

The opening of the Amazon to colonization in the 1970s brought cattle, land conflict, and widespread deforestation. In the remote state of Acre, Brazil, rubber tappers fought against migrant ranchers to preserve the forest they relied on, and in the process, these forest guardians showed the world that it was possible to unite forest livelihoods and environmental preservation. Nowadays, many rubber tappers and their children are turning away from the forest-based lifestyle they once sought to protect and are becoming cattle-raisers or even caubois (cowboys). Rainforest Cowboys is the first book to examine the social and cultural forces driving the expansion of Amazonian cattle raising in all of their complexity. Drawing on eighteen months of fieldwork, Jeffrey Hoelle shows how cattle raising is about much more than beef production or deforestation in Acre, even among carnivorous environmentalists, vilified ranchers, and urbanites with no land or cattle. He contextualizes the rise of ranching in relation to political economic structures and broader meanings to understand the spread of cattle culture. This cattle-centered vision of rural life builds on local experiences and influences from across the Americas and even resembles East African cultural practices. Written in a broadly accessible and interdisciplinary style, Rainforest Cowboys is essential reading for a global audience interested in understanding the economic and cultural features of cattle raising, deforestation, and the continuing tensions between conservation and development in the Amazon.

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