial coffee plantations had no effect and the rice was the seed that most adapted to Cláudia's lands, giving better results. Cassava cultivation has also generated good yields, both for home feed and for sale.

The problem that followed for these farmers who were producing on their lands was the lack of investment in the state roads and highways. The poor quality of roads, without asphalt, that became mud in the period of the rain and dusty in the period of the drought, increased the expenses with the agricultural production flow until arriving at the consumer market. Mrs. Iris Gujahr Vollbrecht [teacher] reported that her husband "began to make paid transportation (freight) which, at that time, was a way of making money." He transported the producers' cassava to AGRO QUÍMICA, the company that bought cassava for the production of alcohol.

Mrs. Leila Aparecida dos Santos [teacher] remembered that farmers made financing in the Brazil Bank to be able to plant cassava and sell the production to AGRO QUÍMICA. Even with good harvests, many producers lost their lands, because they could not pay the contracted debt with the Bank. This was due to the lack of good roads as well as to the lack of efficient transport that would deliver the product to the market. Farmers who invested in large cassava plantations were harmed by this lack of logistics, as was AGRO QUÍMICA itself, which, without receiving its main product for the manufacture of ethanol, also went bankrupt.

With a land that required much processing to produce and without conditions of investments, some settlers began to invest in the cattle activity with the cattle purchase and the pastures planting for themselves or for renting. Mr Luis argued that some farmers who started planting grasses for livestock had problems during the rainy season, since "pastures do not support a viable amount of livestock per bushel." This enterprise became unfeasible for cattle ranchers who kept a very large amount of cattle per bushel.

At the beginning, the agricultural and livestock socioeconomic sector was in the process of adapting to this new soil and climate knowledge, with its peculiar time conditions, with a greater land property than that which the settler had left in his origin state. In the case of loggers, many of the settlers who acted in this sector were already entrepreneurs in their origin places and knew better the positive and negative points of the business. The SINOP Settler itself in Paraná, through the publicity made, promoted the economic prosperity of those who invested in Claudia, with the opening of the virgin lands and with the right profit for the wood sale. Mrs. Roseli

said that this was the main reason to her husband and brother-in-law came in 1978 with more four or five families to open a sawmill in Claudia, encouraged by the settler EnioPipino.

The branch of the logging economy was restricted to the extractivism, with the tree cutting in the forests, the transportation to the logging, the wood processing, cutting and sale. This sector was, in the short term, Cláudia's main economic sector between the 80's of the last century and the first decade of the 21st century. Mr. Luis reported that "started to come loggers, sawmills, rolling mills, and all this time, we can say, [...] the Municipality survived with its wood economy. "

Mr. Vilson Vollbrecht [politician and professor] highlighted the difficulty of finding skilled labor at the beginning of colonization. Because of Claudia is located in the interior, far from the important highway connecting the state from north to south, "BR 163", people who migrated to Mato Grosso preferred to live in cities along the highway, because these cities were bigger, with better housing conditions and with more transportation facilities. The logging, sawing and rolling mills growth in Claudia and the lack of manual workers have prompted entrepreneurs to seek workers in other states. This labor practice became a constant in this period of the logging economy consolidation. The workers were attracted to a new life, in a city without unemployment, with higher salaries than in their home cities, with housing provided by the company itself and, moreover, could migrate with their families. "At that time, the salary at a rollingmill was also quite high. Because many loggers here, they rented buses and went to other states, mainly to Paraná, and brought many people. Because the skilled labor here was equal the gold in the place mining. So the workforce here was overvalued at that time. "

When the logger entrepreneur was able to set up and structure his firm, another problem arose: usually the workers in these loggers had family and small children in the school age. So that the parents could not look for other jobs near the cities, where there were schools, the lumbermen themselves built the schools and helped to maintain them, in order to settle their workers. One of the reasons for the great rotativity population among Mato Grosso cities in this period was the search for schools where their children could study. Thus, the schools within the loggers for the worker's children became a parameter for settling him in the workplace. Mrs. Maria Aparecida Rocha Figueiredo [teacher] described that "The loggers who opened Madeireira Rohdenorte built houses for their employees and brought people from Santa Catarina State. Then in this firm, they built the houses and a room was assigned to the school. We started studying at this school with the neighbors', farmers' and employees' children who started working at the firm. "

The same problem faced the agricultural sector. On the one hand, for the small landowners, the school was important in ensuring the children's upbringing, and on the other hand, for large landowners, it was a way of holding the pawn in the local, providing the children's study. Mrs. Maria Benedita Palharin [political and teacher] stressed that "it is also a way [of the boss] to insure his employee on the farm. And where there is a owners' family who are producing agriculture, this farm requires families. They are usually new families, who have children studying. So that is their concern. "

In addition to the businessmen in the logger industry and farmers / cattle ranchers who settled in the region, we

also had urban economic activities during the colonization process. Mrs. Roseli, Claudia's first teacher, added to the economic-social professional scene the health professionals, engineers, and religious orders who also worked in education as teachers. "Doctor Hitoshi [doctor] was great at Mathematics and he taught Mathematics and Physical Education to the students and Doctor Shiguero [doctor] taught Geography and History. And then came Kurt Walter Hattje [theologian] who was an excelente Portuguese, English and Religion teacher. So that's how we started the first grade, with all the teachers with Higher Education. You know, and it was great, because they did not have the pedagogical part, but they had the will to work, to serve the community, it was great, it was very good to work. In 1979 and 1980, we still received guidance from the director Sister Xaveris, the headteacher [of the Holy Name of Mary Order]. After, arrived Angelica, who was a biochemist and taught Science. And when we started high school, there was Antonio Passos, he was an engineer, Antonio Carlos Canozo, who was an architect, people with a Higher degree and a good degree of goodwill, which I think is more important. "

Initially, Claudia's only school was the Manoel Soares Campos State School, directed by teacher Roseli. This school was located in the urban center. All the school-age children who lived near the urban nucleus or who were able to move from the rural area To the city daily studied there. The lack of schools in rural strategic points was supplied in 1979, when Cláudia city became part of Sinop Municipality. In 1982, started the Rural Municipal Schools implantation, installed on the roads that formed the road network and were located in economically important points such as small farms and ranches or near logging and sawmills.

Among the liberal professionals / other professions, the characteristic that highlighted among them was to migrate several times from city to city. These professionals, often, presented themselves as experts of some specific profession, when, in fact, they had no experience and were not able to engage in any activity. Ms. Aleix Kowalde Prá [nursing technician and teacher] highlighted the lack of skilled labor, exemplifying the school construction, which fell three times: "At the beginning of the colonization here, everyone was a carpenter, you know. As people do not know each other well, if someone said they knew how to build a house, I would believe in it. "This lack of qualified professionals was imperative to make many settlers seeked out cities that had better quality of life.

The difficulties encountered by some families in the agricultural sector, mainly of an economic nature, led them to seek urban occupations. With the city's economic growth in the 1980s, new jobs were generated in the trade and public administration. The urban trade had as characteristic to constitute of a family company, in the great majority with the sale of products coming from other places. The State and the City Hall were the great employers in Claudia with the public employees staff. And, particularly, the schools were the great jobs receptors and fomenters, sheltering in their staff, teachers coming from the most diverse professions, being qualified or not for the teacher's occupation. In a city where the population's seasonal movement was high, added to the lack of skilled labor, the jobs / works were filled with the existing availability of its residents.

The political-emancipatory process in order to become Cláudia in a municipality was being built from 1986. In this year, on September 1st., Cláudia was elevated to District and, from this moment, bigger projections became to be part of its inhabitants' ideas who, as a goal, traced the municipal political independence. This

municipalization process lasted almost two years, with a campaign of convincing among its inhabitants made from house to house. Mr. Vilson said that "Cláudia Political Emancipation Movement was from 1986 to 1987. We worked hard, including visiting settlers, visiting people because the people did not know whether Cláudia's emancipation was viable or not. "

The campaign undertaken by the population and defended by its political representatives resulted that on the July 4th, 1988, the Mato Grosso State governor, Carlos Gomes Bezerra, sanctioned the law that created the Cláudia Municipality. In this year, the population organized in order to have the municipal elections, and the following year, Cláudia had her first City Hall on January 1, 1989. The first mayor was Mr. José Augusto Formigoni, deputy mayor, Mr. Acássio Guzzo, both of the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PBDM) – in Portuguese Partido Democrático Brasileiro (PMDB). When Cláudia Municipality was dismembered from Sinop Municipality, it lost part of its initial territory as District, remaining now with 113,146.8470 ha (one hundred and thirteen thousand, one hundred and forty-six hectares, eighty-four ares and seventy centiares). In the figure below, we see an aerial image of Cláudia in its first municipal government:



Figure 3: aerea view of Cláudia in July in 1990

4. Conclusion

Between 1978 and 1988, Cláudia city lived with a population of southern settlers, initially unaware of the production techniques in the Midwest, with many problems in the road network that made difficult to sell their products, leaving entire families without resources to buy wood to build their homes or even daily food and everyday necessities. Another characteristic of the population was parents' concern about their children's studies, since the choice of where to buy lands was included the Colonizer's promise that should be exist school for the children.

The urban and rural road network remained precarious until the early years of the 21st century, and nowadays there are road points without asphalt in the municipality. Farmers and ranchers, as well as loggers, had to invest in their own transportation or hire private carriers or drivers to dispose their production. The private investments

were many and the return was not always possible. The agricultural sector became the big business in Mato Grosso state, being a major producer of grains and meat for export. Agribusiness was consolidated characterized by a business administration made up of economic groups from outside of Mato Grosso that acquired or leased lands in the region to grow soy, corn and cotton.

The lumber sector, the main economic sector of Cláudia, fell into decline in Mato Grosso because of the Federal Police investigations in 2005, with Curupira Operation, in 2006, with Kayabie Operation and in 2008, with Arco de Fogo Operation. Operation Curupira was aimed to arrest a group formed by employees of the Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (BIERNR), in Portuguese Instituto Brasileiro de Meio Ambiente e Recursos Naturais Renováveis (IBAMA), the State Environmental Foundation (SEF), in Portuguese Fundação Estadual do Meio Ambiente (FEMA) and dispatchers who worked together with the logging businessmen of ghost companies that falsified and commercialized Authorizations for Transportation of Forest Products (ATFPs) in Portuguese Autorizações para Transporte de Produtos Florestais (ATPFs). Following investigative operations in the logging sector, Ouro Verde Operation focused on a Paraná gang that falsified ATFPs and sold the products. In 2006, Operation Kayabi investigated the wood illegal extraction in indigenous lands. The Arco de Fuego Operation in 2008, aimed to combat the Amazon forest illegal burning [10]. In Cláudia city, the logging industry was heavily affected by the corruption investigations and fell into decay. The unemployment compromised many families' incomes who didn't find new job locations and preferred to migrate to other cities.

The lack of professional and educational perspectives among the young people in Cláudia, made them choose to go to work or to graduate in other cities or states, including returning to their parents' original cities, in Paraná. With jobs still mostly in the agricultural sector, in the production of rice, soybeans, corn, beans and coconuts, or in cattle raising, with milk and beef production, young people seek for new opportunities outside the city, mainly in the secondary or tertiary sectors. These reasons make Cláudia a city that does not grow in population terms. According to the Settler Company data, in 1983, Cláudia estimated population was of 2,300 inhabitants. During the decade of 90, the population remained around 10.000 inhabitants: in 1991, it was around 9,027 inhabitants, in 1996 had 12,751 inhabitants. Already in 2000, with the loss of part of its lands for the neighboring municipalities creation, Cláudia had 10,249 inhabitants. In 2007, the number of inhabitants remained at the same level, with the census showing 10,670 inhabitants and, in 2010, 10,635 inhabitants [11]

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