## **Preface**

In fewer than twenty years the world will celebrate the five hundredth anniversary of Columbus's first voyage. During the intervening centuries the Europeanization of the Americas has gone forward inexorably. Yet, a few isolated pockets of the New World have been left virtually untouched. This book deals with one such place, a sparsely populated forest in the headwaters of the Río Orinoco. The people living there call themselves Yanoama.

Notions of geomorphology, kinship, social structure, linguistics, religion, and art forms are not analyzed here per se, since they are amply treated in the existing literature. However, such concepts are incorporated as they are directly pertinent geographically and, particularly, as they apply to Yanoama livelihood activities. A detailed cultural classification is provided as a means of categorizing the Yanoama among tropical American forest cultures, although other classifications could have been used for this purpose.

Terminology is a problem because at least four languages—Yanoama, English, Spanish, and Portuguese—are involved directly, as well as Venezuelan and Brazilian vernacular, and because Yanoama transliteration and orthography are not standardized. The Yanoama used is the Barafiri dialect unless otherwise noted. Barafiri words have been transliterated according to the Spanish alphabet where this is feasible (without diacritical marks), and, except for those used as proper nouns, they are italicized when they appear in the text. Plural forms of Yanoama words are avoided because pluralizing does not follow rules resembling ours. For the sake of clarity, such terms as *teri*, *u*, and *taca* are preceded by hyphens when employed as suffixes.

xiv Preface Yanoama distribution patterns are dynamic. For this reason, and because the great bulk of field data are for the year 1970, conditions and distributions are those of 1970 unless otherwise specified.

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