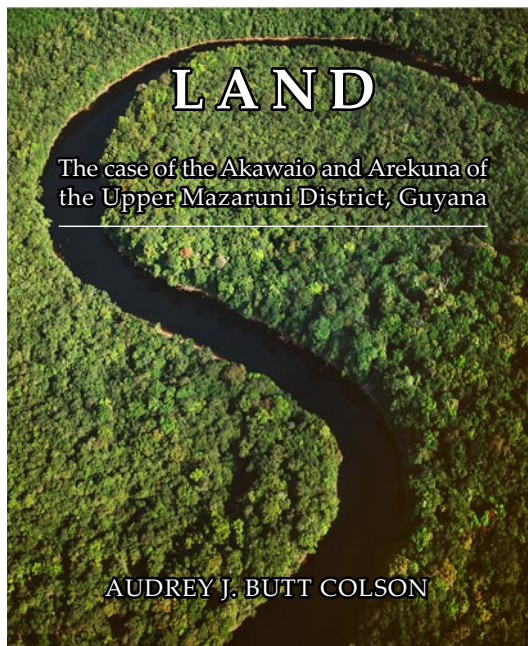


AUDREY J. BUTT COLSON

# LAND

ITS OCCUPATION, MANAGEMENT, USE AND CONCEPTUALIZATION

The case of the Akawaio and Arekuna of the Upper Mazaruni District, Guyana



Dr. Colson addresses the problems facing the Akawaio (Kapong) and Arekuna (Pemong) people of the upper Mazaruni basin, Guyana, relating to their claims to ancestral land occupation and rights. Interrelating land occupation and different levels of structure, she describes the indigenous modes of management and use of land resources and elucidates the basic principles of property ownership and social obligation. An analysis of the conceptual system highlights vital relationships between the communities, their environment and its seasonal changes.

The work is divided into two parts; the first uses archaeological findings, primary sources and exploration accounts which indicate when, where and how Akawaio and Arekuna were living, from 1596 to the present, across an area extending from the Corentyne River (Suriname) to the Orinoco basin (Venezuela), including also, the Rio Branco savannas (Brazil) to the south. It describes and stresses the importance of the indigenous naming system for clarifying group identities and structures, linking them to particular habitats and specific landholdings across this vast area.

The second part incorporates the relevant ethnography for the twentieth century, including the author's own field research data. It shows how land occupation is structured in a non-

hierarchical, segmentary system with bi-lateral kinship. A study of the dual residence settlement pattern and kin nuclei of local communities in relation to land rights and resource use, demonstrates the traditional methods of land management and their socio-political concomitants. The subsistence economy is considered in conjunction with factors of stability and sustainability affected by dispersed resources. Indigenous astronomy and ritual interpret the annual seasonal cycle within which the economy operates.

There is a summary of the salient features of Akawaio and Arekuna land occupation, management, use and its sacred nature, all of which support an urgent request for legal entitlement to their ancestral lands which is now being put to the High Court in Georgetown.

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