

**O ENIGMA DA ESFINGE: O PENSAMENTO POLÍTICO DE SAMUEL
BENCHIMOL E DJALMA BATISTA**

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***THE SPHINX'S ENIGMA: THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF SAMUEL BENCHIMOL
AND DJALMA BATISTA***

Ricardo Lima da SILVA¹
Alex Sander Pereira RÉGIS²
Venâncio José Michiles MARINHO³

RESUMO: Nos anos de 1950 e 1960, vários intelectuais começaram a refletir acerca de caminhos eficazes para integrar a Amazônia ao Brasil. A região saía de um longo período de marasmo econômico e se tornava espaço de reprodução capitalista, com a implantação do projeto de desenvolvimento Operação Amazônia. O artigo visa compreender as ideias políticas de Djalma Batista e Samuel Benchimol, vozes ativas nos debates sobre os rumos a serem trilhados pela região. A partir de suas principais obras, procuramos sistematizar as reflexões sobre a função do Estado, integração regional/nacional e desenvolvimento, ideias-chave de seu pensamento. Tal pensamento, por sua vez, foi gerado pela necessidade das elites regionais de pôr fim à estagnação econômica da região após a Primeira Guerra Mundial; também foi uma forma de tentarem resolver a questão regional, tomando-a como um problema social e político que só seria resolvida com a integração social e econômica ao Brasil.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Pensamento Político. Amazônia. Desenvolvimento. Samuel Benchimol. Djalma Batista.

RESUMEN: *En los años 1950 y 1960, varios intelectuales comenzaron a reflexionar acerca de caminos eficaces para integrar la Amazonia a Brasil. La región salía de un largo período de paralización económica y se convertía en espacio de reproducción capitalista, con la implantación del proyecto de desarrollo Operación Amazonia. El artículo pretende comprender las ideas políticas de Djalma Batista y Samuel Benchimol, voces activas en los debates sobre los rumbos a ser trillados por la región. A partir de sus principales obras, procuramos sistematizar las reflexiones sobre la función del Estado, integración regional / nacional y desarrollo, ideas clave de su pensamiento. Tal pensamiento, a su vez, fue generado por la necesidad de las elites regionales de poner fin al estancamiento económico de la región después de la Primera Guerra Mundial; también fue una forma de intentar resolver la cuestión*

¹ Federal Institute of Amazonas (IFAM), Manaus - AM - Brazil. Professor of the Department of Sociology. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6595-3799>. E-mail: ricardo.silva@ifam.edu.br

² Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM), Manaus - AM - Brazil. Master's Degree in Sociology. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4423-404X>. E-mail: sanderbr.alex@gmail.com

³ Master's Degree in Sociology (UFAM), Manaus - AM - Brazil. Master's Degree in Sociology. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1585-7579>. E-mail: venancio_sa@hotmail.com

regional, tomando como un problema social y político que sólo se resolvería con la integración social y económica a Brasil.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Pensamiento Político. Amazonia. Desarrollo. Samuel Benchimol. Djalma Batista.*

ABSTRACT: *In the decades of 1950 and 1960, several intellectuals began to reflect on what would be the most effective ways to integrate the Amazon to Brazil. At that time, the region was emerging of a long period of economic stagnation and became a space of capitalist reproduction during the military dictatorship with the establishment of the development project, Amazon Operation. The present article intends to analyze and understand the main political ideas of Djalma Batista e Samuel Benchimol, who had an active voice in the debates about the paths to be traced to the region. We seek to systematize the reflections of these authors about the function of State, national/regional integration and development, since they are key ideas in their thought. These thoughts were generated by the necessity of the regional elites to put an end to the economic stagnation after the First World War; it was also a way to try to solve the regional issue, facing it as a social and political problem that would only be solved with the social and economic integration to Brazil.*

KEYWORDS: *Political thought. Amazon. Development. Samuel Benchimol. Djalma Batista.*

Introduction

When the Amazon stagnated after thirty-four years of economic boom (1880-1914), losing the supremacy of rubber exports to its Asian competitor, its decay was not only economic, but social and political. The continuous downgrading of capital undermined their social density, making cities less populous and less differentiated. At the same time, with an elite losing power, made up of state bureaucracy, self-employed professionals, and great rubber tappers, their ability to maneuver and their demand for redress policies from the federal government became diminished.

Depleted of its economic, social and political capital, the region seemed forgotten by history. The prevailing idea was that, because of its large size and peculiar nature, the Amazon would be unable to be disciplined by economic development. Meanwhile, from the thirties, the Estado Novo, led by Getúlio Vargas, put Brazil on the path of industrialization - the Amazon region remained on the sidelines of these events (RIBEIRO, 2015).

In an attempt to combat this conception that the valley could not be developed economically and that the man of the region was unfit for work, a group of intellectuals, coming from the regional elite, began to study the Amazonian problem and to act politically, they are:

Djalma Baptist, Arthur Cesar Ferreira Reis, Leandro Tocantins and Samuel Benchimol. They intended to point out ways for integration and regional development, considered by them as essential for Brazil - the regional issue was, therefore, an important nexus to solve the national issue (RIBEIRO, 2015).

The resolution of regional imbalances was perceived as imperative for national development. That is, integrating the Amazon, placing it within development projects, and thus transforming Brazil into a great power. However, it is necessary to emphasize that this economic development should be done under the leadership of regional elites, respecting certain cultural and social paradigms, preserving both the environment and cultural values, under penalty that moral and social disorder could dominate the Amazon.

During the forties and fifties these intellectuals orbited around national-developmentalism. However, they were disappointed by the post-1945 Republic measures and migrated to conservative modernization in the 1950s and 1960s, because of the attention given to the Amazon by the authoritarian government. This is how these authors positioned themselves in favor of the military dictatorship and Operation Amazon, because the regime started was meeting the demand for development so dear to regional elites (SILVA, 2015).

Not only did his works serve as an advertisement for the measures advocated by conservative modernization, but they also became a critique of some developmental assumptions, such as the social chaos caused by industrialism, the rural exodus, the emptying of the interior of the state, the disappearance of the Amazonian culture and the environmental devastation caused by the action of man. Therefore, the approach of these intellectuals with the military dictatorship was neither mechanical nor unconditional. Although they participated in political debates about the paths the region should take, and had access to the regime's spheres of power, they also made a number of criticisms of the unintended consequences of capitalist development.

Within this context of the mid-twentieth century, Djalma Batista and Samuel Benchimol were intellectuals who, as spokesmen for the regional elites, sought, through their works and political action, to influence the paths to be drawn by the regional society. Thus, by making a study of the ideas of these authors, we aim to understand the intellectual roots of certain ideas that had a social ballast and materialized in public policies, institutional actions or even had an impact on regional collective subjectivity. In other words, analyzing the intellectual genesis of the formulations about the region, which served as the basis for the legitimation of a certain model of society and conception of development, is a way of understanding the paths that the humid tropics has trod so far.

Therefore, the centrality of our study is the area of Political Thinking, where we will seek to explore the political and social ideas of these authors: their formulations on Power, State, regional/national integration and development. We will separate the principal from the secondary of these formulations, using Lucien Goldmann's methodology of genetic structuralism (LOWY; NAIR, 2008), then show what were the historical and social conditions that made it possible for these ideas to emerge.

Firstly, we will interpret the ideas of physician Djalma Batista, showing his perspective on regional issues and his view of the Amazon as a Sphinx that should have its secrets unraveled by intellectuals, scientists and the Brazilian State. Next, we will analyze the thinking of businessman and economist Samuel Benchimol and his concern with a development that was in line with the preservation of the environment.

Djalma Batista and the Sphinx

Born in 1916 in Tarauacá and died in 1979 in Manaus, Batista began his intellectual career in the forties, collaborating as a writer for several newspapers in the Amazonian capital, while practicing medicine, being graduated from the University of Bahia in 1938. From a humanist formation, he sought to understand and defend the Amazon and its populations. He held several prominent positions in the spheres of power in the Amazon, having chaired the Amazonian Academy of Letters. He was vice-president of the State Council of Culture (1968-1972), member of the Amazonas Historical and Geographic Institute and director of the Amazonas Research Institute (1959-1968), and correspondent of several national and international scientific journals.

He witnessed the unfolding of the Estado Novo, the re-democratization and the crisis of populism, which resulted in the 1964 coup and the emergence of the military civil dictatorship. He lived intensely the authoritarian transition, because he suffered the consequences of ideological vigilance as intellectual that defended the agrarian reform, the democratization of the educational system and the defense of the Amazon against external threats (PINTO, 2008).

In his writings, according to Freitas Pinto (2007), he handles medium and long-term macro-historical processes using regional and national historiography while dominating the economy, geography, sociology and chronicle of travelers. His major contributions focus on the area of the history of ideas, the history of institutions, economic history, and especially the issue of the development/underdevelopment process of the Amazon region. His formulations

were influenced by the debates of the time, in which he actively participated, and his thinking was dominated by nationalist and developmental tendencies.

His most important work, taken as a synthesis of his thinking, is *O Complexo da Amazônia: análise do processo de desenvolvimento*, originally published in 1978, in which he defends a blunt action by the national state for the development of the region. His concern was to demonstrate all the uniqueness of the Amazon and prove that its development and integration with Brazil was indispensable to national greatness. However, the author argues that full regional potential could only be developed if a thorough study of its environment and the people of the region was made. For him, development was not limited to the economic sphere, but was a cultural and social problem. Therefore, Djalma advocated massive State investments in science, technology and culture (BATISTA, 2008).

It must be stressed that this regional development and integration was something that should be guided from the top down, with regional elites as leading actors in the process. He argued that the progress of Amazonian civilization should be made from the elite to the people, more specifically from an elite of enlightened men through a systematic dissemination of knowledge (BATISTA, 2008). This way of perceiving the elites is similar to the one defended by Arthur César Ferreira Reis, considered as an informal leader of these conservative intellectuals coming from the regional elite. For Reis, the elites are responsible for the elaboration of nationality, being the political, economic and cultural leaders of the masses, directly responsible for their moral improvement (RIBEIRO, 2015).

Batista, influenced by Araújo Lima ⁴, fought the idea that the underdevelopment of the Amazon region was not due to factors such as climate, spatial isolation or a nature averse to progress. For him, the cause of underdevelopment should be found in the social and cultural order, where the various economic cycles destroyed the Amazonian natural resources. It identifies as the main mark of our civilizing process the violence against traditional populations and the small - or null - importance that elites gave to civil rights. The result of this was an amorphous society, especially in the interior, of demeaning conditions. The only way to break this vicious cycle would be to create changes in the cultural sphere, offering opportunities for everyone to permanently break the cycle of delay (PINTO, 2008).

⁴ The book *Amazônia: a terra e o homem*, by doctor Araújo Lima, was published in 1931, in which he sought to combat the stigmas that the region suffered: as a place averse to modernization projects and a non-working population. The work was a watershed in regional intellectuality and influenced all generations of subsequent thinkers.

He also made a critical assessment of Operation Amazonia, especially the Manaus Free Zone (ZFM, Portuguese initials), praising the economic development and the return of relevance that the region was having to Brazil, but at the same time criticized the emptying of the interior of the state, growth disorder, environmental devastation, increased crime and ZFM's lack of connection to the region by not using any regional raw materials (BATISTA, 2008).

Djalma Batista is part of a generation of intellectuals who began their career in the mid-twentieth century advocating strong intervention by the national State for regional development. The main problem surrounding these authors (Arthur Cesar Ferreira Reis, Armando Mendes, Samuel Benchimol, Agnello Bittencourt) was the possibility of breaking the cycle of economic backwardness that plagued the region (RIBEIRO, 2015). It was not without reason that, according to Oliveira (2001), they supported the dictatorship's economic measures for the Amazon, and their works served as a tool for convincing northern civil society to accept Operation Amazonia. Silva (2014) classifies these authors as a “Developmentalist Generation”, because for them the region was a social and political problem that would be solved via economic integration, with the national State as protagonist. The support, while critical, for the political economy measures of the military civil dictatorship is due to the fact that the regime was putting the region on the agenda and proposing a viable development model to solve the Amazon issue, which the Post-1945 Republic and the Estado Novo dictatorship failed to resolve.

Deciphering the Amazon means seeing it as a problem not only for the country, but for the country. The regional issue and its economic inequalities and cultural and social peculiarities are inseparable from the national issue, as they are produced by the process of formation of Brazil. Batista argues that it is necessary to unravel how these inequalities are formed and what consequences they have for each of the regions of Brazil. The author was aware of the difficulties that the region faced since it was integrated into the nation, as a distant and vast space, stigmatized and whose complexity made it difficult to occupy by the civilizing process. Thus, he puts himself as a kind of “organic intellectual” from the Amazon, trying to show that the distorted and unfavorable views about the Amazonian peoples were far from reality (PINTO, 2007). He was a thinker who saw critically, and from the Amazon, the potentialities and contradictions of the process of national integration.

He considered that the moment in which the *Complexo da Amazônia* was written, in the late seventies, was extremely serious, as we were changing the region without knowing exactly what consequences it could bring. That is why it advocated an Amazon Action Program with two basic aspects: development and conservation (BATISTA, 2008). It then combined two

dimensions that are prevalent in today's discussions: environmental preservation with social and economic development.

Djalma Batista's conception of Power is related to his conceptions of national integration, of the Amazon as a Brazilian problem, of development and preservation. For him, these were the main functions of the federal government regarding the region. In addition, he pointed to the need to create conditions for scientific research to present solutions for the preservation of natural resources and their rational use. His views on regional development and the role of the region for Brazilian development had a major impact on the Amazon, even influencing academic research, development projects and public policy. His main purpose, as well as that of others of his generation, was to show how the region was viable for economic development, while fully understanding its ecosystem to manipulate it. He wanted development to be something that would reach all peoples of the Amazon, so he tried to direct and point out the shortcomings of Operation Amazon.

The Strategies of Samuel Benchimol

It would be absolutely unnecessary to record the importance of Samuel Benchimol's work in thinking about regional development and the integration of the Amazon into the Nation if it were not, still, a remarkable ignorance of his contributions on the subject. Ignorance doubly constructed: by the geographical location and the political location in which his intellectual trajectory took place, outside the historically legitimated and consecrated spaces, from where, until recently, the “established” in the configuration of the national canon of thinkers who “invented” the nation were forged.

Samuel Benchimol (1923-2002) completed a unique career classified as intellectual, amazonologist, educator and entrepreneur, had a degree in law and a master's degree in economics and sociology. His work, taken together, thematizes Amazonian development, puts it in perspective in its multidimensionalities and multitemporalities. Moreover, in his thinking reverberates the conversion of debates and discourses on development to sustainable development; he also followed and thematized the problematic and the institutionalization of the environmental issue in Brazil and in the world. In general terms, this general problematization of the conditions and possibilities of development represents the way in which he has grasped the regional issue in its economic and political articulations with the nation.

In his book *Amazônia: um pouco-antes e além-depois* (1977), he records that from the 1940s to the 1970s his intellectual and political concerns were directed towards the “formulation of an Amazonian strategy”, a theoretical and practical horizon for the equation of “Regional problems”:

[...] my mission would not be fulfilled without seeking, through this memory and my archives, to recall, with humility, episodes and events that belong, not uniquely to me, but, above all, to the generation to which I belong [...] that can still serve and be useful to help decipher the genetic code of the vocation of the Amazon, and through it, build a model and formulate an action strategy for the future (BENCHIMOL, 2010, p. 55).⁵

The generation to which Benchimol refers is linked to the intra-group⁶, the same to which Djalma Batista belonged, with which he established affinities, exchanges, commitments and solidarity, sharing thought forms and worldviews. In addition to the internal intra-group disputes, they breathed a common “period spirit”, had challenges and reflections that met, as well as a specific class experience and solidary political destinies.

As a challenge, they shared the “mission”, with an air of messianism, to formulate a “strategy for the Amazon” - as intellectual, political and business “leaders” - to solve regional problems, whose resolution had been delayed and only from the new “enlightened” generations were being attacked⁷; as a specific class experience, since the trajectory of a significant part of the “colleagues” of his generation belonged to the regional middle and upper class, some of them suffering the inflection of the crisis of extractivism in their families while seeking to assert themselves socially, politically and economically with the opportunities offered by the ongoing modernization processes. Leandro Tocantins and Samuel Benchimol, for example, became intellectual organizers of culture and men of action in public life moving from the social roots based in the extractivism to the conservative modernization project operated from 1964. Corroborating Ribeiro's argument (2015) on Tocantins, Samuel Benchimol also contributes to

⁵ [...] a minha missão não estaria cumprida sem que buscasse, através desta memória e de meus arquivos, lembrar, com humildade, episódios e eventos que pertencem, não singularmente a mim, mas, sobretudo, à geração a qual faço parte [...] que podem ainda servir e ser úteis para ajudar a decifrar o código genético da vocação da Amazônia, e, através dela, montar um modelo e formular uma estratégia de ação para o futuro (BENCHIMOL, 2010, p. 55).

⁶ The idea of intra-group articulates the notion of 'generation' in Mannheim (1976, p. 291). Benchimol cites as belonging to his generation among others: Mario Ypiranga Monteiro, Agnelo Bittencourt, Djalma Batista, Adriano Menezes, Leandro Tocantins, also mentions the 'masters' Vivaldo Lima, Araújo Lima, Alfredo da Mata and Artur Reis.

⁷ In his speech **The Bachelor in Brazil** he details the uniqueness of his generation: “formed after the war, who lived, who fought and who studied in this period of universal unrest by leafing through books and attending classes in the gaps of the hustle of the streets, memorable civic campaigns, rallies, barracks, fulfilling military duties to the Homeland” (BENCHIMOL, 1946).

the realization of institutional changes during the developmental cycle and during conservative modernization.

As a political destination, linked directly to the aforementioned class experience, Benchimol had been intellectually and politically sympathetic to Arthur Reis's state administration in a context of post-1964 “revolutionary government”. Together with the master, friend, he visualizes under the conditions of an authoritarian regime the political and economic conditions for the effective integration of the region via the demiurge State.

Regarding the context of common concerns, it seems important to note that his thesis is marked by two specific concerns: one international and one regional. On the one hand, those that refer to the crisis conditions of capitalism, with the 1929 crack spectrum disturbing the economic thinking of the time when it was debating the creation of countercyclical instruments to combat economic instability, and, on the other, those that they immediately associate with the imagery of the Amazonian decay after the rubber boom, which left behind a previously receding economic recession, recalling the difficult times the author faced in his childhood when his family had impoverished rapidly due to the rubber debacle. In this horizon of internal and external crises, the stabilizing policy, including the planning of economic activity, via State action, presents itself as a solution for the so-called “conjuncture periods” and will reappear in the author's reflections in later works, especially because the “Amazon Redemption” would only begin effectively in the 1960s. *State, Planning, and National Integration* are constitutive terms of his “strategy for Amazon”.

They were subjects of a political, intellectual and economic elite in the region who fought for their interests and affirmed their designs and representations of the “Amazon issue” in an economically sterilized and politically devalued region. As belonging to this elite, Benchimol will act in the political context immediately after 1964, analyzing and positively perceiving - as Leandro Tocantins did - the State's performance via Arthur Reis' “revolutionary government” in the state of Amazonas. If Benchimol's reflection and political action is not an epiphenomenon of class affiliation, however, it is inscribed and articulated politically and ideologically within the working horizons of a generation that sought to defend, value and develop the Amazon according to their views, with their values and interests spelled out in their narratives about overcoming regional problems. Hence the thesis that, at the most rational level, two expressions, “regional development” and “national integration”, “were not just fragments of the justification of military action in the Amazon. They were the collective wills of groups and classes that have crossed generations since the rubber debacle” (BENCHIMOL, 1997, p.

31), so the “enthusiasm” with the establishment of the Manaus Free Zone, which represented the common hope of a generation of regional elites in frank economic political maturity.

The fulfillment of the collective wills of the regional elite sectors expressed articulations between the regional and the national issues, beckoning for class recompositions and power arrangements that came to be consolidated between the end of the boom and the establishment of the Manaus Free Zone. If the history of Brazilian social and political thought is crossed by the fascination of the national question, posed as a challenge, obsession, impasse or incident (IANNI, 1992), with regional diversities converted into regional issues, it will be no different. On another scale, the “Amazon question” acquires centrality in intellectual reflection and political debate in the Amazon; express and articulate especially between the 1940s and 1970s with the aspirations and perspectives of modernization, urbanization and industrialization, considered as vectors of Amazonian development and condition, on the one hand, for overcoming and, on the other, to remove the Amazon from isolation and ensure overcoming underdevelopment, components that articulate in the writings of Benchimol (2010) and Batista (2008).

The equation of the regional question represented by the “Amazonian question” involves, besides the “Brazilian need to expand its borders” a triple movement that integrates in the discourse and practice: 1) Overcoming the economic stagnation of the region as a project of political and economic "redemption" of the regional elites and impoverished ruling classes after the rubber boom; 2) Production of a national political awareness that would give visibility to the region; 3) Construction of a cultural and scientific policy that distanced itself from literature, towards the strengthening and creation of institutions that produced knowledge, theories and techniques adapted to the understanding and solution of regional problems. The defense of the Zona Franca model, its geopolitical project of reorganization of the Amazonian space and its scientific proposal of an *Oikopolitics* for the Amazon, constitute, respectively, its insertion in this triple movement.

In *Política e estratégia na Grande Amazônia Brasileira* (1968) and *Processos de Integração da Amazônia* (1997), Benchimol summarizes the various moments of Amazonian integration with Brazil, or rather, the State's attempts to integrate it into the Brazilian economic space, to diagnose the "mistakes and hits" of these experiments. In the first text, he assumes that only “a consistent policy and objective strategy for the development of the Amazon” will shorten the “days of poverty and isolation”, bringing the region closer to the “time of integration” (BECHIMOL, 1968, p. 4). From the colony to the republic, ending with the “revolutionary government” of 1964, it records the State's 7 attempts to integrate the region into

the nation's economic space. The "federal government", the external agent and "primum mobile" of integration and development, is the one who takes the lead in this process. It is up to him to be motivated "to accept and desire the options that development demands" (BENCHIMOL, 1968, p. 5).

In the second text he recovers and updates the trajectory of this intervention of the federal government in the region until the 1990s. It is the institutional history of the integration of the Amazon through the actions of State power. In this narrative, Amazonian development emerges as a result of the specific moments of planned federal government interventions aimed at integrating the region. Hence the emphasis on the institutional metamorphoses of banks, superintendencies, agencies and development plans that played a decisive role in national integration, as they allowed for demographic expansion and isolation from the region through migratory processes, fronts of economic expansion (agricultural, livestock, industrial, mineral), road opening, colonization projects, large hydroelectric and mining projects that would have had a focus of appeal and attraction (BENCHIMOL, 2009).

Finally, it is worth noting the role of elites in this process of integration and development. In a conference in 1964, in listing the variables indispensable to the development process, he stressed that it is important to "Create within the people the mystique of improvement and change, not in exchange for a vain promise of free satisfaction, but in counterpart of labor and stimulation" (BENCHIMOL, 1964). It notes that business, university, administrative and political elites are primarily responsible for giving the development programs 'operationality', 'momentum' and 'continuity', as many of these programs would have failed in the past precisely for 'elite underdevelopment'. As a component of the modernization and underdevelopment theories of the time, underdeveloped elites correspond to factors of "backwardness" and "resistance" (AGUIAR, 1967). Such insight into the role and centrality of elites in regional development fits in with a "master" of his generation, Agnelo Bittencourt (2001) who stems from the assumption that without responsible and capable elites development becomes difficult or impossible.

Benchimol tends to be guided by a perspective (IANNI, 2011) that conceives of the multitude not as a people, which supposes their possibility of organization, but above all as a mass, indicating that it depends on institutions, rules and means to organize and manifest within the confines of order, so it depends on the elite.

Although problematizes and criticizes federal interventions, their centralization and their lack of sensitivity to regional socioeconomic diversity, seems contradictory to expect from the same external intervener the conditions and possibilities of regional development and the

solution of the “Amazonian question”, with a fitting regional scale an operational protagonism of modern administrative, intellectual, political and economic elites, as opposed to backward elites with an extractive mindset, of which a fraction of the patriarchs of their generation's colleagues and masters had been a part. The “Amazon strategy”, therefore, has in the federal development projects of the Amazon, regardless of the form of government, the “desire” for development by the people and the operational capacity of the regional elites, the point for: 1) definitive integration of the Amazon to Brazil for the economic dynamization and occupation/defense of borders, ensuring Brazilian sovereignty over the area; 2) overcoming social misery, economic sterility and cultural ignorance constitutive of regional problems and underdevelopment in their perspective.

Final considerations

The main reflections of the present analysis on the political and social thinking of Samuel Benchimol and Djalma Batista are based, especially, on their writings of the 1970s, *Amazônia: um pouco-antes e além-depois* (1978) and *O complexo da Amazônia* (1977), written at the time of the military regime. These are works that seek to capture in their reflections the links between the national and the regional question. The first was established through the action of a strong State that took the Amazon as a space to exercise the political economy of capitalist reproduction, identified as the associated development model. The second was based on the coming to power of a political and intellectual group that saw, under the conditions of a conservative and authoritarian political regime, the way out for regional development.

Their position regarding the political economy of the dictatorship was not unconditional alignment, as it implied a strategic positioning, taking the opportunity to make possible an “Amazonian strategy” with a view to economically boosting the region. Operation Amazon was the subject of problematization, sometimes perceived positively by the effects of economic growth, sometimes negatively, by the disorderly growth of cities and the emptying of the interior that it produced.

It is precisely in the balance of these federal government interventions in the region that the Amazonian Question is born in a systematic way. Benchimol and Batista realize the seriousness of the conjuncture surrounding the Humid Tropics, translated into a common concern with an accelerated federal intervention that ignores the complexity of the region and has no sensitivity to the peculiarities of the desires and needs of Amazonian societies. They also

believed in the integral development of the Amazon based on scientific knowledge, a condition to know its complexity and manipulate it for the generation of wealth. The conceptions of Djalma Batista's *O Complexo da Amazônia*, Samuel Benchimol's *Oikopolítica para a Amazônia* and Leandro Tocantins's *Amazonotropologia*, stem from this illuminist ambition that seeks to decipher and intervene in the region by designing scenarios and perspectives for the flourishing of modernity.

As for the role of the State in this process, both Benchimol and Batista, in different gradations, recognize and defend their centrality as an agent of regional development, through actions of economic integration and political valorization. In their writings, they map and systematize such initiatives in time and space. It is worth mentioning that the authors do not directly theorize or conceptualize the State, which appears largely naturalized, in an approach that the State produces from itself: as an entity that should produce and defend the welfare and interest of the collectivity, destined to be neutral and mediating conflicts between different interests. Not problematizing the mechanisms that produce structural inequalities of distribution and legitimation of power, they tend to approach the perspective of the State as one that can assume “a point of view on all points of view”, which, in Pierre Bourdieu's (2012) perspective, it would be a view of the State as an almost God, typical of the classical theoretical tradition, founded on a spontaneous sociology of the State, approaching administrative science, an ideology of public service and the public good.

In addition to the State as the main agent of integration, it is up to the modern regional elites to play an important role in conducting this process, an indispensable complement to the success of external action. On the other hand, in both authors, the extractivist regional elites, representing a backward and anti-modern mindset, appear as a blocking factor or a barrier to favorable conditions for overcoming underdevelopment. Benchimol thematizes the underdevelopment of elites and the people, deficits that could be balanced by the performance of business as a representative of a modern regional elite; and Batista, more strikingly, notes their disregard for the civil rights of regional populations, but also recognizes their place to better clarify and address regional problems.

The relationship between Demiurge State and the performance of the regional elites constitutes a discursive matrix and political practice, which guides the equation of the “Amazonian question” in the context of the military regime, indicating a reformist stance on the part of Benchimol and Batista regarding the conditions and possibilities to put in marches an “Amazon strategy” of regional development.

Benchimol and Batista, acting within and against - the first rather within than against - the military regime were the reliable interpreters of the “regional problems” in the 1970s, influencing public opinion, orienting policies and legitimizing the general outlines of a developmental policy to region.

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