



CONRAD PHILLIP KOTTAK

ASSAULT ON PARADISE

SOCIAL
CHANGE
IN A
BRAZILIAN
VILLAGE

SECOND EDITION

Assault on Paradise

*Social Change in a
Brazilian Village*

Second Edition

Conrad Phillip Kottak

University of Michigan

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Assault on Paradise
Social Change in a Brazilian Village

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About the Author

Conrad Phillip Kottak (A.B. Columbia College 1963; Ph.D. Columbia, 1966) is professor of anthropology at the University of Michigan, where he has taught since 1968. In 1991 he was recognized by the state and the University of Michigan for excellence in undergraduate teaching.

Kottak is the current chair of the General Anthropology Division of the American Anthropological Association. A cultural anthropologist, he has done fieldwork in Brazil (since 1962), Madagascar (since 1966), and the United States. His general interests are in the processes by which local cultures join larger systems. This interest links his earlier work on ecology and state formation in Africa and Madagascar to his more recent research on global change, economic development, environmentalism, national and international culture, and the mass media.

Kottak's last research project (1983–1987) looked at "Television's Behavioral Effects in Brazil." That research is the basis for his book, *Prime-Time Society: An Anthropological Analysis of Television and Culture* (Wadsworth 1990)—a comparative study of the nature and impact of television in Brazil and the United States.

Conrad Kottak's other books include *The Past in the Present: History, Ecology and Cultural Variation in Highland Madagascar*; *Researching American Culture: A Guide for Student Anthropologists* (both University of Michigan Press); and *Madagascar: Society and History* (Carolina Academic Press).

Professor Kottak's articles have appeared in academic journals including *American Anthropologist*, *Journal of Anthropological Research*, *American Ethnologist*, *Ethnology*,

and *Luso-Brazilian Review*. He has also written for more popular journals including *Transaction/SOCIETY*, *Natural History*, and *Psychology Today*.

Conrad Kottak's popular texts *Anthropology: The Exploration of Human Diversity* and *Cultural Anthropology* are published by McGraw-Hill.

In summer 1990 Professor Kottak did brief field research on ways to preserve biodiversity in Madagascar. His current fieldwork focuses on ecological issues in Brazil.

*To Cecilia and Charles Wagley
and to the Memories of
Atahydes Alves de Souza
and
Vandice Nascimento*

Preface

The thirtieth anniversary (1992) of my study of Arembepe, Bahia, Brazil is approaching. My research in this coastal town in the western hemisphere's second largest nation began accidentally, but it continues because of the fascinating transformation I've witnessed. Change in Arembepe illustrates economic development, ecological devastation, and the spread of national and world culture and an international political economy. The first edition of *Assault on Paradise* (published in 1983) proved to be of interest to cultural and applied anthropologists, Latin Americanists, and development specialists.

I also wrote *Assault on Paradise* for the novice. In deciding how the narrative would unfold I kept in mind the introductory students I've taught for twenty-three years. I did this for several reasons. First, I began doing fieldwork myself—in Arembepe—when I was a college student. *Assault on Paradise* describes my grappling with the alien nature of another culture, my fledgling attempts at ethnography, and my development as an anthropologist. I write about ways in which my life and career have been intertwined with Arembepe, its people, and its transformation. As a teacher, I know that students like case studies that blend descriptions of another culture with the anthropologist's recollection of his or her own attitudes, feelings, and reactions. I've tried not to forget this while writing *Assault on Paradise*.

The second reason I decided to write for introductory students also reflects my teaching experience. Usually I supplement a textbook with at least two ethnographic case studies. The first describes a tribal society; the second, a "peasant-type" culture, social change, or the world system. Such books as *Yanomamo: The Fierce People*, *Return to Laughter*, *The*

Forest People, and *The Harmless People* are all studies of hunter-gatherers or tribal cultivators. Arembepe, by contrast, is a community in a modern nation state. I'm pleased that *Assault on Paradise* has proved useful as a case study for the second half of the introductory course.

My editors have let me tell this story in a way that seems to interest students as it teaches them. I've tried to write a book that is both academically sound and jargon free. I want *Assault on Paradise* to be an effective teaching book. Thus it covers a range of topics discussed in introductory courses. These include ethnographic methods, kinship, social organization, economy, politics, culture and personality, religion, social stratification, race, and gender. Also prominent are the contemporary forces that impinge on Arembepe. These include industrialization (and its ecological impact), urbanization, tourism, and the mass media.

For this new edition, the book was scanned into a computer. This allowed me to reconsider every word, sentence, paragraph, and caption. Several teachers and students have told me they found the first edition readable, but I still tried to enhance readability.

I've also written a new chapter and epilogue, based on my continuing research. Chapter 12, *The Global Village*, describes my work (1983–1987) on the impact of television and brings the reader up to date on Arembepe and its people. A new Epilogue (1991) gives a further update and reports on my current work on development, pollution, and ecology.

Conrad Phillip Kottak

Acknowledgments

From the list of "Principal Characters," the reader can see that this book introduces not just villagers, but also anthropologists. Arembepe's first encounter with anthropology was as a "field-team village." Between 1962 and 1964 it was visited by various members of the Columbia University branch of the Columbia-Cornell-Harvard-Illinois Summer Field Studies Program in Anthropology. I thank the members of those field teams who worked with me or shared their findings and impressions about Arembepe. I must single out Peter Gorlin and Niles Eldredge, but David G. Epstein, Erica Bressler, and Shepard Forman also deserve special thanks. Maxine Margolis helped with the 1980 fieldwork, as did Jerald Milanich, who carefully sketched the map of Arembepe in 1980 and then had it prepared by his staff at the Florida State Museum. Jerry also took many of the photos in this book. Thanks to Juliet Maria Kottak, Nara Bales Milanich, and especially Nicholas Charles Kottak, for their help, too. Nick has made a substantial contribution to this second edition, including his written contribution to Chapter 12.

As *Assault on Paradise* makes obvious, Betty Wagley Kottak began studying Arembepe with me in 1962 and has been part of this story ever since. I am profoundly grateful for her companionship, assistance, insights, and analyses.

Marvin Harris encouraged and motivated the teenage anthropologist of 1962 to become a professional, guiding me through the doctorate. Robert Murphy and Lambros Comitas read two drafts of my doctoral dissertation and helped me develop my interpretation of Arembepe during the 1960s.

Among our Brazilian colleagues I am grateful to Dr. Thales de Azevedo, Mariá de Azevedo, Maria and Paulo Brandão,

and the Azevedo family for years of friendship, assistance, and hospitality.

Obviously this manuscript couldn't have been written without the friendship, help, and cooperation of hundreds of Arembepeiros. Besides those called Alberto, Fernando, Dora, and Tomé in this book, I wish to thank Athaydes Alves de Souza, Vandice Nascimento, Aurino Alves, and Francisco dos Santos for their special help.

I also thank those who have read and commented on *Assault on Paradise*, either in manuscript form or in its first edition. These include Maxine Margolis, Niles Eldredge, Charles and Cecilia Wagley, Mariana Kottak Roberts, G. Harvey Summ, Charlotte Cerf, George Foster, several Michigan students, and the following reviewers for McGraw-Hill: Michael Chuse, Castleton State College, and Richard Polnac, University of Rhode Island.

My editor for the first edition of *Assault on Paradise* was David Follmer, whom I thank for encouragement and support. Jeffrey Longcope brought trade-publishing experience and a nonanthropologist's perspective to his evaluation of an earlier manuscript, suggesting ways to enliven it. He encouraged me, for example, to let villagers tell their own stories.

At McGraw-Hill, Phil Butcher, Sally Constable, Sylvia Shepard, and especially Lori Pearson lent their enthusiasm and support to this second edition. Thanks also to project editor Larry Goldberg and production supervisor Rich Ausburn.

Several agencies and institutions have contributed to our research in Arembepe between 1962 and 1991. The National Institute of Mental Health awarded me a predoctoral fellowship and, later, a small grant to investigate "Local-Level Effects of Modernization." The Foreign Area Fellowship Program gave partial support for fieldwork in Arembepe in 1973. The Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies and the Office of the Vice President for Research of the University of Michigan have also supported my Brazilian research.

My project investigating the social impact of television in Brazil (1983–1987) was supported by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the National Science Foundation, and the National Institute of Mental Health. My ongoing work on ecological risks and awareness was first supported by the Michigan Memorial-Phoenix Project. This re-

search continues, with support from the National Science Foundation. My 1991 field trip to Arembepe was facilitated by a grant to the University of Michigan from NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), through CIE-SIN (Consortium for International Earth Science Information Network).

Assault on Paradise is dedicated to Charles and Cecilia Wagley, my parents-in-law. Without them, for various reasons, none of this would have happened. Cecilia Wagley has supported me in many ways; she has shared her family and her friends in Brazil and has given me many insights about her country. Chuck Wagley has provided advice, ideas, and information when I needed them. I can only aspire to be the anthropologist and humanist Chuck is. That humanity, coupled with the analytic and interpretive abilities of a skilled ethnographer, is very obvious in his book *Welcome of Tears*. That study of the Tapirapé Indians of Brazil is a work I admire tremendously. Its style and voice helped guide me as I wrote *Assault on Paradise*. This dedication acknowledges the special place Cecilia and Charles Wagley have occupied in my profession and in my life.

For the second edition, I extend the dedication to the memories of Athaydes Alves de Souza and Vandice Nascimento, special friends, great Brazilians.

Conrad Phillip Kottak

Principal Characters

The Anthropologists

Conrad Phillip Kottak (Conrado)

Author of this book, began fieldwork in Arembepe in 1962; returned in 1964, 1965, 1973, 1980, annually between 1982 and 1987, and in 1991; professor of anthropology at the University of Michigan.

Isabel Wagley Kottak (Betty)

Began fieldwork in Arembepe in 1962; returned each time with Conrad; has A.B. degree in anthropology from Barnard College and M.S.W. from the University of Michigan, school social worker in Michigan.

David Epstein

Member of 1962 field team, holds Ph.D. in anthropology from Columbia University; now a lawyer in Irvine, California, and a 1991 four-time *Jeopardy* champion.

Marvin Harris

Leader of 1962 Brazil field team, Columbia-Cornell-Harvard-Illinois Summer Field Studies Program in Anthropology; graduate research professor of anthropology at the University of Florida.

Peter Gorlin

Member of 1964 field team stationed in Jauá, helped complete interview schedule in Arembepe; holds Ph.D. in anthropology from Columbia University and M.D. from Harvard.

Thales de Azevedo

Leader of 1964 Bahia field team, of which Conrad Kottak was assistant leader; renowned Bahian physician and anthropologist.

Niles Eldredge

Member of 1963 field team in Arembepe; curator of invertebrate paleontology at New York's American Museum of Natural History and coinventor (with S. J. Gould) of the punctuated equilibrium model of evolution.

Shepard Forman

Assistant field leader, stationed in Arembepe in 1963; holds Ph.D. in anthropology from Columbia University; directs human rights program at Ford Foundation.

Raymond Rapaport

Undergraduate field assistant to Conrad Kottak in 1973, now a biochemist.

Maxine Margolis

Helped out with 1980 fieldwork in Arembepe; professor of anthropology at the University of Florida.

Jerald T. Milanich

Did mapping and photography of Arembepe in 1980; archaeologist at Florida State Museum, Gainesville.

Iraní Escolano

Brazilian social science researcher; worked on TV research project in Arembepe in 1985 and 1987.

Pennie Magee

Worked on TV research project in Arembepe in 1985; has Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Florida.

Juliet Maria Kottak

Daughter of Conrad and Betty; visited Arembepe in 1973, 1980, and annually between 1982 and 1985; currently a medical student.

Nicholas Charles Kottak (Nick)

Son of Conrad and Betty; visited Arembepe in 1973, 1980, and annually between 1982 and 1987; did fieldwork on ecological awareness there in 1991; now majoring in anthropology at Columbia University.

The Villagers

Alberto

Fisherman turned barkeeper, Conrad Kottak's best informant, friend, and field assistant in 1973 and 1980.

Tomé

Through the 1970s Arembepe's most successful fisherman, captain, and boat owner.

Dora

Anthropologists' cook on several occasions; unmarried mother formerly classified as a village prostitute.

Fernando

Moderately successful fishing captain; joined a cult and turned to alcohol in reaction to Arembepe's transformation.

Amy

Claudia's daughter, inherited her restaurant business.

Aunt Dalia

Businesswoman whose success rested on sales to hippies, ran juice bar in Street Down There.

Carolina

Alberto's wife, started successful business in Street Down There in the early 1970s; cult participant.

Claudia

Opened Arembepe's best restaurant in the early 1970s.

Dinho

Tomé's younger brother; by 1980 owned five boats, marketed fish, and was Arembepe's richest entrepreneur.

Jaime

Tibrás worker; was water boy for 1964 and 1965 field teams.

Julia

Psychotic young villager with penchant for nudism.

Laurentino

Iconoclastic storekeeper suspected of devil worship.

Maria

"Saint's daughter" in local *candomblé* cult.

Roberto

Fish marketer from Salvador, visited Arembepe through 1964.

Prudencio

Agent of Arembepe's absentee landlords.

Sonia

Tomé's hippie wife.

The Landlords

Jorge Camões

First of Arembepe's absentee landlords to obtain university education; masterminded Arembepe's real estate boom.

Francisca Ricardo

Last landlord to reside in Arembepe; died in 1924.

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Social Change in a Brazilian Village

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