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**RECLAIMING INDIGENEITY: CHARRÚA REEMERGENCE
AS INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

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Henrique Brenner Gasperin

**Reclaiming Indigeneity: Charrúa Reemergence as
International Relations**

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Dissertation presented to the Programa de Pós-Graduação em Relações Internacionais of PUC-Rio in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Mestre em Relações Internacionais

Advisor: James Casas Klausen

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to discuss the reemergence of Charrúa people in the region adjacent to the Río de la Plata. Specifically, I will evaluate some of the means through which one of the most prominent Charrúa representations in Uruguay, the Consejo de la Nación Charrúa (CONACHA) vocalizes its claims: by participating in UN forums and in Fondo Indígena para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina y el Caribe (FILAC). This endeavor intends to show some of the efforts Charrúa people are undertaking in order to contest the commonly-sustained argument of their extinction as an ethnic group, which happens to be intimately coincident with national formations in the region. The dissertation is structured in three chapters. In the first one, I discuss how colonial encounters have shaped much of modern understandings of sovereignty and international relations. Further, I expand to analyze how the international regime of Human Rights is shaping and being shaped by a coordinated global refashioning of the category “indigenous”. On the second chapter, I evaluate Río de la Plata’s regional dynamics involving colonial interethnic relations, and the national formation of Uruguay, which sustains the quality of an “Indianless” country for more than a century. Thirdly, after briefly exposing the history of Charrúa reemergence, I discuss analyzed speeches, claims and collective dynamics of belonging deriving from Consejo de la Nación Charrúa (CONACHA) transnational activity. By bringing together arguments made in the three chapters, I sustain that Charrúa reemergence in Uruguay may challenge political limits by unsettling the ambiguous and complicated constructions of national formation and sovereign authority in the region. Moreover, I advocate for considering the phenomena of indigenous reemergence or ethnogenesis not only as a subject of concern for International Relations, but also as a privileged locus for one to evaluate its constitutive limits, and potential fractures.

Keywords:

Charrúa; Reemergence; Indigeneity; Uruguay; Ethnogenesis

RESUMEN

Esta tesis busca discutir la reemergencia del pueblo Charrúa en la región adyacente al Río de la Plata. Específicamente, evaluaré algunos de los medios por los cuales una de las representaciones más prominentes de los Charrúas en Uruguay, el Consejo de la Nación Charúa (CONACHA), vocea sus reclamos: participando de espacios internacionales como foros de las Naciones Unidas y el Fondo Indígena para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina y el Caribe (FILAC). Este esfuerzo intenta evidenciar algunos de los empeños que el pueblo Charrúa emprende para contestar el argumento común con respecto a su extinción como grupo étnico, lo cual es íntimamente coincidente con los relatos nacionales de la región. La tesis está estructurada en tres capítulos. En el primero, discuto como los encuentros coloniales han mayormente dado forma a los entendimientos modernos de la soberanía y las relaciones internacionales. En secuencia, analizo como el régimen internacional de Derechos Humanos da forma y es formado por una remodelación global coordinada de la categoría “indígena”. En el segundo capítulo, yo evalúo dinámicas regionales del Río de la Plata en lo que se refiere a relaciones interétnicas y la formación nacional del Uruguay, país que sostiene la calidad de “país sin indios” por más de un siglo. Tercero, después de brevemente exponer la historia de la reemergencia Charrúa, analizo y comento discursos, reivindicaciones y dinámicas colectivas de pertenencia étnica derivadas de la actividad transnacional del Consejo de la Nación Charrúa (CONACHA). Tejiendo argumentos hechos en los tres capítulos, sostengo que la reemergencia Charrúa en Uruguay puede desafiar límites políticos por transtornar las ambíguas y complicadas formaciones nacionales y la legitimidad de su autoridad soberana en la región. Además, abogo que los fenómenos de reemergencia indígenas o etnogénesis sean considerados no solamente como objeto de interés para las Relaciones Internacionales, sino también como un sitio privilegiado para que sean analizados sus límites constitutivos y potenciales fracturas.

Palabras-clave:

Charrúa; Reemergencia; Indianidad; Uruguay; Etnogénesis

RESUMO

Esta dissertação busca discutir a reemergência do povo Charrúa na região adjacente ao Rio da Prata. Especificamente, pretendo avaliar meios a partir dos quais uma das organizações Charrúa mais proeminentes, o Consejo de la Nación Charrúa, vocaliza suas reivindicações: participando em espaços internacionais, especialmente no Fondo Indígena para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina y el Caribe (FILAC) em fóruns das Nações Unidas. Busco mostrar alguns dos esforços avançados pelos Charrúa para contestar o argumento comumente sustentado a respeito da sua extinção como grupo étnico, o qual acaba por ser intimamente coincidente com as formações nacionais na região. Assim sendo, a dissertação será estruturada em três capítulos. No primeiro, discutirei como os encontros coloniais formaram muito sobre os entendimentos modernos a respeito da soberania e das Relações Internacionais. Posteriormente, expando para analisar como o regime internacional de Direitos Humanos constitui e vem sendo constituído por uma reestruturação global coordenada da categoria “indígena”. No segundo capítulo, avalio as dinâmicas regionais do Rio da Prata envolvendo relações coloniais interétnicas e a formação nacional do Uruguai, que sustenta a qualidade de “país sem índios” por mais de um século. Terceiramente, depois de brevemente expor a história da reemergência Charrúa, investigo discursos, reivindicações e dinâmicas de pertencimento étnico derivadas da atividade transnacional do CONACHA. Trazendo argumentos construídos nos três anteriores, sustento que a reemergência Charrúa pode desafiar espaços políticos estabelecidos no Uruguai, posto que abala as construções ambíguas e complicadas da formação nacional na região. Ademais, defendo que o fenômeno das reemergências étnicas seja considerado não somente como de interesse das Relações Internacionais, mas também como um lócus privilegiado para avaliar seus limites constitutivos e possíveis rupturas.

Palavras-chave:

Charrúa; Reergência; Indianidade; Uruguay; Etnogênese

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List of abbreviations

ADENCH – Asociación de Descendientes de la Nación Charrúa

CEPAL – Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

CERD – Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

CONACHA – Consejo de la Nación Charrúa

ESICHA – Escuela Intercultural Charrúa Itinerante

FCPF – Forest Carbon Partnership Facility

FILAC – Fondo para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina y El Caribe

ILO – International Labor Organization

MIDES – Ministerio de Desarrollo Social de Uruguay

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

OAS – Organization of American States

REDD+ – Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and more

UMPCHA – Unión de Mujeres del Pueblo Charrúa

UN – United Nations

UNDRIP – United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

UNECOSOC – United Nations Economic and Social Council

UNOHCHR – United Nations Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

UNPFII – United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

WGIP – Working Group on Indigenous Populations

Introduction

Tracing the trajectories of indigeneity should be about enablement and not endless deconstruction (Marisol de la Cadena and Orin Starn)

Every projection of “the real”, however diverse, contested or polythetic, presupposes exclusion and forgetting: constitutive outsides, silences, or specters from unburied pasts that can reemerge as “realistic” in conjunctures or emergencies either currently unimaginable or utopian (James Clifford, in reference to Walter Benjamin)

On July 17th, 2002, in an AirFrance airplane that flew directly from Paris to the Carrasco Airport, near Montevideo, the remains of the legendary Charrúa Cacique Vaimaca Perú were repatriated under the auspices of the *Ley de Repatriación* (17.256/2000¹). Two days later, the bones were taken to the *Panteón Nacional* to be buried alongside the most illustrious figures of Uruguayan history. This was the result of more than ten years of negotiations between ADENCH (*Asociación de Descendientes de la Nación Charrúa*) and the governments of Uruguay and France. On that day, members of the group spoke to the television:

This is a very important historical moment for us and for the general society, it is a milestone

With the return of Vaimaca Perú, we are reconstructing the symbols of our *orientalidad*, Artigas, the *gaucho* and the Charrúa

Vaimaca starts to ride his horses, now let's ride together for a better *Banda Oriental*. I say *Banda Oriental* because the sentiment of Artigas is also riding now. A moment of joy has been started. Vaimaca is back among us once again, we can feel around us the great Charrúa people, whose heart beats again. The grand spirit is back to its territory (in OLIVERA, 2016, p. 219, our translation²).

¹ Available at: < <http://impo.com.uy/bases/leyes/17256-2000/1>>.

² Originally: “Es un momento histórico muy importante para nosotros y para la sociedad en su totalidad, es un mojón; Con el regreso de Vaimaca Perú estamos reconstruyendo los símbolos de nuestra *orientalidad*, Artigas, el *gaucho* y el *charrúa*; Vaimaca empieza a cabalgar, ahora cabalgamos juntos por una mejor *Banda Oriental*. Digo *Banda Oriental* porque el sentimiento *artiguista* está también cabalgando ahora. Es una alegría que empieza a partir de ahora. Vaimaca está de vuelta entre nosotros, podemos percibir alrededor nuestro al gran pueblo *charrúa*, cuyo corazón late de nuevo. El gran espíritu está de vuelta en su territorio”.

After them, the ministers of Education and Foreign Affairs, both intimately involved in the negotiations with the French government, also made their pronouncements. Respectively:

We are watching the return of a national patrimony. The symbol represented by the Charrúa people concerns the past, a past that the people want. The Charrúas are part of the mythical past; the Charrúas are like the ideal ethnicity that superimposes itself over the other races and ethnicities.

This is the outcome of an important effort in recovering a moment of our historical memory, of our past. It is important that the people have a real and direct testimonial of their past, of objects that compose part of the historical patrimony of the nation. (in OLIVEIRA, 2016, p. 220, our translation³).

Both discourses revolve around dimensions of the “past”. Nevertheless, it is by no means an accident that the speech of the representatives of ADENCH, the first nationally recognized Indigenous social organization in Uruguay, centers on change, with future impacts, whereas state representatives try to capture the event under the banner of “national patrimony”. As we will further note, those dimensions are far from unambiguous or sharply opposed, as they inform the complicate relationship the Uruguayan state sustains with its native peoples. In this sense, the intentions of this dissertation have to do precisely with some tensions and ambivalences implicitly present in these testimonials. Briefly, it deals with the ethnic reemergence⁴ of the allegedly extinct Charrúa people in modern-day Uruguay, which has sustained an “indianless” national identity for more than a century. My intention is to sustain a dialogue between this phenomenon and debates around indigeneity in global and regional perspectives.

According to the World Bank⁵ (2019), there are approximately 476 million Indigenous people worldwide, making over 6% of the global population. Thwarting common-sense thoughts that equate modernity and globalization with the dismantling of vernacular “aboriginal” identities, Indigenous peoples have

³ Originally: “Asistimos al retorno de un patrimonio nacional. El símbolo que representa el pueblo charrúa concierne al pasado, el pasado como la gente quiere que sea. Los charrúas forman parte del pasado mítico; los charrúas son como la etnia ideal que se sobrepone a las demás razas y etnias.

Es el desenlace de un esfuerzo importante por recuperar un momento de nuestra memoria histórica, de nuestro pasado. Es importante que los pueblos tengan un testimonio real y directo de su pasado, de objetos que forman parte del patrimonio histórico de la nación”.

⁴ For a more detailed account on “reemergence”, see Chapter 3.1.

⁵ Information extracted from: <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples#1>>.

grown over the last years not only in absolute numbers but, and most especially, in visibility and influence. This is evinced by the two subsequent United Nations commemorative International Decades of the World's Indigenous Peoples (1995-2004 and 2005-2014), the celebration of 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages, the upcoming Decade of Indigenous Languages⁶ (2022-2032), and, most importantly, the signature of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007, the longest-negotiated UN instrument ever. This expensiveness, it ought to be acknowledged, does not happen in a space outside of power. According to James Clifford (2013, p. 16), the decades of 1980s and 1990s have witnessed the emergence of a new public persona and globalizing voice: a *presence indigene*, or *indigèneitude* (indigeneity), which can be somehow paralleled with late 1930s *négritude* movement, interrelating cultural difference with an agenda for emancipation⁷.

This agenda, which is accompanied by institutional openings and growing political and legal referents regarding Indigenous rights, is finding interesting resonances in a South American region whose native pasts have been systematically silenced and occluded. I make reference to the predominantly flat portions of land that surround Río de la Plata, stretching from the southern part of the southernmost state of Brazil, Rio Grande do Sul, to northeastern Argentina, roughly encompassing modern-day provinces of Entre Ríos and Corrientes, and involving the whole territory of Uruguay. Along this text, I will interchangeably use the expressions “Banda Oriental” and “Río de la Plata” to account for the referred territory. Notably, my readings of the region will be indebted to the consolidated scholarship that frame it as a “borderland” space due to inter-imperial colonial territorial disputes and the patterns of mobility and social exchange that conformed its territoriality until late nineteenth century (BOCCARA, 2002; 2005; ERBIG JR., 2020; ERBIG JR.; LATINI, 2019; LATINI, 2010; WILDE, 2003).

⁶ <https://en.unesco.org/news/upcoming-decade-indigenous-languages-2022-2032-focus-indigenous-language-users-human-rights>

⁷ For a discussion that situates Frantz Fanon's critique of negritude movement towards debates regarding Indigenous politics, recognition and the place of the “cultural”, see COULTHARD, 2014, cap. 5.

The social phenomena that will base my discussion throughout this dissertation is the ethnic reemergence of the Charrúa ethnicity. Not only is this a recent phenomenon, but also a dispersed one, coming to public in Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil in neither coherent nor similar forms. Interestingly, though, although there are transnational networks that unite Charrúa communities in these countries, most of their claims are made in relation to their respective nation-states. This being said, my limited time and resources would render the realization of a deep field study about the many faces that shape the so-called Charrúa reemergence an impossible task. Therefore, I chose to analyze parts of the movement in Uruguay. I did so not only because it is where most media attention and scholarly efforts are concentrated, but also because their claims and their existence as an autonomous collective intertwines in a very interesting way with national narratives and practices that constitute and symbolize Uruguayan nationality.

Charrúa was one out of a myriad of ethnonyms⁸ that conquistadors, travelers and religious leaders used to make sense of Banda Oriental's autonomous native peoples, i.e. non-subjugated and non-missionized groups. The complexities and inconsistencies that characterize such "ethnologic" reports will be discussed in the second chapter. Notably, their organization and further division along national archives, as well as interpretation by nineteenth century nationalist-inspired scholars, are directly related to present claims of indigenous "disappearance" or "extinction". Moreover, following a common pattern in Latin America, the ethnonym Charrúa was appropriated by a significant number of

⁸ An ethnonym is, by definition, a name used to refer to an ethnic group, tribe, or people. It is, however, important to go beyond this simple explanation, since in many cases such named tribes or groups were more of an ideal representation made by colonial observants, scholars and adventurers than an actual translation of what people thought about themselves and the ways they were socially organized. Semantically, ethnonym is derived from a category that was used, mostly until the nineteenth century, to define social groups who were not Christian. Therefore, ethnonym adscription may be thought of as a means to orderly translate and make sense of difference, fixing it timely according to specific diacritics. Beyond the political dimension involved in "ethnicizing" an individual or a collective, which would often legitimate unequal treatment or even de-humanization, one has to be attentive to the politics that exists between those who name and those who are named in order to foster critical debates through a postcolonial or decolonial lens. Many African regions share interesting, and in many cases infamous, stories that allow one to think how many ethnicities were "created" by the colonial enterprise, and lately resignified under statist decolonization. Importantly, although some ethnonyms may be "imposed" or colonial creations, it does not disallow for local communities to appropriate them and refashion it as a means of self-identification. For more about it, see AMSELLE; Jean-Loup; M'BOKOLO, Elikia (coord.). **Pelos Meandros da Etnia**. Luanda: Edições Pedagogo e Mulemba, 2014.

romantic Uruguayan literati and scholars to name an idealized and folkloric “national Indian”, whose territoriality and “indomitable spirit” would have paved the way for the modern Uruguayan nation as its predestinated preceding (and total) substitute.

Notably, Uruguay is one of the only countries in South America that is not a signatory of the International Labor Organization 169 Convention, which is the main legally-binding instrument of International Law in respect of Indigenous rights. This is surely not at random, since the country officially claims the “disappearance” of indigenous peoples inside its borders for a long time. The *Libro del Centenario*, which eternized the commemorations of the 100th anniversary of Uruguayan independence, reads that “it has been almost a century since the Uruguayan land has ended up in absolute possession of the European race and its descendants (...). Working man that inhabit all territory” (LÓPEZ CAMPAÑA, 1925, p. 43, our translation⁹). The temporal landmark quoted by the author is paralleled with several extermination campaigns that were led by Uruguay’s first constitutional presidency against the “savage horde of Charrúas”¹⁰, attending claims made by organized landlords in favor of “cleaning the countryside” (ACOSTA Y LARA, 2006, p. 24). The most famous of them became known as the Massacre of Salsipuedes, which was executed on April 11th 1831.

In 1989, though, in the small city of Trinidad (Flores department), ADENCH was formed. Seeking to “restore traditions”, they paved the way for the further foundation of various groups who claimed Indigenous ancestry inside the supposedly “Indian-exempt” Uruguayan territory. Among these groups’ main achievements was their successful lobbying for the repatriation of the remains of Charrúa *Cacique* Vaimacá Perú from Paris. Vaimacá Perú, alongside Guyunusa (pregnant), Senaqué and Tacuabé, had all been shipped from Montevideo to Paris in 1834 in order to be the main attractions of an infamous human exposition. Although Perú, more than 150 years later, was buried with national honors in the

⁹ Originally: “*hace casi una centuria quedó la tierra uruguaya en posesión absoluta de la raza europea y sus descendientes (...) hombres laboriosos que habitan todo el territorio*”.

¹⁰ Quart.1 General Salsipuedes, Abril 15 de 1831. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25596431?read-now=1&seq=3#page_scan_tab_contents>, taken from ACOSTA Y LARA, Eduardo. **La Guerra de los Charrúas**, periodo patrio, v. II. Montevideo: Linardi y Risso, 1989.

Central Cemetery of Montevideo, the affective excess produced by its remains could not be completely symbolized by the Uruguayan state. That is, from that point onwards, Indigenous groups inside Uruguay would increasingly acquire a degree of agency and autonomy that exceeds the dominions of the nation-state.

Such a movement would be strengthened by Charrúa participation in organizations and forums on the international level, such as FILAC (*Fondo para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina y el Caribe*) and the United Nations. Since much of these spaces require engagement to be country-based, the *Consejo de la Nación Charrúa* (CONACHA) was formed in 2005. Uniting much of the Charrúa collectives based inside Uruguayan territory in a council-like structure, CONACHA has risen in importance and was able to achieve important measures that elevated the awareness of idigeneity inside Uruguay. Moreover, it has been partially successful in uniting dispersed Charrúa collectivities under an itinerant and open-ended methodology for identity (re)construction. More recently, CONACHA has been vocalizing claims for symbolic and material reparations against the Uruguayan state, elevating the debate to levels that intimately concern the foundations of Uruguayan sovereignty.

That is one of the knots where the discussion meets debates that are central to International Relations. As it will be discussed in the first chapter, International Relations, both as a field of study and practice, has in sovereignty one of its foundational principles, being both the ultimate locus of the political and the organizing principle of the international system. Having it this way, one may question whether discussions about Indigenous peoples have any significance to the subject of IR. Inspired by discussions that center their attention at the aporetic ambivalence that both constitutes and divides political communities from “the international”, such as Richard Ashley’s (1989) and R. B. J. Walker’s (1993; 2010), I join authors that see in Indigenous politics a potent site to denaturalize the state as the sole locus of authority, and to enlighten its constitutive limits by rendering the political intelligible through embodied experiences (LIGHTFOOT, 2016; PICQ, 2018; RIFKIN, 2015; 2017; SHAW, 2008; URT, 2016).

Indigeneity is certainly one of the concepts I mostly rely on along this dissertation. Remounting to American Indian studies and indigenous studies, it refers less to a coherent ideology than a concatenation of sources and projects. Jodi Byrd and Michael Rothberg (2011, p. 3) locate indigeneity at a crossroads: where colonization intersects with peoples who (collectively) self-define in terms of relation to land, kinship communities, native languages, traditional knowledges, and ceremonial practices that are foundational to the maintenance of an oppositional, place-based existence. These definitions, though, fall short of encompassing all the potential vicissitudes that may be sustained under the banner of indigeneity. Therefore, my first chapter will try to conceptualize some of the main debates regarding indigeneity and historically situate its emergence as a global dynamic. It is important to note that the genealogy of the idea of “Indigenous peoples” essentially has to do with postcolonial political mobilization, having the category “Indian” (as well as similar *aborigine*, *tribal* and *native*) as its main historical antecedent. If in recent decades the concept has been undergoing emancipatory revaluations, it is important to remember that

it was the European invaders of the Americas who, through a famous confusion, started to refer to the inhabitants of the new world indiscriminately as Indians. The Indians for their part had little sense of possessing common characteristics that distinguished them from the Europeans. Their Indianness was a condition imposed upon them by the invaders (MAYBURY-LEWIS, 1991, p. 207).

Interestingly, as it will be further noted, indigeneity grapples dynamics that may be, at the same time, dominant, residual and emergent, as the discursive linking between pasts and futures is quintessential to the positioning of collective identities (HALL, 2017). As we shall subsequently explore in the case of Charrúa reemergence, Indigenous social and cultural movements look “backward” in order to move “ahead”. These metaphors of movement shed light on some of the tensions one needs to be aware of when discussing indigeneity, for native claims for recognition, land, cultural rights, and sovereignty always assume some kind of continuity rooted in kinship and/or place (CLIFFORD, 2013, p. 28). To avoid considering such belonging as part of an essentialist or “backward looking-only” traditionalism, it is important to free “tradition” from a primary association with the past, and grasp it as a way of actively “practicing history”. Notably, if this

dissertation intends to discuss a process of Indigenous reemergence that is based on an ethnonym that has been widely mobilized as a catch-all term to name a romantic “national Indian”, it is paramount that we analyze the way difference has been managed by the nation-state itself. I now move to discuss some methodological commitments that will guide this dissertation.

Methodologically speaking, I do not seek to adopt any “methodological framework” as if they were neutral techniques of extracting information from reality and aligning it with bodies of knowledge. Drawing on Claudia Aradau and Jef Huysmans (2014), it is paramount to be attentive to the way processes of inclusion and exclusion, which give visibility to some things at the expense of others, are intimately attached to (supposedly technical) methodological commitments. Having this in mind, we will adopt their understanding of methods as devices and acts with political and performative potencies. In other words, with power to create realities (enact worlds) and to make particular orderings more visible than others, this conceptualization shifts from a focus on philosophical assumptions to a focus on political effects. More than that, it may allow us to think methods as forms of visualizing and representing “alternative worlds” through experiences of marginalized and subalternized subjects (ARADAU; HUYSMANS, 2014, p. 611). They also note that

[b]y enacting particular worlds and simultaneously making others less visible or invisible, methods as devices partake of and act upon regimes of knowledge and politics [...] If methods enact particular worlds, their experimental connecting and assembling can also create ruptures in these worlds. To render these disruptive effects that methods can have, we refer to methods as ‘acts’ (ibid, p. 608).

Moreover,

methods [as device and acts] appear messy and fragile, rather than delivering the kind of rigour, scientificity, objectivity or truth that are the basis for the authority of knowledge in many of the methodological debates. Rather than type casting methods as delivering a rigorous or objective knowledge contained within a particular epistemology and ontology, the interesting methodological question is what it means and what is at stake in proposing fragile objectivity or messy truth (ibid. p. 613).

These concepts of “messy truth” and “fragile objectivity” precisely translate some of the grounds on top of which Charrúa identity is performed; that is, by collectively (re)creating, (re)assembling and (re)signifying dominant and residual symbols and narratives. Recalling James Clifford’s (2013, p. 18) take on contemporary spaces of recognition and multiculturalism: as asserting cultural difference becomes intimately tied with the securing of rights, “ambivalence becomes a kind of method” for Indigenous peoples. In this sense, by understanding that the domains of the “knowable” are by no means separated from the political, I precisely drive my attention to dynamics that (potentially) unsettle and renegotiate such domains. In this sense, I chose to privilege the foundational contradictions of Uruguayan sovereignty that are, productively, both mobilized and challenged by Charrúa reemergence.

Karen Tucker (2018) also brings up provoking thoughts over decolonizing methodologies in International Relations. Relying on her research over the global governance of “traditional knowledge”, she states that decolonial¹¹ IR cannot be a project of knowledge extraction, but one that facilitates collaborative shaping and building of knowledge as a route to reveal and disrupts colonial hierarchization and erasures in international politics (TUCKER, 2018, p. 225). Two of her four¹² suggested methodological practices for a decolonial framework in IR are especially pertinent to this work: “starting small” and “centering reciprocity”.

By “starting small”, she means responding to “concrete sites and fields of political activity” (ibid, p. 225). According to her, this should be made by drawing attention to nexus of historical legacies and contemporary practices. By “centering reciprocity”, she regards the need of working closely with those who are engaged in different forms of colonial and decolonial struggle through a process that promotes the opportunity of collaborative meaning-making. The disruption of hierarchies involving the researcher and those engaged in such struggles ought to be a major and constant concern. Responding to that, our work proposes to deal

¹¹ Although basing her perspectives on the writings of some canons of decolonial theory such as Aníbal Quijano (2000), she repeatedly highlights important limitations of the field, mostly regarding the absence of methodological thinking and its lack of engagement with concrete sites and practices of colonial and decolonial praxis (TUCKER, 2018, p. 221).

¹² Starting small, centering reciprocity, thinking relationally and holistically and following colonial and decolonial struggles across multiple sites.

with three different (although intertwined) knots of analysis: i) the dynamics and ambivalences of reemerging Charrúa people, ii) regional ethnohistory and further national accounts on alterity, and iii) the global regime of Indigenous rights and indigeneity.

Regarding the first knot, I am willing to engage it with documents and testimonials of integrants in order to better understand the timeline of the Charrúa indigenous movement as well as its new alliances, objectives and fractures. I will also rely on published works made by scholars who have worked with them, such as Mariela Eva Rodríguez (2017; 2019), Andrea Olivera (2016), Darío Arce Asenjo (2014; 2019) and Gustavo Verdesio (2014; 2016). Since discussions over indigeneity and its local-global aspect will be my main focus of analysis, an important part of the interviews I take are focused on the participation of the Charrúa in international indigenous spaces, such as the *Fondo para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América y el Caribe* (FILAC) and different forums under the domains of the United Nations.

Regarding the second knot, I will engage it with bibliographical records, documents and make a short analysis of images and seminal books that allow me to better understand how alterity has been managed, and how its (re)signification interrelates with important historical dynamics and institutional ruptures in the history of Uruguay. For the third knot, I will constitute an overview of some important debates regarding indigeneity, and discuss both some of its main global and regional (Latin American) dynamics. Summing it up, my work will be based on an essentially qualitative account, relying on bibliographical revision and other primary sources such as historical documents compiled in books, direct testimonials and minutes that attest the participation of CONACHA in international forums.

It is important to remember that indigeneity, like other identity-based social movements, is always enmeshed in national and transnational regimes of coercion and opportunity (CLIFFORD, 2013, p. 27). Along both the second and the third chapters, I will sustain and emphasize tensions around issues of self-determination and reconaissance, entertaining both complexities and ambivalences. Without drawing on structural closures or developmental destinies, my analysis will also be focused on the transformative potential of Charrúa

reemergence in relation to the structures of meaning and subjectivity that constitute Uruguayan sovereignty. That is, more than a description of facts and social phenomena, by situating Charrúa reemergence along regional and national socio-historical landscapes, I inquire: **in what ways does Charrúa reemergence in Uruguay challenges the limits of the political?**

To (try to) answer such an open-ended question, this dissertation will walk through distinct paths, intending to inter-relate important debates that surround the inquiry. In this sense, I point to some objectives this work envisions: i) to analyze the relation between indigeneity and International Relations, with an especial emphasis on debates around sovereignty; ii) to discuss how the former “borderland” condition of Banda Oriental is related to Uruguayan national narratives regarding Indigenous peoples and native pasts, and iii) to advance discussions on the relation between global spaces of Indigenous activity and local dynamics of Indigenous belonging and Charrúa identity formation. By establishing a common ground to put all these complex questions in dialogue, I look forward to opening up an inviting space for further transdisciplinary engagement regarding Indigenous reemergences in the region. Moreover, I aim to highlight how looking at/through/with Indigenous peoples and politics is an important locus for critically discussing limits and possibilities of International Relations.

The text is divided in three main chapters. In the first one, I start discussing some of the core principles of International Relations, stressing the relationship between state sovereignty, the international, and the political. I move forward by assessing a brief historical account of indigeneity and international norms, discussing the complex relationship between international society, indigenous peoples and the post-WWII Human Rights regime. I finish the chapter by engaging with theoretical debates about the multiple dimensions “being Indigenous” may assume under the open-ended understanding of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, emphasizing its manifestations in Latin America, in observance to regional colonial history and nation-building patterns.

The second chapter is divided in two sections. The first one advances a regional discussion about Banda Oriental, and the “borderland” character it

assumed after the foundation of Colônia do Sacramento by the Portuguese in 1680. Less than presenting a historical overview, I look forward to exploring how the dispersed patterns of knowledge production, combined with inter-imperial disputes over territorial dominion, have contributed to the silencing of indigenous pasts regarding autonomous native partialities. Subsequently, I analyze some of the discourses Uruguay has mobilized in order to build a homogeneous and “indianless” nationality, associating them with policies of land management and citizenship.

The third chapter starts by discussing some of the main attributes of the concept of “reemergence”. I further on move to discuss how the end of Uruguay’s civil-military dictatorship in 1985 has been accompanied by social claims for re-signifying nationality, thereby creating a fertile ground for Indigenous reemergence. Drawing on the historical accounts of some of the main Charrúa collectives, I evaluate how their recent activity in international and transnational spaces has been enabling collective agency and identity formation. Moreover, I discuss how their claims for historical and symbolic reparations challenge some of the core features of Uruguayan nationality, therefore exposing potent fractures for challenging and politicizing the limits of the political.

1.

The Indigenous and the International: a Reflection on Limits

Indians, Indigenous peoples or indigeneity are quintessentially modern identities. That is one of the main points I want to make in this chapter. Although for some the classification “Indigenous” may, at first sight, appear to make reference to a group of people located in a diametric opposition from modern existence, I will elaborate on the many ways the idea of the “Indigenous” happens to be profoundly imbricated in the constitution of modernity, and the international. I will also sustain the idea that Indigenous politics are an interesting locus to analyze how some of the constitutive limits of modernity and sovereignty are being negotiated and challenged since the last decades. To do so, this chapter starts with a short theoretical discussion about the spatial and temporal resolutions of sovereignty, its ontological dependence on the enactment of boundaries, and how otherness is addressed within the discipline of International Relations. In the following moment, I investigate some central dynamics of colonialism in Latin America by engaging especially with the ambiguities of “contact zones”. Moving forward, I continue to take on colonization to discuss the formation of international norms and portray how Indigenous peoples became subjects of international law. After that, I explore some of the ways Indigenous peoples articulate their identities in translocal interactions, with a special attention to the Latin American context.

1.1.

Where and what is the political? International Relations and its others

Adopting a critical perspective to analyze International Relations both as theory and as political practice (which are not conceived as separate realms),

Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney (2004, summarized in p. 39-41) bring up important reflections regarding what they call the “problem of difference”. Two moments¹³ that inaugurate not only IR, but also the modern-state form, and a secular conception of humankind are highlighted as central to this question: the European arrival in America and the signature of the Peace of Westphalia. These events, which can also be read as constitutive of modernity¹⁴ itself, are important points of departure for one to think about ambiguities, silences and violences that are enmeshed in the founding of what we now conceive to be the international. Looking at their study has allowed me to better situate my subject of study – the reemergence of Charrúa people in Uruguay – within International Relations.

From the European arrival in America emerged what Tzvetan Todorov (1984) called the “double movement”, which constituted senses of “otherness” and “sameness” brought by the encounter of European explorers with Native Americans. Firstly, it should be noteworthy that different European thinkers developed distinct thoughts about this encounter, which was, by no means, unambiguous (INAYATULLAH; BLANEY, 2004, cap. 2; PRATT, 1992). Notwithstanding, the texts that tried to make sense of these moments were caught between insights that sustained (in varying degrees) the extent to which the Indians were as human as (and thus, somehow, similar to) Europeans, as well as the extent to which they were different. Mary Louise Pratt (1992, p. 6) refers to these moments as “contact zones”, which invoke “the spatial and temporal co-presence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect”. This implies that colonizer and colonized (for now, European explorers and American natives) cannot be conceivable in a separate way. Rather, they become different “subjects” only as a product constituted in and by their relations to each other.

¹³ It is important to say that these “moments” should not be understood separately from the historical developments that were happening around them as if they had radically broken past beliefs and practices. More important is to look at them as historically crystallized points that give meaning to profound and complex historical tendencies. Inayatullah and Blaney (2004) themselves offer an interesting critique regarding the commonly told history about Westphalia being the final (modern) blow to Christian imperial cosmology.

¹⁴ Modernity can be thought as a cosmology founded upon two main premises: the division of culture and nature and the division between human and non-human. René Descartes’ thought is commonly framed as having inaugurated modernity through its dualism, which radically “subjectifies” the human mind in opposition to the “outside world”, the body and the senses. The all-knowing God, then, is substituted by the “rational mind” as the main locus of knowledge validation.

We now turn to the other constitutive moment of the international: Westphalia, which brought up the principle of equality among states, fundamental to our modern understanding of international relations. Relatively speaking, it sought to delegitimize and break the hold of the monopoly of social and political power of a particular group – namely, the Catholic Church, intermingled alongside overlapping authorities – in favor of a system of independent discrete political communities. Following a modern and secular rationale, for one to be recognized and acknowledged, the affirmation of others would supplant divine ordination (INNAYATULLAH; BLANEY, 2004, p. 19). Nevertheless, differences in ways of life between these communities remained. How, then, should an ordering principle be determined? This question leads us to the “problem of difference”, which emerges and intensifies¹⁵ under modern conditions of relative equality (among states), often leading to the reassertion of (illicit and informal) forms of social hierarchy (idem, p. 20). In other words, approval from other states is required, but, without a central ordering hierarchy, differences in ways of life turn out to be potential threats for the dynamics of sovereign reconnaissance¹⁶. Inayatullah and Blaney (2004) argue that these differences end up conceived and placed at a distance, and managed within the borders of the independent states¹⁷. Since this logic fails to properly account for the ambiguous character of the encounter with difference¹⁸ (see NANDY, 1983;

¹⁵ Peace of Westphalia crystallized a tendency that had already been manifesting itself along Europe, which stood as one of the main causes of the Thirty Years’ War (1618-48). The fragmentation of Christianity brought up by the Protestant Reform had already led to other paradigmatic events such as the Peace of Augsburg (1555), in which the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* was established, allowing princes of the Holy Roman Empire to legally affirm Protestantism or Catholicism over their territorial domains. In this sense, Westphalia further consolidated this movement alongside the crystallization of the principle of sovereignty among states. The displacement of difference into the modern realm, however, did not mean that the pre-modern impetus for religious cleansings gave place to a “tolerant” society.

¹⁶ Innayatullah and Blaney’s (2004) argument is inspired by Ashis Nandy (1983) and Jessica Benjamin (1988), both of which rely upon a psychoanalytic approach that decentralizes the colonial/gendered subject. Through that, the authors challenge the common idea in IR that defines difference purely “among or between states”. That is, by excluding the necessary overlapping that constitutes “self” and “other”, the authors condemn violent practices that are authorized by the resulting equation of (form) difference with disorder.

¹⁷ The setting of borders splitting inside from outside is not only a distinction between disparate elements, but an act of splitting that is mutually constitutive of both state/political theory and a system of states/IR theory. Politics, then, ends up being possible only within sovereign states, while the interactions among them tend to fall within a realm absent of ethic constraints, and condemned to repetitive and tragic interactions (WALKER, 1993, cap. 2).

¹⁸ Innayatullah and Blaney (2004) pose the necessity of IR to embrace the idea of “culture” as a potential way to engage with such ambiguities and avoid the violent depolitization of its deferral.

BENJAMIN, 1988; PRATT, 1992; WALKER, 1993) what happens is a “deferral” of the problem of difference, in which

[t]he “other” lurks as a perpetual threat in the form of other states, foreign groups, imported goods, and alien ideas, and as difference within, vitiating the presumed but rarely, if ever, achieved “sameness.” Internal others are managed or governed by some combination of hierarchy, eradication by assimilation or expulsion, and tolerance. Our responses to others seem (...) perpetually drawn toward Todorov’s equation: difference is translated as inferiority and thereby subjected to eradication. Indeed, the “inside/outside” logic performs, in Jessica Benjamin’s terms, an act of “splitting”—an exclusion of the overlap of self and other that works to deflect our responses to difference in the direction of a “purifying hatred”. (INNAYATULLAH; BLANEY, 2004, p. 39).

This passage summarizes the dilemma that undergirds a system that, on the one hand requires (form) equality, and on the other ends up confining differences in the inside of its discrete components. To avoid dealing with this dilemma, these differences end up being organized along an evolutionary understanding that classifies people and societies according to arbitrary measures of development. That is precisely where the European encounters in America and the Westphalian system of sovereign states meet. It is also a discourse by which the figure of the “Indian” is invented and summoned. As it will be further detailed, the category Indian has had a central role in representing primitive “otherness”. Seventeenth century social contract theorists, whose writings are mostly concerned with the legitimacy (or even the undeniable necessity) of statehood, often resort to the figure of the “Indian” in order to frame backwardness or the state of anarchy (SHAW, 2008, cap. 1; INAYATULLAH; BLANEY, 2004, cap. 1). Bringing, once again, Todorov’s (1984) figure of the “double movement”, the other is greeted with responses that either try to fully assimilate it into self by repressing difference or designate it as radically different, thus denying it a common humanity (INAYATULLAH; BLANEY, 2004, p. 43).

This brings us to two major efforts to manage and deal with difference: to separate it spatially with state boundaries – mostly deployed in post-Westphalian Europe –, and to separate it temporally according to degrees of development/modernization – mostly deployed in relation to colonize lands and Native Americans. In the latter movement, then, the constructed temporal

backwardness of Natives (commonly referred to as “savages”) is equated with the imagined temporal origins of the European self. The spatially distinct other, thus, is converted into a temporally prior self (INNAYATULLAH; BLANEY, 2004, p. 50). Such a movement has allowed violent practices on the basis of tutelage as we will further see. We now turn to founding theoretical contributions of International Relations in order to better grasp the ways in which Indigenous peoples can be thought as constitutive of the subject and therefore, intimately, a product of modernity. By looking at some central texts, we are able to perceive the ways state-centered modernity has straightened the locus of political activity to the state. That is precisely where one of my main interests rests: the way contemporary indigenous activity challenges such limits.

By “the political”, Karena Shaw (2008, p. 1) means “the conditions under which and the practices through which authority is constituted and legitimated, and what these constitutions and legitimations enable and disable”. In her book “Indigeneity and Political Theory: Sovereignty and the Limits of the Political” (2008), she starts by reading Thomas Hobbes’ formulation of sovereignty, especially its ontological foundations. This allows us to note how identity and difference are produced and where they are located. Before going into her accounts on Hobbes, it is important to briefly situate the context in which the famous political theorist was inserted. Thomas Hobbes first published his *magnum opus*, *Leviathan*, in 1651, in England. The previous years had witnessed growing violence spurring around Europe led by the collapse of traditional forms of political authority. His objective, then, was to argue for a different form of political authority capable of ending bloodshed and (re)ordering the continent. That is precisely where civil authority (or modern sovereignty) is raised as an alternative to religious authority¹⁹.

In *Leviathan*’s first part – “Of Man” –, Hobbes (1968) lays fundamental aspects of men’s individuality (shared characteristics) that set civil authority as an

¹⁹ Hobbes addresses the tensions between religious and civil authority by appealing to what can be known and what cannot. His appeal to reason leads him to affirm the lack of a shared verifiable basis to properly access the knowledge of God and, then, to sustain the need of a civil (secular) authority as an imperative necessity for the (re)establishment of order (SHAW, 2008, p. 29).

imperative necessity²⁰. Shaw (2008, cap. 2) warns us that we should read hobbesian elaborations on sovereignty not only as a matter of security but also as a matter of identity-making and meaning-production; one that is

spatially bounded, progressing through time, achieving feats of science, technology, advancing knowledge, and so on. In other words, there is a sense of community one is a part of that potentially not only provides a space for the satisfaction of one's desires but gives a collective range of possibilities for them, provides a backdrop of meaning for them. This challenge is resolved through a maneuver enabled by his earlier ordering of time and space: sovereignty is produced by ordering difference spatially to enable identity (SHAW, 2008, p. 30).

In other words, these spatially-bounded political communities become the ontological foundation for communication, as well as for the production and evaluation of (rational) knowledge. They become the only possible means to order men's diversity of "passions" and their natural constant pursuit of desire (power)²¹. For Hobbes, however, government/civil authority are not constructions of men, but rather a necessity that exceeds them.

These constructions enable the production of a homogeneized man-citizen that runs in "natural" chaos and whose disciplining requires the formation of one common overarching sovereign identity (SHAW, 2008, p. 30). Besides the formation of a common civil authority, Hobbes argument also produces an "outside". One that is horrific, brutish and averse to human progress. Sovereignty, then, guarantees not only order and security; it also enables men to move through time, to advance their desires. By naturalizing men's a-historical and anarchical condition (both outside and before) sovereign authority, the world ends up neatly

²⁰ It is important to note the importance Hobbes gives to language in his elaboration. Language is the means through which the Leviathan is able to establish its authority and avoid misinterpretation (disorder). Truth (and falsehood as well), in Hobbes' stance, are dependent on language. Truth ends up being "the right ordering of names in our affirmations" (HOBBS, 1968, p. 105). For all men have the potential to master language, language itself can be read as a universalizing principle. Being both the means through which the Leviathan acquires its ruling capacity and a universalizing principle among human beings, language lays out the basis not only of the necessity of statehood, but also for the colonization of those whose "reason" would be "othered" and timely located along the "state of nature" (see SHAW, 2008, cap. 2) Also, "In Hobbes' constitutive narrative about the constitution of politics, the sovereignty of the state was itself supposed to be the authority that made all names stick" (WALKER, 2010, p. 193).

²¹ "So that in the first place, I put for a generall inclination of all mankind, a perpetuall and restlesse desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death. And the cause of this, is not alwayes that a man hopes for a more intensive delight, than he has already attained to; or that he cannot be content with a moderate power: but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath at present, without the acquisition of more" (HOBBS, 1968, p. 161).

divided between sovereign and non. An imaginative boundary is drawn between an inside and an outside, the latter referring to a place where the ruling state is the state of war. That is precisely where the “savage” American Natives come in as a powerful argumentative tool. They give form to the outside²². This outside, however, should not be understood as it is sustained by an ontological cut between the “we” and the “savages”. In essence, “they” are the same as “we”, but have (yet) not managed to achieve sovereignty. According to Karena Shaw (2008, p. 34), more important than outlining Hobbes’ racist misconceptions about Native Americans

is that this misrepresentation is a necessary consequence of his production of the conditions under which we can think about or imagine politics at all. (...) To address the political implications of Hobbes’ misrepresentation thus requires challenging the conditions of possibility that ground our contemporary thinking about politics: sovereignty (SHAW, 2008, p. 34).

Summing it up, politics ends up confined to and defined as negotiations of rights and duties between already-constituted “subjects” and their “sovereigns”²³. In order for sovereignty to work, its conditions of possibility must be excluded from the realm of the political (idem, p. 35). Paradoxically, the inauguration of sovereignty is the precondition for politics, but men’s natural characteristics that imperatively require sovereignty are excluded of such a realm. This ontological grounding, thus, produces an epistemological system that has enabled authoritative claims that have gone far beyond Hobbes and his time. That being said, it is paramount to go deeper into one of the main constitutive enterprises of our modern political system: colonialism.

²² We must remember, though, that European people living in the XVII century had roughly no more than abstract and vague ideas about American Natives. In his sense, Hobbes’ use of the “savage” was designated more to argue for the minimization of violence among European neighbors than to legitimize it against “the savages”. He invokes the figure of the (far outside) savage in order to give meaning to a plethora of “differences” that should be ordered within European nations.

²³ This is represented by the ideas of science and knowledge, both of which could only be conceived, as so not to evoke competing basis for authority, in relation to the sovereign. “Sovereignty in this way becomes the principle that structures the intellectual, as well as physical, world, as it reinforces the ontological and epistemological principles that guide our own activities and practices as knowledge producers, as “subjects” who apprehend the world as Hobbes describes. His production of “man” as a “knowing subject” thus provides the basis for a reorientation of authority along two parallel axes: the subject (who knows with authority) and the sovereign state (who embodies/guarantees this authority)” (SHAW, 2008, p. 36).

1.2.

Norms and indigenous peoples: building and challenging the international

Over the previous section, we were able to evaluate how the construction of modern territorial sovereignty has been intimately dependant on the existence of “sovereign subjects”, whose ontology, as well as conceptions of development over time, could only be conceived both “after” and spatially “within” the sovereign state. Also noteworthy was the fact that the emerging model of secular and diffuse authority between states has always relied on images and discourses of a human-natural “state of anarchy” – representing violence and the absence of order.

Along this chapter, I will discuss how the social construction of the international realm, which is itself deeply reliant on norms, has both authorized violent practices against Native societies and served, more contemporarily, as the main locale for the articulation of indigenous politics. To do that, the chapter will start with a brief consideration of Francisco de Vitoria’s stances regarding Natural Law, which was refashioned within the contact between European explorers and Native Americans in the sixteenth century. The founder of international law, as he is commonly addressed (alongside Hugo Grotius), has established a mediating ground between peoples located in both sides of the Atlantic Ocean that can be read as the foundation of the modern understandings of “international”. Subsequently, I will move on to analyze how the consolidation of a positivist-inspired “family of nations” in nineteenth century international law has allowed for the surging of organized transnational indigenous activity, which reached its apex with the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007.

1.2.1.

The sovereignty doctrine and early colonialism

To talk about colonialism is to talk about land dispossession. The processes that involved, signified and authorized it are complex, and inevitably dependent of what I will discuss along this chapter. According to Anghie (2005, p. 16), regarding the colonial enterprise, what is hardly disputed is the central significance law has had along its whole deployment. One has to acknowledge the centrality of Francisco de Vitoria's texts²⁴ in developing a universally binding legal system that would dismiss the Pope's universal authority (Divine Law) and pave the way for the establishment of a secular international law, whose administration would be deemed to the sovereign actors.

Therefore, one can argue that international law (also relations, by definition) and colonialism were developed in many parallel ways. Reaffirming the dynamics of the "double movement" occasioned by the arrival of Europeans in America, the contact zones brought by the colonial encounters resulted in processes of classification that had direct influence on territorial claims, and contestations about sovereignty. That was definitely far from an unambiguous and easy dynamic. What is important to be noted is that it was through the establishment of a new "Natural Law"²⁵ that Vitoria sought to bridge cultural²⁶ differences between Native Americans and Europeans in a way that peoples in both sides of the Atlantic would respond to a common universal juridical charter. Nevertheless, it was precisely the "common humanity" acknowledged by Natural Law doctrine that allowed for the legal waging of "just war" by the European explorers against Native Americans.

The right to wage just war was the main constitutive power that characterized a "sovereign" within Vitorian framework (ANGHIE, 2005, p. 26). Let us bear in mind, though, that his texts preceded Thomas Hobbes' by, roughly, a century, so the definitions advanced in the first section were nowhere near well

²⁴ Especially, "*De Indis*", from 1532.

²⁵ One has to note that Natural Law for Vitoria was hierarchically dependent on God's totalizing presence regarding "nature".

²⁶ I recognize how imprecise the meaning of the word "cultural" in this sentence is.

established among European powers²⁷. Therefore, the conception of “sovereignty”, for Vitoria, was not related to a spatially contained political community in relation to other similar units. One has to note that, Francisco de Vitoria’s doctrine wielded a huge importance to Catholic theology. Thus, it was the capability of waging “just war”, according to a universally binding Natural Law (to which the *ius gentium* was subordinated), that accounted for his conception of sovereignty. Just war, in its turn, was only possible to Christian subjects²⁸, such as the Iberian crowns. Amerindians, then, if not converted to Christianity, were kept out of the realm of sovereigns, and offensives against their communities and territory were commonly authorized through alleged violations of the Catholic-inspired *ius gentium*²⁹ (idem, p. 24).

The violent practices that characterized the colonial enterprise were mostly authorized as part of a moral responsibility. If the Amerindians (inevitably and invariably) violated *ius gentium*, it was not because of some kind of inherent bad character or any ethno-racial component. Rather, since people in America and Europe belonged to a common humanity, Vitorian doctrine agreed that it was a pedagogical duty of the Catholic entities to guide them towards reason and away from barbarism. From this complex overlapping of norms and arguments, what is important to take is: colonialism in Latin America was authorized by legal doctrines. These doctrines recognized a common ground between Europeans and Amerindians, which would set the stage for what is now International Law. Nevertheless, this system authorized the deployment of violent actions against those who violated common premises that were established by the Catholic Europeans. Therefore, it mostly operated under a division of Catholic x non-catholic (or barbaric x civilized³⁰), which would itself inspire the tensions between

²⁷ Therefore, Vitoria’s location of the sovereign is not based on distinguishing a spatially bound statist realm from an international dimension, nor in distinguishing public and private sovereign identities.

²⁸ The Law of Nations was part of *jus gentium*. One can infer that by his premise regarding Saracens (roughly, Arab Muslims), which were “inherently incapable of waging just war” for they were not Christians. Therefore, Saracens were also not sovereign according to Vitorian doctrine, and neither were the Amerindians.

²⁹ Notably, one of the principles of Divine Law was the right to “travel” and “sojourn” in any planetary portion of land (in: De Indis, p. 151). Thus, the denial of hospitality by some Natives would legitimate the deployment of just war.

³⁰ Cannibalism, for example, was widely referred as a contradiction of natural law, and many texts written by Iberian theologians and jurists recurred to it as the main example of Natives’ corrupt “education” and a proof that evangelization was not only necessary, but a legal and divine duty.

universal and particular that sustain “the problem of difference” of IR. In other words, Victoria started a movement that began to replace horizontal/ontic space between Europe and others to a vertical/temporal space, laying out the foundations of what would become the modern international (INNAYATULLAH; BLANEY, 2004, p. 58; WALKER, 2016).

Notably, this movement has constrained and violently repressed forms of life whose spatial and temporal cosmologies were not translated into the logics of Christian sovereignty, representing a fundamental step towards the advancement of what Marshall Beier (2005) called “hegemonologue”. The emergence of a legally universal Natural Law, as showed, has been constitutively dependent on colonialism. As the colonial enterprise grew, and eventually became incorporated in secular capitalist processes of accumulation, universal norms to regulate and order international affairs assumed a distinct character. Positivism began to replace Natural Law, and membership emerged as a meaningful criterion to refashion the line that divided sovereign societies from non³¹ (ANGHIE, 2005, p. 58).

1.2.2.

International society and indigenous politics

The emergence of the institutional structures of mediation that would lately give sociological grounding for the workings of the English School of International Relations³², i.e. the international society, was based on the establishment of a “family of nations”. Membership in the family was restricted to

³¹ With the secularization of international Law and the rising importance ascribed to scientific reason, racializing theories, with taxonomic efforts often reliant on quantitative measurements about human natural features, a redesigned “developing-trough-time” aspect of modernity started to gained prominence *in lieu* of the previous theological grounds. This marks deep changes regarding colonial logics of the XVI and XVII century from those of the XIX and XX centuries. For a critical stance on that, see Douglass (1881) and Du Bois (1903). Also for the record, it is important to note that the first journal specialized in international affairs, which would later, from 1922 onwards, become the famously known “Foreign Affairs Magazine”, was initially named as “Journal of Race Development”.

³² English School relies almost unanimously on a narrative of “expansion” of the international society, which, roughly, sees it as an assimilative beam bursting out of Europe towards the rest of the globe (for more on that, see DUNNE, 1997).

societies and peoples whose social organization fit specific criteria and the basic form of a (recognized) nation-state. Imperialism, therefore, is ultimately authorized through mandates that allowed recognized nations to occupy and explore territories and peoples who were kept outside of the family³³. It is important to say that such imperial practices get to be authorized by another frame of temporal politics in comparison to the one of the early American colonialism. Thus, dynamics of land dispossession become mostly legitimized under a secular ideology of social development (powered by rising capitalism). By deeming indigenous peoples/aborigines incapable of enjoying sovereign status or even of constituting legal subjects with rights, international law was able to govern and legitimate the patterns of imperial colonization (ANAYA, 2000, p. 22). Paradoxically, it is precisely from the fringes of this system that contemporary international Indigenous politics emerge.

Both the discipline and practice of international relations play a crucial role in maintaining structures that both enable Indigenous politics and reinforce the marginalization of Indigenous peoples' concerns, ensuring that their issues (issues which emerge in part because of their implication in the international realm) can only have relevance to the extent that they appear in particular forms. Inter-national relations, as both discipline and practices, contributes to a framing of options for the shape and expression of Indigenous politics, not least by providing the conditions of entrance to the discourse. The position that international relations is only about relations between states (which would require sovereignty as a precondition for entrance) has given way (not coincidentally, just as sovereignty is being broadly asserted by Indigenous peoples) to a more complex set of conversations about what international politics is and might be (SHAW, 2008, p. 71).

In my readings of Indigenous rights, I advocate for a different reading than Paul Keal's (2003), who understands it as a necessary "step further" on the moral expansion of international society. That is, the encompassing of Indigenous legal personhood would be a righteous movement of the cosmopolitan moralization³⁴.

³³ "Othering" in XIX century differs from early colonization periods, although not drastically altering who these others effectively were. It should be noted, as well, that this different logic of othering also relied on the linear and vertical structuring of the world initiated by Victoria. This is illustrative in the case of the Berlin Conference (1884-5), which established the lately referred "scramble of Africa", and it did so without the consultation or appraisal of Africans themselves. By deeming them as (yet) too primitive to understand the concept of sovereignty, almost the whole African continent was conceptualized as terra nullius.

³⁴ For more on the racist dimensions undergirding discourses and practices of a world order based on Kantian cosmopolitanism, see FERNÁNDEZ, Marta. O Cosmopolitanismo Kantiano: Universalizando o Iluminismo, *Contexto Internacional*, v. 36, n. 2, 2014, pp. 417-456. One can also make sense of Keal's approach by the notion of "prophecy of expansion" regarding

Instead, I understand Indigenous politics as intrinsically related to the creation of an international society – a play on its constitutive margins. In other words, it operates precisely on limits of inclusion and exclusion enacted by the sovereignty-based international society, and not as claim for plain “inclusion” in an ever expanding universality (which, by definition, would have its center of irradiation in Western Europe). Indigenous politics (or worldings) therefore, does more than simply to expand ways of practicing global politics; it forms a different register altogether, and it should be understood as an embodied dynamic of consciousness, one that permits both theorizing in consciousness and embodied experiences³⁵ (PICQ, 2018, p. 98). Such embodied consciousnesses, although partially operating within the structures of international society, also pose a direct challenge to modernity’s Cartesian foundations by offering possibilities to think politics outside or “beyond” (TICKNER; BLANEY, 2013) the state, whose sovereign dominion, we should remember, is never fully completed (DOTY, 1996).

We now move to evaluate the regime of Indigenous rights, which is crafted in international law. As it will be seen, its legal formalization does not make it a less controversial or ambiguous matter, and that is precisely where most of its power resides. To do that, I will start with a historical outlook in order to, subsequently, discuss some of the main legal dispositifs and doctrines that sustain Indigenous rights in the present time.

In 1923, Levi General Deskaheh, chief of the Younger Bear Clan of the Cayuga Nation, and spokesman of the Six Nations of the Grand River Land, near Brantford, Ontario, crossed the Atlantic until Geneva, where he sought to reach the then four-year-old League of Nations. His concerns had to do with the denial of Native self-government since the institution of Canadian Indian Act of 1876³⁶. Through a petition entitled *The Red Man’s Appeal to Justice*, Desakaheh denounced escalating conflict over traditional structures of territorial government by Canadian police as a menace to international peace. His claim of representing a sovereign nation were in part based upon the Haldimand Treaty of 1784, in which

international society. For more on that, see BARTELSON, Jens. **A Genealogy of Sovereignty**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

³⁵ Such embodied experiences pose a direct challenge to the Cartesian foundations of modernity. For more on that, see SMITH, 2007, cap. 1.

³⁶ For more on the Canadian Indian Act of 1876 and its amendments, see COULTHARD, 2014 and SIMPSON, 2014.

King George III conveyed the Grand River Land on the Canadian side of Lake Erie to Iroquois who had fought on the side of the British during the American Revolution (NIEZEN, 2003, p. 33). However, English representatives sought to remove the issue of the agenda by arguing that it was a matter of internal concern of the British Empire and of Canada in particular. Although Desakaheh was not able to be heard on the official floors of the newborn international institution, his effort would expose powerful fractures.

Even though the International Labor Organization (ILO) had been the first international institutional body to discuss the conditions of native workers in the 1920s, it was the emergence of the global Human Rights regime that gave momentum Indigenous claims. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratified in 1948, in spite of not being concerned with Indigenous autonomy *per se*, laid the foundations of Indigenous politics by moving the locus of the international from the state to people (PICQ, 2019, p. 107). The first convention to invoke the category “Indigenous” was ILO 107 (1957). In its second article, it assigned to governments the primary responsibility “for developing coordinated and systematic action for the protection of the populations concerned and their progressive integration into the life of their respective countries”, alongside “the fostering of individual dignity, and the advancement of individual usefulness and initiative”. These words leave no doubt about the assimilationist tone that inspired the mobilization of the category “Indigenous” by international instruments at the time (NIEZEN, 2003, p. 38).

Manuela Picq (2018, p. 107-8) points to the 1949 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the 1969 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination as other instruments that, although not precisely making reference to Indigenous peoples, were important precursors of modern structures of the Indigenous rights in the international arena. All these endeavors should be seen as part of the decolonization regime that assumed a vigorous position in the agenda of multilateral organisms, especially the UN. The 1960s and the 1970s have witnessed the emergence of dozens of sovereign nations that were not, until then, allowed or invited to compose the “family of nations” and its successive institutions. The two most powerful and contending political ideologies at the time, western liberalism and Marxism, both regarded (formal)

colonialism in a negative ways. Their modern essence, nevertheless, did not permit the extension of such decolonizing effort to indigenous patterns of association and territoriality whose formations were prior to European colonization. Instead, the population of a colonial territory as an integral whole, irrespective of pre-colonial political and cultural patterns, was deemed the beneficiary unit of decolonization prescriptions (ANAYA, 2000, p. 43). The decolonization regime, then, confirmed its norm of independent statehood for colonial territories while preserving their colonial borders. The maximum corollary of this endeavor was the “salt-water thesis”³⁷, which effectively precluded from the decolonization regime any considerations of indigenous or tribal enclaves living within the external boundaries of independent states (ibid, p. 43).

Indigenous activism, whose action on the international arena was conducted primarily by societies living under sovereign jurisdictions of post-colonial settler states, forced the UN to create special venues to address their priorities. In 1975, the World Council of Indigenous Peoples was founded. Although not properly composed by Indigenous representatives, the International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs has also played an important role in advocating for Indigenous rights. What is most important to note is the subsequent rising debate around the use of the term “peoples” (instead of “people” or “populations”), which carries a call for self-determination – something that, in international law, was almost uniquely equated with independent statehood (NIEZEN, 2003, p. 29).

The 1970s have witnessed the rise of international Indigenous articulations. Through the organization of conferences and with the support of NGOs and scholars, the seminal International Non-Governmental Organization Conference on Discrimination against Indigenous Populations in the Americas was held in 1977 in Geneva³⁸. This conference is a hallmark of an endeavor that

³⁷ Also named as “blue-water thesis”, it refers to the limited interpretation of Chapter XI of the UN Charter, regarding self-determination of non-governing territories. It restricts sovereign self-determination only to overseas colonial territories, thus denying its application to indigenous peoples inside a contiguous sovereign state. Importantly enough is to note the special support it received from Latin American countries.

³⁸ The conference was held as a project of the NGO sub-committee on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Apartheid and Colonialism.

inspired central theoretical concerns of this dissertation: the creation of a transnational indigenous identity. Such an effort would lately embrace and be shaped by other peoples beyond America. The conference helped to establish a pattern of coordination among indigenous peoples from throughout the world in the formulation and communication of their demands, a pattern that has continued throughout subsequent numerous international meetings (ANAYA, 2000, p. 46).

Alongside these developments, much effort was put, both by Indigenous groups themselves, observers and academics, towards defining the concept “Indigenous”. After all, its internationalization through common structures of organization, norms and meaning were pushing for it in different ways. The first and most compelling definitional effort, still widely used for its definitional synthesis, is José Martínez Cobo’s³⁹ Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations. Demanded in 1970 and first published twelve years later, in 1982⁴⁰, its importance also has to do with the fact that the text represented more the views of the Indigenous participants than of UN’s nation-states. Among the many accomplishments of the Cobo Report, its identification of areas where existing international HR standards pertaining to equality and non-discrimination were not adequately applied to Indigenous peoples (including health, housing, education, language, culture, employment, religion and administration of justice) was, perhaps, what elevated it as a canon of international Indigenous politics (LIGHTFOOT, 2016, p. 36). The Cobo Report also was the first official acknowledgement within the UN system of the existence a special relationship between Indigenous peoples and land (which, by the time, was not accommodated by national and international norms).

It is essential to know and understand the deeply spiritual special relationship between Indigenous peoples and their land as basic to their existence as such and to all their beliefs, customs, traditions and culture. For such peoples, land is not merely a possession and a means of production. The entire relationship between the spiritual life of Indigenous peoples and Mother Earth, and their land, has a great many deep-seated implications.

³⁹ José Martínez Cobo was an Ecuadoran ambassador who was selected as Special Rapporteur for this study in 1970 under the mandate of UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

⁴⁰ The report’s final chapter was published only in 1987. This final chapter, though, is more of a summary of the conclusions, proposals and recommendations of the full report (LIGHTFOOT, 2016, p. 48).

Their land is not a commodity which can be acquired, but a material element to be enjoyed freely (COBO, 1986, Ch. XXI, 26)

Cobo's Report has directly resulted and paved the way for the founding of the permanent Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP), under the banner of UNECOSOC, in 1982. Since its first meeting, discussions have been mostly centered on both definitional issues and standards. Twelve states participated of WGIP's first meeting alongside with three Indigenous NGOs with ECOSOC consultative status, as well as a number of Indigenous nations and confederations from the United States, Canada, South America and Australia. The presence of both NGOs and Indigenous nations would drastically increase over the years (LIGHTFOOT, 2016, p. 38).

The efforts to include "peoples" as a working concept in international legal instruments regarding Indigenous issues has motivated the resistance of some countries, which mostly claimed threats to their territorial integrity⁴¹. The issue, though, is more complicated than that, since Indigenous peoples have generally invoked the right to self determination as an expression of their desire to continue as distinct communities, while in virtually all instances denying aspirations to independent statehood (ANAYA, 2000, p. 48). In 1989, the first legally binding dispositive that made use of this language, and that strongly advanced questions regarding Indigenous self-determination, was adopted: Convention ILO 169. It is international law's most concrete manifestation of its growing responsiveness to indigenous peoples' claims, with special regards to self-determination (ANAYA, 2000, p. 60). In its preamble, the basic theme of the Convention is shown through the acknowledgement of "the aspirations of [indigenous] peoples to exercise control over their own institutions, ways of life and economic development and to maintain and develop their identities, languages and religions, within the framework of the States in which they live" (ILO, 1989). Upon this premise, it also includes provisions regarding Indigenous cultural integrity, land and resources rights, and non-discrimination in social welfare spheres (ANAYA, 2000, p. 48). ILO 169 normatively consolidated the collective dimension of Indigenous rights. Not without resistance, though.

⁴¹ Especially among those that composed the "CANZUS" – Canada, Australia, New Zealand and United States, with a special stress for the latter. For more on that, see LIGHTFOOT, 2008.

The conceptualization and articulation of such rights collides with the individual/state perceptual dichotomy that has lingered in dominant conceptions of human society and persisted in the shaping of international standards. It challenged notions of state sovereignty, which were (and still are) especially jealous of matters of social and political organization within the presumed sphere of state authority (ibid, p. 48). That is precisely the reason why Manuela Picq (2018, p. 111) calls ILO 169 the “Indigenous Magna Carta”⁴². Its articles have largely influenced national constitutions all over Latin America, and they have also been evoked by many Indigenous groups to (not always successfully) counter conflictive statist and corporative mega-projects in the continent.

Before we can expand into such discussions, though, it is paramount to put forth an important question. Although ILO 169 has a legally binding character, it is under the realm of the international customary law⁴³ that a good part of Indigenous rights gained track. With the rise of multilateral institutions and the human rights regime, common standards of behavior regarding relations between states, indigenous peoples and private actors have been crystallizing. Beyond the normative character of norm-building, the consolidation of reporting practices by nation-states denote how Indigenous activity in the international realm has influenced the creation of subjectivities of obligation and expectation attendant upon the rights that go beyond treaty ratification or other formal act of norm assent. In other words, “[t]he multilateral processes that build a common understanding of the content of indigenous people’s rights, therefore, also build expectations that the rights will be upheld” (ANAYA, 2000, p. 55). Rounds of written and oral statements of governments before international audiences regarding their domestic behavior in situations that involve indigenous peoples

⁴² Nevertheless, the controversy regarding the term “peoples” was “resolved” (in an unhappy way for most Indigenous peoples involved) through the article 1.3, which says “[t]he use of the term peoples in this Convention shall not be construed as having any implications as regards the rights which may attach to the term under international law” (ILO, 1989). What is also seen as having fallen short of expectation was the relative inaccessibility of Indigenous peoples to autonomously initiate complaining procedures (NIEZEN, 2003, p. 39). Such controversial aspects are yet unresolved, and it is so because they represent a challenge to structural dynamics of what Anthony Anghie (2005) called “the doctrine of sovereignty”. In other words, they offer potentially destabilizing threats to the ontological foundations of the modern conception of politics (SHAW, 2008) and evince the “problem of difference” that inaugurates and constitutes the dynamics of international relations (BLANEY; INNAYATULLAH, 2004).

⁴³ Customary law is generally observed to include two key elements: a ‘material’ element in certain past uniformities in behavior and a ‘psychological’ element, or *opinio juris*, in certain subjectivities of ‘oughtness’ attending such uniformities in behavior (MCDUGAL et al, 1980).

have been crystallized both as a practice of norm-compliance⁴⁴ and of potential denouncing actions. This common ground of opinion has been shaping international institutions and actors⁴⁵, whose identities and interests should not be understood as separate realms, but as part of a dynamic intersubjective process in which the constitutive aspect of norms plays a fundamental role, especially in this case (LIGHTFOOT, 2008).

Summarizing an important point, indigenous rights must be understood – regarding the form they were constructed by the organizing peoples on the international realm – as going beyond individual equality. As a liberation movement, then, indigenism⁴⁶, as called by Ronald Niezen (2003, p. 17), stands apart from the twentieth century's most exalted freedom struggles: decolonization, anti-apartheid and civil rights. The collective and non-statist character of Indigenous claims is the base of that difference.

But who are Indigenous peoples after all? To avoid having a definition controlled by states, thus tending to fall in dichotomy between a fixed tradition and an integrated modernity, Indigenous delegates have in most cases rejected the idea of a precise and rigid definition. Cobo Report, though, is still seen as a flexible consensus⁴⁷, according to which Indigenous peoples and nations are

⁴⁴ Norm-compliance can be conceived, as do constructivist explanations, less as a rule-oriented approach and more as a process-oriented one, which gives central significance to the social construction of identities and meanings among actors in the international system, having identities and interests as intersubjectively constituted realms. Regarding a constructivist approach centered on the Indigenous relations of Asia, see KINGSBURY, 1998.

⁴⁵ To name a few, the OAS General Assembly resolve to request for a juridical instrument relative to the rights of indigenous peoples, which included consulting rounds; The Amazonian Cooperation Treaty agreed to establish a Special Commission on Indigenous Affairs; The Indigenous Peoples' Fund (*Fondo Indígena*) was created after the Second Summit Meeting of Ibero-American Heads of State in 1992; The World Bank, in 1991, adopted a revised policy directive in view of the pervasive role the banks may play in financing development projects in less-developed countries, where most of the world's indigenous peoples live; The resolutions adopted at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development included provisions regarding indigenous peoples and their communities; The Rio Declaration (1992) reiterates percepts regarding indigenous peoples rights and seeks to incorporate them within the larger agenda of global environmentalism and sustainable development; The Program for Action adopted by the 1994 UN conference on Population and Development includes a part in which it covers normative assumptions regarding indigenous peoples; The European Parliament, in 1989, passed a resolution named "on the Position of the World's Indians", in which it called governments to secure indigenous land rights and free prior consultation (ANAYA, 2000, cap. 5).

⁴⁶ Not to be confused with Latin American *Indigenismo*. For more on that, see RAMOS, 2002.

⁴⁷ I name it flexible since it does not fully apply to some situations, such as the case of Indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia, where patterns of displacement and movement across national

those which have a historical continuity with preinvasion and precolonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves as distinct from other sectors of societies now prevailing in those territories [...] and are determined to preserve and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples (*apud* MERLAN, 2009, p. 305)⁴⁸.

Besides that, Ronald Niezen (2003, cap. 1) highlights other two important defining features. First is that leaders of Indigenous communities are always careful to distinguish their identity and experience from those of states, which leads to the formation of a “regional solidarity” with those who share similar ways of life and histories of colonial and state domination. This leads to a sense of awareness between them regarding who represents an indigenous nation and who does not. Second, by denying a rigid definition, the WGIP has, since its first meeting in 1982, adopted an “open-door policy” towards participation in its annual gathering. In this sense, what characterizes a group as indigenous within the international realm is less dependent on a set of pre-established criteria than it on a mutual movement of collective recognition⁴⁹. Moreover, Niezen (2003, p. 91), who has studied and worked alongside indigenous peoples from Canada and North Africa, as well as attended some Indigenous forums under the banner of the UN, says that ethnocide and ethnic cleansing are among the most significant markers or sources of indigenous identities. For him, “the most significant sources of Indigenous identity are broken promises, intolerance, and efforts to eliminate cultural distinctiveness or the very people that represent difference”. This being said, we further move to analyze perhaps the most significant document in terms of Indigenous rights and Indigenous politics.

On the September 13th of 2007, suited diplomats and representatives of the member states shared the UN General Assembly hall with dozens of indigenous delegates, most of them colorfully dressed in traditional regalia. On that day,

boundaries are constitutive of their land claims and identity. This will be further discussed in regard to the inherent ambiguity of indigeneity.

⁴⁸ According to Paul Keal (2003, p. 7), “Cobo’s definition encompasses four key inter-related factors common to most definitions of indigenous peoples: subjection to colonial settlement, historical continuity with pre-invasion or pre-colonial societies, an identity that is distinct from the dominant society in which they are encased, and a concern with the preservation and replication of culture.

⁴⁹ This dynamic, of course, is not devoid of constraints and ambivalences. By analyzing the case of peoples of Southern Africa, Sylvain (2002) identifies “essentializing” tendencies regarding an overdrawn distinction between political economy and “culture” in the criteria offered by the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinated Conference.

which marked the Sixty-first session of the UN General Assembly, the deliberative organ had before it a draft resolution entitled “United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”⁵⁰ (UNDRIP or “the Declaration”), which had been under work for more than twenty years, and was, at the time, being put under voting. With an overwhelming margin, the Declaration had 143 votes for, eleven abstentions and four votes against. The latter were Australia, Canada, New Zealand and United States. On their following statements, in which they justified their position, land rights and self-determination were the main obstacles for the approval, whereas the USA opposed the idea of “collective rights” whatsoever⁵¹. Nevertheless, the wide acceptance of this declaration by the international community is regarded as a landmark of what Anishinaabe Political Scientist Sheryl Lightfoot (2016) calls a “subtle revolution”. On the same year, the non-binding declaration was evoked by Belize Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of Indigenous Maya people collective land rights. Months later, Bolivia approved *Ley 3760*, which incorporated UNDRIP into its domestic law.

The second paragraph of UNDRIP’s preamble affirms that “indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples, while recognizing the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such” (UNDRIP, 2007, p. 1). Article 3 offers its central organizing contention, which has opened up fierce controversy in the process of ratification: “Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development (ibid, p. 4). When read together, these moments consolidate self-determination as a collective right to difference, indicating that Indigenous peoples do not need to fulfill others’ expectations of the kinds of political, social and cultural entities that they comprise, most especially the states that claim Indigenous peoples and lands as part of their domestic space (RIFKIN, 2015, p. 1).

Thought of in its way, difference suggests less a specified content than a relational demurral, a right to be *other than* what

⁵⁰ Its sections are on the issues of (1) self-determination; (2) lands, territories, and resources; (3) international peace and cooperation; (4) cultural, political, and social rights; (5) relocation and occupation; and (6) treaties.

⁵¹ International pressure, though, mounted on such states, which shifted their official positions on the Declaration, eventually issuing formal and official statements of support or endorsement.

indigenous peoples might otherwise be taken to be (such as the subjects of the regular legal and administrative authority of settler-states). Insisting on the value of self-determination-as-definitional-indeterminacy opens the potential for a politics predicated less on occupying a particular status than on the open-endedness of what will constitute the political through which such a status might be defined/assigned/negotiated (RIFKIN, 2015, p. 2).

Following patterns present in discussions and practices that have been leading the discussion among Indigenous representatives since the 70s in relation to the kinds of collectivity, sorts of self-rule and forms of land tenure that would properly count as 'Indigenous', the text not only dismisses a predetermined ensemble of traits and criteria, but it also holds at bay settler-state inscriptions and interpellations. It articulates positive rights with a negative momentum against the imposition of other norms and frameworks, particularly those by states that seek to incorporate Indigenous peoples and lands as part of their domestic realm. Drawing critically on Giorgio Agamben's work⁵², Mark Rifkin (2015, p. 3) notes that "the insistence on the 'integrity' of Indigenous peoplehood as against state jurisdictional imperatives functions as a challenge to, and refusal of, the *state of exception* to which they have been consigned". Moreover, by treating indigeneity less as a specific content than as a political problem, the Declaration multiplies the practices and processes that could be counted as Indigenous. This is especially true when one looks at the various invocations along the Declarations of "histories", "philosophies", "knowledges", "development", "values", "ethnic identities", "religious and intellectual property", "oral traditions", "land tenure systems" among other markers as (possible) attributes of Indigenous peoples. "The declaration, then, holds open the 'communicability' of such multifaceted and shifting *difference* despite settler colonial attempts to erase, interpellate, or

⁵² Giorgio Agamben (1996) inspires his work on Carl Schmitt's famous equation of sovereignty: the potential to decide over exception. It is the power to suspend the regular operation of law, disabling its categories and protections over citizens, and, thus, envisioning "bare life", which is located below/behind politics and law, in a place where individuals are subject to potential infinite violence. Agamben uses the figure of the Nazi camp to illustrate a zone of indistinctiveness between inside and outside, without any juridical protection. For Rifkin (2015, p. 3), this situation of indeterminacy is somehow similar to the position Indigenous peoples occupy in relation to (settler) Nation-states. For Agamben (1996), the potential difference between People as a unified polity and the people as a series of bodies is only realized in contemporary forms of sovereignty. For Rifkin (2015), though, this operation disavows modes of communality whose operations remains irreducible to the legalities and political determinations of the state, and maintains a conceptualization of politics deeply wedded to liberal notions of citizenship, without the possibility of conceiving distinct peoples on land claimed by the nation-state (for him, the only possible vehicle for peoplehood) under the political realm.

manage it” as a matter located at the “internal” realm of the state (RIFKIN, 2015, p. 6).

The equation of self-determination as a political claim – beyond a “merely cultural” one – is an outcome of the Declaration’s consolidation of a productive indeterminacy. With the absence of a definitive legal structure for such peoples, the Declaration understands the relationship between Indigenous peoples and nation-states that encompass them as a matter of ongoing negotiation. Thus, “[i]ndigenous sovereignty under UNDRIP is remade as an open-ended potential form manifesting forms-of-life that are irreducible to settler legalities and administrative structures” (RIFKIN, 2015, p. 9). This being said, it becomes clear that UNDRIP, which crystallized discussions that had been going on for more than two decades among Indigenous peoples from all over the world, sets a new framework for Indigenous politics. It became a landmark in consolidating indigeneity as a sphere of commonality among those who form a world collectivity of indigenous peoples in contrast to their various others (MERLAN, 2009, p. 303). Such a sphere of commonality is mostly taken to make reference to peoples whose great moral claims on nation-states and the international society are almost always based on inhumane treatments, which involve assimilation, extermination, genocide and ethnocide⁵³ (MERLAN, 2009, p. 304; NIEZEN, 2003, cap. 3). Regarding the open-endedness allowed by the declaration, many potential ambiguities permanently surround the global concept “Indigenous”, which is evoked by groups of different shapes, sizes and social contexts. What is always at stake is an assertion of temporal priority, of relatively deep roots in a place (CLIFFORD, 2013, p. 14).

Along this chapter, we were able to understand some central issues about the normative-institutional framework that gives form and shape to contemporary Indigenous politics and rights in the international arena. The hallmarking signature of the UNDRIP in 2007, has been an important step in consolidating a space for Indigenous actors to discuss independently from nation-states, representing, thus, a challenge to some pretentiously established dimensions of sovereignty. The principle of self-determination, which acquired a central role in

⁵³ For more on the development of these concepts in relation to Indigenous peoples, see NIEZEN, 2003, cap. 3.

post-WWII international politics, is now the main device through which Indigenous peoples all around the world sustain most of their claims. Nevertheless, it is the refashioning of such a principle in collective terms what makes Indigenous politics especially powerful – and insightful to think about sovereignty and International Relations. The purposeful indeterminacy of the category “indigenous” has found resonance and significance in so many distinct contexts it is completely impossible for one to discuss it all. Therefore, the next chapter will bring some general reflections that will allow us to better understand contemporary indigenous experiences – their variety, ambiguities and possible contradictions.

1.3.

Indigenous experience today: the global, the local and the margins

Along this section, I will bring up discussions made either by Indigenous scholars or academics who have worked closely with Indigenous peoples. In its first section, I will put into conversation thinkers of both North and South America, whose approaches on indigeneity are, in one way or another, enlightening of the multiple dimensions the concept may acquire, therefore illuminating different political implications that an Indigenous identity may enact. In the second section, I will direct the scope to Latin America in order to discuss some of the recent turns the continent has been going through in regard of Indigenous politics.

1.3.1.

What is “being indigenous” about?

Mark Rifkin (2017) offers us a provocative insight about the place of Indigenous politics. Drawing on queer studies, he frames Indigenous resistance

not as a refusal of modernity, but as an expression of alternative experiences of time that persist alongside settler imperatives (idem, p. 39). By alternative experiences, he means dynamics of “storying”,⁵⁴ which conceptualize time not only as plural, but also as sensuous. This reading depends on reconceptualizing not only continuity, but also the sense of community/identity. The affective connections that come along with storying may be able to cut the gulf between past and present through practices of becoming: (re)creating, (re)inventing and resurging. For it to account for collective frames of reference⁵⁵ and to avoid a homogenizing essentialist dichotomy between Natives and non-natives, Rifkin (2017) conceptualizes the notion of emplacing/emplaced stories – recurring to land affections to make sense of Indigenous duration as overlapping networks of affective attachment (to persons, nonhuman entities and place). Approached this way, “storying can be understood as remaking the potentially rupturing effects of settler colonial violence (like removal, allotment, and termination) into part of the affective repertoire through which indigeneity persists as such despite the force of non-native occupation” (idem, p. 46).

Resonating in a similar tone, Kevin Bruyneel (2007) brings the figure of the boundary to analyze the relation between the United States and the Natives. For him, the imposition of colonial rule by the United States, instead of being a matter of inclusion or exclusion of Indigenous peoples has always relied on the enactment of dualisms⁵⁶ such as “progressive-backward” or “civilized-savage”, which legitimated (and still legitimize) the impositions of western/modern ways of knowing as the standards by which indigenous peoples are understood and judged. Moreover, it has historically swung pendularly between periods of integration/assimilation and periods of recognition of distinct entities. This has been demanding a constant reaffirmation of the legitimacy of the US as a political

⁵⁴ Rifkin (2017, p. 36) bases his arguments on Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s (1976) ideas, which account that stories are more than experiences inherited from the past, being also constitutive of one’s phenomenological frame of reference. Through an “embodied sense of belonging”, bodies of stories in common functions as such as a previous constitution, orienting perception of the present as part of as an ongoing process.

⁵⁵ Something that, according to Rifkin (2017, p. 42), queer perspectives are ill equipped for dealing with.

⁵⁶ These dualisms do not mean that people from Native ancestry were somehow not allowed to get US citizenship on a racist basis. Rather, Bruyneel (2007, p. 10) draws on Thomas Biolsi’s “tension between uniqueness and uniformity” to give meaning to the historical ambivalence regarding US-Indigenous relations.

community at odds with its constitutive outside(s), and it was, precisely, one of the main ways land dispossession was legitimized. In other words, the expansion of United States' territorial frontiers was managed through ambivalent dynamics of assimilation-recognition regarding Natives. These bordering practices, though, also leave open space for resistance, which Brunyeel (2007) describes to be the Third Space of Sovereignty, acting precisely upon the ambivalences of the sovereign actor, not specifically inside, neither outside it. One, thus, needs to be attentive to Roxanne Doty (1996, p. 143) when she says that the scope and depth of the power of sovereignty as conceived and practiced is never fully complete, for "the social construction of sovereignty is always in process, and is a never completed project whose successful production never can be counted on totally".

The texts of both Rifkin (2017) and Brunyeel (2007) mostly revolve around Indigenous peoples of North America. As I have already mentioned, colonialism was far from a homogeneous enterprise, as it has been already warned by Patrick Wolfe (1999). Notably, the general and multifaceted character of *mestizaje* in Latin America, the higher influence of Christianity in Iberian colonial projects and the extensive exploitation of Indian labor in its centers are some among many aspects that differentiate colonization between North and South America (BOCCARA, 2002; SCHWARTZ; SOLOMON, 1999). Nevertheless, Rifkin's (2017) and Bruyneel's (2007) perspectives are highly insightful for us to think about Indigenous peoples and Indigenous politics by appropriating ambivalences and excesses that stand beyond (but not completely separate from) the temporal and spatial fixes brought by modernity and the statist projects. Moreover, their texts offer perspectives that avoid the "binds" that often locate Indigenous peoples between assimilation and unchangeable tradition. As Castellanos (2018, p.778) points out, American Indian studies, although having scarce penetration in studies about Latin America, offer important perspectives to trace how technologies of settler belonging and their colonial legacies, which involve racial entanglements, gendering practices (PICQ, 2018; SIMPSON, 2014) and strategies of elimination and dispossession, are continuously in operation, refashioning themselves under neoliberalism, globalization and neoextractivism (COULTHARD, 2014; BYRD, 2011; GUDYNAS, 2009; SVAMPA, 2013).

Another important pattern for us to highlight regarding Latin America has to do with the unfolding of national independences of the XIX century. Rita Segato (2007, p. 158) is clear when she affirms that it is necessary to “perceive a historic continuity between the conquest, the colonial order of the world and the post-colonial republic formation that extends until the present”. The Iberian heritage assured the new states that they were receiving a territory that was *a priori* claimable⁵⁷, and all presence that opposed such claim had to be countered (BRIONES; DEL CAIRO, 2015). One of its main constituencies draws nationalist discourses that produce the idea of the nation as a continuous narcissist narrative in time. Such continuity, under which the basis of the political community is developed, however, is not a constitution devoid of potential fractures and excesses, since it arrives from hybrid and incomplete interactions of contending cultural textual constituencies (BHABHA, 1990). As suggested by Segato (2007, p. 138): “all states – colonial or national (...) – are otherness-like, otherness-phobic and otherness-producer at the same time. It allows the deployment of its others to enthrone itself”.

In the new nations of Latin America, the (formal) institutional state apparatus has, in many times, preceded – and, thus, demanded the creation of – national ideals (SALAS, 1977). The need to acquire national legitimacy over land in relation to the European metropolis has often relied on manipulations of imaginaries over the Native. Segato (2007) comes up with the idea of a “matrix of alterities” in order to make sense of the practices through which the newborn states deployed classifying criteria to govern what was “adequately ethnic” and what was not. Alcida Ramos (1994) coined the concept of “hyperreal Indian” to self-explicitly account for aesthetical constructions and narratives that may go beyond reality in order to build a national narrative somehow attached to “the traditional”. National narratives also operated through the consolidation and fixing of “heritages of the nation”, deliberately dramatizing over the indigenous

⁵⁷ This marks a profound distinction between Latin and North America regarding the way national narratives were developed in relation to Natives and how actions of land dispossession were legitimized. In this sense, it is instructive to remember US national imagery and cartographical efforts to make sense of an “expanding frontier”, alongside the euroamerican “founding fiction” of occupying land devoid of previous meaning (see SHAPIRO, 1997) in contrast to the preliminary Iberian wholly division of the “New World” marked by the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) and the further projects equating Catholic conversion – vassalage – right to claim land (ERBIG JR., 2020; HERZOG, 2015).

and colonial “past”⁵⁸ in a construction of time that assumes the “nation” as its main point of reference (RUFER, 2016, p. 176; GUHA, 1997, p. 154). These dynamics can be read as means of “ethnogovernmentality” (BOCCARA, 2007), which may be presented in distinct configurations and structures.

In this sense, minding the important aspects that differentiate the history of Indigenous peoples in North and Latin America, all these contributions allow us to evaluate the dynamics and heritage of colonialism beyond its formal end, which culminated with the independences of American countries. Such understanding highlights the importance of historical readings that shed light on (modern) discourses that have authorized and still authorize practices of land dispossession on the basis of establishing temporal, spatial and ethnic/racial⁵⁹ limits. Briefly initiating some of the subjects that will be addressed in the next subsection, it is important to note that Indigenous movements are not quintessentially about ethnicity; they are about social justice and the redistribution of resources, with a strong relation to land. The moral force of Indigenous politics rests not on cultural differences, but on the violent histories that constitute Indigenous identity (PICQ, 2018, p. 8). In this sense,

There are as many different ways of being indigenous as there are colonial processes. What matters is not to determine who is indigenous, but to understand it as a fluid, relational, and *inevitably political* identity. Andrew Canessa (2012) suggests that indigeneity is highly contingent, informed by a certain historical consciousness and entangled with gendered and racial identities. (...) [I]t refers less to a constitutive who/what than to the otherness implied by it (...) Indigeneity [is] an oppositional identity linked to the consciousness of struggle against dispossession in the era of contemporary colonialism. The term *indigenous* is constantly in process, both embraced and contested, and its meaning should not be codified, but understood as positional (PICQ, 2018, p. 16, our markings).

⁵⁸ Bhabha (2000) suggests that the nation fabricates the dissemination of its meaning in terms of an ambiguity of time: that which raises that the only possible destiny is the indefinite process of a future where things will never be as before, but that destiny requires identity and pedagogic force of the atavistic as the origin of what precedes it, fundamentals it, and somehow returns in any moment. The point being that this ambiguity transformed into a powerful machinery in the hands of the state to differentiate: from the temporal unfolding, the colonial modernity continues to indicate the contemporary formations in our contexts to distinguish between subjects of the present (modern subjects) and subjects that should or could be conducted to the present (brought from some type of past) (RUFER, 2016, p. 177).

⁵⁹ Ethnicity and race, in this sense, should be understood less as a checklist of pertaining features and more as a relational dynamic whose meanings often intersect as put forth by Stuart Hall (2017).

For Manuela Picq (2018) it is precisely the fact that “Indians” emerged as others – quite intimate ones, paraphrasing Ashis Nandy (1983) – in relation to Europeans, as well as their co-constitutive character regarding the statist order inaugurated in Westphalia, which makes Indigenous politics a potentially destabilizing point to deal with some central foundations of our modern international political system.

It is paramount to emphasize that to cast oneself as indigenous is never an innocent act. It is, on the contrary, a profoundly political one. Since the late 70s, when the Indigenous movement started to gain traction in the global arena, different groups around the world (re)emerged under the banner of indigeneity⁶⁰. James Clifford (2007; 2013) argues that it is precisely under liberal globalization, with loosened imperial and national hegemonies, that many organizing and self-declaring opportunities for Indigenous peoples emerge. In this sense, many people who have, for generations, been struggling to reclaim land, gain recognition, and preserve certain heritage now participate in wider political contexts. In some circumstances, such peoples are able to make profits (not only, but also financial) through art, cultural and natural resources (CLIFFORD, 2013, p. 17). As it has already made implicit, such a dynamic does not take place somewhere “outside” power. Rather, especially since it is through UN and ILO that much of global Indigenous politics takes place, a degree of tactical conformity with external expectations and acceptance of multicultural liberal institutions is required (CLIFFORD, 2013; POVINELLI, 2002). It is in this sense that Merlan (2009, p. 312), referring specifically to indigeneity, inherently global and local, notes that “internationalization affords both openings and constraints”. The latter, related to the inherent liberal architecture of structures of mediation. Quoting Clifford (2013, p. 27): “like other identity-based social movements, they are enmeshed in powerful national and transnational regimes of coercion and opportunity”.

⁶⁰ In some situations, though, political possibilities opened by nativist claims have allowed for violence and ethnic hatred. This possibility is what takes the debates over indigeneity in post-colonial Africa and Asia to a whole new ground. It is mostly so due to the colonial inheritances, such as borders, that shaped post-colonial states in these continents. One has to be mindful of the ways political violence was deployed through the invocation of “native” priority in post-colonial Africa. The damaging legacy of the construction of an ethnic opposition between native and outsider has been the core feature that motivated the bloody Rwandan civil war in 1994 (MAMDANI, 2002). Amita Baviskar (2007), from India, warns to the possibilities of Hindu-nationalist co-optation of the politics of indigeneity in affirming ethnic supremacy. These examples reflect post-colonial cases in which there are no unambiguously identifiable “first peoples”.

Indigeneity, thus, becomes part of a “global ethnoscape” (APPADURAI, 1996⁶¹ *apud* UDDIN et al, 2018, p. 7).

A rising variety of social experiences and groupings have been able to engage in identity-based politics by self-declaring “indigenous”. I subscribe to James Clifford (2007, p. 198), when he notes, with no delegitimizing purposes, that “people are improvising new ways to be native”. His noting should be analyzed in the light of world’s growing number of Indigenous population, which directly challenges notions of their fate towards disappearance. For him (2007; 2013), contemporary indigenous experience is deeply involved in processes of (re)articulation – mostly temporal and spatial, involving memories and heritage. By looking especially to indigenous experience in Alaska, Clifford (2007) notes how reflections advanced by “diaspora theory” may find resonance within contemporary indigeneity not only for its destabilization of fixed notions of rootedness (which could easily be appropriated by non-indigenous norms of authenticity), but also by reading identity as an ongoing dynamic movement. Moreover, diaspora theory’s multiscaled predicaments resist teleological narratives of transformation such as those that situate modernity and indigenouness in opposite ends of a line. In regard to this debate, it is important to remember that nearly half of Latin American Indigenous populations live in urban areas (WORLD BANK, 2015, p. 10).

In diaspora, the authentic home is found in another imagined place (simultaneously past and future, lost and desired) as well as in concrete social networks of linked places (...) A *realistic* account of “indigenous experience” engages with actual life overflowing the definitions, the political programs, and all museums of archaism and authenticity – self-created and externally imposed (CLIFFORD, 2007, p. 214, my emphasis).

By realism, it is important to elaborate on that, James Clifford (2007) does not solely mean it in a descriptive-historicist sense, which would invariably fell into totalizing frameworks. Rather, he draws on Walter Benjamin’s (1969) theses on the philosophy of history to note that contemporary indigenous experience accounts for the emergence of new historical subjects in translocal circuits⁶². In

⁶¹ APPADURAI, Arjun. **Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization**. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1996.

⁶² “Realism – after poststructuralism and decolonization – presupposes a fractured, contestable narrative perspective. There is no longer a standpoint from which to definitely map particular,

other words, history is practiced, acting as a translation tool for rethinking “tradition” and cultural continuity. Such novelty of the subjects has to do with the processes of political articulations, conjunctural performances, and partial translations that may, in contemporary indigenous identity, account for the indigenization of silenced and marginalized histories – as it is exactly the case for reemerging Charrúa people. In this sense, the persistence and renaissance of many different small-scale tribal and native societies rearticulated under the sign of “indigenous” can be understood as an expansion of the historically real (CLIFFORD, 2007, p. 214). Clifford (2007), although taking a different path, adopts a similar perspective than Rifkin’s (2013; 2015): that the transformative potential of indigeneity rests on its constitutive ambivalence and its ongoing dynamics.

This being said, I want to have clear that indigeneity, understood in its both global and local character, may provide mediating grounds for the (re)creation – or reemergence – of subjects who could have been deemed extinct on different socio-historical accounts. That is the movement I want to make in this dissertation. I do not mean to see it, though, as a movement that goes unilaterally from global to local, as if Charrúa people could only exist nowadays as part of a global tendency. Rather, I propose reading such open-ended global sphere of articulated commonalty as allowing for existing memories, heritages and embodied experiences to be translatable into an acknowledged Indigenous identity in order to achieve material and symbolic benefits and reparations. This is not to say that all members of Charrúa people share a common perspective regarding their means of political organization⁶³, nor that there are no disputes over group performance. I also recognize that this movement should not be seen in a naïve “empowering” nexus of an ontologically pre-constituted entity.

Before diving into the history of the Río de la Plata region, I will briefly address some contemporary regional Indigenous dynamics of Latin America that are essential for our discussion. One should be aware that the continent historical experiences are distinct, and that it is not my intention to do a deep comparison

local stories in an overarching sequence, no narrative of human history, of enlightened progress, of economic development, or of a disseminating global system” (CLIFFORD, 2013, p. 40).

⁶³ For a debate relating global indigeneity and the emergence of Indigenous élites, see GABBERT, 2018.

between them, nor is it to make sense of them in a unitary way. I have already highlighted the centrality ethnogenic processes and interethnic *mestizaje* (SALOMON; SCHWARCZ, 1999) had on Latin American colonization history. I have, as well, noted how XIX century independencies preceded nation-building discourses and practices, which, in almost every country, have relied onto some kind of appropriation of Native American symbolism. In articulation with capitalist pressures, it walked hand-in-hand with politics of forced assimilation and land dispossession. Drawing on Segato (2007), Ramos (1992) and Briones (2007), such dynamics would often fixed and nationalize ideal types of “Indian”, whose policies of national recognition could also be understood as “ethnogovernmentality”.

1.3.2.

Latin America and indigeneity

As it was already mentioned, for much of the Latin American colonial period, the term “Indian” denoted a fiscal status. Regarding the Andean region, Olivia Harris (1996, p. 361) points that it was only in mid-nineteenth century that the distinction between those (Indians) who pay tribute to the state and people who enjoyed access to their labor as intermediaries of the state became chiefly an ethnic one. Along with the independences, XIX and XX century also witnessed the emergence of nationalist readings concerned with the land question in Latin America. Some of them praised “Indians” as national gears for nationalist land reform⁶⁴, such as the Miskito nationalists in Nicaragua. Some regarded “Indian” as an atavistic category, such as post-revolutionary Bolivia in the 1950s and Perú

⁶⁴ José Carlos Mariátegui, for many considered the most important Latin American Marxist intellectual, in his seminal essay, *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana*, sees *pueblos originários* and peasants as revolutionary subjects in leading the much needed agrarian national reforms. In his original formulation, Indians are thought as gears for national development in a Marxist teleology of development. Several decades later, his ideals would be restored in a less nationalist and more regional perspective by what peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano (2000) called the “colonial matrix of power”, and the coloniality of power. Both can be interpreted as a temporal structure of *longue durée* that is continuously renewed and articulated in different circumstances after the conquest in 1492. The contestation of this structure would be made by “decolonizing” conjunctures.

under General Alvarado's left-wing nationalist rule in the 1960s, which gave prominence to the term *campesino* (CANESSA, 2018; KALTMEIER, 2018). *Indigenismo*⁶⁵ as an ideology of cultural differences has had its first momentum on a nationalist basis, but it exceeded statist formulations and inspired social movements. Discourses about the Indian in Latin America are "a conflictive terrain that is relevant in terms of political representation, citizenship rights, and programs of development" (KALTMEIER, 2018, p. 175).

In 1980s and 1990s, Latin America has been through a wave of redemocratization, since many of its countries had faced military dictatorships in the previous decades. Interestingly, many new constitutions adopted dispositifs that acknowledged indigenous rights in a non-assimilative perspective, recognizing at large the ethnically diverse character of nations. Examples are Brazil (1988), Colombia (1991), Perú (1993), Argentina (1994), Bolivia (1994), Ecuador (1998) and Venezuela (1999). In the same direction, almost all South American countries, with the exception of Uruguay, Suriname and Guyana, have signed ILO Convention 169. New governmental agencies and NGOs emerged to deal with the new paradigm of indigenous self-determination (KALTMEIER, 2018, p. 188). Indigenous autonomous articulations on national and regional basis also got ever more prominent. Interestingly, such constitutional changes have flourished in concomitancy with Latin America's neoliberal decades, which have witnessed a deterioration of people's livelihoods, especially those of indigenous peoples⁶⁶ (CEPAL, 2015).

In a response to that, twenty-first century Latin America has witnessed what many scholars called the "pink tide" of emerging progressive left-wing governments. Such an effort was, in some countries, led by political parties whose discourse was deeply rooted in indigenous symbols. The *Movimento al Socialismo* (MAS) and the *Movimento Indígena Pachakuti* (MIP) in Bolivia, as well as the *Movimiento de Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik – Nuevo País* (MUPP-NP) in Ecuador are, perhaps the most vivid examples of indigenous identities being

⁶⁵ See RAMOS, 2012 for a comparative analysis of *indigenismo* ideology in three distinct Latin American national cases: Argentina, Brazil and Colombia.

⁶⁶ For an interesting approach about the parallels of neoliberal political-economic policies and state-endorsed multiculturalism, see HALE, Charles. Does Multiculturalism Menace? Governance, Cultural Rights and the Politics of Identity in Guatemala. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, v. 34, 2002, pp. 485-524.

mobilized to dispute state power from the inside. In 2005, Bolivia elected world's first self-declared indigenous president: the Aymara Evo Morales, former leader of MAS, who pledged for anti-neoliberal politics and a "refoundation of the nation". His rise to power has definitely marked a high point for Indigenous movements in Latin America. With a broad participation of popular movements, a new constitution was approved by plebiscite, and it defined Bolivia as a plurinational state. By placing native concept of *buen vivir/suma qamaña* at the center of its ideals of development, 2009 Constitution advocated for a project of national decolonization⁶⁷ (CANESSA, 2018; KALTMEIER, 2018). A year before, in 2008, the Constitution of Ecuador had innovatively recognized the personhood of non-human entities in the form of the rights of Nature or *Pachamama*⁶⁸ (YOUATT, 2017; PICQ, 2018). Ecuador has also adopted *buen vivir/sumak kawsay* as a core philosophy of its plurinational constitution. Regional networks of Indigenous peoples were consolidated and reinforced under Morales' *Diplomacia de los Pueblos por la Vida*, an axis of Bolivia's foreign policy that advocated in favor of peoples as actors of international relations (MARTÍNEZ, 2011). Examples of these networks are the Continental Summits of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities of Abya Yala and *Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas* (BECKER, 2008)⁶⁹.

In Brazil, the country's eastern and northeastern rural regions have witnessed the emergence of peoples self-identifying themselves with Indigenous tribes that were thought to be extinct. By claiming their identity, these peoples

⁶⁷ Bolivia's (2009) new Constitution preamble reads: "We have left the colonial, republican and neo-liberal State in the past. We take on the historic challenge of collectively constructing a Unified Social State of Pluri-National Communitarian law, which includes and articulates the goal of advancing toward a democratic, productive, peace-loving and peaceful Bolivia, committed to the full development and free determination of the peoples. ... We found Bolivia anew, fulfilling the mandate of our people, with the strength of our Pachamama and with gratefulness to God".

⁶⁸ Article 71 of Ecuador's Constitution (2008) states "Nature, or Pacha Mama, where life is reproduced and occurs, has the right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes. All persons, communities, peoples and nations can call upon public authorities to enforce the rights of nature. To enforce and interpret these rights, the principles set forth in the Constitution shall be observed, as appropriate. The State shall give incentives to natural persons and legal entities and to communities to protect nature and to promote respect for all the elements comprising an ecosystem".

⁶⁹ The experience of Bolivia and Ecuador engaged with a lot of contradictions, mostly regarding the tense relation between national development policies and Indigenous self-determination. For a critical perspective on governmental mobilization of indigenous symbols, see PICQ, 2018 and DELGADO, 2018. For a more holistic account, regarding the influence of China's demand for commodities in territorial disputes in Latin America, see GASPERIN; GUERRA, 2019.

have been able to be recognized by Brazilian law as Indigenous and, therefore, to have their land demarcated under special Constitutional dispositifs (OLIVEIRA, 1998; FRENCH, 2011). Jonathan Warren (2001), who conducted an ethnography with Indigenous people of the region, highlights the antiracist foundations of their collective efforts, which mark and hail non-whiteness. Argentina and Uruguay, in the past decade, have also witnessed Indigenous reemergence of deemed-extinct tribes, challenging well-established notions of national whiteness by “indigenizing” local traditions and subaltern experiences (ESCOLAR, 2007; RODRÍGUEZ, 2017; LAZZARI, 2010).

All these examples were raised to briefly note some of the diversity of Latin America’s Indigenous experiences. If it is possible to point a regional common ground regarding state-building, it was the subordinated role Amerindians played in the states that came into being after independence from European colonial powers (GABBERT, 2018, p. 240). Echoing what have already been extensively discussed, collective claims of indigenous identities exist in an intersection of complex social dynamics, which mostly involve land, class, race, gender and even citizenship. Indigeneity is about distribution of resources, material and symbolic, as well as social justice. Such movements, though, should not be seen as the awakening of existing well-bounded units, but rather as a product of social change constituted from different f(r)ictions (TSING, 2007). Indigenous identification does not revive atavistic traditions incompatible with modernity. It instead pushes for new forms of political participation and legal practice by collectively articulating distinctive attachments in an ongoing relation. As we have mentioned earlier regarding colonialism, the contemporary transnational regime of indigeneity, which enables Indigenous peoples to organize globally and to be collectively conceived beyond “internal” national subjects, also fosters ethnogenesis and ethnic reemergence.

It is notable that, from the 1980s to 2010, the number of peoples who self-identified as Indigenous has sharply risen in Latin America. According to the World Bank (2015, p. 10), based on the last census available for the region (2010), Latin America has about 42 million Indigenous people. Of course, as already mentioned, to be Indigenous in the Andes may be quite different from being Indigenous in Patagonia or in urban Santiago. Therefore, in order to

understand the historicity and social complexity of the territories which Charrúa people are indigenous from, we move to the next chapter.

2.

The creation of Banda Oriental and its People(s)

After presenting a theoretical discussion about indigeneity, both in colonial and post-colonial contexts, this chapter will account for a localized historical endeavor. Before clarifying some important takes, it is important for us to remember the relational character of the notion of “Indian”, a colonial category *par excellence*. Thus, I am going to focus on the ways Charrúa people have been covered by some historical records in order to have a better understanding of their relationship with key local agents, such as the Iberian empires, the Jesuits, other Indigenous groups and the nascent nation-states. In accordance to what has been exposed along the previous chapter, Manuela Picq (2018, p. 24) is clear in recognizing the paramount importance of historical reflections regarding not only Indigenous groups, but also the formation of national states, since

[i]ndigeneity refers, first and foremost, to the state. State and indigeneity are two sides of a coin. From its inception, indigeneity has referred more to a colonial relation with the state than to a cultural or ethnic identity. This is why indigeneity needs to be historically and legally situated. Since Indian identities were constituted in the European reformulation of self in relation to others, they reflect the formation of a sovereignty regime as European empires spread globally (PICQ, 2018, p. 24).

As it was mentioned in the introduction, after a couple of years following the Massacre of Salsipuedes (1831) no official document would make explicit reference to Charrúa groups whatsoever. Indeed, after the 1830s, the lands of Banda Oriental became no longer hospitable to what has been consolidated in both academia and popular knowledge as an authentic Charrúa way of life. The discursive construction of a supposedly “authentic” Charrúa is a dimension whose importance should not be underestimated. The fact is that Charrúas were easily (and almost incontestably) framed as an extinct people. Such discourses of extinction, beyond colonial bare violence targeting Native lands and ways of life, are intertwined with processes that remount to territorial disputes and forms of knowledge production.

In order to try to encompass such phenomena, I will rely on notions of “boundary”, for it accounts for practices (and ideas) of both connection and distinction, while leaving open important aporias of ambiguity and permeability (WALKER, 2010). It enables one to account for historical subjects beyond rigid binaries and static ethnic/spatial classifications. This is especially important in contexts of colonial inter-ethnic relations, whose historical records are almost entirely reliant on a colonial gaze. Therefore, I will start the chapter by accounting for a discussion regarding the relation between ethnonyms and geographical imaginaries in Río de la Plata region. Subsequently, I will move on to analyze central aspects of Uruguayan nationhood and the forms through which it has dealt with Indigenous peoples along its national formations of otherness (SEGATO, 2007). Before starting, I should state that it is by no means my purpose here to exhaust any kin historical discussions. Rather, by looking at some regional particularities regarding the production of historical and spatial knowledge, I want both to shed light on some important dimensions that undergird contemporary Charrúa reemergence in Uruguay and to evince the central role indigenous peoples have played in defining the region’s territory, albeit unjustly under-recognized.

2.1.

Ethnohistory in borderlands: between ethnification and ethnogenesis

When I first got in touch with the theme of the “extinction” of the Charrúas, my first attitude was to look at historical records. Who were them? Where did they live? Which cultural diacritics would constitute “a Charrúa”? These questions are pertinent, but certain regional particularities regarding the production of knowledge about Charrúas and other indigenous groups that inhabited the Río de la Plata basin offer real challenges for anyone intended to investigate the region’s indigenous past. Since I did not personally go to nor looked into any archives, I will mostly rely on sources from scholars who drew on archival investigations and, through that, were able to identify important trends and patterns regarding the relation between Indigenous groups and European

actors on the region. Before digging into this discussion, I will open space for a brief debate regarding production of knowledge (mostly in documents, testimonials, academic texts, etc.) both in and about America's colonial pasts.

2.1.1.

Notes on ethnohistory

Ángel Rama, in his seminal opus *La Ciudad Letrada* (2015), emphasizes the important role of the European urban-based *letrados* for Iberian efforts to order American territories. Colonial order relied intimately on the workings of lettered elites whose function was to make sense of American realities in a more or less cohesive way. Trying to bring different peoples to a unified present was an important aspect of Europe's colonial endeavor of territorial administration. As it was said on the previous chapter, naming and classifying "Indians" and the land they controlled was an important means to exert colonial power. This observation is important to consider when it comes to reading history in our times. In this sense, and most especially when it comes to non-modern collective subjects that are deemed extinct, which have left barely no Native-authored sources, it is indispensable to note some intrinsic characteristics of the archives, which organize the main references for the production of historical knowledge. Notably, "[a]rchives do not simply record and preserve historical evidence; they also condition how that evidence is accessed and interpreted" (EBRIG JR; LATINI, 2019, p. 253).

Yet, we should remember, as was told by Gerald Sider (1987, p. 7), that colonial power structures are situated in a "contradiction between the impossibility and the necessity of defining the other as other – the different, the alien – and incorporating the other within a single social and cultural system of domination". Recent scholarship regarding colonial Americas has been paying attention to borderland spaces, for they present particular conditions to evaluate the production of knowledge. Especially due to the struggle colonial officials faced to know and project authority over peoples and places that were beyond the

reach of their settlements – the *ciudades letradas* (EBRIG; LATINI. 2019, p. 254⁷⁰). The production of ethnonyms, about which I will further expand, assumed a distinct character when it came to autonomous⁷¹ Indigenous groups, whose contact with the colonial officers were constitutive of the borderland itself.

Stuart Schwartz and Frank Solomon (1999, p. 443) argue that, regarding named and believed-in societies, one can (and should) ask not only where they come from, but also whether those who believed them to be real were members, outsiders or both. This starting point, which is committed to the idea that innumerable ethnogenic⁷² processes took place along the centuries of colonialism in the Americas, is insightful for distinct reasons. Firstly, it acknowledges that colonization was both an inconstant enterprise, meaning that different ideas influenced its deployment along the centuries, and also that different regions and social groups – even if located within portions of land claimed contiguously by the same Empire – have also witnessed distinct social outcomes. These frameworks allow us to move beyond a fixed dichotomy between colonizer/colonized in order to better grasp the many ambivalences and the unstable frontiers that were constantly challenged, subverted and (re)drawn along the colonial period in the Americas.

From the beginning, the colonial enterprise sought to make sense and typologize the many groups they encountered in the “new world”. Beforehand, though, one has to dismiss the idea that persisting labels either for “Native” or even Iberian societies imply an unchanging continuity. They all reflected the outcomes of colonial encounters and social distinctions. What should be noted, as historical records show, is that early European observers relied pretty much on European-style classifications such as “nation” to describe other kinds of social organization (SCHWARTZ; SALOMON. 1999, p. 448). With the power of writing, European efforts to make sense of and name American realities have had a tendency to fix what was in motion along spatial-temporal markers

⁷⁰ Both authors also cite the texts of BENTON, 2010; HERZOG, 2015 and KARASCH, 2016 as examples of studies that are based on a borderland approach.

⁷¹ When I say autonomous, I mean it in contrast with groups that were deemed “vassals” of an imperial power. It should be reminded that having vassals also meant, for Iberian crowns, granting legal possession over Native land.

⁷² Briefly, by ethnogenesis, Schwartz and Salomon (1999, p. 443) mean “the ways in which new human groupings came to be, and how they were categorized in colonial cultures”. Sometimes, the term “ethnogenetic” is used with the same meaning.

(BOCCARA, 2002, p. 53). Also importantly is to note that even before the Iberian invasion Native American's own ways of making sense of human diversity were already in an effervescently ethnogenetic condition. It is argued that only after specific conflictive relations emerged Europeans started to be regarded by the Amerindians as a kind of "other" they were not used to meet. In this sense, processes of fission, readaptation and recombination were already going on in both sides of the ocean, and were strongly intensified with the arrival of the Europeans (SCHWARTZ; SALOMON, 1999, p. 444).

What is important to be kept in mind, given the myriad of practices that constituted colonialism and gave form to the colonial encounters, is that "colonial tribes"⁷³ mostly arose from the "outside margins" of colonial dominions, where state (colonial) power pressed on people "without state" (SCHWARTZ; SALOMON, 1999, p. 449). What is paradoxical about their tribal – and thus, stateless – character is that while state governors tended to see them as standing in the very contrary of governance, the same state governors not rarely relied on their "tribal" friendship – which often came along with evangelization rituals (or, in a more rare case for Latin America, treaty-making) – in order to buffer their own frontiers and capture runaways (ibid., p. 449).

In order to account both for the expansionist pressure of the colonial empires and the ambiguous identities and practices assumed by colonized subjects through the relations with imperial agents and local elites, Guillaume Boccara (2005) coined the concept of *complejo fronterizo*. His conceptualization of a complex, which goes beyond the image of a line, is situated alongside a tendency that has given prominence to the borderland as a fruitful vantage point to account for accessing and making sense of indigenous agency. The so-called "border studies" in ethnohistory sought to overcome the dualism between domination and resistance by giving emphasis to negotiating and mediating practices (WILDE, 2018, p. 106). Boccara's (2005) complex opens a possibility to analyze both alterity-ascribing efforts by colonial agents (ethnification) and the creative

⁷³ For "colonial tribes", I mean the often misleading term usually taken "to represent a peculiar sort of stateless, but military assertive society" (SCHWARTZ; SOLOMON, 1999, p. 449). The main problem with this term has to do with the fact that it mostly sees them – stateless, warlike societies with multiple settlements and shared political identity – as if they were passing through a spontaneous stage in community development for stateless people instead of seeing them as (partial) products of colonization.

adaptations of Native societies to deal with European counterparts⁷⁴. Such an understanding accounts for the borderland as a porous limit, a contact zone where *mestizajes* are constantly enacted.

Without the participation of the *mestizos* (either biological, social or/and cultural), the enterprises of social domination, political submission and economic exploitation would have been, in many cases, impossible. Inversely, we see that *mestizos* played a crucial role in Indigenous resistances (BOCCARA, 2005, p. 38, our translation⁷⁵).

By blurring ontological fixities, it is possible to overcome the atavistic trap of anthropological culturalism, as well as the developmentalist discourse that understands indigenusness as an early stage of human history, whose perpetual overcoming is equated with progress. Much of Indigenous resistance was done through creation and change, and European colonialism, beyond its cruelty, also provided new openings for social reorientation. That affirmation leads us to note that one cannot conceive dynamics of either ethnogenesis or reemergence (as it is the case for contemporary Charrúa people) without paying attention to ethnohistorical processes. The main objectives of this chapter, which mostly deals with the past of both the Banda Oriental region and its native people, are neither that of unveiling a “true history” nor one of building a totalizing effort to conceptualize Banda Oriental’s history. Rather, assuming present-day Charrúa reemergence as a point of departure, this section intends to shed light on the ways ethnonyms were ascribed to make sense of Native activity and territoriality in Banda Oriental, and how such actions have resonance in contemporary thought and practice, where the discourse of Indigenous extinction still finds widespread prominence in the region. As it will be seen, though, Indigenous peoples played a crucial role in Banda Oriental’s history not only by roughly challenging some colonial projects of expansion, but also by being indispensable enablers for the realization of others.

⁷⁴ A harsh critique is made to the ways some historians and anthropologists read archives and documents from the colonial period as if they were ethnographic data that reflected the “real state” of indigenous societies at the moment of the European arrival. According to Boccara (2005, p. 32), “*los especialistas contribuyeron a poblar las fronteras americanas de quimeras y participaron de la operación de reificación de las prácticas y representaciones indígenas*”.

⁷⁵ Originally: “*Sin la participación de los mestizos (biológicos, culturales y sociales), las empresas de dominación social, sujeción política y explotación económica hubiesen sido, en muchos casos, imposibles. De modo inverso, vemos que los mestizos jugaron un rol crucial en las resistencias indígenas*”.

2.1.2.

Indigenous agency beyond ethnic markers: borderlands and archives

Jeffrey Erbig Jr. (2020) has conducted an extensive archival research to access colonial production of knowledge in and about Río de la Plata region. He notes that little evidence exists to suggest that most ascribed ethnonyms (Charrúa included) were indeed meaningful to peoples to whom they referred. What he calls “imposed identities”⁷⁶, more than accounting for Native ways of making sense of their sociality, were reflections of imperial observers’ attempts to catalogue inhabitants on a regional scale, and define political relationships that would supposedly apply to broad populations (idem, p. 25). This would lately become a problem, for it occluded the comprehension of local, material and symbolic factors that shaped Native interests, actions and mobility. In order to understand the relationship between Natives and European settlers, one has to be attentive to the multiple spatial dynamics that would be constitutive of the region’s territoriality. The borderland approach, thus, is not only helpful to see beyond imposed ethnonyms, but also to better understand how discourses of Indigenous extinction would be later sustained.

Lands adjacent to Río de la Plata land have been, for the whole sixteenth century and for the most of the seventeenth, a backwater for Iberian colonial activity. European presence on the region was limited to sparse settlements along a thin fluvial connection between Buenos Aires and the Jesuit-Guaraní missions. Although European arrival dates back to 1516, the lack of mineral resources led the Spanish crown to declare it as a “*tierra sin provecho*” (BRANDT, 2019, p. 14). Thus, European presence in the region was limited to a few military bases. Nevertheless, records render evident that Iberian officials and Native peoples interethnic contact were not restricted to military operations.

⁷⁶ The concept is drawn from NACUZZI, Lidia. **Identidades impuestas**: Tehuelches, aucas y pampas en el norte de la Patagonia. Buenos Aires: Sociedad Argentina de Antropología, 2005.

Most native peoples in the region had itinerant life-ways, and their traditional socio-spatial means of organization are commonly called *tolderías*⁷⁷. Latini (2010, p. 75) tells us that since the sixteenth century, language and gift exchange were not uncommon between *tolderías* and colonial officers. Such information leaves us with an interesting point to think about colonialism in Banda Oriental. The region is commonly (and rightly) referred to as a territory of late colonization (VERDESIO, 2005 and ASENJO, 2014, par example). Nevertheless, records of language exchange contact as early as in sixteenth century show us that interethnic contact between Natives and Europeans, although not in an intensive way, are quite an old phenomenon. Since that time, it can be said, a process of native ethnogenesis partially motivated by the contact with European settlers began to take place⁷⁸ (LATINI, 2010). It is important though to note that most reports of interethnic relations were episodic, and inasmuch it has been long known that Natives controlled the region's hinterland, most records about them were limited to the purview of the "lettered city" (ERBIG JR.; LATINI, 2019, p. 254).

Yaros, Bohanes, Chanás, Minuánes, Charrúas and Guenoas were all ethnonyms used by colonial officials to make sense of Native *toldería* peoples. However, since most registers were made within the purview of the lettered city – which did not have easy communication networks and were responsive to two competing empires –, they reproduced a geographic myopia both about the region's hinterlands and its Native inhabitants⁷⁹. Broad territorial networks of kinship, allegiance and authority allowed the understanding of *tolderías* (which

⁷⁷ According to Erbig (2020, p. 24), *tolderías* was a broadly used term by Iberian empires to make sense of "tentlike buildings (*toldos*), made of rods and hides, that constituted encampments, (...) it carried both social and special connotations. A *toldería* was simultaneously a kin-based community and a mobile center of authority". Further, I will often use the term *toldería* to make sense of mobile native partialities, since the records about ethnonyms are inconsistent in many ways. There is even a scholarly debate about the necessity of discontinuing the reliance on ethnonyms for regional historical studies (see ERBIG JR.; LATINI, 2019, p. 266 and MONTEIRO, John. **Tupis, tapuias e historiadores**. Estudos de história indígena e do indigenismo. Tese apresentada para Concurso de Livre Docência, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2001, p. 11).

⁷⁸ It is speculated that, from a Native perspective, diplomatic abilities, which included the mastery of Latin languages, emerged as a determinant virtue for one to ascend to leadership positions (*caciques*) in Native societies (LATINI, 2010).

⁷⁹ Noting that, when talking about a context in which there is a clear trend regarding the regional interethnic landscape, I will mostly prefer the use of the term *toldería* instead of one or other specific ethnonyms. Such a choice has to do with the impact new borderlines, especially national ones, have had in the interpretation of the region's Native groups and their pasts.

had their differences and distinctions) as involved in a regional social dynamics (ERBIG JR., 2016, p. 15). Nevertheless, Iberian adscription of ethnonyms had to do with tagging the locality of certain *toldería*, and to mark political relationships, which could assume varying degrees of conflict and cooperation⁸⁰. According to Erbig Jr. and Latini (2019, p. 254),

they exhibited the frustrations and anxieties of imperial writers when faced with the presence or specter of the autonomous Native peoples that surrounded them, while at the same time projecting contiguous control over the territories that separated individual settlements, thereby imagining a terrain devoid of non-subjugated Indigenous actors. Even military forays tended to remain close to colonial settlements or along extant corridors.

Regarding Charrúas, this ethnonym had its first appearance in a 1527 report written by Spanish mariner Diego García. Variations such as “jacroas” (Fernández de Oviedo, 1535), “zechurus” (Schmidl, 1536), “charruaes” (Ortiz de Vergara, 1569) and “charruaha” (Del Barco Centenera 1602) have also been employed in subsequent years. Eventually, it became a catch-all term to make sense of Native peoples living north and east of the Río de la Plata. In 1608, a Spanish official made use of the term “*Banda de los Charrúas*”, rendering synonymous both ethnic and geographic designations as a catchall term to name all natives that were inhabiting Banda Oriental (ERBIG JR.; LATINI, 2019, p. 261). Inconsistencies, however, were common ground, since leadership (*caciques*), territorial occupation and other aspects would all count as markers for ethnonym ascribing⁸¹. Moreover, the distinct authorship of reports also impedes a more systematic understanding of the different worlds that inhabited Banda Oriental.

In 1680, an expedition that had left Rio de Janeiro on the previous year berthed in the eastern margin of Río de la Plata and founded the southernmost Portuguese settlement in America: Colônia do Sacramento. This event would incite deep changes in colonial patterns of territorial occupation and

⁸⁰ Even when analyzing the historical cooperation between Minuánes and the Portuguese empire in the late XVIII century, Elisa Frühauf García (2009) notes that such “cooperation” was made in relation to different groups and in different periods of time.

⁸¹ Illustratively, in the 1650s, officials from Santa Fe reported the existence of a “principal leader of the *Charrúas*”, named “Machado”, which would threaten the city’s ranches in the coast of Parana River. However, in 1715, Spanish military official Francisco Piedrabuena assumedly held negotiations with “the caciques of the Machado”, who were later appointed as being a Charrúa clan (LUCAIOLI; LATINI, 2014).

representation, since previous (although fragile) agreements over territorial possession were being overtly challenged⁸². In this sense, it would also influence changes on the patterns of relationships established between Iberian settlements and Native peoples (new interethnic landscapes), who, as we shall see, played active roles in shaping the region's historical and territorial formation. Therefore, it infused a new political calculus into ethnic labeling, which would now relate to the interimperial land disputes (LATINI; ERBIG JR., 2019, p. 262). As expected, the founding of Colônia paved the way for growing inter-imperial tensions and disputes over land.

The armies both Iberian empires have formed to dispute possession and access to the now contested lands of Banda Oriental were composed not only by soldiers, but also by jurists. Strategic settlements as well as acrobatic juridical discourses were part of the tactics Iberian crowns employed in their struggle to control and claim possession over Banda Oriental (ERBIG JR., 2016, cap. 2). For one to have the dimension of what the region was like from the establishment of Colônia do Sacramento to the first initiatives to demarcate an inter-imperial borderline in 1750 with the Treaty of Madrid, Jeffrey Erbrig Jr. (2016, p. 457) advances the illustrative idea of an “archipelago of relatively isolated and autonomous enclaves connected by narrow corridors that cut through native lands”. Sources are scarce, but it is supposed that between 1680 and 1750 they would count for 5,000 to 10,000 people (ERBIG JR., 2016, p. 451; LUCAIOLI; LATINI, 2014, p. 123). The size of each individual *toldería* was variable, since periodical joining (sometimes with military purposes⁸³) and separation was common ground, but projections usually go from few dozens to a hundred people.

Besides the establishment of strategic located settlements⁸⁴, Iberian empires also tried to settle *toldería* peoples in *reducciones*⁸⁵. *Reducciones*, as the

⁸² Namely, the 1494 Treaty of Tordesilhas, which drew an imaginary meridian to divide Portuguese and Spanish lands, and its extension for the whole world made by 1529 Treaty of Zaragoza.

⁸³ In 1731 Montevideo siege, Minuan cacique Yapelman called upon Guenoa *tolderías* to help him in the blockade.

⁸⁴ Here, I mean after 1680 founding of Colônia do Sacramento. Notably, the settlements that were founded thereafter were: Santo Domingo Soriano and Montevideo for Spain, and São Miguel and Rio Grande for Portugal. Such efforts were sustained by juridical principle of *uti possidetis*, which rules over possession based on occupation. It literally means “as you possess, thus may you possess”.

term suggests, means, literally, to reduce a group of people to sedentism. As it should be reminded, it not only meant the reduction of mobility, but also reduction to faith. For Christianity and sedentism were indistinguishable, having people ordered in *reducciones* meant Iberian empires could claim them as vassals (mostly through baptism). Submitting Natives to papal authority was a legal way for claiming their land as pertaining to one crown or another (ERBIG JR., 2016; HERZOG, 2015). The empires' political calculus regarding Native vassals, though, was not that simple. Assuming Natives as vassals also meant making crowns responsible for *toldería*'s actions⁸⁶. Nevertheless, most initiatives that sought to reduce mobile peoples from Banda Oriental were unsuccessful⁸⁷. Natives would commonly stay for one or two years before going back to their nomadic life-ways in Banda Oriental's hinterland. Such a behavior would lead them to be cast as "infidels"⁸⁸ by colonial officers. Mobility and infidelity became a common equation that sought to delegitimize the possession of land for *toldería* peoples. The following statement was written (1721) by Buenos Aires' governor to the king of Spain:

⁸⁵ Reducciones were Iberian efforts to forcibly resettle Natives into uniform European-style towns. They have had a huge impact in creating new frontiers and social formations. New distinctions between faithful and non-faithful Natives were drawn, which both inaugurated material options on the margins and also paved the way for ethnogenetic endeavors. It ought to be noted how principles of international law – regarding standards to recognize dominion over territory – were (mostly along XVI and XVII centuries), deeply intermingled with Christian theology. In this sense, the conversion of Natives has mostly meant integration to the civil commonwealth of one of the Iberian crowns as perpetuate vassals (HERZOG, 2015, cap. 2). Patterns of mobility were deeply related with religious political dynamics. For Catholic theologians and jurists, Christianity and sedentism were synonymous. Nomadic practices were characterized as infidelity, and mobile Natives were never deemed to as having legal dominion (sovereignty) over land in South America (ERBIG JR., 2020, p. 111). The margins of the colonial dominion, it should be noted, not only served to enclosure people. They were also effervescent places where different social experiences, rare opportunities and hard-to-classify practices constituted an unstable and fragile social fabric.

⁸⁶ Notably, in 1703, Portuguese authorities required reparations from their Spanish counterparts after Colônia's chaplain was killed. Portuguese accused Bohanes, Spanish vassals, to be the assailants. The Spanish crown, though, contended it were the Minuanes (viewed by both empires as independent) (ERBIG JR., 2020, cap. 2).

⁸⁷ What came closer of a successful initiative in reducing *toldería* peoples was 1750's Charrúa-Franciscan *reducción* in the margins of Parana River named Concepción de Cayastá. In a forcible way, though. Charrúas were denied the right to go back to their lands. The settlement, mostly a buffer-zoned exile, would be completely dissolved in 1794.

⁸⁸ It is important to note, though, that there are records of people who had lived within Charrúas and Minuanes *tolderías* and that moved to Guarani-Jesuit *reducciones* (WILDE, 2009). It is important not to account for Native and indigenous peoples as if they were completely cohesive collectivities. Interestingly, though, is that these Charrúas and Minuánes did not pass on their ethnic markets as kinship if they were not living in *tolderías* anymore. This is an aspect that will be further detailed.

It would be good if Your Lordship would order the Governor of this Plaza to oblige said Indians, by force or willingly, to abandon that countryside, over which they have no right, because they are like gypsies, vagabond wanderers, that have no fixed lands, house, or home, and *only inhabit* the countryside because of the cows [that are there]. (ROS, 1721, *apud* ERBIG JR., 2016, p. 111).

The notion of “inhabitants” of the land would be repeatedly found in official documents that referred to mobile Natives. Such a discourse was aimed at delegitimizing them as legal possessors of land. Curiously, though, ten years later, in 1731, the settlement of Montevideo signed a peace treaty with Minuán *tolderías*⁸⁹. It tacitly recognized their dominion over portions of land, but the language adopted portrayed them as subjects of the Spanish empire, thus denying their sovereignty (ACOSTA Y LARA, 2006, p. 57). This one was not the only peace agreement signed with Caciques and *tolderías*. The need for peace agreements mostly had to do with access to ranches and to the countryside, thus, beyond or between the “archipelagos of settlements”. *Tolderías*, in this sense, should be understood as wards of mobility in Banda Oriental’s hinterland. Since they arbitrated access to the countryside, having good relations with them was indispensable for Iberian settlers. *Yerba mate*, tobacco, cattle and even weapons were among some of the goods that were given to *tolderías* in exchange for their cooperation. Temporary shelter in settlements was also a common trading currency, since clashes between different *tolderías* were not a rare phenomenon (ERBIG JR.; LATINI, 2019).

In the 1750s and the 1780s, Banda Oriental would witness some of the largest mapping efforts ever undertaken in South America, which would later impact on the concession of land titles and national territorial formations. The signature of the Treaty of Madrid (1750) marked a divorce of Iberian strategies of possessing land through vassalage, which would be also followed by posterior Treaty of San Ildefonso (1777). A bilateral frontier-drawing expedition was mobilized in order to settle inter-imperial disputes over territorial possessions. By

⁸⁹ Such a peace treaty (1731) came after Montevideo had the access to its countryside blocked by Minuanes, avenging the unsolved murder of one of their kin. Montevideo’s population had to ration food for the winter, and their inhabitants saw themselves trapped inside the city’s walls. Interestingly, the peace treaty was brokered by Guenoa Native named Francisco de Borja. Among the material dispositions of the treaty was the giving of gifts to *cacique* Yapelman (ERBIG JR., 2020, cap. 1).

that time, written records about *tolderías* began to shift, and the ethnonyms employed to make sense of them were resumed to two: Charrúa and Minuán. It is important to note that when individual *tolderías* were defeated, what became registered was the supposed vanquishing of entire ethnic communities (ERBIG JR.; LATINI, 2019, p. 262). Beyond the legal-discursive aspect of the borderlines⁹⁰, its practical realization had deep impact in interethnic relations in Banda Oriental, also accounting for Native ethnogenesis (ERBIG JR., 2020).

Aware of the mapping expeditions conducted both by Portuguese and Spanish officials, Charrúas and Minuanes exerted regional authority not only by charging tolls, but also by enabling the passage of mapmakers through the region's complex landscape. The rising rewards *tolderías* were getting from the expeditions – both as intermediaries and facilitators – reformed their territoriality alongside borderland areas. Nevertheless, with the envisioning of complete territorial control brought by the borderline, most mapmakers began cataloguing *tolderías* within essentialist ethnic categories. After all, though, with the persistence of nomadism, allied with unsuccessful political agreements, bordering initiatives inspired by the Treaty of Madrid (1750) and San Ildefonso (1777) could not properly enforce what they had aspired to. As a response, the borderline became increasingly militarized, and land titles were given to willing settlers, who soon began to clash with those ethnicized and mobile subjects, generating new tensions between claims of possession and the sovereignty of *tolderías* (ERBIG JR.; LATINI, 2019, p. 263). Native mobility and ignorance of principles of private property began to be labeled as “invasion”.

This period has coincided with the expulsion of Jesuits from America by both Iberian crowns. It was a landmark of the emergence of illuminist reforms in colonial ruling patterns. What has become known as the *Reformas Borbónicas* (for Spain) and the *Reformas Pombalinas*⁹¹ (for Portugal) were a series of

⁹⁰ Borderlines, differently than borderlands, are fixed limits that legally divide the dominions of different and mutually recognized entities with a certain degree of equality of form. In this case, the Portuguese and Spanish empires.

⁹¹ Among the main instruments enacted by the Pombaline Reforms were: i) the expulsion of the Jesuits from Portuguese dominions in 1759 and ii) the approval of the legislative document named “*Diretório que se deve observar nas povoações de índios do Pará e do Maranhão enquanto sua majestade não mandar o contrário*” in 1758. The latter would formalize an assimilation policy based on interethnic marriages, which formally abolished indigenous slavery. It would also stimulate the construction of strategic *aldeamentos* to control border areas, mostly populated by

administrative changes mostly intended to enhance their political presence, impose taxation and stimulate European settlements over the land. The Spanish crown instituted, 1776, the Virreinato del Río de la Plata as a separate territorialized administrative institution to order and control a huge portion of land that included Banda Oriental⁹². This movement led to the (re)creation of colonial subjects according to an ideology based on the principles of the Enlightenment. By the end of the century, theologians were replaced by liberal intellectuals moved by the *rationales* of reason and progress. In this sense, expeditions led by naturalists were promoted in order to redrawn spatial and humane frontiers. Notions of inside and outside were built on the basis of cultural inscriptions, what Guillermo Wilde (2003, p. 111) called “Statist ethnographies”.

Among various authors whose narratives sustained this paradigmatic shift, one should look attentively at Spanish-born navy officer and naturalist Félix de Azara⁹³. Azara commanded the Spanish frontier operation “*Comisión de límites*”, motivated by the signature of the Treaty of San Ildefonso (1777). He was able to travel across territories that were under the administration of Virreinato del Río de la Plata for two decades, and wrote extensively about different local societies, strongly basing his classifications on hierarchically ascribed degrees of civility⁹⁴. Such a body of knowledge contributed to the consolidation of a disparagingly distinction between *toldería* peoples and the missionized Guaraníes. Not only

Guarani people that had left Jesuit missions. Notably, the privileging of interethnic marriages by the Portuguese crown turned indigenous women into “desired wives” by some settlers, who were given governmental support (*dotes*) whenever the interethnic marriages in such strategic locations became official. Interestingly, in a letter written by Marquês do Lavradio to the governor of the Capitania de São Pedro, he emphasizes that government-rewarded interethnic marriages should be between (explicitly female) Natives *legitimamente índias* and Portuguese vassals with *sangue limpo* (GARCIA, 2009, p. 88).

⁹² Before that, the area that comprised the domains of the Virreinato del Río de la Plata was under control of the Virreinato del Perú. The repartition of the land in two distinct administrative units would allow for a closer control of the area by the Spanish crown, at the expenses of local *criollos* and Jesuits.

⁹³ A Portuguese counterpart in border-demarcation efforts, with similar views to Azara’s is José de Saldanha. See more in SALDANHA, José. **Diário Rezumido, e Historico, ou Relação Geographica das Marchas, e Observações Astronomicas, com Algumas Notas sobre a Historia Natural, do Paiz**. Biblioteca Nacional, 1786. Similar views can also be found on the *Diretório dos Índios*.

⁹⁴ In Azara’s seminal compendium, *Geografia Física...*, he makes sense of the region’s population diversity according to a Humboltian scientific naturalism, based on stigmatic oppositions. His texts would have loud resonances in future ethnographies and anthropological researches. For a detailed ethnohistorical account on ideas about American alterity employed by Iberian empires, see PADGEN, Anthony. **Spanish imperialism and the political imagination: studies in European and Spanish-American social and political theory. 1513-1830**. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

land, but also difference itself should be ordered. In this sense, his work has influenced the “fixing” of ethnonyms that, as we have already discussed, were, until then, employed in a quite loosely and ambiguous way. Ultimately, his texts would give sustenance to formal policies with homogenizing principles, aiming at the (forced) assimilation of social difference, especially when it meant nomadic life-ways (WILDE, 2003, p. 116).

The most important policies intended to create homogeneity in Río de la Plata [region] were basically three: the definition of a territory by demarcating the limits with Portugal, the extermination of the “infidels” and the population of the *campaña* region. These policies defined in a sociocultural plan a distinction between an “inside” and an “outside”. The “inside” was understood as a homogeneous space, in which the ethnical frontiers that differentiated the “reduced” groups, the “infidels” and the *criollo* population⁹⁵. The “outside” was identified as an otherness comparable to Spain. In face of this “big other” – Portugal –, the Spanish crown could imagine itself as a homogeneous body or, at least, a homogenizable one. It is noteworthy that while the “inside” was established ethno-racial terms pointed towards a canon of civility, the “outside” would express itself in political-administrative terms (WILDE, 2003, p. 116)⁹⁶

Notably, though, Jesuit missions were complex interethnic spaces. The conceptual distinction that “guaranized” all its indigenous components is often misleading in the sense that it does not account for the many interactions that took place on its margins (LEVINTON, 2009; LATINI, 2010; BRACCO, 2016). *Tolderías* would not rarely ask for protection inside its domains, as they would also commonly steal missions’ cattle and engage in conflictive efforts. Religious sources show that distinct *Guenoa-Minuan tolderías* were explicitly willful in

⁹⁵ Notwithstanding, Wilde (2003) notes that the dismantling of the reductions led to new kinds of relationships and associations between “infidels” and Guaraní-misioneros, generating “spaces of ambiguity” that evaded the control of the colonial gaze. This reinforces his concept of “paradigm of mobility” regarding the Banda Oriental’s hinterland, which was constantly readapted. It is also interesting to note how the figure of the Gaucho, alongside its contemporary folklorized is also strongly inscribed in discourses of mobility, evasion and smuggling.

⁹⁶ Originally: *Las políticas más importantes en el Río de la Plata destinadas a crear homogeneidad fueron básicamente tres muy relacionadas entre sí: la definición de un territorio por medio de la demarcación de los límites con Portugal, el exterminio de la población “infiel” y el poblamiento de la “campaña”. Esas políticas definían en el plano sociocultural una distinción entre un “adentro” y un “afuera”. El “adentro” era concebido como un espacio homogéneo, donde eran eliminadas las fronteras étnicas que diferenciaban a los diversos grupos reducidos e “infieles” y la población criolla. El “afuera” era identificado con una alteridad equiparable con España. Frente a éste “gran otro”, Portugal, la corona española podía imaginarse como cuerpo homogéneo o al menos homogeneizable. Es destacable que mientras el “adentro” se establecía en términos étnicoraciales y se apuntalaba en un canon de civilidad, el “afuera” se expresaba en términos político-administrativos.*

being reduced (BRACCO, 2016). Also notably, *misioneros* were active participants in the construction of cities such as Dolores, Mercedes, Maldonado, Minas, Paysandú, Artigas, Soriano and even Montevideo (ASENJO, 2014, p. 210).

Beyond this new social and territorial interpretation, the reforms also stimulated settlements alongside the borderline. In American-Spanish literature, this was referred to as *arreglo de los campos*. According to the *Expediente sobre el arreglo y resguardo de la campaña de este virreinato*⁹⁷, it meant ordering cattle, its slaughtering and commerce. It outsourced to new *estancieros* (landowners) the task of policing their portions of land against the presence of “*gauchos*”, “*gauderios*” or “*forajidos*”, thereby forbidding trade relations with them (DÁVILA; AZPIROZ, 2016, p. 28). With the institutions of this new system of land titling, nomadic activity became officially categorized as “invasion” and “smuggling”, concepts that would officially authorize the use of force. According to Dana Bianchi (2001, p. 96), the emergence of concepts such as *gauchos*⁹⁸ and vagabonds in official documents had less to do with the lack of fixed domicile than with the absence of (formal) “work”. In this sense, the imposition of legal definitions equated to formal work was a means to order space and mobility itself. Since most *tolderías* were located on the Spanish side of the nascent borderline, Portuguese officials and common vassals sought to firm alliances with them in order to access regions and trade routes beyond the line (ERBIG JR., 2020). The

⁹⁷ Real order signed by José de Gálvez in 1786.

⁹⁸ Gaucho mostly stands for an individual who inhabits the countryside of the Río de la Plata's lowlands (pampa). His mode of life is often referred to as ambiguous and mobile. As it was the case for some *tolderías*, gauchos would occasionally integrate militias as well as work intermittently in ranches. It is widely portrayed in popular culture as having notable abilities with horse riding and cattle taming. What Guillermo Wilde (2003) called a “paradigm of mobility”, regarding the large amount of cattle in pampa region has allowed for the emerging of his figure. Gauchos can be thought as *mestizos*, since their mobile life-ways, which challenged borderlines and property limits can be paralleled to that of the *tolderías*. The figure of the *gaucho* would gain prominence in Domingo Sarmiento's famous novel *Facundo: civilización y barbarie* (1845). The would-be president of Argentina, from an illuminist perspective, wrote a biography about Facundo Quiroga, a pro-federalism *criollo* who ordered an invasion of Sarmiento's hometown (San Juan) in 1829. In his book, Facundo represents the *gaucho*, being a landowner that exerts his leadership on a personalist basis, recruiting uncivilized militias, and precluding Argentina's development. Facundo was a close coreligionist of Rosas' authoritarian federalist-inspired government. Notably, Sarmiento, which had liberal ideas of a western urban-based industrial development, wrote his novel from Chile, exiled of Argentina due to Rosas' rule. The book, although having Facundo as its protagonist, drives a harsh critique to Rosas' *caudillismo*. The gaucho character still plays a central cultural role in Argentina, Uruguay, and the southernmost region of Brasil, especially in Rio Grande do Sul state. For the record, I am widely referred to as “gaucho” for Brazilians that gets to know about my place of birth.

map below was drawn after a compilation of 280 colonial sources (1750-1806) regarding the location of *tolderías* (without making distinctions based on ethnonyms). As one can see, mapping the borderline has also allowed for new means of performing it.

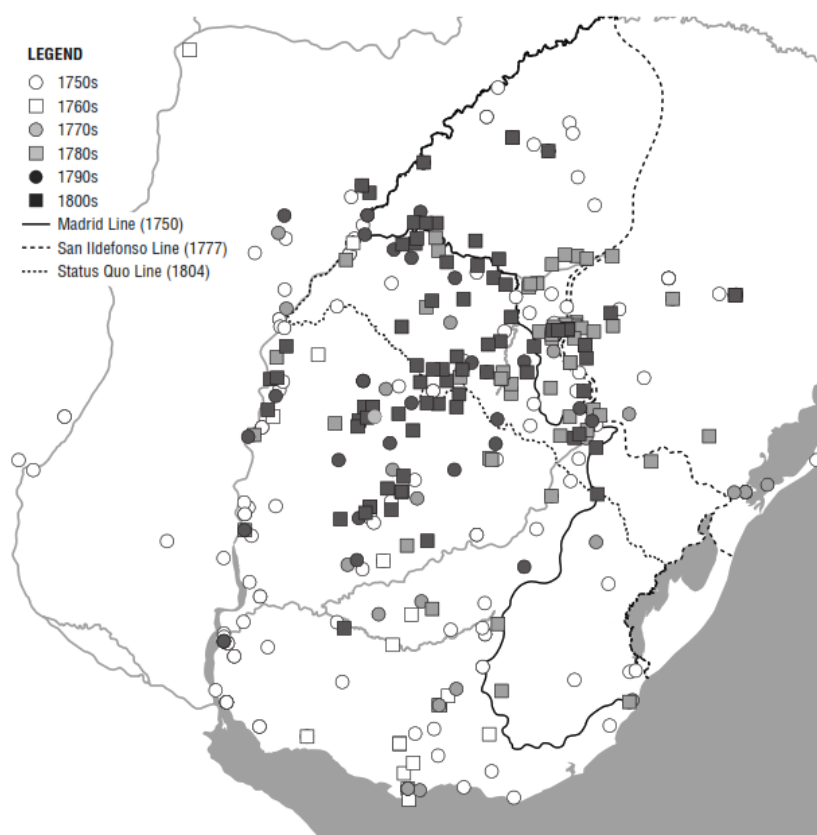


Fig. 1 - Reported *toldería* locations (1750-1806)

Extracted from ERBIG JR., 2020, p. 125

However, with the cession of Colônia do Sacramento to the Spanish, and the dissolution of the legal borderline in early XIX century, the borderland that had been a place of opportunity and action for Charrúas and Minuanes became increasingly inhospitable to their mobile life-ways. Captive-taking practices, aimed at removing them from the countryside, peaked with the help of the new settlers and armed militias. Hundreds, mostly women and children, were taken in captivity to distinct settlements⁹⁹, and distributed to willing petitioners, “for the

⁹⁹ Among the settlements that received the greatest amounts of Natives, Buenos Aires and Montevideo are, by far, the top-ranked. An interesting trend is notable: since the first documented raid in 1697 to the 1750 raid that led to the founding of Concepción de Cayastá, almost all Native captives were taken to Jesuit *reducciones*. San Borja (at the time, a Spanish-Jesuit mission), for example, documented the incorporation of 500 captive Natives in 1702. After 1750, though,

purpose of indoctrinating and raising them in Christian education” (ERBIG JR. 2020, p. 139)¹⁰⁰. Native captives were not allowed to be sold, since they were not slaves at the eyes of the law. Nevertheless, their work as domestic (often non-free) “servants” came in handy in contexts where African slave trade was already in a downward spiral. However, the biggest concern behind such raids had to do with land, and the uttermost preoccupation of colonial officials was avoiding their return to the countryside. Compulsive baptisms, which followed the removal of Indigenous names and surnames, were a common policy for governing natives and cut their ties with their unsubordinated kin.

The rising European occupation of Banda Oriental brought by late XVIII century bordering endeavors has also provided openings to Native peoples beyond nomadism. In spite of the lack of documentation, many individuals left *tolderías* to freely join (permanently or pendularly) Iberian settlements or work in adjacent ranches. By looking at civil and criminal records, it is possible to note that Native presence in Iberian settlements was far from irrelevant. Baptisms, arrests and marriages are all examples of records that, along the XVIII century, illustrated how Native and settler worlds were not completely apart. Evasions and eventual migrations between the countryside and the settlements were not rare, which enables us to note that Charrúas and Minuanes knew how to take profit from the watchful imperial gaze by moving within and beyond its sight (ERBIG JR., 2020, p. 148). Notably, Montevideo is the city that presents the most voluminous accounts regarding the presence of Charrúas and Minuanes, which included demographic presence in the census of 1726 and 1773 (MESSANO, 2009).

Nevertheless, the ethnographic readings mostly advanced by demarcation officials in the end of XVIII century defined Charrúas and Minuanes strictly as people who lived outside the colonial system (ERBIG JR., 2020, p. 138). The paucity of sources, thus, has more to do with the way imperial writers have ascribed indigenous ethnonyms than a supposed “ethnic purity” that divided and separately constituted Charrúa, Minuanes (nomads) and Iberians (sedentary). Although colonial writers employed generic terms to indicate Native ancestry in

settlements and military outposts became the principal destine of the captives. (see ERBIG JR., 2020, cap. 5).

¹⁰⁰ Passage extracted and translated from Archivo General de la Nación Argentina, IX, 41-3-8, exp. 1.

settlements and ranches such as *indio*, *china*, *párvulo*, *criatura* and *mulato*, they tended to suppress ethnonyms whenever either walls or labor contracts made their lives sedentary¹⁰¹ (idem, p. 147). Baptism, as it has been noted, ended up playing a crucial role in separating Natives from their kin. As individuals that were separated from *tolderías* lost their ethnic identification, “historical processes of ethnification and ethnicization coincided with attempted ethnocide” (ERBIG JR.; LATINI, 2019, p. 263).

In 1804, Portuguese and Spanish officials agreed on setting the borderline on the “status quo line”, which gave form to the contemporary territorial frontiers of Banda Oriental, which divide Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. From that point onwards, the project of exterminating mobile life-ways has been jointly embraced by the Iberian empires. However, this project assumed a new dynamic with the crisis of Iberian imperial sovereignty driven by British invasions, and the Napoleonic Wars. In 1810, *criollo* liberation movements gained momentum in Buenos Aires, and were accompanied by the emergence of claims for independence all over Spanish America. One year later, the government of the Virreinato del Río de la Plata had to cross the river and reestablish itself in Montevideo. For Banda Oriental, it signified a rampant militarization of the countryside, which has witnessed the formation of new tactic alliances that involved *criollos*, *caudillos*, *gauchos* and indigenous peoples (sedentary and mobile).

Two main contesting political projects gained distinction from the emergent nationalist movements. One pledged for a more centralized union of the area that had constituted the Virreinato. The other defended the establishment of federalism, with a high degree of provincial autonomy. In Banda Oriental, they were respectively represented by the *Provincias Unidas del Río de la Plata*, centered in Buenos Aires, and the *Liga Federal* (or *Liga de los Pueblos Libres*), whose most prominent leader was the *caudillo* José Gervasio Artigas¹⁰². As a

¹⁰¹ Interestingly, ethnonyms would assume a different indicative in Christian-led missions. Guaraní, for example, was an ethnonym that identified all people that lived inside the 30 Jesuit missions. When Charrúas were taken to settle in Cayastá, they continued to appear in official records as Charrúa even after settled (ERBIG JR., 2020, p. 147).

¹⁰² Beyond the 1813 created Provincia Oriental, the federalist project led by the *Liga Federal* sought to gain faltering support of Santa Fé, Corrientes, Entre Ríos, and Córdoba.

countryside-raised landowner, he spent his adolescence in contact with the mobile dynamics of that constituted Banda Oriental's hinterland¹⁰³.

His federal project abided for landowners, vagrant men (indigenous and non) and military officials. People who, a couple years before, were on opposite sides integrated the non-conventional cross-caste alliance that responded for the *Liga Federal*. Perhaps the most symbolic event on the formation of this alliance was the *Éxodo del Pueblo Oriental*, when people who were not allied with the remaining Spanish presence in the region left Montevideo to the west margin of the Uruguay River¹⁰⁴. Karina Melo (2017, p. 166) notes that at least 37 families who joined the exodus had Guaraní surnames. Artigas' army, which accompanied the exodus, included Charrúa and Minuán peoples from *tolderías*¹⁰⁵, which were according to himself, "indispensable to the army's mobility" (MELO, 2017, p. 131)¹⁰⁶. In a letter, Artigas notes that

All Banda Oriental massively follows me, all convinced to lose a thousand lives rather than live them in slavery: infidel Indians, having abandoned their *tolderías*, inundate the countryside presenting me their brave efforts in cooperation to the consolidation of our great system (ODDONE *apud* MELO, 2017, p. 171, our translation¹⁰⁷).

This new political architecture produced new and ever changing borders, mostly governed by force rather than law (ERBIG JR., 2020, p. 158). In 1820, expanding Portuguese forces gave a final blow to federalist forces in the Banda Oriental, which were already losing provincial allies on the western margin of

¹⁰³ Interestingly, in 1797, Artigas integrated the *Cuerpo de Blandengues de la Frontera de Montevideo*, a militia formed to attend complaints made by Spanish landowners regarding cattle theft and illegal caw slaughtering, and defend the frontier against Portuguese incursions. Naturally, *tolderías* were direct enemies of the militia.

¹⁰⁴ Such an exodus was due to agreement made between liberated Buenos Aires and Spanish Viceroy Elío, which had seen Montevideo – the last Spanish stronghold in Río de la Plata – under siege. As last resort, he called for Portuguese invasion of the Banda Oriental to fight against the liberators loyal to Buenos Aires. Finally it was agreed that Banda Oriental would remain under Spanish jurisdiction. Artigas, then, leads a crowd of thousands of people towards exile on the western margin of Uruguay River, now province of Entre Ríos.

¹⁰⁵ It is important to note that most *tolderías* maintained an autonomous stance regarding Artigas' army. Perhaps it is a reason for they were not counted in the census of the exodus.

¹⁰⁶ Document extracted from Archivo General de la Nación Argentina, Sala X, 1-5-12.

¹⁰⁷ Translated from Portuguese translation: "*Toda a banda Oriental me segue em massa, resolvidos todos a perder mil vidas antes que gozá-las na escravidão: os índios infieis, abandonando suas toderias, inundam a campanha apresentando-me seus bravos esforços para cooperar à consolidação do nosso grande sistema*".

Uruguay River¹⁰⁸. In the following year, the Banda Oriental would be annexed to Portuguese dominions, and would later be part of the Empire of Brazil under the name of *Província Cisplatina*. With the failure of the project idealized by Artigas, which envisioned the implementation of a wide agrarian reform with a certain degree of articulation with mobile Natives¹⁰⁹, the countryside became strictly uninhabitable for *tolderías*. Not only Iberian empires, but also emerging nationalist groups expressively saw them as a threat to their national ambitions. As we will see in the next section, the last *tolderías* would be met with extreme violence by recently-independent Uruguay. Notably, the national republics would keep up with the readings that bounded ethnonyms to nomadism, and the discourse of indigenous extinction would be central to the imagination of emerging nationalities.

2.2.

Uruguay or the dream of an “indianless” land

Nation-state policies have everywhere created the conditions for indigenous lives.

If the nation-state moves people into reservations, then the fight must continue from the reservation. If the nation-state requires assimilation, then debates will emerge from within the apparatus of assimilation. The form of indigeneity in a particular place cannot be divorced from these histories of national classification and management.

(Anna Tsing)

¹⁰⁸ One has to acknowledge the complicity of the central directory of the *Provincias Unidas del Río de la Plata*, in Buenos Aires, with Portuguese expansionist incursions towards Banda Oriental. Politicians of the recently independent nation often referred to the Banda Oriental as part of their territory. However, the federal-revolutionary project of Artigas, which did not recognize the legitimacy of the Central Directory, was seen by some as more of a threat than foreign invasion. Buenos Aires kept itself neutral during Portuguese invasion and punished provinces that supported Artigas (such as Misiones, Corrientes and Entre Ríos) (CASAS, 2004).

¹⁰⁹ The sixth article of the *Reglamento Provisorio de la Provincia Oriental para el Fomento de su Campaña y Seguridad de sus Hacendados* (1815), the document that summarizes Artigas' propositions regarding land possession reads: “Por ahora el señor alcalde provincial y demás subalternos se dedicarán a fomentar con brazos útiles la población de la campaña. Para ello revisará cada uno, en sus respectivas jurisdicciones, los terrenos disponibles; y los sujetos dignos de esta gracia con prevención que los más infelices serán los más privilegiados. En consecuencia, los negros libres, los zambos de esta clase, los indios y los criollos pobres, todos podrán ser agraciados con suertes de estancia, si con su trabajo y hombría de bien propenden a su felicidad, y a la de la provincia.”

In 1825, a group of republicans who became known as the *Treinta y Tres Orientales* gathered in Florida to sign the declaration of independence of the territory formerly named as *Província Oriental* from the Empire of Brazil, who named it *Província Cisplatina*. Their will was to integrate the *Províncias Unidas del Río de la Plata* (contemporary Argentina). However, the non-recognition of the document by the Portuguese kept military conflicts going in the region. The end of the conflict would only come with the signature of the *Convención Preliminar de Paz*, in 1828, in which Argentinean and Brazilian representatives, brokered by Great Britain diplomats, agreed to the creation of an independent country. Quite symbolically, Uruguay was born from a meeting in which it had no representation, and whose brokerage was secured by a completely external actor. In 1830, the República Oriental del Uruguay approved its first constitution, and Fructuoso Rivera was elected its first constitutional president.

Although new borderlines emerged with the new independent nations, it by no means represented a rupture with colonial modes of knowledge, which include its understandings of alterity. In fact, racist illuminist thought, which inspired Félix de Azara's investigations about peoples and landscapes of Río de la Plata region, would have a remarkable participation in the construction of Argentinean and Uruguayan nationalism along the XIX century. As I have argued on the previous chapter, it is important to think about Latin American states in a historical continuity with the period of the conquest (SEGATO, 2007).

2.2.1.

A State with no nation or Foundation through ethnocide

By 1830, most *tolderías* had already disappeared from Banda Oriental. With the institutionalization of the state of Uruguay, the remaining mobile Charrúas saw themselves in the middle of virtually divided ranches and marked cows. The land in which mobile partialities interacted autonomously with fixed

settlements was now divided in privately owned pieces, which were subject to a constitution, and the rule of a sovereign state. Among the first official petitions the state of Uruguay has received were those of the *hacendados* (landowners, mostly dedicated to cattle raising), which demanded official action against cattle and horse stealth. Below, we see two letters sent by landowners to the Uruguayan president.

Amigo y Señor: Por tercera vez los Charruas, ó no se quien, han vuelto á rovarme la estancia de las cañas el Martes 7 del corriente, llevandose como 400 cabezas de ganado segun se calcula por la rastrillada, todos los caballos, dejando degollado un muchacho de 9 años, y no se sabe si se llebaron ó dejaron tambien asesinado otro peon jóven como de 14 á 16 años (...) El matar el muchacho chico y acaso el grande me induce á creer que no serian solos Charruas sino juntos con ellos algunos conocidos de los muchachos (...) segun dicen todos eran charruas con cuereadores de las muchas tropas que hay de otro lado del Arapehí en mata perros, catalán y puntas de cuaró, ácia cuyos destinos vá el rastro de lo que acaban de robarme. Por todas partes de estos destinos no se oye mas que lamentos de robos (apud ACOSTA Y LARA, 2006, p. 22).

Mi respetado general y amigo: p.r. el parte que le adjunto se impondra V. de que el Ten.te D. Fortunato Silva se ha batido con los Indios Charruas que habian robado el Ganado y Cavalladas de la estancia del Becino D. Geronimo Jacinto. Este acontecimiento haci como otros semejantes que repetiran los Indios indudablemente probaran la necesidad que ubo de que V. se puciese en campaña, haci como se ciente cada ves mas la que existe de poner todos los medios p.a separar a los Charruas del Territorio que ocupan y reducirlos a un nuevo orden de vida y costumbres (apud ACOSTA Y LARA, 2006, p. 30, our markings).

Notably, notifications of stealth and crimes were not only pointed at Charrúa people. “Anarchists” and bandits are other identifications that are found in the documents compiled in Acosta y Lara’s (2006) book. As a response, by the end of 1830, Rivera and some ministers rounded up a plan to put an end to such incursions. Its objective was “to clean the hinterlands from bandits and thieves, whose infection damages public order, and the security of people and property (...) to contain the savages and reduce them to a state that must be conserved” (ACOSTA Y LARA, 2006, p. 24). Although Charrúas were not the only possible perpetrators of such illegalities, they were known to be a constant presence in the countryside, for President Rivera noted that “*las indómitas tribus de Charrúas*

eran poseedoras desde una edad remota de la más bella porción del territorio de la República” (In REPETTO, 2017, p. 50¹¹⁰).

In 11th April 1831, the bloodiest of a series of planned operations (1831-34) took place at the margins of the Arroyo Salsipuedes, near the contemporary line that divides Paysandú, Río Negro and Tacuarembó. What has become popularly known as The Massacre of Salsipuedes had the objective of “solving the ‘indigenous question’, promoting the interests of the rural bourgeoisie over private land property, implementing a harsher control over the recently drawn national borders and expanding the reach of the “state of law” (ACOSTA Y LARA, 2006). Rivera convinced different *tolderías* to join his troops in a fight against Brazil, which was not an unusual request since they had been allied before against this common enemy. Most of the Charrúa *tolderías*, then, marched to the agreed site only to be met by death at the hands of Rivera’s troops (SZTAINBOK, 2010, p. 178). It is believed that around 50 people have perished on the hands of the government forces, while around 200 people, mostly women and children, were taken as captives to Montevideo¹¹¹. The campaign was justified as being the “last resource available”, after many failed sedentary-settling attempts, to deal with the incorrigible lawlessness of the Charrúas (ACOSTA Y LARA, 2006).

It is interesting to note that President Rivera, when talking about the conflict, framed Charrúas as enemies¹¹² who needed to be “pacified”, while also saying that the high price Charrúas were paying was due to their “past and recent crimes”. General Julián Laguna, in a letter addressed to Paysandú military general, defends the “extermination of the savages infest the State’s territory” (ACOSTA Y LARA, 2006, p. 90, our translation¹¹³). It becomes clear that, in

¹¹⁰ Biblioteca Nacional de Montevideo, Rollo 30, Num. 532, 18/4/1831.

¹¹¹ In April 12th, Rivera, who was himself personally in the field, counted around 300 captives. The list of those who arrived in Montevideo comprises less than 200 names. This leads us to think that either some died on the way or they were distributed to local ranches or settlements (REPETTO, 2017, p. 60).

¹¹² “*Fuéron en consecuencia atacados y destruidos quedando en el camino más de 40 cadáveres enemigos, y el resto con 300 y mas almas en poder de la division de operaciones Los muy pocos que han podido evadirse de la misma cuenta, son perseguidos vivamente por diversas partidas que se han despachado en su alcance, y es de esperarse que sean destruidos tambien completamente sino salvan las fronteras del Estado (...) las fuerzas del Ejercito prosiguen en su alcance hasta su exterminio. Para completar enteram.te este triunfo q.e [que] tanto importa a los mas caros intereses de la Nacion es de absoluta necesidad,*” (Biblioteca Nacional de Montevideo, Rollo 30, Num. 52).

¹¹³ Originally: “(...) exterminar los salvajes que infestan el territorio del Estado”.

spite of the new-born quality of the Uruguayan state in 1831, the so-called “past crimes” had to do with a time that preceded the national state, imagining colonial time and claims over land as a proto-nationality. This continuity is expressive on the ways Charrúa and Minuán have been narrated since late XVIII century as occupying an insurmountable position in regard of sedentary populations. In other words, the only possible relationship with them would be total conflict. Not only ignoring the many non-conflictive ways Natives and *toldería* peoples have related to Iberian settlements, such a thought is also not true given that Charrúas and Minuanes fought alongside Liga Federal (of which Rivera himself was part for some time) in many occasions. Nomadic mobility had been already “ethnicized” (e.g. AZARA, 1801), and with the creation of the state, such “race of savages” was addressed with biological metaphors of infection. For the state to live, the Charrúa disease, whose temporal priority is implicitly recognized, had to be, for once and for all, exterminated. Notably, in a letter sent to the editorial board of the Brazilian journal *Íris*, in 1848, former president Rivera explicitly confirms his objectives of extermination. Curiously, what seems to be his uttermost concern is to defend himself from accusation of treason against the Charrúas.

Se a min coube a fortuna e glória de acabar com uma horda de selvagens nomados e ferozes, abrigada nas escabrosidades do paiz, fiz o que outros nao puderam alcanzar antes de mim, e cumpri as ordens do governó, com grande satisfacção das populações, que por tantos annos foram victimas de correrias, roubos e mortes d’ aquelles bandidos. (...) Limitarme-hei porêr aos factos inventados. (...) E’ falso que houvesse necessidade de atraioar os selvagens para os-destruir: nem estes selvagens foram nunca alliados do governó oriental, nem os orientaes, com quem eu tive a fortuna e honra de combater para cima de 35 annos, em mais de cem batallas, podian tener taes homens, desde que por utilidade geral, se-decretava o seu exterminio...” (In: PICERNO, 2008, p. 233).

Those who were taken to Montevideo were gathered in a public square and distributed to the society as savages who needed to be Christianized and civilized. Montevideans, especially those from higher classes, could “acquire” one Charrúa if committed to teach her/him and give a minimum standard of living. An official document issued by the state in 1832 explicitly mentions the need for “converting this savage mob into a useful piece of society” (AGN.MGM.1190.38_13/04/1831

apud REPETTO, 2017, p. 62, our translation¹¹⁴). Ana Francesca Repetto (2017, cap. 1.3) advances an important point when she highlights the distinct treatment given to Charrúa captives according to gender. Women captives, who vastly outnumbered men¹¹⁵, were forcibly integrated through domestic serfdom. Many of them were cruelly separated from their children, some of them newborn. Moreover, adding to the debate regarding the “dissolution” of ethnic markers pendant (either forceful or organic) non-reduced Native integration to dominant society, she notes how the ascribed value to “ethnicized” bodies was (and still is) made under a male-dominant ordering. In other words, images about the Charrúas, which were commonly centered on warlike, indomitable and un-civilizable behavior, would often celebrate masculine bodies, occluding the historicity of Native women’s contact with the dominant society (REPETTO, 2017, p. 63). A planned disintegration of kinship, beyond crude war, was the means Uruguayan state adopted to deal with the remaining autonomous and mobile Charrúas, a strategy that had already been employed previously.

According to historian Ana Ribeiro (2013), the recent independence, the porous borders and the constant disputes over land in Río de la Plata region made “order” the principal lexicon of the first governments of Uruguay. Charrúa scholar Martín Delgado Cultelli (2020, p. 67) classifies the Massacre of Salsipuedes as a “constitutive genocide¹¹⁶” due to its function in conforming a Nation-state that required the annihilation of groups who were not included in the social contract. However, since the social construction of sovereignty is always in process, and never successfully completed (DOTY, 1996), what we will see in this and the next chapter is that the “Indian” has been haunting Uruguay since its inception.

In 25th February 1833, roughly two years after the Massacre of Salsipuedes, four Charrúas, who were taken as captives from recent governmentally-led raids, crossed the Atlantic Ocean towards Paris. Vaimaca Perú, Senaqué, Tacuabé and Guyunusa (pregnant) would be the main attraction of an exposition entitled “*Indiens Charruas*”. The four persons that participated in

¹¹⁴ Originally: “(...) *convertir esta muchedumbre salvaje en una porción útil de la sociedad*”.

¹¹⁵ This is a trend that had been persisting from captive-taking in pre-independence. Men would often be ascribed military tasks under the watchful eyes of soldiers.

¹¹⁶ The concept is a reference to FEIERSTEIN, Daniel. **El genocidio como práctica social. Entre el nazismo y la experiencia argentina**. Buenos Aires: Fondo Cultura Económica, 2007.

this abhorrent event were lately referred to as “the last Charrúas” (RIVET, 2003). Their museum-like regalia would serve as inspiration for European-made paintings such as Arthur Onslow’s *Indiens Charruas* (1833) and Jean-Baptiste Debret’s *Chef de Charruas Sauvages* (1834), which would, paradoxically, both eternize and exterminate the authentic Natives of Banda Oriental. The former would serve as inspiration for the *Monumento a los últimos Charrúas*, built in 1938 and exposed in Prado square, Montevideo. Roughly ten years later, Uruguayan historian Manuel de la Sota (1842) would prescribe their total disappearance in a famous book. Interestingly, the author calls Charrúas the *espartanos de América*, while tracing a parallel with the death of Juan Solís in 1516¹¹⁷.

National historical records (or their absence) regarding the presence of Misioneros are also interesting. As already mentioned, “faithful” Natives have had an important role in building and early populating Uruguayan cities such as Montevideo (1724) and Paysandú (1772). Nevertheless, by leaving missions or autonomous life on the hinterlands, Natives have lost their ethnic referents. In 1828, Fructuoso Rivera invaded the already decadent Portuguese-claimed Sete Povos das Missões (now part of the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul). Later, though, with the signature of the aforementioned *Convención Preliminar de Paz*, brokered by Great Britain, the General would leave the region towards Uruguayan territory, followed by hundreds of *índios misioneros*. These people followed Rivera towards Uruguayan territory and settled along Santa Rosa del Cuareim (contemporary Bella Unión) and San Borja del Yi, on the margins of Río Negro. Facing rising pressure from landowners, both settlements would be completely abandoned by the 1860s. Afterwards, no more records involving *misioneros* would be found in national documents, although there is an agreement on their further destination as peasant workers in estancias, comprising what was commonly called paisanos (ASENJO, 2014, p. 269; BASINI, 2015, introduction; MAZZ, 2018; PADRÓN FAVRE, 1999). It is important to mention that, in 1833, a Presidential Decree resolved tensions between occupiers and owners on the

¹¹⁷ Iberian explorer Juan Díaz de Solís is known to be the first European to have reached Río de la Plata. A widely-told myth about his death tells he was cannibalized by Natives. Darío Asenjo (2014) makes reference to this story as the *asado fundacional* (or the “foundational barbecue”), which addresses (in a somehow morbid link) both Uruguayan meaty diets, and the ferocity of its first inhabitants.

basis of “buy-sell” mechanisms, what has legitimized further dispossession (DE LA TORRE et al, 1971, p. 159). Darío Asenjo (2014, p. 263, our translation¹¹⁸) highlights that *misioneros*

(...) have seen their village burn at the hands of the army in 1862. The treatment inflicted on *misioneros*, which were violently repressed in Santa Rosa del Cuareim in 1833, and in San Borja del Yi in 1844 and 1862, was clearly not mentioned in official history. The destiny of the remaining settlement-based *misioneros* would not either meet the subsequent dimension of the Massacre of Salsipuedes on the imaginary [of the nation]. Those [Christian-] converted Indians, respectful of the colonial laws, were not considered as the other [Indians] by the authorities. They would not be so for Uruguayan historians either. The *misioneros* were neither the outlaws, nor the out-of-faith, but it is, nevertheless, the question of land possession which sealed their fate, as well as for the Charrúas.

This has to be understood as a movement that emerged in a context of high political instability. As already noted, Rivera’s plan of exterminating the Charrúa was a response to demands of landlords. Nevertheless, political rivalries opposing emergent Partido Blanco and Partido Colorado would make Uruguayan countryside a theater of operations for international wars. Rival parties and their militias would often act as proxies of larger political groups from both Brazil and Argentina. Foreign landownership in Uruguay became an important bargaining chip for the consolidation of external alliances and the establishment of internal institutional power. Notably, after the Guerra Grande, in 1852-53, Brazilian-born landowners would buy huge portions of land in northern Uruguayan territory, and Rio de Janeiro would systematically interfere in Uruguayan politics¹¹⁹. Even after independence, Uruguay had not ceased to be a frontier space. In fact, these events prove Salas’ (1977) point, which argues that the formal state has preceded the existence of the nation.

¹¹⁸ Originally: “virent leur village brûler aux mains de l’armée en 1862. Le traitement infligé aux *misioneros*, qui furent violemment réprimés à Santa Rosa del Cuareim en 1833, puis à San Borja del Yi en 1844 et 1862, n’a bien entendu pas fait l’objet de récits dans l’histoire officielle. Le destin de ces derniers villages *misioneros* ne connaîtra pas non plus la portée des massacres de Salsipuedes dans l’imaginaire par la suite. Ces Indiens convertis et respectant les lois coloniales n’étaient pas considérés comme les autres par les autorités. Ils ne le seraient pas non plus pour les historiens uruguayens. Les *misioneros* n’étaient ni des hors-la-foi, ni des hors-la-loi, mais c’est cependant la question de la propriété des terres qui scella leur sort, tout comme pour les Charrúa”.

¹¹⁹ Interestingly, the Brazilian-supported *coup d’état* led by Colorado Venancio Flores, which overtook the Blanco Anatasio Aguirre from the presidency in 1865 can be read as the main trigger of the further *Guerra de la Triple Alianza* or *Guerra do Paraguai*, the deadliest international conflict of the American continent.

It was only by the 1870s that Uruguay would attain relative political and territorial stability, what pressed for the consolidation of national ideologies. Policies meant to connect and secure national territories under the establishment of a cohesive social fabric were induced not only through military statist impositions, but also through literature, science and aesthetics. Prominent nationalist-inspired stories sought to organize past regional phenomena (some of which have been discussed on the previous section) through a “teleology of the nation” perspective, in which the spatially-bound entity (Uruguay) became a methodological and ontological point of reference to make sense of and bind the region’s past and present. Notably, the region had gone through complex and overlapping interethnic relations, and some of the resulting vernacular ways-of-life somehow threatened the sovereignty of a state whose foundations fall back to transatlantic ambitions of creating a strategic “buffer zone”.

2.2.2.

Modernization: cosmopolitan oblivion

Regarding Uruguayan construction of a public national space, what needs to be highlighted as the main institutional modernizing engine was the 1877 promulgation of the *Decreto-Ley de Educación Común*, elaborated by the *colorado* José Pedro Varela. The work of Varela was profoundly inspired by former Argentinean president Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, about whom I have already spoken in a previous footnote. Both thinkers drew on positivist modernization theory to envision the development of their countries. Rational-liberal urban life would be positively framed in an opposition to the incivilized gaucho/caudillo ways-of-life and forms of authority of the countryside. According to Varela (1865 *apud* BARRÁN, 1990, p. 91, our translation¹²⁰), “the countryside inhabitant, who nowadays dulls idleness, servility, crass ignorance, savage habits and our political convulsions, would only be civilized (...) when he knows how to

¹²⁰ Originally: “El habitante de la campaña a quién hoy embrutece la ociosidad, el servilismo, su crasa ignorancia, sus hábitos salvajes, y nuestras convulsiones políticas, solo se civilizaría (...) el día en que supiera leer y escribir”.

read and write". One of the means found to deal with that was the institutionalization of secular, free and compulsory schooling based on a national curriculum. According to a report from CEPAL (1990 *apud* CAMARERO, 2014, p. 22, our translation¹²¹), “few societies can be said, as it is the case for Uruguay, as being ‘daughters of the school’. (...) [It] transferred to the society not only language (...) and ways of thought, but also a set of values that define Uruguay in international context”. Up to this day, much of the historical texts adopt perspectives that portray Uruguayan land as a “semi-populated desert”, whose transformation into a country was no more than a “historical necessity” (AMBROSIO, 2014, cap. 4).

Noteworthy, from the 1870s to the end of the century, under a period that is commonly referred as *militarismo*, Uruguay has witnessed the construction of national railroads connecting the countryside to Montevideo. Moreover, rural property fencing became a widespread reality, since, virtually, no land would remain unclaimed in Uruguay. Fencing was publicly supported by the state¹²², which exonerated import duties on wire and posts until 1879. Curiously, an amendment to the Rural Code made in the same year ruled out that wiring costs needed to be shared among owners on both sides of the wire. Such a legal instrument has contributed to the consolidation of the *latifundio* in rural Uruguay, since the price of wiring was prohibitive to the majority of small landowners (BRANDT, 2019, p. 40). Many rural laboring activities lost importance with the advent of the fences (such as cattle rounding). Barrán and Nahum (1967) have called the outcomes of wiring as the first tech-led unemployment of the country. With the growing number of dispossessed, options inside Uruguay were either to move to the city or to build informal dwellings on land left unfenced¹²³. That period would consolidate Uruguay as a cattle-farming and beef-exporting country,

¹²¹ Originally: “*de pocas sociedades se puede decir como la de la uruguaya, que la sociedad es hija de la escuela. (...) [ella] fue transfiriendo a la sociedad no solo el lenguaje, (...) y las formas de pensar, sino también un conjunto de valores que definen al Uruguay en el contexto internacional*”.

¹²² Colonel Latorre had strong ties with the *Asociación Rural del Uruguay* (a successor of the *Gremio de Hacendados* formed in the late XVIII century), what allowed him to accommodate the interests of urban and rural elites.

¹²³ Many informal rural settlements would be commonly (and pejoratively) called *pueblos de ratas*. Such people would become easy targets of bare violence and non rarely work as seasonal employees in *haciendas* (see more at ASENJO, 2014 and BRANDT, 2019).

what has continuously persisted until these days. Juan Oddone (1986, p. 458, my highlighting) notes that former president Colonel Latorre's policies

met the essential requirements of the propertied classes. Latorre carried out the policy that traders, rural producers and foreign investors all needed during a period of favorable trends in export markets. The influence of rural caudillos was temporarily nullified by strong centralized government. This regime permitted the extension of the capitalist order to the rural economy, applying a **rough and ready justice**.

Regarding the educational reforms, different authors sustain that the institutionalization of the school was the cornerstone of Uruguayan nationalism (VERDESIO, 2005; ASENJO, 2014; 2015; LAURINO, 2001; BARRÁN, 1990; RODRÍGUEZ, 2017). In that sense, we can read this phenomenon through what Étienne Balibar (2002) named “nation-form”. Attentive to the limits that frame nationality as a social construction, he notes how narratives are central to the advancement of a “fictive ethnicity”, which inscribes controlled belonging. An immanent sense of “peoplehood” reads the historicity of distinct populations as a natural predestination towards homogeneous nationality. That also demands a closure, in which (authentic) national culture defines the limits of the political community. In that sense, as much as Varelian schooling in Uruguay advanced nationalist narratives, it also institutionalized a “national time” to the national territory. The rural transformations mentioned above were also part of this project, since it purported the abolishing of many vernacular life-ways and forms of authority, thereby integrating Uruguayan territorial practices in international circuits of capital.

It was under that historical landscape that an artistic movement, whose resonance was directly transmitted by the national school system, emerged. Such a movement exposed what Vannia Sztainbok (2010, p. 179) claimed to be Uruguay's dual dilemma: between racial anxiety and national legitimacy. From this period onwards, the national story of the region's Native inhabitants would assume a curious perspective. The Charrúas, once the biggest threat and enemy to national affirmation, would be romantically refashioned as the ideal “National Indian” (ASENJO, 2014; 2015). What would not change, though, were the narratives about extinction, which would endure through legendary-like reifications. The cruel irony of this story is that what took Charrúas to move from

enemies to cultural forbearers was their disappearance as a sovereign and autonomous group.

Juan Zorrilla de San Martín, one of the most acclaimed Uruguayan writers of all time, published in 1888 a poem named *Tabaré*. Different authors sustain that his writings were intentionally committed to the consolidation of a Uruguayan nationality (ACHUGAR, 1985, p. 99; GARCÍA, 1992, p. 17; SOMMER, 1991, p. 241). Curiously, the novel came out four years before San Martín was chosen to deliver a speech on the “Quatercentenary celebrations (1492-1892) in the name of Uruguay”¹²⁴. *Tabaré* is also the name of a blue-eyed (*mestizo*) Charrúa, whose behavior blends native ferocity with a “civilized” piety – which manifests itself when the protagonist remembers his early-lost white mother¹²⁵. After rescuing a white girl (suggestively) named Blanca from other Natives’ libidinal desires, *Tabaré* becomes himself object of the girl’s fascination. When she is seen with *Tabaré* by her brother, the latter kills him in an aesthetical movement that narrates the impossibility of interracial love.

Gustavo San Román (1993) makes an interesting analysis of how the sexual desire (and its absence) of the main characters of the poem carries an important symbolic weight to think not only about San Martín’s account of Uruguayan nationalism, but its constitutive relation to otherness. Notably, Blanca is thrilled by *Tabaré*’s *mestizo* exoticism. *Tabaré*, however, and in contrast to other Native male’s bestiality, experiences no libidinous desires at all. The compassion he feels towards Blanca derives from his vague resemblance of his dead (white) mother. “¿Es ella que falta en su pasado?/ ¿Es la blanca visión de sus ensueños?/A una mujer tan blanca como aquella/ Oyo cantar los canticos maternos” (SAN MARTÍN, 1950, p. 76). Indeed, when sexually potent moments erupt along the narrative, *Tabaré* lowers his head and looks away, what Román (1993, p. 306) classifies as showing both submission and shame. Although *Tabaré*

is source and object of desire, he is not presented as a subject of desire himself. (...) The poem, like its author, ultimately succumbs to repression, though not without temporally flirting with desire. Repression, it seems, was essential to the task of constructing national identity (idem, p. 307).

¹²⁴ His discourse would idealize Spain as divinely predestined to “discover” America. For a more detailed analysis, see ACHUGAR, Hugo. **Planetas sin Boca**. Montevideo: Trilce, 2004, p. 85.

¹²⁵ Importantly, who had been raped by his “pure” Charrúa father.

Such a movement not only, as said by Román (1993), evidences the predestined and necessary death of the Native as a precondition for the birth of the nation. It also illustrates its homogeneous white character, where *mestizaje* is not praised as a defining component of the nation. Thus, such a construction, which happens to be starkly similar to Argentina's national founding fictions, holds an opposite stance to Mexican nationalist idea of *raza cósmica*. Mariela Eva Rodríguez (2016), who has studied discourses of extinction and indigenous reemergence both in Southern Argentina and in Uruguay, calls it “degenerative *mestizaje*” ideology. Such a construction allows one to make sense of most of the state policies that would be instituted on the following years. Since the full denial of the many zones of contact between Natives and Iberian people in the history of the territory that now comprises Uruguay is impossible, managing narratives over the past has always been an area of major national concern. Tabaré was assigned as a part of national curriculum not long after it was first published (ROMÁN, 1993; ASENJO, 2014). Such a denial of the *mestizo* also has to be understood in relation with the growing policing apparatus that aimed to wipe out of Uruguay's countryside much of its vernacular (sometimes called *gaucho*) culture that stood in the way of fenced cattle-raising *latifundio* economy. In one of its most famous passages, San Martín, a Catholic himself, eternalizes Charrúas' fatal destiny:

Jamás mira de frente; Jamás alza la voz, muere en silencio; Jamás un signo de dolor se posa; Entre sus labios pálidos y gruesos. (...) Son el hombre-charrúa, La sangre del desierto, La desgraciada estirpe que agoniza; Sin hogar en la tierra ni en el cielo (SAN MARTÍN, 1950, p. 45).

When I had the opportunity to talk to Martín, a prominent young Charrúa leadership in Montevideo, we passed through *Plaza Fabini*, located in *18 de Julio*, one of the city's main avenues, giving arterial connection to and from Uruguay's administrative center. On the center of the square, *Monumento al Entrevero* is exposed. Inaugurated in 1967 and sculpted by José Belloni, it depicts a “total-war” image, where it is impossible to distinguish conflicting sides. The official website of the municipality describes it as “*indios y gauchos evocan las primeras*

luchas de la patria oriental”¹²⁶. The combatants, all men, show varying phenotypes, and all ride horses. In its octagonal base, it reads:

La Patria rinde homenaje a sus/ héroes anónimos, que en la soledad/ de los campos dejaron su vida/ en holocausto de sus ideales

Sin distinción de clases ni de razas, todos lucharon en un mismo/deseo y esperanza:/ igualdad de/derechos ante una Patria Libre

When I asked Martín about its meaning, he told me that it was a depiction of the Hobbesian-like “state of nature” that’s supposedly prevailed in hinterlands before the creation of the Uruguayan state. Although the monument portrays this total-war as a needed stage towards the achievement of the “free oriental homeland”, its subjects (gauchos and Indians) had to die for it to grow. This is a narrative that follows the romantic nationalist discourse that began in the late nineteenth century, different from the one that prevailed straight after the Massacre of Salsipuedes. We will briefly cover it next. What is similar, though, is the reification of the Native as a masculine figure, whose only possible interaction with the “civilized world” is on the basis of conflict.



Fig. 2 - Monumento al Entrevero, Montevideo. Extracted from Wikipedia

¹²⁶ MUNICIPIO B. Monumento a El Entrevero. 2011. Available at: <<https://municipiob.montevideo.gub.uy/node/234>>. Accessed on 24/05/2020.

That narrative helps to obscure indigenous pasts beyond terminating conflicts. Discourses that emerged after national independences would disregard, for example, the centrality of *tolderías* in bordermaking efforts of Iberian/*criollo* advancements. In literature, it was only after the resolution of disputes over international frontiers – roughly around 1870s – that Indigenous pasts got any attention. Nevertheless, imperial ethnonyms whose adscription was committed to marking geographic location and political alliances were then appropriated by anthropologists and literati as indicatives of cultural forbearing. (ERBIG JR., 2020, p. 164). The author follows the argument stating that

This shift toward appropriating Indigenous pasts while marginalizing contemporary Native peoples was ubiquitous with emergent nationalist and regionalist discourses throughout the Americas. Elite writers reproduced pre-Colombian symbols to espouse patrimonial heritage, “salvage ethnographers” recorded or collected elements of Native cultures they deemed destined to disappear, and artist mythologized Indigenous peoples that they considered to have been doomed to defeat; collectively, they biologized indigeneity, divorced it from modernity, and overlooked the persistence of Native societies. (...) the primary outcome in Río de la Plata was to render invisible the descendants of Charrúas, Minuanes and other autonomous peoples (idem, p. 164).

The anatomy of the archives in such a borderland region allowed for nationalist readings that stitched together ethnic histories with mischaracterized migration (ERBIG JR.; LATINI, 2019). Postcolonial narratives, thus, occluded from historical memory other forms of identification that may have been assumed by Native communities after eventually abandoning *toldería* life-ways. In the case of *pueblos* whose population was mostly brought from the Misiones, they were forcefully expelled from the countryside in attendance to landowners’ interests in the 1860s. Envisioning national future (and progress alike) could not cope with Native histories that were not those of extermination or emigration beyond the national borderlines.

By looking at knowledge producers and literary narratives of indigenous presence in Uruguay, it becomes clear that not only a brutal massacre took place, but also a whole discursive campaign that sought to assure the nation that

“indigenusness had been eliminated”¹²⁷. Not through an honorable war between two formally equal sides. Rather, this assertion has been framed under the banner of a “historical necessity”, which leaves few or no space for neither accountability nor proper remembrance. Salsipuedes, in this sense, provides a clear example of how sameness was produced (by attempted foreclosure of racial fusion) and land was secured through symbolic and material organization of space (SZTAINBOK, 2010, p. 183). Securing land, though, especially when it came to the “external” borderlines of the nation was done through the romantic invention of the “national Indian”. Some illustrative ethnic-maps shown in school books denote how the construction of Uruguay both as a predestined national space and a whitened nation relied on the “folklorization” and the “nationalization” of the Charrúa. Notably, this process has allowed for reading non-Charrúa Indigenous nations (mostly Guaraní) and their histories both as “devalued” and foreign to Uruguayan territory¹²⁸ (ASENJO, 2014, p. 336). The invention of the national Indian was an important part of a nationalist tendency González Laurino (2001) named *orientalidad*¹²⁹.

¹²⁷ Vannina Sztainbook (2010) writes in her article that up to, at least, 2006, the website of the Ministry of Sports and Tourism of Uruguay had attached the following message: “*The population of Uruguay is of European origin, primarily Spanish and Italian; there is no prejudice against other nationalities due to an open door immigration policy. There is the small presence of the black race, which arrived in the country from the African coasts, and was greatly reduced during the times of Spanish domination. As to the indigenous population, it has been over a century since the last Indians disappeared from the national territory, which distinguishes the Uruguayan population from the rest of Hispanic America*”.

¹²⁸ As an example, one can read how the *Manual de Historia de la República Oriental* (BOLLO, 1897) distinguished Charrúas from Guaraníes “*El carácter moral de los charrúas era fiero, indomable, valiente y amigo de la libertad. Guerreros ante todo, prefirieron hacerse diezmar combatiendo siempre contra los conquistadores, que seguir el ejemplo de sus vecinos los guaraníes, sometiéndose a las exigencias religiosas de los jesuitas, y hasta el último momento de su permanencia sobre el suelo del Uruguay hicieron esfuerzos sobrehumanos por substraerse a la esclavitud. (...) En resumen: los charrúas, como los otros pueblos de la raza Pampeana, eran nómades, bravos, guerreros, independientes e indomables*”.

¹²⁹ According to Laurino (2001, p. 33), paradoxically, “*orientalidad* affirms itself as a civilized space through a meaningful appropriation of its opposite (barbarism), in a mythical synthesis that is, in itself, a political resource of negation. By praising the wandering gaucho and his caudillo, the generation of [18]78 grants them a privileged spot in national tradition, but also mythically buries them as detestable mobs alongside their caudillos, erasing the presence of those pertaining to the “*pueblos de ratas*”, formed by the vagabond gauchos, expelled by the fencing of the fields, from the present.



Fig. 3 - Ethnic map of Uruguay. Extracted from a pedagogical booklet in ASENJO, 2014, p. 330

The main authors that consolidated the nationalist-inspired ideology of *orientalidad*, according to Laurino (2001, p. 110) were Francisco Bauzá (1849-1899) and Eduardo Acevedo Díaz (1851-1921). The former has famously sustained that Charrúas “held the destiny of Uruguayans in their hands”, thereby attributing a nation-like political organization to the “extinct” Charrúas¹³⁰. Interestingly, though, by reinforcing their mobile life-ways, such authors were able to discursively construct Charrúas as ancestors, but not as (pre-Uruguayan) national subjects. Thus, reinforcing what is represented by the *Entrevero* monument, and echoing Balibar’s (2002) nation-form,

The national identification with the values that were attributed to the Charrúa tribe only became possible with the verification of their complete disappearance. Upon the desolate image of extermination was founded the legend of the indigenous community, which constructed a national kinship based on the idea of a mythical, autochthonous group. The ethnic plurality dissolves into a new “race”, which germinates from the singular

¹³⁰ His description of pre-columbian American political structures is symptomatic of the proto-national narrative: “*Cuando la conquista española abordó la América del sur, tres naciones encontró organizadas, con elementos propios, carácter independiente y límite, a saber: el Imperio de los Incas (Perú) el reino de Lautaro (Chile) y la República Charrúa (Uruguay) (...) abandonados a sus propios esfuerzos y atacados de firme por los españoles, lucharon los charrúas tres siglos, siempre constituidos en cuerpo de nación (...) Todo esto pasó dentro de un territorio determinado y demostró a las claras la existencia de una nación*” (BAUZÁ, 1975 apud ASENJO, 2014, p. 328).

environment of the native land and is configured within the symbolic limits of the nation (LAURINO, 2001, p. 116).

One also needs to make a case for the first national archeological/anthropological exhibition, the *Exposición Histórico-Americana de Madrid*, in 1892. Such an event would initiate a tendency that is still reproduced in museums across Uruguay regarding its Indigenous pasts. José Henrique Figueira, who is recognized by modern Uruguayan anthropologist Renzo Pi Hugarte as the father of national anthropology, presented a collection of artifacts to make sense of the nation's early inhabitants. Through his demonstration, which fixes indigenous peoples in an unattainable past, Figueira “could demonstrate that Uruguay was a modern and advanced society “à la Europe”, since not only Indigenous were inexistent, but it also had archeologists” (REPETTO, 2017, p. 105¹³¹).

Throughout my short journey in Uruguay in 2019, I had the opportunity to visit three museums whose theme had to do with Native populations. Namely, the *Museo de Arte Precolombino e Indígena* (Montevideo), the *Museo de História del Arte* (Montevideo) and the *Museo Indígena* (Colonia del Sacramento). All of them exhaustively reproduced similar collections of pointy and round rocks that had hunting purposes – very similar to what Figueira exposed in Madrid in 1892. The last museum, in Colonia, also exposes fragments of texts written by journalists and anthropologists regarding Natives (especially Charrúas). Although fractured and contradictory, all texts affirm that no trace of the culture of the Charrúas was actually passed on to modernity. One of the notes reads that

if it were not for the *boleadoras* (...) we would not have anything of their culture. In reality, they have made no influence at all in the general culture of the country, since hunters have had very little influence in civilizations everywhere in the world. The Indians of the north-American fields, in what have they influenced the current culture of the United States? Beyond certain mythic elements, in nothing¹³².

¹³¹ Originally: “no sólo podía demostrar que en Uruguay era una sociedad moderna y avanzada “a la europea”, una vez que inexístían indios, sino también podía mostrar que en Uruguay existían arqueólogos”.

¹³² Piece of a newspaper article exposed in *Museo Indígena* in Colonia del Sacramento. Named “Escribir desde el afecto”, there is not enough information make a proper reference. It is mostly composed by an interview given by Renzo Pi Hugarte, one of the most famous Uruguayan anthropologists, who has been a student of Claude Lévi-Strauss in Sorbonne. Originally, it says: “no fueran las boleadoras (...) no tenemos nada de su cultura. En realidad no influyeron nada en la

Also noteworthy is the complete absence of any mention to Indigenous pasts in museums such as the *Museo Histórico Nacional* and the *Museo Casa de Gobierno*, both in Montevideo. Such an absence is illustrative of incommensurability. It indicates the existence of a grey zone in national history, which is exactly where Uruguay's dual dilemma (SZTAINBOK, 2010) resides. Museums can either tell the history of the republic (white, institutional, civilized) or the pre-history of the Natives (non-white, nomadic, savage). A metaphor can be used by relating Tabaré's (the *mestizo*) lack of reproductive impulse and the way museums in Uruguay keep Native past and the republican history exposed in different buildings. An even more open denial of the nation's indigenous past can be found in a book written by famous Uruguayan historian Carlos Maggi in 1963¹³³ (*apud* VERDESIO, 2005, p. 179-80, our translation): "Here, in Uruguay, we started very recently, and we started out of nowhere: a **lonely immigrant** facing a wide desert. This was a piece of planet untouched by the spirit; Here, not long ago, the stone emerged without marks of **human labor**"¹³⁴. Although not dismissing Uruguay as an "empty land", by relying on the concept of "human labor", Maggi's remark highlights the "ethnic" (as informed by "lonely immigrant") abyss that distinguishes history from pre-history in national terms. Huarpe scholar Carina Jofré (2012), which has studied constructions of the "pre-historical" Indian in San Juan province, Argentina, conceptualized these efforts as "narratives of discontinuity".

In late XIX century, Uruguay received a large wave of immigrants. Most of them were Italian and Spanish men¹³⁵. In a census conducted in Montevideo by the year 1889, 47% of the population was composed by foreigners. When it came to men more than 20 years-old, this number would grow to 78% (AROCENA,

cultura general del país y es que los cazadores influyen muy poco en la civilización, muy poco en cualquier lugar del mundo. Los indios de las praderas norteamericanas, en qué influyeron en la cultura actual de Estados Unidos? Más allá de ciertos elementos míticos, en nada.

¹³³ MAGGI, Carlos. *El Uruguay y su gente*. Alfa: Montevideo, 1963. Curiously, the same author, after almost three decades, would write a book where the nation's *prócer*, Artigas, would be "indigenized" in face of his contact with Native tribes. See more in MAGGI, Carlos. *Artigas y su hijo el caciquillo*. El mundo pensado desde el lejano norte o las 300 pruebas contra la historia en uso. Fin de Siglo: Montevideo, 1991.

¹³⁴ Originally: "Aquí, en Uruguay, empezamos hace muy poco y empezamos desde la nada: un inmigrante solo ante un gran desierto. Esto fue un pedazo de planeta intocado por el espíritu; aquí, no hace mucho, afloraba la piedra sin huellas de trabajo humano".

¹³⁵ Several non-American communities also deserve to be mentioned, such as the Basques, the Swiss, the Russians, the Armenians, Jews and Arabs (AROCENA, 2009).

2009, p. 6). Such phenomenon accounted for the famous representation by Brazilian anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro (1977, p. 461) of Uruguay as a “transplanted society” or as composed by “descendants of the boats”. Supported by the new national political consensus under the leadership of *colorado* José Battle y Ordoñez, Uruguay experienced a liberal-fashioned secular modernizing turn. Leaving aside the mystification of pre-Colombian aesthetics, a new prominent narrative about Uruguay as a “melting pot of (white) races” emerged. Through the paradoxical merging of the monolithic discourse of *orientalidad* with the liberal-urban white cosmopolitanism, it would allow for an even more profound silence over the region’s Indigenous histories. Both the hailing of a mythical “national (extinct) Indian” and the narrative of a cosmopolitan white nation would put Uruguay in an exceptional¹³⁶ place in relation to its American neighbors (RODRÍGUEZ, 2017). Also important, this exceptionality would also be strongly influenced by the schism between the state/civil realm and religion.

Notably, this narrative has materialized itself along the first half of the XX century with the consolidation of public policies that have granted a (formally) indistinct citizenship. José Battle y Ordoñez, who is not rarely (although wrongly) deemed as a socialist, has installed nation-wide policies of welfare-state, who have given Uruguay a puissant urban middle-class and remarkable figures in terms of income equality and literacy. The state would consolidate itself as a strong and hegemonic mediator of the social and economic life in the country¹³⁷, and so was the case of its ideological apparatus. In other words, the institutionalization of a welfare state in Uruguay has accompanied the crystallization of a national homogeneous identity (REAL DE AZÚA, 2000). In

¹³⁶ Some authors make a distinction between the *orientalidad* and the new liberal cosmopolitan ideology (see ASENJO, 2018 and LAURINO, 2001). Although not complimentary incompatible, those narratives have mostly shaped Uruguay bipartisanship from the late XIX century until its XX century military dictatorship (1973-85). The *Partido Blanco/Partido Nacional* would mostly reproduce *orientalidad*-inspired narratives (praising the *patria vieja* and the mythical character of its origins in the countryside). *Partido Colorado*, on the other hand, would mostly pursue a liberal-urban-progressive narrative that hailed white cosmopolitanism. In relation to the Indian aesthetics, while the former relies on its fictional mystification in forming the nation, the latter relies on a completely antagonistic stance, which could not confirm any kind of heritage. Notably, *Partido Colorado* would establish a nationwide incontestable hegemony until 1959.

¹³⁷ Although Battle y Ordoñez has had certain success in consolidating a national industry and an internal market, Uruguay has never abandoned its main characteristic of an intensive-raised livestock exporter.

1925, in a celebration of the country's 100 years of independence, a commemorative book would state that Uruguay is

The only nation of America that can make the categorical affirmation not even a single core that reminds its native population is contained inside its territorial limits. The last Charrúas **disappeared** as a tribe, **without leaving durable vestiges**, in the corner of Yacaré Crucú, in the year of 1832, and since that **long-gone time**, almost over a century ago, the Uruguayan land has remained in absolute possession of the European race and its descendants. Working men from all nationalities populate the country (...) all races of the globe, fused in the melting-pot of our progressive democracy, find a favorable reception (in CABELLA; NATHAN, 2013¹³⁸, p. 6 *apud* REPETTO, 2017, p. 14, our translation and highlighting¹³⁹).

The sentence above shows how Uruguay has proudly portrayed itself as having “no more inhabitants in need to be civilized” (MAESO, 1910¹⁴⁰ *apud* ASENJO, 2014, p. 273). Besides completely crystallizing the “extinction” narrative, the ideology of the “melting-pot of (white) races”, in combination with the mediating role the state has assumed under and after Battle y Ordoñez rule, Uruguay was labeled as a “*sociedad amortiguadora*” – one that praises the consensus, in which conflicts and tensions are somehow more easily manageable (REAL DE AZÚA, 2000, p. 15) – or “hiperintegrated” (RAMA, 1987).

Both these metaphors, which portray Uruguay's lack of predestination for “radical politics”, fictitiously understand the nation as a homogeneous society. Interestingly, Uruguay is commonly referred to as the most secular country of the Americas. Moreover, since its first constitution, citizenship and nationality bear almost no distinction. With the emergence of the liberal-cosmopolitan discourse, one should note that such “closeness” regarding the country's political landscape has less to do with a spatial foreclosure of the national borderlines than with a

¹³⁸ CABELLA, W.; NATHAN, M. **Iguales y diferentes**. Nuestro Tiempo - Libro de los Bicentenarios. Comisión del Bicentenario. Montevideo: Ed. Imprimex, 2013

¹³⁹ Originally: “*es por otra parte la única nación de América que puede hacer la afirmación categórica de que dentro de sus límites territoriales no contiene un sólo núcleo que recuerde su población aborigen. Los últimos charrúas desaparecieron como tribu, sin dejar vestigios perdurables, en el rincón de Yacaré Curucú, en el año 1832, y desde aquel lejano entonces, casi una centuria, quedó la tierra uruguaya en posesión absoluta de la raza europea y de sus descendientes. Hombres laboriosos de todas las nacionalidades pueblan el país (...) todas las razas del orbe, fundidas en el crisol de nuestra democracia progresiva, encuentran favorable acogida*”.

¹⁴⁰ MAESO, Carlos. **El Uruguay a través de un siglo**. La jornada civilizadora realizada en la República Oriental del Uruguay y el brillante porvenir de esta nación americana. Montevideo, 1910.

“ethno-temporal” discontinuity (JOFRE, 2012), which can be seen, as noted, in the way museums are organized throughout the nation. Curiously, Indigenous peoples that entered Uruguay have not rarely been equated with foreigners, as it was the case of the Mbyá Guaraní in the early 1980s (BASINI, 2015).

2.3.

Partial Conclusions

It is only by delving deeper into any political system, listening more attentively at its margins, that one can accurately estimate the powers it has taken to provide the state with the apparent stability that has permitted its elite to presume to speak on behalf of a coherent whole

(Cynthia Enloe)

Recalling Rita Segato (2007), much of what has been exposed regarding the way the country has dealt with its others, and constructed its national formations can be read along her concept of “national formations of alterity”. The assumption to be a conflict-absent and somehow homogeneous society, although placed in a continent that has been under European colonialism for centuries, has had the “seal” of scholar knowledge. Interplead by nationalist endeavors, most anthropologist and historians have relied only on local archives, which limit and favor arguments for the disappearance of Native pasts. Let us remember that the use of ethnonyms to make sense of Native communities had more to do the vantage point of the observer than with a proper self-identifying sign (LATINI; ERBIG JR., 2019). Thereby, no official/academic ground would have the instruments to “anthropologize (i.e. identify social otherness) indianness”¹⁴¹ in

¹⁴¹ João Pacheco de Oliveira Filho, who has conducted extensive fieldwork and produced juridical reports about Indigenous peoples in Brazil’s northeastern region (commonly thought as Indian-exempt before the 1980s), coins the concept *Materiais de Bordo* to make sense both of the set of social *praxis* and the juridical-administrative structure that may allow for an anthropologist to ascribe (indigenous) otherness to a determined collectivity. Notably, he is talking from Brazil, whose constitution recognizes distinct citizenship and land rights for groups and individuals recognized as Indigenous. Therefore, anthropological report-making has had (and still do have) a fundamental role in recognizing Indigenous collective subjects. For more on that, see FRENCH, 2011 and OLIVEIRA FILHO, 1999.

Uruguay (see OLIVEIRA FILHO, 1999, p. 113; BASINI, 2015, introdução). In the same line, no group of people would publicly claim collective identification by appealing to indigenous peoplehood, although images and aesthetics that drew upon the “legendary” Uruguayan Indian have had resonance in left-wing organizations. The bluntest example was the Marxian-inspired *Movimento de Liberación Nacional – Tupamaros* (MLN-T), who carried on its name both a reference to legendary Indigenous leader Túpac Amará and Eduardo Acevedo Díaz’s romantic novels¹⁴². In this sense, although some Native aesthetics was indeed mobilized in Uruguay’s political arena during the second half of the XX century, none would sustain claims based on a long-term colonial dispossession. Rather, such images were mobilized to voice claims “from within” the limits of the national narrative – such as “Uruguayan productivity” (see MERENSON, 2010, p. 273).

Notably, though, if we are able to talk about Indigenous reemergence in the following chapter, such an effort is possible due to new possibilities to make sense of social dynamics and claims that are intertwined with the new global paradigms of Human Rights and indigeneity. As mentioned in the first chapter, that has enabled groups that identify themselves with an indigenous identity to voice collective claims publicly through a language of rights and self-determination (FRENCH, 2009; GABBERT, 2018). Such reemergence, though, does not happen outside discourses of alterity and management of otherness. Notably: “to encounter indigeneity is not to describe it as it really is, but to explore how difference is produced culturally and politically. Understanding this process requires attention to both the temporal and the social” (GARCÍA, 2008, p. 217).

What is particular about Uruguay, though, is that the meaning the “nation-form” has given to indigeneity has been both one of complete temporal and cultural overcoming and also one of “national legend”, which heavily relied on the racist ethnonyms ascribed in late colonial times. That has led to the paradox that both “everyone and no one can make claims to [Charrúa] ‘Indianness’” in

¹⁴² As mentioned before, Acevedo Díaz was one of the prominent writers that gave shape to the ideology of *orientalidad* in the last quarter of the XIX century. His texts make explicit reference to the term “Tupamaro”.

Uruguay (SZTAINBOK, 2010, p. 187). It is no accident that the most famous motto related to Uruguay national soccer team's playing style is "*garra charrúa*"¹⁴³. Thus, to talk about a process of Indigenous reemergence that manifests itself through an imposed ethnonym (Charrúa), which has also been as a catch-all term for representing the "national Indian", needs to take into account the way difference has been managed by the nation-state. As I will further mention, many reemergent communities have appropriated symbols and narratives that were advanced by the same reproductive apparatus that had given sustenance, laterally, to the narrative of extinction. A curious case that unsettled some of the narratives and the frontiers of the Uruguayan "nation-form" remounts to the early 1980s, when a small group of Mbyá Guaraní entered Uruguayan territory. At first, local anthropologist sought to categorize them as "Paraguayan Indians" (BASINI, 2015, introdução), what has revealed some of the anxieties of a presumably white country located in a non-white continent¹⁴⁴.

In observance to most of what has been exposed along this chapter, José Basini (2015) sustains that Uruguay's "indianless" condition is materialized alongside three main "voids" (*vazios*): i) a juridical void, which is materialized in the absence of constitutional dispositifs that legislate over Indigenous kinds of citizenship and Indigenous movement across its national borders (p. 436), ii) a historiographic void, which pretty much has to with the equation "Charrúa = national (extinguished) Indian", and the consequent failure to account for other kinds of Native presence in the formation of the national territory (BASINI, 2015, p. 442; see also ERBIG JR.; LATINI, 2019) and iii) an anthropological void, which resides in the enduring epistemological essentialism regarding Native identities found in Uruguayan academia¹⁴⁵ (BASINI, 2015, p. 455, see also REPETTO, 2017, cap. 3).

¹⁴³ As noted in MONES, Úrsula Kühl. **Nuevo Diccionario de Uruguayismos**. Bogotá: Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 1993, p. 180.

¹⁴⁴ What is interesting though is that all these "lacks" are subject to ambivalence, as it was the case with the case of the Mbyá-Guaraní and, as it will be seen next, with the reemergent Charrúas. The engagement of recent Charrúas in transnational activity, I argue, renders visible many ambivalences within these "voids", which may function as potent fractures to challenges the limits of the political in a post-colonial sovereignty (SHAW, 2008).

¹⁴⁵ It is paramount to say that anthropology in Uruguay is showing, from 2013 onwards, a wider acceptance of discussions that unsettle the narrative of the homogeneous nation. Notably, Nicolás Guigou (2018), who is the director of the faculty of Social Anthropology at Universidad de la República (UdelaR), has developed the critical concept of *Antropología Caucásica* to make sense

In the next chapter, I will move on to analyze how reemergent Charrúas have been mobilizing claims and discourses along transnational spaces, and how such activity challenges the limits of the political of a presumably “hiperintegrated” (RAMA, 1987) nation. I will try to evaluate how “post-national citizenships” (MAZZ, 2018) are expressing themselves through disputes over memory and the past by engaging with a new transnational regime regarding indigeneity. Subsequently, backed by the presented case, I will argue in favor of considering the phenomenon of Indigenous reemergence as a matter of interest for International Relations.

3.

Charrúas: Here and There, Now and Then

Longe de ser uma profunda expressão da unidade de um grupo, um etnônimo resulta de um acidente histórico, que frequentemente é conceitualizado como um ato falho, associado a um jogo de palavras e com efeito de chiste. Muitas vezes um grupo dominado não é mantido como uma unidade isolada, mas é incorporado a outras populações (igualmente dominadas ou, inversamente, frações da população dominante), sendo dividido, subdividido e somado a outras unidades de diferentes tipos. Esquartejado, montado e remontado sob modalidades diversas e em diferentes contextos situacionais, qual a continuidade histórica e cultural que um tal grupo dominado pode ainda apresentar?

(João Pacheco de Oliveira Filho)

What was does not provide a set pattern, like a mold, for what will or could be. Rather, the exertion of temporal sovereignty in the face of a history of settler violence and displacement consists in an ongoing re-creation oriented by an engagement with the historical density—the “pieces”—of collective identity and experience.

(Mark Rifkin)

Along this Chapter, I will discuss the phenomenon of Charrúa reemergence in the light of what has been discussed in the previous chapters – both regarding international Indigenous politics and the regional particularities regarding colonialism and national formations. Firstly, I will briefly discuss what the idea of reemergence stands for, and contrast it with the more scholarly consolidated category of ethnogenesis. Subsequently, I will present an outline of the formation of Indigenous organizations in Uruguay, which dates back to 1989, and has undergone important changes in recent years. Finally, I will evaluate how one of the most prominent Charrúa collectives, the *Consejo de la Nación Charrúa* (CONACHA) is vocalizing claims in the international realm, which develop in concomitance with their reemergence as an Indigenous people. My intention is to discuss some of the potentials such endeavors have in unsettling national and regional political landscapes.

3.1.

Between reemergence and ethnogenesis – a conceptual debate

Ethogenesis has been a widely used terminology not only to make sense of contemporary Indigenous politics, but also – and most especially – to account for outcomes of historical interethnic contact. Conceptual efforts are very much indebted to Brazilian anthropologist Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (1976), who has developed the notion of “interethnic friction”, which basically changes anthropological attention from investigating patrimony from an ontologically pre-determined “culture” to a sociological interest on relations involving economic, political and social aspects of (in)dependency manifested in the encounters of social entities. Such a movement has been widely influenced by workings on ethnicity from the late 1960s, which have sustained the importance of reflecting on the changing/manipulable frontiers that differentiate an ethnic group over time¹⁴⁶. That is, the definition, adscription and conscience of difference between “us” and “them” are produced for and from social contact and exchange rather than from isolation.

The timely dimension of this argument will be part of our concern in this chapter. Mark Rifkin (2017, p. 2) sees the outcomes of settler states’ network of institutionalized authority (maps, policies, monuments, schooling...) over their “domestic” territory as a project of “denial of Indigenous temporal sovereignty”. That is the enactment of one vision or way of experiencing time as the only temporal formation to possibly understand the unfolding of time itself. This process is generally operationalized through the territorialized institutionalization of a lexicon that guards control of symbols and narratives that sustain national formations. That is precisely what the educational project conducted by Varela in late nineteenth century was about.

¹⁴⁶ A work that remarkably represents this tendency is BARTH, Fredrik. **Ethnic Groups and Boundaries**: The social organization of culture difference. Bergen: Universitets Forlaget, 1969.

In practical terms, Native peoples often end up framed either as being fully assimilated in the wider political community¹⁴⁷ or as “stuck-in-time” isolated remnants. In other words, timelocked in a temporal stasis, and located in an antithetical position in relation to modernity (RIFKIN, 2017, p. 5). This kind of spatio-temporal dynamics, which has deepened itself with national independences and the predominance of positivist readings of international law, has altered dynamics and conceptions of (ethnic) “change” as well. Modernity ended up functioning less as a descriptive chronology and more as normative “right” to inclusion in a certain kind of shared time – the “present” (idem, p. 13). In many cases, Indians were deemed the “right” to move to modernity. The common price, however, was the involvement in frames not of their making that normalized non-native (white) presence, privilege and power¹⁴⁸. Glenn Coulthard (2014), in a more materially-envisioned argumentation, argues this movement is intimately paralleled with ongoing practices of land dispossession. Rifkin (2017, p. 37) recurs to the idea of a “chronobiopolitics” to make sense of the territorial institutionalization of “a present” or a national time, and the linear conception of time that comes along settler-colonial sovereignty in the sense of positing the “givenness” of certain territorial jurisdiction as the self-evident basis for understanding the movement of time (let us not forget how this relates to the hobbesian principles already discussed). Moreover, it operates by framing time as an unending succession in which present unfolds out of the past while supplanting it¹⁴⁹.

This operation has, of course, not been restricted to the bureaucratic corpus of legal-administrative institutions. It was mostly backed and sustained by nationalist-inspired scholarship, literature, images and other aesthetic representations regarding Native people. According to Joanne Barker (2011, p.

¹⁴⁷ García (2009) reminds us that the abnegation of public ethnic identification can, in many occasions, be read as an agency-endowed action of Natives themselves. In her writings, she notes how some Guaraní in southern Brazil not rarely shifted from publicly presenting themselves as “Indians” to non-Indian vassals (and vice-versa) as a political strategy after Pombaline reforms.

¹⁴⁸ Although the formulation of Indigenous inclusion in the “present time” may operate as a way of challenging racializing forms of anachronization, it threatens to elide other ways of envisioning the multivectorial dynamics of Native people’s continuity and change that exceed such a frame (RIFKIN, 2017, p. 13).

¹⁴⁹ Past, thus, ends up framed as alterity. In other words, past ages framed as somehow not contiguous with modernity and the idea of present ends up as an “integrated whole” (RIFKIN, 2017, p. 39-40).

20), Native traditions end up fixed in an authentic past and are then used as the measure of a cultural-as-racial authenticity in the modern present. History and anthropology have both been deeply engaged with such a framework (SHAW, 2008, cap. 4)¹⁵⁰. Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000), on Westernized modern historicism, says it accounts for a conception of time that is godless, continuous, empty and homogeneous. For him,

the assumed universal applicability of its method entails the further assumption that it is always possible to assign people, places, and objects to a naturally existing, continuous flow of historical time, such that one will always be able to produce a timeline for the globe, in which for any given span of time, the events in areas X, Y, and Z can be named — putting them into a time we are all supposed to have shared, consciously or not (CHAKRABARTY, 2000, p. 57 apud RIFKIN, 2017, p. 19).

Notably, the political consciousness acquired by Indigenous groups in the wake of their International articulations has paved the way for deep contestation over official versions of history (HILL, 1992; LEVI; MAYBURY-LEWIS, 2012). Therefore, to debate ethnogenesis or reemergence is not only about the present. Rather, interpretations of history are themselves the most fiercely disputed present-day political arena for Indigenous peoples.

This discussion ought to be understood in the face of the particular forms that knowledge about Native pasts has been developed in Banda Oriental. To remember what have already been said, the ethnonyms that were used to describe Native groups not only were erratically distributed, but also had more to do with strategic ascriptions for territorial control from Iberian empires than with actual Native behavior (ERBIG JR., 2020; ERBIG JR.; LATINI, 2019; GARCIA, 2009). Regarding independent native societies, such as those whose life-ways developed within the nomadic *toldería* form, whenever their parts abandoned their autonomous life by settling along with the *Hispano/criollo* society (either forcefully or spontaneously), they would lose their ethnic identifiers. With its suppression from written records, combined with the practices of ethnocide described earlier and the consolidation of narratives that folklorized a “national Indian”, the control over regional Native symbols and histories became dominion of the state. One could not wrongly say that such pasts have become central

¹⁵⁰ Lyons (2010, cap. 2) brings the image of “culture cops” to portray “cultural elites” who decry cultural forms as authentic/inauthentic.

matters of national security and sovereignty. In the case of Uruguay, which had not achieved territorial stability and effective national sovereignty until the 1870s, the Charrúa “*indio nacional*” narrative indirectly legitimated violent repressive action against vernacular rural lifeways and small land-owners that consolidated the full territorial and symbolic dominion of the statist apparatus (BARRÁN; NAHUM, 1967).

The same ethnonym – Charrúa – is now central to Indigenous reemergences not only in Uruguay, but also in Brazil and Argentina. Since they had been deemed extinct, much of the activity of the reemergent collectives is centered on reconstructing history and memory in order to shape and form for their existence as a social group with some degree of socio-cultural continuity. It goes without saying that this is a hard task, since the Uruguayan state and much of its citizens appeal to the ethnonym as part of a nationalist folklore regarding the state’s national formations of alterity.

A more-or-less established consensus regarding how to name the processes of ethnic actualization of Indigenous groups who were considered culturally and linguistically extinct (HILL, 1992, p. 811) is forming among scholars from Argentina and Uruguay. Notably, those are the only two countries of Latin America considered by Darcy Ribeiro (1967) as being populated by a “transplanted people”, and which have been subject to a *settler-colonial* social and territorial history (VERDESIO, 2005; 2014). The “reemergence” terminology has been adopted by scholars such as Gustavo Verdesio and Mariela Eva Rodríguez, who work closely with Charrúa people in Uruguay. In 2017, a volume entitled “*Reemergencia indígena en los países del Plata: Los casos de Uruguay y de Argentina*” was published in the journal *Conversaciones del Cono Sur*¹⁵¹.

In one of the articles of the volume, Argentinean anthropologist Axel Lazzari (2017), who has conducted extensive research alongside the Rankülche people, elaborates on his advocacy for the term “reemergence”. He highlights that sociopolitical dynamics of identification involving Indigenous groups that were assumed to be “extinct” (as told by museums and archives) or disappeared

¹⁵¹ The volume was inspired on a series of presentations exposed in the *II Simposio Sección de Estudios del Cono Sur*, from the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), in the *Universidad de la República*, in Montevideo.

through acculturation are, in many aspects, different from those of groups whose existence was not under question by the dominant society. That is, although both are processes of ethnogenesis, what he calls “novelty factors” (*factores de novedad*) – regarding the way reemergent groups deal with a common opinion regarding their “inexistence” – ought to be taken into account (LAZZARI, 2017, p. 43).

According to Lazzari (idem, p. 46), the idea of reemergence better captures the temporal “dis-continuities” that characterize the Indigenous experience of those who belong to “acknowledged-as-extinct” groups. Notably, processes of collective (re)construction of symbols and affections are commonly enacted through the (re)articulation of shattered memories and narratives that interplay with established regimes of social acknowledgement, such as national formations of alterity, as discussed by Rita Segato (2007) and Claudia Briones (2007). Therefore, by recurring to the figures of “specter” and “fetish”, one can think of reemergence as the invoking of figures that occupies an inter-state-eal space, defined by Jessica Auchter et al (2019, p. 665) as “between the state and the myths that sustain it. In other words, the ghost is the figure that reminds us that the story told by the state of its own crafting is incomplete, and rests on the deaths of others”. In that sense, they can be thought as a *revenant* that recalls an unpaid debt (DERRIDA¹⁵² *apud* LAZZARI, 2017, p. 47). In relation to a national society whose foundational narratives appeal to a triumph of the European reason over Indigenous (honorable) barbarism, Charrúa reemergence represents a challenge to a whole civilizational promise, whose political structure of social mediation may have their legitimacy put under question.

This being said, I further move to analyze the historical formation of Charrúa groups in Uruguay. As it will be notable, public events of high-level political dispute, especially those involving periods of regime change, have lain out grounds for the development of collectives identified with Indigenous descent. Moreover, it will be clear how transnational networks have, since the foundation of the Indigenous movements in Uruguay, been significantly important for their development.

¹⁵² DERRIDA, Jacques. **The Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International.** London: Routledge, 1994.

3.2.

Post-dictatorial fractures

En todas las latitudes, si no los asisten las inflexiones que solo puede proporcionar la duda, hay caminos que desembocan rectamente en la atrocidad

(Tomás de Mattos)

El pasado es indestructible. Tarde o temprano, vuelven las cosas; y una de las cosas que vuelven es el proyecto de abolir el pasado

(Jorge Luis Borges)

“*Siempre estuvimos acá*”. The sentence with which I start this section, which can be translated as: “we have always been here”, was said by M.C., an integrant of a Charrúa collective named *Bascuadé N’chalá* (in Charrúa: rise up, brother/sister) as we were sitting on the grassy soil of a big square near Montevideo’s bus terminal. Beyond words, we were also sharing the hot water of a *mate*, what was also true for most of the encounters I experienced in the country. Ironically, we had at our sights the view of an obelisk that renders tribute to the men who crafted the first Uruguayan Constitution, in 1830. Back then, no one would deny the existence of Charrúa peoples inside the artificial borderlines that divided and gave shape to what is now Uruguay. Before discussing the rise of indigenous collectives in Uruguay’s late XX century, I go back to briefly discuss some of the social dynamics that started to unsettle the homogeneous/hiperintegrated/free-of-radical-disputes myth about Uruguay’s national identity.

From 1973 to 1985, Uruguay, following a continental trend, has lived up with a civil-military dictatorship, which inaugurated a regime of exception that suppressed and violated basic civil and human rights. In order to make sure that the Latin American countries would not follow Cuba’s path in aligning themselves with the Communist bloc, the Uruguayan dictatorship had as its main enemy the left-wing group *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional – Tupamaros*,

which I have already mentioned briefly. Notably, the group, which had an armed branch, was being persecuted by the state since the 60s. According to Gustavo Verdesio (2005, p. 178), the rupture of the democratic rite, which had been common ground in Uruguay for most of the twentieth century, has produced a deep social trauma, which has led to the reassessment of much of the grounds that gave symbolic sustenance to the political community until then. Among them was the belief in “equality as a foundational element and difference as something ruled by chance – [whereby] the only differences that were publically debatable were political¹⁵³ ones”.

The last sentence is illustrative of what I have discussed in the previous chapter. Such a social belief is the precise representation of a nation-form which has been established in a foundational moment of violence, and whose legitimate presence has been reenacted through a discourse of indispensable rational-secular providence. Let us not forget the aesthetic representations of both the *Entrevero* statue, and the walls that separate historical/republican museums from the a-historical/indigenous ones. Such a traumatic rupture, which has led to a reassessment of Uruguayan national narratives, has also had direct impact on its foundational structures. That is, the ontological groundings from which one can conceive and be conceived as part of the political community. To be short, one of the things that succeeded the civil-military dictatorship in Uruguay was an aesthetic movement, which I will further address, that linked the foundational Massacre of Salsipuedes to the violence that had been perpetrated in the recent state of exception. In order to have a better grasp of this movement, which inaugurates public indigenous articulation in Uruguay, I will briefly expand on some concepts of psychoanalysis that may help us to understand it.

¹⁵³ We should note that when Verdesio (2005) mentions that “only political difference was able to be conceptualized as “difference” in Uruguayan society, he means institutional/party politics. Although different from the notion of “the political” I have discussed in the first chapter – Verdesio’s quote illustrates an important perspective for us to bring back some takes on “the political” for conversation. His affirmation is clearly committed to show the “limits” of subjectivity in Uruguay society, which I have discussed along the second chapter. Such “limits” are bound to the constitution of the political space, whose inauguration and sustenance over time are dependent on the (re)enactment of a foundational violent act. As we have discussed before, in a hobbesian account, it can be thought of as the (figurative) moment that creates the political community, thereby rendering possible the political life inside of a spatially bound political community.

A central idea for many authors that discuss the relation between the Uruguayan civil-military dictatorship and the emergence of indigenous collectives has to do with the pressures of reimagining the “national imaginary” (see VERDESIO, 2005, p. 179; ASENJO, 2018, p. 1; OLIVERA, 2016, p. 195). That is a term whose meaning account for both a symbolic/social structure and for subjectivities. Subjectivity, in this sense, ought to be understood as part of a structure of meaning that is sustained by a symbolic order, which itself only comes into being with the constitution of subjects. That reading is indebted to a Lacanian perspective, whose “decentered” take on subjectivity is reliant on language, which is the interpellative locus that both locates a subject within a symbolic order and allows him/her to constitute himself/herself as such¹⁵⁴. Given their contingent ontological groundings, both subject and symbolic order are structured around a “lack”, which for the latter stands for a constitutive inaugural antagonism – “a non-founded founding act of violence” (EDKINS; PIN-FAT, 1999, p. 6). Without losing sight of the importance of language, such a foundational moment is achieved under imposition of meaning, which itself is dependent on an “inaugural” master signifier. For the symbolic order to be consolidated, though, “the violence that is implicated in this process then disappears: in the history of what happened, what was brought into being with this foundational act is narrated as always already inevitable” (idem).

Within modernity, sovereignty performs the function of a master signifier, being a nodal point for meaning articulation. For that matter, we should remember that sovereignty is a political model that historically emerges as an effort to decentralize the universal authority of the Catholic Church. This movement, as previously commented, becomes itself engulfed in a tension between the universal and the particular, which sustains the “problem of difference” (INNAYATULLAH; BLANEY, 2004). This being said, sovereignty – which is central both to discourses of politics and the international – is itself embroiled in questions of subjectivity. It functions to define politics in a particular way, where the sovereign is the only referent through which one can conceptualize it (EDKINS; PIN-FAT, 1999, p. 7). In other words, sovereignty satisfies the

¹⁵⁴ This he/she division must also be understood as part of an authoritative heteronormativity sustained in/by a symbolic order. Although my writing gives the impression that such a gendered division is “anterior” to the discussion subject-symbolic order, it should not be understood as such.

“desire” of people (for wholeness, to overcome the lack) to be subjects in a symbolic order which is ultimately secured by it. Therefore, if the social order fails to symbolize people’s desire, what becomes subject of questioning are the groundings of the master signifier, which inaugurates and authorizes the political space.

In 1985, the year that marked the end of the dictatorship, Alberto Restuccia released a theatrical play named *Salsipuedes*, where the Indian was portrayed as the *par excellence* victim of state repression. Described as a “show-historical-cultural-folkloric-musical”, it was divided in three parts, named “*Sangre Charrúa*, *Genocídio Étnico* and *El país de Urú*”. According to Darío Asenjo (2014, p. 358, our translation¹⁵⁵), it was one of the hallmarks of an aesthetical movement he has named “Indian renovation”. The theater was a “claim of all Uruguayan disappeared native ethnicities, against all intolerance, which calls for the non reproduction of the bloody facts (...) [of] the first government of this republic (...) it is about an “memory aid” to avoid historical forgetting”.

Three years later, famous Uruguayan writer Tomás de Mattos has published a novel named “*¡Bernabé, Bernabé!*”. It romantically narrates scenes of the Massacre of Salsipuedes, which is portrayed as moment of treason and genocide perpetrated by the Uruguay’s “founding fathers” against local native peoples. Bernabé is the name of the nephew of Fructuoso Rivera – the first president of Uruguay and one of the main orchestrators of Salsipuedes –, who is killed by fugitive Charrúas in a revengeful act one year after Salsipuedes. The novel is fragmentally narrated by a fictitious protagonist-narrator, Josefina Péguay, who has lived among eminent public figures of Uruguay’s early decades in the second half of XIX century. It is interesting to note that, as a woman, Josefina is able to narrate some of the foundational episodes of Uruguayan history from a marginal, “private” realm, which enables her to paint the protagonist with ambiguous sentiments that are commonly left outside official history. In the book’s prologue, the book explicitly notes that its narrative should be understood in parallel with other historical facts, as it reads

¹⁵⁵ Originally: « revendication de toutes les ethnies uruguayennes autochtones disparues, contre toutes les intolérances et qui appelle à ce que ne se reproduisent pas des faits sanglants (...) [de]le premier gouvernement de cette république (...) il s’agit d’un « aidemémoire » pour éviter l’oubli historique »

I have chosen “*¡Bernabé, Bernabé!*” as the spearhead (...) of the publication of the Archive Narbondo-Péguy¹⁵⁶ (...) because it seems a text that stands very closely to these days, still marked by the revelations of Nuremberg. I am [keen of] the rarely heard opinion that we, the pleased citizens of a small, but peaceful country, do not enjoy the protection of a vast abyss such as an ocean to separate and distinguish us from the perpetrators of the crimes that we today repudiate and whose punishment congratulates us so much. In all latitudes, if not accompanied by the inflections that only doubt can provide, there are roads that straightly fall into atrocity (MATTOS, 1988, p. 25, our translation¹⁵⁷).

By interestingly praising the “doubt” as an indispensable means for a society to avoid crimes against humanity, the romance poses as a harsh critique over the way the national historical imaginary has been built, allowing for a revaluation of its foundational events. In one of the passages, when Josefina is discussing with his dad weather Salsipuedes and Mataojo (another raid operation against the Charrúas) could be though as an act of treason perpetrated by the Uruguay state, the latter belittles her sense of historical compassion for the natives and associates it with her femininity. “I am lucky you are not one of my male children: I would not know how to make a place in life for you” (MATTOS, 1988, p. 55, our translation¹⁵⁸). By appealing to a “historical necessity” (“*necesidad histórica*”) (p. 56), her father can be read as a loyal representative of the official national history, which dismisses any kind of social accountability for the massacres, since “the destiny of the Charrúas was sealed” (“*la suerte de los Charrúas estaba echada*”) (p. 57).

Literary studies scholar Veronica Garibotto (2015, p. 62) comes up with interesting reflections about Mattos’ famous novel. According to her, the text takes the dialectics between remembering and forgetting – which are central to the construction and reproduction of national narratives – to its limit for the case of

¹⁵⁶ This archive is a fictitious narrative instrument, which is central to other novels written by Tomás de Mattos. Namely, *La fragata de las mascararas* (1996) and *Historia estampada* (1997).

¹⁵⁷ Originally: “*He escogido “¡Bernabé, Bernabé!” como punta de lanza (...) de la publicación del Archivo Narbondo-Péguy (...) porque me parece un texto muy cercano a estos tiempos todavía signados por las revelaciones de Núremberg. Soy de la poco escuchada opinión de que nosotros, los complacidos ciudadanos de un país chiquito pero pacífico, no gozamos del amparo de un abismo tan vasto como un océano, para separarnos y distinguimos de los perpetradores de los crímenes que hoy repudiamos y cuyo castigo tanto nos congratula. En todas las latitudes, si no los asisten las inflexiones que solo puede proporcionar la duda, hay caminos que desembocan rectamente en la atrocidad*”.

¹⁵⁸ Originally: “*Menos mal que no sos de mi hijos varones: no sabrías hacerte un lugar en la vida*”.

Uruguay. The appeasing narrative of a homogeneous and egalitarian nation is challenged when its foundational moment is labeled as an act of treason. According to Darío Asenjo (2014, p. 358), Tomás de Mattos drew inspiration for his writings in declarations made by an old torturer of the dictatorial period. Interestingly, when I visited the home of Monica Michelena, one of the main Charrúa leaders of CONACHA, a painting exposed in of the house's walls read a paraphrase of one of the most famous passages of Mattos' book. Namely, when Charrúa cacique Vaimaca Perú sees Fructuoso Rivera shooting against his kin, the epitome of treason, and says: "*Mira, Frutos matando los amigos*", (MATTOS, 1988, p. 78).

These two artistic pieces are illustrative of Uruguay's post-dictatorial moment, in which the current symbolic referents were failing to account for people's desire. Therefore, alternative readings of the "national" gained the public realm, and contributed to the refashioning of Uruguay's national imaginary. Obviously, this movement should not be seen as "internal" or as something that occurs inside the national capsule. Rather, they are deeply related to social and symbolic connections that go beyond national borders, whose attachment with local dynamics may potentially reinscribe national narratives. Regarding Uruguay, the end of the civil-military rule is often read as a final blow to the imaginary of a "hiperintegrated" nation (ASENJO, 2014; LAURINO, 2001; VERDESIO, 2005). As we will further discuss, it is amidst this moment of effervescence that groups that claim Indigenous identification begin to gain momentum in the national public realm.

It should be noted, however, in a similar vein to what happened in Brazil, that Uruguayan parliament has approved a law that has left most crimes against humanity perpetrated during the dictatorial period unpunished (*Ley de Caducidad de la Pretensión Punitiva del Estado*, nº15.848/1986¹⁵⁹). The main proponent of the law, with the argument of "institutional salvation", was the first elected president after dictatorship himself, the *Colorado* José María Sanguinetti¹⁶⁰. For those that account for the "Indian renovation" trend, amnesty and amnesia were

¹⁵⁹ Available at: <<https://legislativo.parlamento.gub.uy/temporales/leytemp1140721.htm>>.

¹⁶⁰ It is important to say that Sanguinetti himself, in 1985, had proposed a law that would guarantee full amnesty for crimes perpetrated during the dictatorial period. The law, however, was not approved in the parliament.

framed as different chapters of the same continuously violent story. For them, the armed forces of the state that killed and tortured under dictatorial exception represented no more than a continuation of those crimes perpetrated on the Massacre of Salsipuedes over 150 years before.

3.3.

Uruguay's "Indian Renovation"

The year 1989 has formally marked the beginning of organized Indigenous action and advocacy in Uruguay. The year has witnessed the foundation of two organizations: *Asociación de Descendientes de la Nación Charrúa* (ADENCH) and *Asociación Indigenista del Uruguay* (AIDU). The latter had the intention of growing public awareness regarding the needs of the Mbyá Guaraní families that had arrived in Uruguay in the early 1980s. Through AIDU's action, these families were secured a piece of land to live in Park Lecoq, located in the outside fringes of Montevideo. As briefly mentioned, the presence of these families have shed light on some of the tensions grounded on a territory that is part of Latin America, but that has no legal or cultural spaces for Indigenous peoples nor proper investigations regarding native pasts (BASINI, 2015, cap. 7). Notably, AIDU was renamed after some years to *Asociación Mbyá Guaraní Uruguay* (AMGU).

ADENCH, as the name says, was the first organization that advanced claims regarding the Charrúas. Founded in the city of Trinidad (Flores department), it sought to "restore traditions" of people who "had the conviction of being descendents from Amerindians, which would, therefore, automatically accept to take part in studies and analysis required to prove such condition" (ASENJO, 2014, p. 412¹⁶¹). Its foundation partially complied with projects conducted by Uruguay's Ministry of Education and Culture¹⁶², which were fostering researches about "Uruguayan natives". Notably, ADENCH, at its early days, sought to constitute a formal archive regarding Charrúa descendants, which

¹⁶¹ Extracted from ADENCH Statute, 1990.

¹⁶² Most expressively, the *Primer Encuentro Nacional de Descendientes de Indígenas*, in november 1988.

was deeply reliant on biological and genetic material. “Science came to secure their claims by posing the legitimacy of an Indian ascendance within biological anthropology” (idem, our translation¹⁶³). Markers such as the Mongolian spot, shovel-shaped teeth and fingerprints were considered important indicators of Charrúa ascendancy, and shaped both the public projects and politics of membership of ADENCH. After some years, as it will be mentioned, the group would leave aside its focus on biology and genetics as “indicators of indianess”.

Ten years later, in 2001, a group named Sepé was founded. In a similar vein to what ADENCH was already doing, the group would often visit schools to mobilize debates regarding Indigenous peoples in Uruguay. Nevertheless, its membership was not restricted to people who claimed to be descendant from a specific ethnicity. Gustavo Abella, one of the groups’ founders, who also happen to be a historian, affiliated to the Marxist-leninist party *Unidad Popular*, noted that Indians constituted the “living memory of the Artigas’ plan¹⁶⁴” (in ASENJO, 2014, p. 417). Both ADENCH and Sepé, although through different means, were interested in reclaiming the indigenous component within the national narrative. The former group was created out of a demand that came from the Ministry of Education and Culture. The latter ultimately linked Charrúas with Artigas, both representing national projects of land redistribution and the ultimate national hero (*prócer*).

The by far most expressive act these organizations (mostly ADENCH) have managed to put forward was the repatriation of the remains of Vaimaca Perú. Perú was one of the Charrúas that were held captive after the Massacre of Salsipuedes and taken to Montevideo. Three years later, he would be chosen by the Uruguayan government to be one of the four Charrúas to be abhorrently exposed in Paris. His remains had been in Europe since then, and ADENCH

¹⁶³ Originally: « *La science vint au secours de leurs reivindications en apportant la légitimité d’une ascendance indienne avec l’anthropologie biologique* ».

¹⁶⁴ Remembering what has already been briefly exposed, José Artigas was one of the leaders of the *Liga Federal*, whose federalist political project clashed with both Buenos Aires’ centralism and Portuguese southern expansionism. Most of the praised ideals of Artigas were advanced in his *Reglamento* (1815), where he advocated for a wide agrarian reform. He is also praised by most of the Indigenous organizations in Uruguay for his positions regarding that “the Indians should govern themselves”, assuming therefore a radically distinct position that Fructuoso Rivera’s (for more on that, see CULTELLI, Martín. *Artigas y los Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas*. **Zur**, 2017).

would play a fundamental role in having them repatriated. In 2000, Uruguayan congress approved the *Ley 17.256/2000*, which was based on a bilateral agreement between governments of Uruguay and France, agreeing on the repatriation of the remains.

In July 2002, under the auspices of the previously mentioned law, Vaimaca Perú was returned to American soil. In a highly solemn rite, his remains were buried in the *Pantheon Nacional* of the Central Cemetery of Montevideo. Presented with the highest national honors, the ritual was a show of deep symbolical paradoxes and controversies regarding Uruguay's national narratives and its modes of making sense of natives. First of all, Perú's coffin was carried by the *Cuerpo de Blandengues de Montevideo*, a cavalry unit whose foundation predates Uruguayan independence. As it was already mentioned, young Artigas was a *Blandengue* himself, and one of their main tasks was to counter Portuguese troops and secure properties from Charrúas and other nomadic indigenous peoples that threatened the interest of the *hacendados*. Having Perú hailed as a national hero, he was received as a "soldier of Artigas". According to the then Ministry of Foreign Relations, those were "the remains of someone who has participated in fierce and tough struggles, typical of his epoch, and who has accompanied with his custody and active and vigilant action the acts of our maximum hero Don José Gervasio Artigas" (in ASENJO, 2014, p. 402 our translation¹⁶⁵). Furthermore, Vaimaca Perú was buried just a few meters away from where Bernabé Rivera's remains lie. Yes, the one that names Mattos' novel and who was one of the main protagonists of the massacres that killed and subdued much of Perú's kin in the 1830s.

¹⁶⁵ Originally: "Los restos de un ser que participó en luchas enconadas y duras propias de su época y supo acompañar con su custodia y con su acción activa y vigilante la acción de nuestro héroe máximo Dn. José Gervasio Artigas".



Fig. 4 – *Cuerpo de Blandengues de Montevideo* carrying Vaimaca Perú's remains in Montevideo Central Cemetery. June 19th, 2002¹⁶⁶

The contradictions that become evinced in this ritual pretty much remount to what we have discussed in the previous chapter. The “national Indian” was now beyond discourses, symbols and the “pre-historic” museum. In the beginning of the XXI century, it was honorably buried under one of the most sacred national spaces. The ritual’s high symbolism leaves no doubt that Perú and all the Charrúas represented by his remains became more than ever assumed as part of the national imaginary, belonging to a domain whose ultimate intermediary was the state itself. Notably, this somehow attended to some of the anxieties that have affected the nation after the dictatorial rule. Having an Indian honorably buried was a blow on discourses that saw Uruguay’s population as “descendants of the boats” or a “transplanted people”.

The movement that mostly interests me, though, has to do with the not completely successful attempt of the Uruguayan state in securing Vaimaca Perú’s remain as a part of its national patrimony. That is, if one analyzes the statements made by government officials, it is clear that their impetus is to connect Perú with Artigas – a figure that has been captured by the state as the maximum representative of the national spirit. That is, the only way he gets to be translated by the national lexicon is as a faithful soldier of someone whose “patriotic” ideals had already carved out a “national” space even before Uruguay had declared itself an independent country. However, having a (dead) Charrúa crossing the walls of

¹⁶⁶ Extracted from <<http://www.poetasdelmundo.com/detalle.php?id=2358>> in June, 20th, 2020.

the “pre-historical” museums into the “historical” realm would come at a price. The Eurocentric nation-state, which since the Varelian period was itself the single keeper and custodian of the history that gave meaning and ordered time in that portion of land, was about to have its hegemony contested.

The burial of Perú’s remains in the Central Cemetery of Montevideo has raised great interest and awareness of biological anthropologists and archeologists. If Vaimaca Perú was the only “pure” Charrúa whose remains were available, and he has just been recognized as an honorable Uruguayan subject, many scholars saw the repatriation as an unprecedented opportunity to investigate the genetic origins of the Uruguayan society. That is, the investigations were interested in integrating “Charrúa biogenetical heritage” to the national patrimony and archive. This position was officially defended by a prominent indigenist organization: *Integrador Nacional de Descendientes Indígenas Americanos* (INDIA), which was created out of ADENCH. INDIA had close ties with renowned Uruguayan anthropologists such as Daniel Vidart and Renzo Pi Hugarte, and it was funded by the National Museum of Anthropology. Its *Declaración de Principios* reads: “We are proud that in our past we have had Indian relatives, as well as Blacks and Europeans. We do not deny any part of our being, manifesting affection and thankfulness to each one of them” (our translation¹⁶⁷).

A couple of days after the burial, a group of researchers would walk into the Pantheon with the scientific intentions. They would not be able to do so. With previous awareness, Enrique Auyanet, a member of ADENCH, would stand in their way and defend Perú’s remains from what he named “profanation” (in OLIVERA, 2016, p 220). This action would symbolize an internal rift that divided “indigenist and Indigenous” organizations (ASENJO, 2014). Sustaining a position that would later become almost unanimous among Charrúa groups, Auyanet argued that Charrúa descendants should have the authority over their ancestors. Such a position has led to an outcry in Uruguayan academia, which mostly

¹⁶⁷ Originally: “*Estamos orgullosos de que en nuestro pasado hubo familiares indios y también los hubo negros y europeos. No renegamos de ninguna parte de nuestro ser, a cada una de ellas manifestamos tanto afecto como agradecimiento*”. Available at: <<http://indiauy.tripod.com/princip.htm>>.

criticized what was labeled as “anti-scientificism” and “obscurantism”. Anthropologist Renzo Pi Hugarte wrote an article in 2003¹⁶⁸ where he coined the concept “*Charruísmo*” in order to discredit positions such as Auyanet’s. This tension would be resolved in the national parliament, which approved in 2004 a single-article law (*ley 17.767/2004*)¹⁶⁹ that forbade the realization of experiments and scientific studies with the remains of Vaimaca Perú.

The law, however, was not able to impede the manipulation of the remains before its promulgation. Monica Sans, a biological anthropologist has her signature found in many publications whose results followed analysis made either with Perú’s remains or with genetic experiments conducted with Indigenous descendants. In some of her articles on the subject, she stresses her indebtedness to dismantling the narrative of an “empty territory” populated by the “descendants of the boats” (SANS, 2017, p. 3; SANS et al, 2010, p. 289; SANS et al, 2014, p. 84). Her methods of investigation mostly involve comparing genomes between Vaimaca Perú’s remains, other remains found in mounds (*cerritos de indios*)¹⁷⁰ and living Uruguayan citizens. With a superficial look, two tendencies draw my attention. Firstly, the “national” scope that is often used to timely bound the territorial unit between prehistory and modern times. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, an employment of ethnonyms to genetically distinguish native populations that tends to fall short of most of the discussion advanced on chapter 2.1 and debates on ethnogenesis. As already mentioned, an against-the-grain reading of the disperse archives that keep information of XVIII century Banda Oriental allows one to note that most patterns of ethnic classification had more to do with the varying geographical imaginaries of colonial agents than human movement (ERBIG JR. 2020, p. 166).

¹⁶⁸ Namely: PI HUGARTE, Renzo. El Charruísmo. La antropología en el sarao de las pseudociencias. **Anuario de la facultad de Antropología Social y Cultural 2002-2003**, Udelar, NORDAN, Montevideo, 2003.

¹⁶⁹ Available at: <<https://legislativo.parlamento.gub.uy/temporales/leytemp6736841.htm>>.

¹⁷⁰ *Cerritos de indios* are human-made geological formations that constitute archeological record of the spatial-territorial organization of archaic societies, which are mostly found on the south and eastern portion of Uruguay and the *campanha* region of Rio Grande do Sul. They have become increasingly central to much recent archaeological research in the region. Some of the recent archeological findings have revealed the existence of a “net” that connected most of the *cerritos de indios* (OLIVEIRA, 2016, p. 224).

ADN investigations would find an ambivalent reception from Charrúa descendants. On the one hand, the studies have undoubtedly had a symbolic weight in rendering visibility and “scientific legitimacy” to their public appearances and claims. However, on the other, the “biologization” of indigeneity is rightly perceived as a potential “scientific” ground that may be used by those who deny grassroots claims of Indigenous belonging (interview with M.M. in 22/06/2020). Among the most impacting results Sans’ (alongside distinct co-authors) research show was that “approximately one third of [Uruguay’s] population (34%) has at least one native ancestor¹⁷¹ by maternal lineage”. In fact, districts in Uruguay’s countryside, such as Tacuarembó, would show an even higher number for the same trend: 62% (SANS et al, 2009, p. 167). I lack technical knowledge to make a deep discussion about this assertion, but I recognize its importance as almost all the Charrúas I have spoken to confronted me with this data. Such studies are also revealing in the sense that they shed light on the gendered dimension of interethnic marriage in the region. If one remembers that the big migration waves of the late XIX century were predominantly made up by men, it is not a big step forward to affirm that white male-native women marriages were common in the territory that comprises modern-day Uruguay (ASENJO, 2014, p. 376). I will come back to this soon, but what is important to note is that even though these results have raised the visibility of Charrúa collectives, most of the groups would almost unanimously deny any further investigations within this biological framework (interview with M.M. in 18/12/2019; interview with N.C. in 30/06/2020).

The “Indian renovation” in Uruguay has also had resonance on artistic performances. In 1996, a group named *Basquadé Inchalá* (in Charrúa: rise up, brother/sister) was founded with the purpose of “investigating our [Charrúa] roots through artistic interventions” (interview with M.M. in 18/12/2019). When I interviewed M.M., one of the main group leaders, she has highlighted the importance of A.V., her husband, in helping them to find their “roots from Abya Yala” (interview with M.M. in 18/12/2019). Notably, Alejandro takes the most of the credit for composing a song also named *Basquadé Inchalá*, which is

¹⁷¹ Sans et al (2009; 2017) emphasizes that this assertion allows for no ethnic distinctions between native groups.

commonly called the “hymn” of the Charrúa people (interview with J.D. in 20/12/2019). For the group, the artistic concerts would also be part of their “ethnic reconstruction”, which has both a performative and a militant role. According to M.M., (interview in 18/12/2019, our translation¹⁷²), “the shattering of our ancestral memory was the main project of the [Salsipuedes] genocide, here we recover, reconstruct it”. In 2004, Basquadé Inchalá would become a community. Since then, it would grow in importance, being today one of the most prominent Charrúa collectives in Uruguay.

3.4.

Turning collective

To successfully resist ongoing systems of domination, racial or ethnic stereotyping, and cultural hegemony, the first necessity of disempowered peoples, or of marginalized subcultural groups within a national society, is that of poetically constructing a shared understanding of the historical past that enables them to understand their present conditions as the result of their own ways of making history

(Jonathan Hill)

In 2005, an important turning point happened in the still young Indigenous movement in Uruguay. Under the recently elected left-wing government of Frente Amplio, which attended Indigenous lobbying, Uruguay has signed the *Convenio consultivo* of the *Fondo para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina y Caribe* (FILAC). Notably, the organization’s highest institutional arm, the *Asamblea General*, has a parity-representation system, in which each country is represented by a state representative and an Indigenous one (on a national basis). From this necessity, the *Consejo de la Nación Charrúa* CONACHA was born. From the start, the groups that composed CONACHA were: Basquadé Inchalá (from Montevideo), Pirí (Tarariras), Sepé (Montevideo), ADENCH

¹⁷² Originally: “El rompimiento de la memoria fue el principal proyecto del genocidio, nosotros acá la recuperamos, la reconstruimos”.

(Montevideo), Berá (Paso de los Toros) and Guyunusa (Tacuarembó). The council would gather periodically in assemblies where each group would be represented by two delegates. A two-year term presidency was also implemented. From that point onwards, CONACHA would episodically gather the “ancients” from each group in order to elect people to occupy its institutional leading roles. Among the first outcomes of the relation established between CONACHA and FILAC was the receipt of a 5.000 US Dollars financial aid for the realization of a pedagogical project: the conception of a manual about “Indigenous know-how” within the scope of the wider *Ser Nativo* project. Its purpose was to raise the awareness of institutional representatives about Indigenous rights and affairs (ASENJO, 2014, p. 449).

The *Consejo de la Nación Charrúa* (CONACHA) is the organization whose international articulation I am proposing to analyze in this dissertation. Before dwelling into that, it is paramount to mention that not every Charrúa group is represented in CONACHA, as it is the case, for example, of the Clan Choñik, from Montevideo. Therefore, when I investigate the activities of CONACHA, I will not be talking about all Charrúa communities in Uruguay or elsewhere. As it has been widely reported, there is a relevant degree of political discordance among groups of people with Indigenous descent in Uruguay (see ASENJO, 2014, cap. 2; OLIVERA, 2016). As I have already mentioned, I have chosen to focus my investigations on CONACHA because it is the organization with the highest degree of public appearances, and also the one that institutionally represents Indigenous peoples in the transnational instances I will discuss. Moreover, it seems to be the one that is mostly pushing the political limits of the “hiperintegrated”/indianless Uruguayan national framework.

It is important to say that FILAC was created out of the *II Cumbre Iberoamericana*, hosted by the Organization of Ibero-American States in Madrid¹⁷³, in 1992. The year is symbolic as it represents the 500th anniversary of the reported arrival of Christopher Columbus in what would be called America. In the *Cumbre*’s final declaration, FILAC is founded as part of the agenda of

¹⁷³ Founded in 1949, the OEI is composed by all Latin American countries, except for Haiti, and the countries of the Iberian Peninsula: Portugal, Spain and Andorra. Its main areas of concern are international cooperation for education, science and culture.

cooperation regarding human and social sustainable development¹⁷⁴. Specifically, regarding the facilitation of mediating processes between Indigenous and non-indigenous actors in the matters of acknowledgement, protection and promotion of Indigenous rights. Moreover, it works as a financial enabler of projects of “development with identity, focusing on the *Buen-vivir-Vivir-bien* of Indigenous peoples, as well as the acknowledgement of their individual and collective rights” (FILAC, 2017, s/n).

FILAC expressively highlights its subordination to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which we have already covered in chapter 1. According to Darío Asenjo (2014, p. 450), since the admission of CONACHA as the institutional representative of Indigenous peoples before FILAC, some of their reunions have been accompanied by the Bolivian ambassador in Uruguay (let us remember how the *Diplomacia de los pueblos* was part of Bolivia’s foreign policy under Evo Morales’ rule). It is also important to highlight that in 2011, M.M. was chosen to be enrolled in a course of Indigenous Women Leadership Strengthening. The course was organized by the Intercultural Indigenous University, which is based on Colombia, and is part of a project financed by FILAC in partnership with the *Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social* – a decentralized public organization in Mexico. For the final thesis, Monica counted both with an academic supervisor (Andrea Olivera, which holds a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Lausanne) and a spiritual supervisor (Marithué, another Charrúa leader from Uruguay). According to M.M. (interview with M.M., 22/06/2020, my translation¹⁷⁵), “Fondo Indígena (FILAC) gave us a formation (...) many of us were able to take courses... and it was also a trampoline, a space that has allowed us to access other superior spaces such as the UN”.

The demands of representation made by FILAC rearranged the way much of the recent Charrúa groups and communities organized themselves. Moreover, both Andrea Olivera (2016) and Darío Asenjo (2014), who have conducted

¹⁷⁴ Information extracted from: <<https://www.oei.es/historico/iicumbre.htm#6>>

¹⁷⁵ Originally: “Nos ha dado una formación el Fondo Indígena (...) muchos de nosotros hemos podido hacer cursos y fue también un trampolín... un espacio que nos permitió acceder a otros espacios superiores como la ONU”.

extensive ethnographic research with the reemerging Charrúa collectives, point to the founding of CONACHA as one of the turning points in their recent history. They also highlight the influence Charrúa people has received from other Indigenous peoples throughout Latin America, both in an aesthetical sense and in the coordinated adoption of cosmological and ecological premises such as *Buen vivir*. The figure below is illustrative of this intercultural relationship. One can see the *Whipala*¹⁷⁶ in the foreground, fluttering ahead the Bolivian flag. On the background, there is the Uruguayan flag. All these symbols share the landscape with the monument Betum Arrasan, inspired in an old Charrúa symbol, in an April 11th commemoration in Salsipuedes.



Fig. 5 - A celebration in front of Salsipuedes memorial Betum Arrasan. Extracted from ASENJO, 2014, p. 459

The site where the picture was taken has become extremely sacred for the Charrúa people. It is located in the margins of the *Arroyo Salsipuedes*, symbolizing an approximate location of where the homonymous Massacre has happened. Nowadays, it is part of a privately owned piece of land, whose owner allows the realization of the yearly (counter) celebration of the extermination campaign perpetrated by the Uruguayan state in its early days. The ritual, which commonly takes between two and three days, has its highest moment on April 11th. It has been going on since 1997, and it is frequented not only by Charrúas and descendants, but also by some collectives that identify themselves with some

¹⁷⁶ *Whipala* is a colorfully checked flag which is original from Andean native peoples. It was adopted as a national symbol of the Plurinational State of Bolivia after the promulgation of 2009 Constitution. Nowadays, the flag has been appropriated a continental-wide symbol of Indigenous peoples.

kind of “nativism”, mostly related to *gaucho* tradition. The date of the celebration is nowadays coincidental with a national holiday: the *Día de la Nación Charrúa y de la Identidad Indígena*.

In September 2009, the two Uruguayan parliamentary chambers approved the law 18.589/2009, which recognizes April 11th as date of national celebration. The second article of the referred law notes that governmental agencies should “execute or coordinate public actions that inform and sensitize the citizenship about the Indigenous contribution to the national identity, the historical facts concerning the Charrúa nation and what has succeeded in Salsipuedes in 1831”¹⁷⁷. When I talked about it with M.C., a young prominent Charrúa leader, he has mentioned that the original proposal advanced by CONACHA was to include the term “genocide” in the text, calling it the *Día del Genocidio del Pueblo Charrúa*. This denomination, however, was apparently deemed as “too harsh” by the legislators, who turned the idea down. According to Andrea Olivera (2016, p. 122), one of the first advocates of forcing the national remembrance of Salsipuedes was Enrique Auyanet, from ADENCH. He was part of Honorable Commission against Racism, Xenophobia and All Forms of Discrimination, which was founded in 2004 by Uruguay’s Ministry of Education and Culture¹⁷⁸. In spite of being only partial, the national acknowledgement of the date as a national celebration is widely seen as a major asset by Charrúa groups.

The most frontal opposition regarding this matter came from the Partido Colorado, who has as one of its main figures former president Julio María Sanguinetti, who has proposed the amnesty law in 1985. This party, which continuously ruled Uruguay from the 1870s to the end of the military dictatorship, strongly claims the figure of Fructuoso Rivera as one of Uruguay’s founders. In a recent video¹⁷⁹ posted on his Facebook account, Sanguinetti roughly criticizes

¹⁷⁷ Originally: “(...) *ejecución o coordinación de acciones públicas que fomenten la información y sensibilización de la ciudadanía sobre el aporte indígena a la identidad nacional, los hechos históricos relacionados a la nación charrúa y lo sucedido en Salsipuedes en 1831*”. Available at: <<https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/96102/113458/F-1310524169/URY96102.pdf>>.

¹⁷⁸ The law 17.817/2004 makes explicit reference to international mechanisms of control and advancement regarding the subject of the law. That is, the law may be understood as an “internal” conformation of international debates and consensus in the matter of Human Rights.

¹⁷⁹ The video was posted in June, the 9th, 2020. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/JulioMaSanguinetti/videos/972705959850168/>>.

what he, subscribing to Renzo Pi Hugarte (2003), pejoratively calls *charruismo*, therefore denying the acknowledgement of existing Indigenous peoples in Uruguay. He cites partial historic data to affirm that Charrúas were not “indigenous” from the territory that now comprises Uruguay. Rather, Sanguinetti accounts for their presence in northern Uruguay as an outcome of the Hispano-criollo expansion towards modern-day Northeastern Argentina. In an evolutionist tone, he frames the disputes between “us”, the civilized labor-prone Hispano-criollo society, and “them”, the (extinct) uncivilized barbaric natives as “shocks”. It is a reproduction of what we have discussed before as the “historical necessity” narrative, in which no person, ideology or nation are to blame for the extinction of a people, the dispossession of their land and the inhumane way some were distributed as home servants among Montevideo high society. By bringing in the name of lots of what could be called “founding fathers” of Uruguay, such as Rivera, Lavajella, Artigas, Oribe, Larrañaga, and placing them in opposition to the Charrúas, it is easy for one to see the discursive similarities between the video and his 1985 plead for “institutional salvation” in order to sustain a law that would turn a blind eye towards the humanitarian crimes perpetrated during Uruguay civil-military dictatorship.

The passionate rejection some public figures have assumed towards the Charrúas has been manifested along two main “turns” taken by Charrúas and Charrúa descendants in Uruguay. One was the oppositional stance assumed by most of them in relation to scientific investigation in sacred sites and most of the ADN investigations¹⁸⁰. According to M.M. (interview with M.M., 22/06/2020, our translation), “to support all these ADN investigations is to support this vision, that in the next day, the Uruguayan state may ask us for our ADN to know if we really are”¹⁸¹. The second was when CONACHA and other Charrúa groups started to publicly identify themselves not anymore or not only as descendants, but as Indigenous Charrúa. The focus of these groups has gradually shifted from searching individual biological/genetic heritage to the cultivation of a collective

¹⁸⁰ Notably, in 2017 CONACHA has decided in assembly not to participate in the URUGENOME project, which aims to investigate the Uruguayan genome, to which they had been invited to take part by Monica Sans and the *Instituto Pasteur de Montevideo* (MAGALHÃES DE CARVALHO, 2017, p. 47). For more about the project, see: < http://pasteur.uy/novedades/__trashed/>.

¹⁸¹ Originally: “Apoyar todas esas investigaciones de ADN es como apoyar esa visión, que en el día de mañana el Estado Uruguayo puede pedirnos un ADN para saber si somos realmente”.

praxis through which they could contemporarily reconstruct their ancestry. Importantly, all their claims recognize that native territorial dispossession and the subsequent cultural rupture all descendants have been subject to do not allow them to claim continuity with the deemed “authentic” (i.e., nomadic, in *toldería*, on the countryside...) Charrúa life ways. Therefore, much effort has been put into deconstructing stigmas that associate the Charrúas as a people whose collective existence is confined to an unchangeable authentic past¹⁸². Let us not forget the idealized image of the (dead) Charrúa *índio nacional* was advanced to give territorial legitimacy to a national society who proudly celebrated its only-European descent.

As we have seen, the turn towards collective identification as Charrúa has a direct relation with the integration of CONACHA into the international circuits of Indigenous articulation (ASENJO, 2014, p. 455; OLIVERA, 2016, p. 175). Notably, as discussed in the first chapter, developments in the matter of international Indigenous rights have always relied on the premise of self-determination as its core disposition. According to Irène Bellier and Veronica González-González (2017, p. 132), the emergence of a global identifying category “Indigenous peoples/ *pueblos indígenas/ peuples autochtones*” has led to the production of a symbolic grounding that establishes a middle ground between the (distinct) Indigenous worlds and the United Nations system. Such a movement may be identified with the emergence of a “global Indigenous community”. Accounting for much of the things we have discussed previously from a sociological perspective, Bellier and González-González (idem, our translation¹⁸³) state that

¹⁸² See, for example, this pedagogical project which aims to deconstruct racist stereotyping regarding native people in Uruguay. One of the catchphrases that is deemed racist is purportedly *Garra Charrúa*, which does not carry any kind of negative meaning whatsoever. Nevertheless, what is a matter of criticism is how it has become a national folklore that valued of an Indian character whose contemporary existence was not possible. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10212991890391670&set=pcb.10212991895791805&type=3&theater>>.

¹⁸³ Originally: « (...) la construction d'un espace pour les peuples autochtones dans le système international passe par des pratiques symboliques et langagières qui visent à poser les termes de nouveaux paradigmes politiques. Les représentants autochtones parviennent à influencer un milieu ordonné par les protocoles des États et des instances onusiennes, en s'appuyant sur des références à la coutume, des formes cérémonielles, des logiques d'assemblée uniques et le

the construction of a space for Indigenous peoples in the international system depends on symbolic practices and languages aimed at laying the terms of new political paradigms. Indigenous representatives manage to influence an environment ordered by protocols of state and UN bodies of authority by relying on customs, ceremonial forms, particular logics of assembly, and the control of a vocabulary that becomes a political issue (...) [T]he symbols have forged the fundamentals of a new relation between Indigenous peoples, the United Nations and the States.

Besides, although the adoption of a generic universal concept of “Indigenous peoples” may blur much of the singularities that distinguish Maori from Mohawk or Sámi from Yanomami, the third article of UNDRIP reads that it is by virtue of self-determination that Indigenous peoples exert their right to freely determine their political status. The following article is even clearer, when it says that “Indigenous peoples, in exercising their self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government” (UNRIP, 2007). By assessing this discussion, I aim to expose the nexus between a global political dynamic, which is subordinated to the UN system and the Human Rights regime, and local social action involving reemerging Charrúa Indigenous peoples. In order to claim the collective dimensions of the rights typified both in UNDRIP and ILO Convention 169, as well as to be acknowledged by the “global Indigenous community”, self-determination is primordial. Moreover, this movement allows for local Indigenous politics not to be reduced to a matter of national “internal affairs”. What is important to be highlighted is the global-local nexus of this matter, which institutes new discursive and semantic fields that conform a new framework of relations in the international, national and local levels (BELLIER; GONZÁLEZ-GONZÁLEZ, 2017, p. 146). Among the most hailed claims advanced by Indigenous peoples universally is the consubstantiality of the relation between peoples, their cultural and economic modes of life and their lands. Growing scholar attention has been given to the notion that local communities have not just adapted the concept of Indigenous peoples to their own uses, but have also done the reverse: adapted themselves to the concept¹⁸⁴ (LUDLOW et al, 2016, p. 3).

contrôle d'un vocabulaire qui devient un enjeu politique (...) les symboles ont forgé les fondements d'une nouvelle relation entre les peuples autochtones, les Nations unies et les États »

¹⁸⁴ See, for example: JACKSON, Jean. Culture, Genuine and Spurious: The Politics of Indianness in the Vaupés, Colombia. **American Ethnologist**, v. 22, 1995, pp. 3-27, PULIDO, Laura.

This discussion has found direct resonance inside CONACHA. The turn towards self-determination has meant rising public exposure by the reemerging Charrúas. Their relation with the state apparatus has also faced some changes. From the point of self-declaring “Charrúa Indigenous people” onwards, Charrúas would increasingly vocalize public claims by appealing to a collective belonging, mostly denying their identification with dispersed descendants. In 2012, they have made public a set of collective objectives, which are:

1. To attain a more present indigenous self-identification in our country; 2. To attain the acknowledgement by the Uruguayan state regarding: a) the ethnic and cultural preexistence, as well as its presence in the present days, of the Indigenous peoples that inhabited and still inhabit this territory; b) the role that indigenous peoples have had in the gestation our national identity; c) the responsibility of the Uruguayan state in the shattering of the integrity and the Human Rights of the Charrúa people, especially in the genocide and ethnocide of Salsipuedes. 3) To attain the ratification of the 169 ILO Convention by the Uruguayan state and the inclusion of laws about indigenous rights in Uruguayan Constitution (CONACHA, 2012¹⁸⁵).

We now move on to discuss central internal dynamics fundamental to the (re)formation of Charrúa identity in a local level.

3.5.

The centrality of memory: *devenir* Charrúa

Ahora es la hora [...] de empezar a contar desde el principio [...] antes que tengan tiempo de llegar los historiadores

Ecological Legitimacy and Cultural Essentialism. In: Daniel Faber (ed.), **The struggle for Ecological Legitimacy: Environmental Justice in the United States**. New York: Guilford Press, 1998, p. 293-311, LI, Tania. Ethnic Cleansing, Recursive Knowledge, and the Dilemma of Sedentarism. **International Social Science Journal**, v. 173, 2002, pp. 361-371.

¹⁸⁵ Originally: “1. Lograr una mayor autoidentificación indígena en nuestro país. 2. Lograr el reconocimiento por parte del Estado uruguayo de: a) La preexistencia étnica y cultural y su vigencia en nuestros días de los Pueblos Indígenas que habitaron y habitan este territorio; b) El papel que cumplieron los Pueblos indígenas en la gestación de nuestra identidad nacional; c) La responsabilidad del Estado Uruguayo en el avasallamiento de la integridad y de los derechos humanos del Pueblo Charrúa y en especial en el genocidio y etnocidio de Salsipuedes. 3. Lograr la ratificación del Convenio 169 de la ILO por parte del Estado Uruguayo y la inclusión de una legislación de los derechos indígenas en la Constitución uruguaya”.

(Gabriel García Marquez)

The social articulation between Charrúas from both the eastern and the western margins of the Uruguay River is rich. That is between Charrúas who currently live both in Uruguay and in northeastern Argentina (mostly in the provinces of Corrientes and Entre Ríos). Interestingly, most of this Charrúa transnational articulation has been sustained by women. From 2004 to 2007, a small group of Charrúa women from both sides of the river began to periodically meet and constituted a common ground for transnational articulation. In February 2010, inspired by this small collective, thirteen Charrúa women gathered themselves in the outskirts of Montevideo to formally create UMPCHA (*Unión de Mujeres del Pueblo Charrúa*), which institutionalized monthly meetings, always during full-moon. The Uruguayan-Swiss anthropologist Andrea Olivera has participated in much of UMPCHA's gatherings during 2010 and 2011. She notes that the (re)invention of rituals has been crucial for both of them, as it is explicitly acknowledged by Charrúa leader Monica Michelena (in OLIVERA, 2016, p. 288). In this sense, Olivera (idem, our translation) in a collaborative testifying position notes that

It is necessary to invent, even if some rituals still stand, since the connection with Charrúa cosmology has been lost, they [UMPCHA members] say. An example is the presentation of their children to the moon, which is still practiced today (...) In Charrúa cosmology, they add, life is itself a ritual... Therefore, there is no need of protocol besides the practice of circularity and horizontality of exchanges. The element that materializes such circularity and gives the word its real dimension is *mate*¹⁸⁶, which is also considered a ceremony. The circulating *mate* strengthens us and keeps us together, helping us to preserve simplicity and sobriety. When sharing it, we tell each other our dreams, our anecdotes, and the life experiences of each one of us. The goal is to rediscover the meaning of the collective that is considered to be lost¹⁸⁷.

¹⁸⁶ Mate is how societies around Río de la Plata call an herb-made tea which is commonly drank in wooden small bowls. The herb has been a sacred crop for Guaraní societies and was also part of the everyday life of the Charrúa and other *toldería* peoples. Nowadays the habit of taking it is completely widespread in the region. In southern Brazil, mate is commonly referred to as chimarrão.

¹⁸⁷ Originally: “Es necesario inventar, incluso si algunos rituales perduran, porque se ha perdido la conexión con la cosmovisión charrúa, dicen. Por ejemplo, la presentación de los niños recién nacidos a la luna, aún practicada hoy, En la cosmovisión Charrúa, agregan, la vida en sí es un ritual... Por lo tanto, no hay necesidad de protocolo, pero sí de practicar la circularidad y

Among the objectives that were agreed upon by UMPCHA members along their founding meetings, I give a special emphasis on three of them: i) to assume the ancestral committing of being the guardians of Charrúa values and our territory through concrete actions, ii) to claim our rights as Charrúa women: “we are those who transmit the customs and the spirituality of our Indigenous people” (in OLIVERA, 2016, p. 290, our translation) and iii) to adhere to the declaration of our sisters in the continent¹⁸⁸. Interestingly, UMPCHA, unlike CONACHA, is not bound to a statist territoriality. Instead, their members, some of which are also part of CONACHA, claim to belong and represent the “Charrúa macro-ethnicity”, which also includes Indigenous women from northeastern Argentina¹⁸⁹. This conceptualization has a direct relationship with the already discussed inconsistencies regarding native ethnonyms that have characterized Río de la Plata region’s ethnohistory. Since their first meeting, Charrúa women from UMPCHA were compromised in (re)constructing a shared territorial historical-oral memory. Each one would testify about their private experiences and oral memories, which would not rarely find resonance in one another’s. From 2010 onwards, much of the eldest women in UMPCHA would be elevated to “guardians of the memories” and “guardians of the territory” at the eyes of most Charrúa collectives. According to N.C., the few pieces of Indigenous ancestry that still “remain” in modern-day Río de la Plata region were transmitted and guarded by women, mostly because

horizontalidad de los intercambios. El elemento que materializa esa circularidad y le da a palabra su real dimensión es el mate, que también se considera una ceremonia. El mate que circula nos fortalece y nos arraiga juntas, nos ayuda a preservar la simplicidad y la sobriedad. Al compartirlo, nos contamos nuestros sueños, nuestras anécdotas o las experiencias de vida de cada una de nosotras. La mete es rencontrar el sentido de lo colectivo que consideran perdido”.

¹⁸⁸ A reference is made to the Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women (1995). Especially to its fifth point, that reads: “We, the women of the original peoples of the world have struggled actively to defend our rights to self-determination and to our territories which have been invaded and colonized by powerful nations and interest. We have been and are continuing to suffer from multiple oppressions; as Indigenous peoples, as citizens of colonized and neo-colonial countries, as women, and as members of the poorer classes of society. In spite of this, we have been and continue to protect, transmit, and develop our Indigenous cosmovision, our science and technologies, our arts and culture, and our Indigenous socio-political economic systems, which are in harmony with the natural laws of mother earth. We still retain the ethical and esthetic values, the knowledge and philosophy, the spirituality, which conserves and nurtures Mother Earth. We are persisting in our struggles for self-determination and for our rights to our territories. This has been shown in our tenacity and capacity to withstand and survive the colonization happening in our lands in the last 500 years”. The full version is available in: <http://www.ipcb.org/resolutions/htmls/dec_beijing.html>.

¹⁸⁹ Pan-ethnic (re)articulation and ethogenesis has been a common organizing and identity forming movement throughout Latin America since 1980s. For more on that, see MAYBURY-LEWIS, David. *Becoming Indian in Lowland South America*. In: Greg Urban and Joel Sherzer (eds.), *Nation-states and Indians in Latin America*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991.

“the Spanish came and did not bring woman with them... they *took* the Indians” (interview with N.C., 20/06/2020, our translation¹⁹⁰).

According to Andrea Olivera (2016, p. 306), these memories and oral testimonials would commonly bring up a polyphony of records. Nevertheless, remembrances of hurtful experiences often find common ground. Among those, she emphasizes reports of skin-color discrimination, shaming regarding their non-European ancestry and the purposeful silencing of their native background, which should not exceed the limits of the private realm. They soon realize that what exists is a “mutilated memory”, whose pieces find common resonance in familial secrets and feelings of shame regarding the ascendancy that should not be brought to the public. I have had the opportunity of interviewing three Charrúa women that integrate UMPCHA. In an interview, one of the eldest Charrúa leaders, N.C. told me that “Formerly, to say you were indigenous was to condemn yourself to death”¹⁹¹ (interview with N.C., 20/06/2020, my translation¹⁹²). In the same vein, M.C. told me her quest to investigate her ascendance was “an impulse, an anxiety I had with myself for a long time... since I was in school, I knew that I was different... When I became aware [of her Charrúa ancestry], I felt complete”. (interview with M.C., in 12/12/2019, my translation¹⁹³). M.C. also mentioned the importance of the artistic career she undertook after she got divorced in discovering her indigenousness. Moreover, she told me about the hardship of raising her two children in the face of an absent father.

The issue of shame involving indigenous ancestry did not affect only women. Darío Asenjo (2014) has conducted interviews with Bernardino García, a grandson of a famous Charrúa *cacique* named Sepé¹⁹⁴. His family had already been the subject of an article published by Eduardo Acosta y Lara, a famous

¹⁹⁰ Originally: “los españoles vinieron y no trajean mujeres... tomaran a las indias”.

¹⁹¹ Very similar memories are shared by a territorialized reemergent Charrúa community in Maciá, Entre Ríos, Argentina. See in: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uiu71VNIXPo>>.

¹⁹² Originally: “Antiguamente, decir que eras indígena era como condenarte a muerte”.

¹⁹³ Originally: “un impulso, una inquietud que tenía conmigo hace mucho tiempo... Desde que estaba en la escuela, ya sabía que era diferente... Cuando me enteré, me sentí completa”.

¹⁹⁴ Sepé did not join other Charrúa *caciques* in Salsipuedes, and his death was registered in 1866. His body was exhumed and his cranium was sent to Rio de Janeiro, where it was lost.

Uruguayan historian, in the early 80s¹⁹⁵. In an interview, Bernardino testified that because of his publicly known Charrúa descent, an evangelic church of Tacuarembó denied hosting his marriage. Moreover, his wife, Micaela García, reported that once she was inquired by a journalist interested in how her sexual life with a savage man was like (in ASENJO, 2014, p. 46). These abhorrent testimonies find echo in what Andrea Olivera (2016) found in her thesis about the hostility of the public realm regarding native identities in Uruguay. Monica Michelena, perhaps the most vocal figure of CONACHA nowadays, states that

Many of us became aware that we were Charrúas when we already had some age. Some years ago, I began to understand how our familial histories were. Each person who I met with had pieces of memory, and, from there, I began to put together the question of Charrúa memory inside me, pondering and understanding situations of my childhood, some things that my mother had told me, some she had not. I have started to comprehend that the silences and fractures of our collective memory are also part of our history, and sometimes it is not possible to fill up the voids, that we are also inevitably a consequence of these silences. The massacre of Salsipuedes, the persecutions, the kinship dismembering and the stigmatization have led our grandmothers and grand grandmothers to shut. They did not want to draw attention; they did not want to be Indians, because it was too much of a heavy weight. Our fathers and mothers occulted their Indigenous origins, sometimes for shame, or for fearing persecution or discrimination and exclusion (in RODRÍGUEZ; MICHELENA, 2018, p. 196, our translation¹⁹⁶).

When I visited Monica in her home, which has become a public space for meetings, artistic plays and rituals of the Charrúa community, I asked her whether she had already suffered skin-color prejudice. She consented. What most surprised me, though, was not her affirmation. It was the story that she told me straight after. Instead of bringing public experiences, she rather told me how once when

¹⁹⁵ Namely: ACOSTA Y LARA, Eduardo. Un linaje Charrúa en Tacuarembó (a 150 años de Salsipuedes). **Revista Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias**. Serie Ciencias Antropológicas. Vol. I n. 2. Montevideo, 1981.

¹⁹⁶ Originally: “*Muchos nos enteramos que éramos charrúas ya de grandes. Hace unos años comencé a entender cómo fueron nuestras historias familiares. Cada persona con la que fui encontrando tenía pedacitos de memoria y, así, fui armando el tema de la memoria charrúa dentro mío, reflexionando y entendiendo situaciones de mi infancia, cosas que mi madre me contó y otras que no. Comencé además a comprender que los silencios y las fracturas de nuestra memoria colectiva también son parte de nuestra historia, y que a veces no es posible llenar los vacíos, que inevitablemente también somos consecuencia de esos silencios. La masacre de Salsipuedes, las persecuciones, los desmembramientos familiares y la estigmatización llevó a nuestras abuelas y bisabuelas a callar. No querían llamar la atención, no querían ser indias porque era una carga demasiado pesada. Nuestros padres y madres ocultaban sus orígenes indígenas, a veces por vergüenza, otras por miedo a la persecución o a la discriminación y exclusión*”.

she was young a grand aunt firmly held her arm and asked: “¿a quién saliste tñ negra?” (roughly: “out of whom have you come so dark?”) (interview with M.M., in 18/12/2019). Although it may seem banal, this passage also appears in an article she has written alongside Argentinean anthropologist Mariela Eva Rodríguez (2018, p. 198). Notably, there was a high degree of sentiment involved in this passage, which can be translated into the revealing undesirability it was for one to carry native traits even in private and familial circles, since its coming to the public could represent a threat that could affect public-familial relationship itself. In a similar vein, in almost all of my talks with Charrúas, they highlighted differences between a past in which they had part of their identity repressed, and a present where they are collectively empowered to come out and claim it. Martín Delgado Cultelli (2014, our translation¹⁹⁷) summarizes it when he says: “We have always been [here], however the rest of the society did not see us, and even we did not see ourselves”.

These shared memories of repression, silence and shame, have led to the adoption by the Charrúas, especially from UMPCHA members, of an itinerant and co-constructive methodology for (re)constructing their collectivity, which is often framed as a puzzle whose shattered pieces are being reunited. What began as the main theme of Monica’s thesis in the *Universidad Intercultural Indígena*¹⁹⁸ was subsequently adopted both as a way of life and a methodology for community/individual empowerment. That is summarized by the idea of constructing *el gran quillapí*¹⁹⁹ *de la memoria*. In 2011, Andrea Olivera (2016, caps. 10, 11 and 12) has joined some women of UMPCHA in an itinerant project. Their plan was to walk along some regions of the Uruguayan hinterland, namely Tacuarembó, Paysandú and Cerro Pan de Azúcar, in order to establish connections with *pueblos*. Through this circuit, UMPCHA members were able to share their thoughts with local inhabitants’ memories and knowledge as to reconstruct what they felt it was lacking. It was agreed by UMPCHA elders that

¹⁹⁷ Originally: “Siempre estuvimos, solo que el resto de la sociedad no nos veía e incluso nosotros mismos no nos veíamos”.

¹⁹⁸ MICHELENA, Monica. **Rearmando el Gran Quillapí de la Memoria en Uruguay**. Thesis presented for obtaining the Diplomado para el Fortalecimiento del Liderazgo de las Mujeres Indígenas. Universidad Intercultural, Colombia, 2011.

¹⁹⁹ *Quillapí* is a coat made of leather that used to be worn by native peoples of the *pampa* region of South America. According to M.M (interview in 18/12/2019), “al ponernos el quillapí, sentimos que estamos acompañados de nuestros ancestros”.

being Charrúa was part of a process – or, as indicated in Olivera’s thesis title, a *devenir* Charrúa. The idea of “becoming” has led Olivera (2016, p. 50) to identify four main axes that characterized the reemergence of the collective Indigenous Charrúa subject in the region: i) the genealogical axis, in which becoming indigenous remounts to oral and corporal memories transmitted by family; ii) the political axis, which is invested in demanding public acknowledgement of the Charrúa genocide, as well as policies of reparation and other claims alongside non-Indigenous activism; iii) the ecological axis, which advocates for a valorization of land and nature as part of an integrated and sustainable ecology and iv) the spiritual axis, that favors cosmological life-ways that interplay with memory, land and collectivity.

The narrative and acting frameworks Uruguay has recurred to in order to legitimate its national sovereignty²⁰⁰ have depended upon the fierce denial and repression of emotive attachments whose connections went beyond those secured by the national institutions. It is not a coincidence that a 1990 CEPAL report called the Uruguayan nation as a “daughter of school” (in CAMARERO, 2014, p. 22). With the early implementation of a universal public schooling system, which temporally coincided with the fencing politics that left the countryside almost uninhabitable for autonomous *pueblos*²⁰¹, national time become the necessary referent one had to be adapted to in order to properly exert and enjoy citizenship. No Uruguayan constitution would ever mention or recognize societies or communities that were not a total part of the nation. Therefore, as the years passed, much of the memories that bounded one to a time or to a community that was not the national were just suppressed. What passed on, though, were mostly feelings of absence, emptiness and non-belonging, as well as dispersed oral testimonies.

²⁰⁰ We should remember that, as exposed in chapter 2, Uruguay’s nation-form was created out of and inspired by narratives that hailed its European “spirit”, while appealing to a “native” myth that allowed the envisioning of the country as a unit with national predestination even before the European arrival in Americas. Nevertheless, these two temporalities, who shared a common imagined territorialization, were always narrated as completely separated dimensions. The case of the museums is an explicit materialization of that matter.

²⁰¹ Interestingly, the 2011 Uruguayan National Census has reported that only 5,07% of the country’s population lives in rural areas. A recent debate, though, has suggested the need to reform such understandings (see PIÑERO, Diego; CARDEILLAC, Joaquín. Población Rural en Uruguay: Aportes para su Reconceptualización. *Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, Montevideo v. 27, n. 34, 2014, pp. 53-70).

Such memories, though, would find almost no social resonance until two already discussed important issues emerged: i) the flourishing of a global category of “Indigenous”, which had direct impact in Latin America’s national and regional regimes and societies ii) a push for the refashioning of the national Uruguayan imaginary that came after its civil-military dictatorship, in which narratives that connected the state’s foundational violence against the Charrúas in Salsipuedes and its recent crimes would gain the public arena. It is not a surprise, therefore, that an important part of the organized reemergent movement is gathered in Montevideo²⁰². Moreover, it should be noted that a cultivation of “indian aesthetics” had been nurtured inside classist organizations in Uruguay (and throughout Latin America) since the 1960s, what has also laid grounds for the establishment of a reemergent Charrúa identity that is profoundly rooted in class struggle and identification (MAZZ, 2018, p. 198).

3.6.

Acknowledgement and reparations: dealing with the (inter)national

In the 2010s, CONACHA has advanced two major public campaigns, which have reached a relatively wide audience. Firstly, they lobbied in favor of the inclusion of the category “indigenous” in the 2011 Uruguayan National Census. The demand, though, was only partially met. The census included two questions regarding “believed in *ascendancy*”. The first one would inquire which ascendancies the respondent believed he/she had, which could be “*afro/negra*”, “*asiática/amarilla*”, “*blanca*”, “*indígena*” or “*otra ascendencia*”²⁰³. Notably, this question would allow for multiple answering. The following question would then inquire which one of those the respondent considered to be his/her main ascendancy²⁰⁴. Roughly, 4,9% of the Uruguayan population has declared to have,

²⁰² Notably, much of the Charrúas that live in Montevideo are first or second generation inhabitants of the city. Moreover, it is among their latest efforts one of “interiorizing leadership” (interview with M.M. in 18/12/2019).

²⁰³ “*cree tener ascendencia...?*”.

²⁰⁴ “*cuál considera la principal...?*”.

among others, Indian ascendancy. 2,4% would declare it as its main ascendancy. Looking through a regional cut, the departments of Tacuarembó and Salto figure as those with the highest rates of declared Indigenous ancestry in both questions. Respectively, 8% and 6,1% for the first question, and 5,6% and 4,5% for the second (INE, 2012). Interestingly, this has represented a vertiginous increase if compared to the results of 1996 National Census, when only 0,4% of the population declared to be “racially” Indigenous²⁰⁵.



Fig. 6 - Poster of a CONACHA campaign in favor of Indigenous ascendancy self-declaration in 2011 Uruguay National Census

Even though its formulation did not fully meet the demands planted by the Charrúa collectives, the National Census has raised important points of discussion. Most notably, the blatant discrepancy between its results and the genotypic findings of the studies previously mentioned (SANS et al, 2012; SANS, 2017). According to M.D. (interview, 14/12/2019) feelings of fear, shame and even ignorance are still common ground among Indigenous descendants. Nevertheless, the “main ascendancy” results, which saw 76.452 people declaring to have Indigenous ascendancy as their principal, were received with a more positive reaction. Most importantly, this number was assumed by both the

²⁰⁵ In 1996, the format of the question was: “*a cuál raza cree Ud. Pertenecer?*”.

International Bank and CEPAL/FILAC as referents of the country's "indigenous population" in late regional reports regarding Latin America (WORLD BANK, 2015; CEPAL/FILAC, 2020). As a matter of comparison, having 2,4% of "Indigenous population" puts Uruguay above Brazil, Paraguay and El Salvador in relative terms, and leaves it virtually tied with Argentina and Costa Rica²⁰⁶ (CEPAL/FILAC, 2020, p. 153).

What is interesting about this is that Uruguay gets to be included in a realm – that of Indigenous peoples/populations – it has for long denied to be part of. Notably, such regional Latin American approaches pose a direct challenge to the idea of a "Uruguayan exceptionality" (RODRÍGUEZ, 2017), which was discussed in chapter 2. Most importantly, though, is that these regional reports, especially the one from CEPAL and FILAC²⁰⁷, gets to cross different data that allows one to compare socioeconomic standards between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations by country. Data evinces how those Uruguayans who self-identified as having Indigenous ascendancy in 2011 share notable worst socioeconomic conditions than the average of those who chose other main ascendancies. Notably, the trend leaves open a huge space for questioning the unanimously ignored native pasts and debates about land dispossession as well as other kinds of violence sustained against native peoples in national formation. According to the World Bank report (2015, p. 19), poverty among urban Uruguayans who recognize themselves as having Indigenous ascendancy is 1,7 times higher than among other Uruguayans. For extreme poverty, the numbers is 1,4 times higher. Besides, they have higher numbers of informal employment (37% against 30%) and less access to sanitation (57% against 65%). Right below,

²⁰⁶ I am aware these comparisons have little or no real importance or meaning, since they are made through the juxtaposition of national-made censuses, whose categories of identification do not share a common referent. Moreover, as widely discussed in chapter 1, there are many ways of being or being considered indigenous, as these categorizations are always involved in complex assemblages of power and meaning, thereby rendering purely quantitative comparisons pretty much senseless. Furthermore, some forms of state recognition may be understood as a threat to some Indigenous peoples' sovereignty, and therefore be denied as such by Indigenous peoples themselves (see COULTHARD, 2014; SIMPSON, 2014. See also CASTAÑEDA, Quetzil. *We Are Not Indigenous! An introduction to the Maya Identity of Yucatan. Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, v. 9, n. 1, 2004, p. 36-63).

²⁰⁷ This report is committed to measuring advances and drawbacks regarding the 2030 Agenda and the Objectives of Sustainable Development (OSD) established by the United Nations (CEPAL/FILAC, 2020, p. 11).

I reproduce three indicators that drew my attention regarding Uruguay in CEPAL/FILAC report (2020).

País y año censal	Urbana		Rural		Ambas áreas	
	Indígena	No indígena	Indígena	No indígena	Indígena	No indígena
Argentina, 2010	28,0	25,0	24,1	33,1	27,3	25,7
Bolivia (Estado Plurinacional de), 2012	32,7	39,2	8,8	19,5	19,1	36,2
Brasil, 2010	29,2	25,5	9,0	21,3	16,9	24,9
Costa Rica, 2011	32,5	28,7	23,1	26,3	26,9	28,1
Ecuador, 2010	48,5	38,3	13,8	27,9	21,2	34,7
Honduras, 2013	24,9	26,6	5,9	12,1	10,2	20,3
México, 2010	21,5	24,1	6,3	12,5	14,4	21,8
Panamá, 2010	42,3	39,6	11,2	11,3	18,4	31,3
Perú, 2017	23,9	23,3	12,4	11,2	20,6	21,7
Uruguay, 2011	45,6	40,2	57,9	48,1	46,0	40,6
Venezuela (República Bolivariana de), 2011	13,7	20,2	13,6	17,2	13,6	19,9

Table 1 - Indigenous and non-Indigenous percentage of national populations that live in households that are not their own according to area of residence
Extracted from CEPAL/FILAC, 2020, p. 218

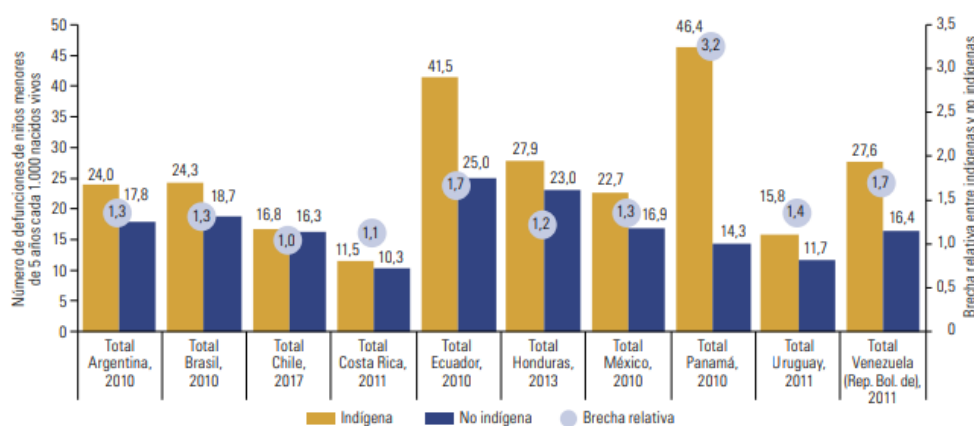


Table 2 - Child (below five years old) mortality rate of Indigenous and non-Indigenous population - over 1000 born alive
Extracted from CEPAL/FILAC, 2020, p. 213

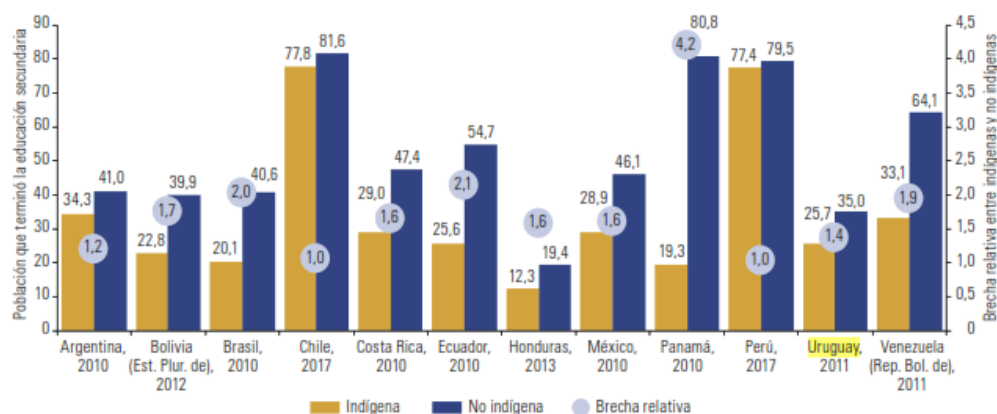


Table 3 - Indigenous and non-Indigenous population (from 20 to 29 y/o) that finished secondary education
 Extracted from CEPAL/FILAC, 2020, p. 197

Dismissing in-depth data analysis, since ethnically-based socioeconomic inequalities are explicit, this record shows us that beyond pure ethnocide and land dispossession, the campaigns against natives is directly related to their actual subaltern positions in modern class society. Moreover, what is central to our argument is that these data function to include Uruguay in regional and international debates regarding Indigenous rights. This phenomena walks hand-in-hand with the dynamics of Charrúa reemergence we have just mentioned. As Jan Hoffmann French²⁰⁸ (2009) notes under his concept of “legalizing identities”, cultural practices, legal provisions and identity formation are interrelated. French (2009), which is both anthropologist and jurist, sustains that the relatively recent international scene, which favors multiculturalism, and to which much of the discussions advanced in the first chapter are indebted, has both created and is being created by alternative identity-based political mobilizations in favor of social and redistributive justice (FRASER, 1998). The subjects to which these legal configurations are addressed, though, are in many times not as “out there” as it would be thought. Drawing on legal sociology, she advances that “laws (...) constitute new ‘relations’, ‘meanings’, and ‘self-understandings’” (FRENCH, 2009, p. 11), therefore impacting local cultural practices and self-identifying

²⁰⁸ French’s book (2009) has based this argumentation on the observance of the case of the formation of two inter-related mixed-blood communities that live in the margins of the Rio São Francisco, in the northeastern Brazilian states of Sergipe and Alagoas. One of them has self-identified itself as Indigenous, the Xocó, and the other, as a quilombo, the Mocambo. They have based their socio-legal community recognition on the basis of 1973 Indian Statute and 1988 Constitutional Quilombo clause. Interestingly, in a future paper (2011), she would account for how these identities, which were enacted under national legal frameworks, were central in shaping global concepts of indigeneity, strongly influencing the text of UNDRIP, published in 2007.

notions. On that matter, a group's identification may be read as "a positioning which draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes, and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle" (LI, 2000, p. 151²⁰⁹ *apud* FRENCH, 2009, p. 11).

That being said, I move forward to discuss other public major campaign advanced by CONACHA in the 2010s: their lobbying in favor of Uruguay's ratification of ILO 169 Convention. In July 2012, CONACHA has officially released a campaign for gathering signatures in order to put pressure in the Uruguayan government for it to sign and ratified the referred Convention. Both Enrique Auyanet and Mónica Michelena gave inaugural speeches in a room of the Uruguayan parliament. Enrique has mentioned the need of specific public policies addressed to Uruguay's Indigenous peoples. For him, the legally-binding international instrument would represent for the Charrúas "the effective possibility of having access to justice"²¹⁰ (EQUIPO DE COMUNICACIÓN DEL CONACHA, 2012). Mónica has mentioned that Uruguay, both the state and the national society, had historical debts with the Charrúa people, which would justify the need of historical reparations. She notes that "Uruguayan constitution does not acknowledge the ethnical preexistence of Indigenous peoples in this country, and neither acknowledges the multiethnic and multicultural character of its population"²¹¹ (CONSEJO DE LA..., 2012). Although signaling positively in some opportunities, as did former chancellor Luis Almagro in 2014 (VERDESIO, 2016), Uruguay has not signed the Convention until this day. This demand, however, would be at the center of CONACHA's international activities, which will be the subject of further analysis.

Since the releasing of the campaign in favor of the signature of ILO 169 Convention by Uruguay, CONACHA has been able to vocalize its claims and mark its presence in distinct international forums and spaces. Their representatives took part in four of the yearly meetings of the UN Permanent

²⁰⁹ LI, Tania. Articulating Indignous Identity in Indonesia: Resource Politics and the Tribal Slot. **Comparative Studies in Society and History**, 42(1), 2000, pp. 149-179.

²¹⁰ Originally: "*la posibilidad efectiva de tener acceso a la justicia*".

²¹¹ Originally: "*No existe en la constitución Uruguaya un reconocimiento de la preexistencia étnica de los pueblos indígenas en este país, ni tampoco se reconoce en ella el carácter multiétnico y multicultural de su población*".

Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) over the last decade, in 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2019. Charrúas have also expressed their claims to the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in more than one occasion. Moreover, CONACHA has posed their claims to the Universal Periodic Review²¹² (UPR), a periodic examination of UN member state's Human Rights situation held by UNOHCHR in which recommendations are made and further evaluated. Under the same organism (UNOHCHR), they have also presented alternative reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), in which the official Uruguayan position is often subject to contestation. In an alternative report written by CONACHA to CERD, the council recommends the “spreading of socioeconomic data about the situation of the Indigenous population (...) [and] the acknowledgement of the collective rights of Indigenous peoples, such as territorial, social, cultural and environmental rights” (INFORME ALTERNATIVO, 2016, our translation²¹³). According to N.C., “the international scene is much important because it renders us visible. It properly recognizes us as Indigenous people... more than does our own government” (interview with N.C., 20/06/2020, our translation²¹⁴). In 2019, the signature of ILO 169 Convention by Uruguay was welcomed by over a dozen countries that integrate UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/WG.6/32/URY/2, 2019; A/HRC/26/7/Add.1, 2014).

Regarding delivered speeches, they mostly revolve around and reproduce specific issues. It is interesting to highlight that in most of the times, the representatives of CONACHA mention that their process of collective reconstitution is conducted conjointly with Argentinean Charrúas. One issue that appears in every discourse is the importance of the signature of ILO 169 Convention, mostly because this would allow for the development of specific public policies at the national level and also leverage their collective rights to sacred territories, symbols and traditional knowledge through the mechanism of

²¹² See UMPIÉRREZ, Alejandra (compiladora). **Tercer Ciclo de Examen Periódico Universal de Naciones Unidas**, Compilado de contribuciones escritas presentadas por organizaciones de la sociedad civil de Uruguay. Friedrich Eibert Stiftung, Uruguay. 2018. Available at: <<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/uruguay/14625.pdf>>.

²¹³ Originally: “Se recomienda que el Estado difunda los datos sobre situación socioeconómica de la población indígena (...) que reconozca constitucionalmente los derechos colectivos de los Pueblos Indígenas, tales como derechos territoriales, sociales, culturales y ambientales”.

²¹⁴ Originally: “La escena internacional es muy importante porque nos visibiliza. Nos reconoce propiamente como pueblo Indígena... más do que lo hace nuestro gobierno”.

free, prior and informed consent. Beyond that, it is argued in favor of the official acknowledgment by the Uruguay state of Salsipuedes as genocide. What is often portrayed as a threat to such territories is the growing neoextractivist activity in Uruguay, as well as the country's longstanding tradition of intensive monoculture, cattle-raising and commercial forestry. In 2012, during the sixteenth session of the UNPFII, under discussion about the applications of action plans, strategies and other national-level policies, it was sustained that

We do not have access to our sacred places in order to do our ceremonies and honor our ancestry, neither can we protect them from extractive megaprojects which are being installed in our ancestral territories, since there is no free, prior and informed consent in Uruguay. In Uruguay, we Charrúas suffer from intoxication from agrochemicals, the rural schools are fumigated, making Charrúa children and their teachers sick. There were also cases of children who are employed as fumigating-backpack-equipped workforce getting poisoned with the pesticides (INTERVENCIÓN DEL CONSEJO..., 2012, our translation²¹⁵).

Under FILAC, which is, after all, a mechanism for financially enabling initiatives regarding regional Indigenous development, CONACHA has had some important projects approved for funding. The most notable, though, was the 2018 second edition of ESICHA, an acronym for *Escuela Intercultural Charrúa Itinerante*. Adopting a similar methodology than the one I have described with the women of UMPCHA, which had already been developed in past workshops named *Encuentros de Saberes Ancestrales* in 2015 and 2016, ESICHA had the purpose of developing the capacities and organizing the formation of the Indigenous Charrúa identity around the national territory. By (re)assembling and systematizing oral memories and familial traditions of Indigenous descendants, CONACHA has conducted a series of workshops, whose themes were: i) Indigenous rights; ii) Collectivization and registering oral memories; iii) history of the Indigenous peoples of Abya Yala; iv) Charrúa culture and cosmovision; v)

²¹⁵ Originally: "(...) no tenemos acceso a nuestros lugares sagrados para hacer nuestras ceremonias y honrar a nuestros ancestros, ni tampoco podemos protegerlos de los megaproyectos extractivistas que se están instalando en nuestros territorios ancestrales, ya que no existe la consulta libre previa e informada en Uruguay. En Uruguay los charrúas sufrimos de la intoxicación de parte de los agrotóxicos, las escuelas rurales son fumigadas, enfermando a los niños charrúas y a sus maestras. También hubieron casos de niños que son empleados como mano de obra para fumigar con mochilas fumigadoras, fueron envenenados con los pesticidas".

Chaná-Charrúa languages²¹⁶ and iv) Ancestral knowledge. Ultimately, the objective was to form and empower Charrúa leaders to enable the representation and development of CONACHA's Indigenous activism in different locales. Through the collective construction of their own pedagogy and methodology, they sought to strengthen the group's collectivity as well as standardize a discourse regarding their activism and identity (MAGALHÃES DE CARVALHO, 2018, cap. 3). Martín Delgado Cultelli, who has conducted some of the workshops, notes that

Although it is very important to talk from your own sentiments, which is something one does not need [to have] a wide educative instruction for, we also have to consider that in a public debate, such sentiments are not enough. It is imperative [to have] some level of formation, about history and what Indigenous rights according international norms are. The average people think we are some crazy folks that put on the headband and trouble around. Therefore, we need to row double time to show that we are not crazy, and our thought is rational (in MAGALHÃES DE CARVALHO, 2018, p. 93, our translation²¹⁷).

In 2019, fourteen Uruguayan Charrúa²¹⁸ groups and families, established in six different locales (namely, Montevideo, Tacuarembó, Salto, Paysandú, Rocha and Flores) were interviewed and inquired by a civil-governmental joint commission in December 2018. Empowered by some of the collective knowledge developed and shared within the workshops in ESICHAÍ, they pointed to what they considered to be the most important Indigenous “territories of immaterial

²¹⁶ Interestingly, CONACHA was able to get funding from MIDES (*Ministerio de Desarrollo Social*) to finance the visit of Blas Jaime, acknowledged as the only known speaker (or semi-speaker) of the Chaná language. From this day onwards, Charrúa José Damián has been in charge of maintaining ties with Jaime in order to reconstruct a Chaná-Charrúa language. Notably, Chaná was an ethnonym used to name semi-nomadic *todería* peoples from XVI to XVIII century. There are records referring to Chanaes and Charrúas interacting in Santo Domingo Soriano, a city that borders Uruguay River, whose founding remounts to a mid-XVII century Franciscan reduction. According to M.M. (interview with M.M., 22/06/2020), “*Nos decimos Charrúa, pero a la vez, posiblemente también seamos descendientes de Guenoa, Guaraní (...) Resurgir tiene esas cuestiones. Sí, tomamos de otros pueblos. Ser Charrúa no significa dejar a fuera lo Chaná, sino que incluye lo Chaná, lo Guenoa-Minuán, los Yaros, Bohanes, incluye todos estos otros pueblos (...) Es nuestra tarea también recoger a memorias de otros pueblos. No me interesa si termina siendo Guaraní.*”

²¹⁷ Originally: “*Si bien es muy importante hablar desde el propio sentir y para eso uno no necesita gran instrucción educativa, también tenemos que considerar que en un debate público ese sentir no es suficiente. Es necesario cierto nivel de formación, de lo que es la historia y lo que son los derechos indígenas de acuerdo a las normativas internacionales. El promedio de las personas piensa que somos unos locos que nos ponemos la vincha y molestamos. Entonces hay que remar el doble para demostrar que no somos locos y que tenemos un pensamiento racional.*”

²¹⁸ Among the contacted groups, is Betum, from Salto, which is self-identified as “Bohanes”, an ethnonym that was used to make reference to peoples that used to live in *tolderías* in Rio de la Plata between the XVI and the XVIII century. Even so, Betum is a member of CONACHA, and is commonly thought to be a part of the “Charrúa macro-ethnicity”.

usage” located under Uruguayan jurisdiction. These landscapes were divided between “territories of memory”, “spiritual territory” and “resistance territory”. All of them carry a significant weight for Charrúa collective memory, ecology and cosmology. Burial sites, locales of historical conflicts and areas of native forestry are claimed by Charrúa as sacred land that should not be exposed to the neoextractivist rationale that has been jointly mobilizing capital and state over Latin America’s territories (GUDYNAS, 2009; SVAMPA, 2013).



Fig. 7 - Map of Indigenous sacred sites under Uruguayan jurisdiction
Extracted from PROYECTO REDD+ URUGUAY, 2019

This inquiring was a small part of a wide national project named *Proyecto REDD+ Uruguay*, which is being planned since 2017 by the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fishing, and the Ministry of Household, Territorial Ordering and Environment, intending to “identify the causes of deterioration of native forests and plant actions to revert them, aiming to widen the surface and

quality of the country's native forests"²¹⁹. Based on an agreement signed with the World Bank, which provides funding through the Carbon Fund of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility²²⁰ (FCPF), the project aims to properly prepare the country for the fulfillment of a pre-established set of guidelines that would allow it to integrate the framework of FCPF. Among them, is a set of safeguards that consider Indigenous peoples and Indigenous population as "relevant stakeholders" to be consulted for the proper implementation of the project and its validation from international counterparts (UN-REDD, 2016; PROYECTO REDD+ URUGUAY, 2019).

Beyond the mapping efforts, which are definitely important to collectively crystallize territories that hold a symbolic and spiritual importance for the reemerging Charrúas, this report goes a step further in providing grounding for acknowledgement of the collective claims of the Indigenous peoples of Uruguay regarding land. Notably, the "safeguards" normative of the REDD+ process, which considers Indigenous peoples "relevant stakeholders", has been appropriated as an important means through which Charrúa communities vocalize claims regarding land and territory. Interestingly, one of the cited documents that sustained the report was produced by Charrúa Andrés Delgado²²¹, which has obtained a degree in "*Pueblos Indígenas, Bosques y REDD+*", academically availed by the *Universidad Intercultural Indígena*, in 2018. The degree was obtained as part of a partnership that involves FILAC, World Bank, FCPF and other regional institutions that deal with Indigenous affairs and/or environment issues. Indigenous leaders of Latin America and the Caribbean are the project's

²¹⁹ Extracted from: <<http://www.mvotma.gub.uy/politica-planos-y-proyectos/redd#gestion-sostenible-de-los-bosques>>.

²²⁰ Forest Carbon Partnership Facility is "designed to assist developing countries in their efforts on reducing emissions from deforestation and/or forest degradation, conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks ("REDD+") by building their capacity and developing a methodological and policy framework that provides incentives for the implementation of REDD+ programs" (BIRD, 2015, p. 1). In November 2013, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, under the 19th session of the COP-19 has approved the Warsaw Framework on REDD+, which establishes the main international architecture regarding procedures for mitigation efforts in the forest sector by developing countries to be recognized by the UNFCCC and compensated through payments for performance. This set of guidelines is followed by FCPF program under the *Proyecto REDD+ Uruguay*.

²²¹ Andrés is one of the leaders of a Charrúa community named Jaguar Berá, hosted in one of the poorest peripheries of Montevideo. Among its activities are education, socioeconomic sheltering, community development and the development of Charrúa spirituality. Jaguar Berá is part of CONACHA.

target audience, which are conceded scholarships funded by FCPF. Some of the project's objectives are

To strengthen the capacities of territorial management of Indigenous peoples of Latin America with a biocultural focus, ensuring the integration of the concepts, tools and practices of intercultural negotiation in REDD+ processes on regional indigenous territories; To develop a wide understanding and application of structural elements of the Indigenous peoples of Latin America in the designing and maneuvering of REDD+ process in Indigenous territories; To improve the knowledge of leaders, technicians, negotiators and trainers of Indigenous peoples about the political, environmental, social and economic fundaments of REDD+ (FILAC, 2017, p. 3).

It is important to bring Tania Li's (2010) critique regarding how some international development initiatives, such as FCPF, rely on concepts of indigeneity that are axiomatically linked to notions of local people, forest-dwellers or forest-dependent communities. Drawing on her idea of "communal fix", she is attentive to a recent turn of institutions such as the World Bank in favoring and selecting groups, usually appealing to ethnicity, culture or tradition, to fix collective regimes of land tenure against land commercialization. By helping to erect strict legal frameworks of collective landownership, which have direct influence in the on-the-ground social fabric of these people (FRENCH, 2009; 2011), these efforts may "produce a discourse of alterity that overlooks the dynamics of dispossession" (LI, 2010, p. 399). In this sense, REDD+ in Uruguay may definitely represent an important means towards the legal acknowledgement of the Charrúas as an indigenous people in modern-day Uruguay, perhaps even granting them some kind of territorial authority in observance to their own traditional beliefs. Nonetheless, the often rigid conception of "indigeneity-as-collectivism" or "ecologically noble people" advanced by such projects may pose a challenge to the open-endedness of the "becoming Charrúa" conception collectively adopted up to this date by many of the reemerging groups that integrate CONACHA.

3.6.

Politicizing indigeneity in the streets of Uruguay: the *indio político*

Recently, the militant attachment of reemerging Charrúa groups with matters of environment preservation, antiracism and wealth distribution has been growing. Their partnership with afro-Uruguayan organizations is notable. Mundo Afro, an association that works in favor of the rights and the visibility of afro descendants in Uruguay, often offers space, political leverage and support to public activities conducted by CONACHA. In many of their public interventions, Charrúas dress their headbands and traditional regalia and hold onto traditional artifacts such as the *caracola*²²². Such acts of performance are also present in their frequent interventions in Universities, schools and other public environments. Helen Gilbert (2013, p. 178) remembers us that indigenous performances “negotiate indigeneity for at least two constituencies – their local communities and the broader postcolonizing societies from which their audiences are drawn – while often building in modes of address that will speak to international viewers as well”. In this sense, their public performances have become ever more politicized, adhering to distinct popular claims.

In this sense, it is important to highlight CONACHA’s closeness to CRYSQL, an association of Uruguayan former political prisoners that lobbies for state reparations involving the monumentalization of places that guard the memory of state terrorism, and the search of disappeared people. Some Charrúa communities such as Jaguar Berá, from Montevideo, have outspokenly voiced claims against recent authoritarian tendencies witnessed in Uruguay, such as the rejected 2019 Constitutional referendum, authoritarian declarations made by far-right politician Guido Manini Ríos (*Cabildo Abierto*) and the recent government-endorsed bill *Ley de Urgente Consideración* (LUC), which restricts civil liberties and opens space for the criminalization of social movements. In a public

²²² On that regard, I quote Charrúa M.C. (interview with M.C., 10/12/2019): “*cuando se hace la marcha donde van todos los grupos en el centro del país (...), sobre los derechos de todos grupos, nosotros vamos como indígenas y la gente nos reconoce. La gente se emociona cuando ve a los indígenas... Porque vamos con nuestras plumas, con un ponchito, con algo, no? Pa identificarnos... Y ellos se emocionan. Muchos dicen: sí, mi abuela era indígena, mi bisabuela... Se reconocen y se emocionan*”.

statement (April 2020, our translation) made by Jaguar Berá community against a declaration made by Ríos in which he criticizes post-dictatorial commissions of truth, they affirm that

The military and the Uruguayan State are responsible not only for the last dictatorship, but also the Salsipuedes Massacre in 1831 (...) The struggle for human rights is one, and we will always side with the mothers and kin of disappeared people, because all of us Charrúas are family of victims of State terrorism, either near or far in time, and because these are [State-sponsored] crimes that hurt the heart of every sensitive soul, and the only way to heal this wound is through JUSTICE, which is only possible through the unveiling of all truth²²³.

In a similar take, Martín Delgado Cultelli (2017, p. 3, our translation²²⁴) writes about his personal trajectory as a modern-day Charrúa in a published article

The knot that relates political, social and economic violence conjointly with the constant reaffirmation of memory is part of my trajectory as an Indigenous activist and member of a family directly affected by the dictatorship. I have been raised hearing stories of military abuse. My parents were victims of state terrorism in the sixties and in the seventies; my father was

²²³ Originally: “El ejército y el Estado uruguayo son responsables no solo de la última dictadura militar, sino también de la masacre de Salsipuedes en 1831 (...) La lucha por los derechos humanos es una, estaremos siempre del lado de las madres y familiares de desaparecidos porque todos los charrúas somos familiares de víctimas del terrorismo de Estado más cerca o más lejos en el tiempo, y porque son delitos que hieren el corazón de cualquier alma sensible y la única forma de sanar esa herida es que haya JUSTICIA, la cual solo es posible a través del descubrimiento de toda la verdad”. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10212625133622980&set=a.10202506917793908&type=3&theater>>.

²²⁴ Originally: “El entramado que vincula violencia política, social y económica, conjuntamente con la reafirmación constante de la memoria es parte de mi trayectoria como activista indígena y miembro de una familia a la que la dictadura afectó directamente. Crecí escuchando relatos sobre los abusos de los militares. Mis padres fueron víctimas del terrorismo de Estado de los años sesenta y setenta; mi padre fue detenido por las Fuerzas Conjuntas y en los cuarteles recibió torturas brutales, mi abuelo materno estuvo en prisión, mi madre tuvo que exiliarse y mi tío materno —al que no conocí, pero que está presente en las conversaciones familiares— fue asesinado por las fuerzas de seguridad en 1969. Mi abuela y mis tías se ocuparon de mantener viva la memoria sobre este periodo de la historia. Sin embargo, yendo más atrás en el tiempo, nos encontramos con otros relatos sobre las violencias y el autoritarismo. Estos no son tan nítidos como los de la dictadura, pero son claros y contundentes. La diferencia no se debe solo a que unos recuerdos son más recientes que los otros, sino a que los últimos cuentan con mayor licencia social. La hegemonía de las izquierdas en el campo social en Uruguay habilita espacios para hablar sobre las violaciones a los derechos humanos en el pasado reciente, pero no así sobre el pasado lejano. Volviendo a la historia de mi familia, tanto en la memoria de mi padre como en la de mi abuela paterna están presentes las guerras civiles, en las que se pone de manifiesto la brutalidad implicada en el proceso de consolidación del Estado nación (...). El Estado y la sociedad uruguaya se niegan a reconocer que las elites se enriquecieron con la masacre genocida del siglo XIX.”.

detained by the *Fuerzas Conjuntas* and received brutal torture sessions in barracks, my grandfather has been in jail, my mother went on exile and my uncle – who I have not meet, but is present in familial conversations – was murdered by security forces in 1969. My grandmother and my aunties took care of maintaining the memory about this historical period alive. However, going back in time, we meet other reports of violence and authoritarianism. These are not as clear as those from the dictatorial period (...). Left-wing hegemony in Uruguay's social agenda avails spaces to talk about human rights violations in recent times, but not so much about distant times. Going back to my family's history, either in my father's memories or in my paternal grandmother's, civil wars are present, which reveal the brutality implicated in the consolidation of the nation-state (...). The State and Uruguayan society deny acknowledging that [contemporary] élites became rich on top of the massacres conducted in XIX century.

Following a pattern that has already been discussed, an important part of Jaguar Berá's communitarian actions rely on activism, which mostly resonates with racial, classist and environmental claims. Recently, they have submitted a project to FILAC in order to supply food for Charrúa families of Montevideo who had their income hit by recent SARS-CoV-2 outbreak (interview with N.C., 20/06/2020). This political activity finds resonance in the discursive image Axel Lazzari and Diana Lenton (2019) have named *indio político*. By exceeding the normalized realm that bounds the "Indian" to a backward a-political traditionalism, and joining contemporary popular mobilizations condemning what would be a "continuation" of the violence their ancestors' had been subject to, the *indio político* represent a case for transgressive disagreement.

Jacques Rancière (1996) has famously differentiated 'police' from 'politics' as two juxtaposed logics of being together in his work about the disagreement. By the former, he means the processes of operationalizing the "aggregation and consent of collectives, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and functions and the systems of legitimation of such distribution" (RANCIÈRE, 1996, p. 41, our translation). By the latter, he means occasions that challenge the police order by instituting actions that question the very arrangements of distributions, classifications and functions. In his words, there is politics because "those who do not rightfully count among the beings of

speech exert a force to be taken into account and thus become a community by putting distortion in common, which is no other than confrontation itself, the contradiction of two worlds” (idem, 1996, p. 40, our translation). In this sense, the possibility of radical politics is linked to a leveling effect on the hierarchies and symbolical orderings of the police order. This renders the *indio politico* image – one that confronts and negotiates the “national formations of alterity” or the ethnogovernmentality (BRIONES, 2007; BOCCARA, 2007) – a “symbolic dirtiness”, or an excessive fashion, which translates into potential openings regarding politics, subjectivities and models of citizenship (LAZZARI; LENTON, 2019).

In the case of Uruguay, the transgressive stance posed by reemergent Charrúa people challenges what we have discussed about the country’s construction of a national time. Reminding what was brought in chapter 2, the “hiperintegrated” polity (RAMA, 1987) depended on a complete symbolic seizure between national and pre-national histories, which occluded native pasts, repressed Indigenous ancestry as well as histories of *mestizaje* and reinforced the narrative of Uruguay as an “indianless” territory populated by “descendant of the boats”. Moreover, Real de Azúa (2000) notes that the character of a “*sociedad amortiguadora*”, which defined Uruguay predestinated differentiation, was dependent on narratives of both territorial and racial homogeneity. The public contestation of such homogeneity by the Charrúas fosters a reinterpretation of this story. Their “ghostly” reemergence of the indigenous subject instantiates a disagreement over the “appeasing” solution Uruguay has relied to in narrating and resolving social conflict as seen both in Salsipuedes and in recent civil-military dictatorship.

3.7.

Partial conclusions

In this chapter, we were able to discuss some of the features of the Charrúa reemergence, with a special emphasis in Uruguayan collectivities. Firstly, we examined some of the academic discussions regarding ethnogenesis and reemergence in order to better shape our discussion and situate it academically. Secondly, we discussed some of the fractures the national subjectivity was dealing with after the end of the civil-military dictatorship in Uruguay, relating it with the “Indian renovation” national tendency. Subsequently, we have analyzed some of the central collective dimensions of the Charrúa reemergence in Uruguay, emphasizing some of its principal claims, projects and constitutive dynamics. Some important tensions were also brought up, such as the contradictions exposed in the burying ritual of Vaimaca Perú, which pretty much encapsulate much of the ambiguities that constitute the relationship between reemergent Charrúa collectives and the Uruguayan state. Notably, although the foundation of Uruguay is coincidental with the extermination of *toldería* life ways and native land dispossession, their reemerging descendants’ claims and demands are mainly posed in relation to state-national entities²²⁵. I will expand on that in the conclusion.

Against-the-grain archival readings, especially those that adopt a regional approach in order to move beyond such seizure, evince that not only interaction between natives and European-*criollos* was intense, but was also central for the construction of the borderlines that divide and give form to the countries in Rio de la Plata (ERBIG JR., 2020; ERBIG JR.; LATINI, 2019). Nevertheless, the entrenched ethnogeographical imaginings developed during the eighteenth century and assumed by national archives and stories have largely impeded Indigenous efforts at reclaiming lands. Burial sites and other kinds of vernacular archeological architecture are administered as national historical monuments, whereby access and public signification ends up arbitrated by the state, largely impeding Charrúas’ effort to (re)constitute their cosmology and ecology (ERBIG JR. 2020, p. 173).

²²⁵ Regarding this question, it is important to remember that FILAC, the international organization with which Uruguayan Charrúas have the closest relation, has a nation-based structure of representation, which allows for Indigenous representatives according to nationality and not with ethnicity or region.

Even so, symbolical advancements such as the repatriation of Vaimaca Perú's remains, the law that transformed the date of the massacre of Salsipuedes in a national holiday and the refashioning of the national census as so to include indigenous ascendancy have all undeniably contributed to unsettle much of Uruguay's (white) imaginary. There is growing artistic, literary and academic²²⁶ interest and action in frameworks that contest stories of national homogeneity through new readings over the country's land (dis)occupation histories and indigenous heritage²²⁷ (MAGALHÃES DE CARVALHO, 2018). According to M.D. (interview with M.D., 18/12/2019), hundreds actively integrate the growing number of groups that claim Indigenous identity in Uruguay, especially in Uruguay's countryside, in efforts to (re)constitute affective attachments with land. As for CONACHA, their 2016 approved statute consolidated their objective "to unify as many groups of Indigenous descendants as possible", as well as "to promote a historical revisionism and a change of vision regarding the actual existence of the Charrúa people in our country" (ESTATUTO, 2016).

As it was noted, much of the meanings and feelings attached to the reemergence are related to "residual" embodied experiences. In this sense, the process of "indigenization", whose claims are intimately related to a Massacre that coincided with the foundation of Uruguay, instantiates new perspectives not only about statist politics, but also about the "idea" of the nation-state, challenging encompassing perceptions over citizenship, development, and affective attachment. That is precisely where the public event of the Charrúa reemergence interacts with modes of production and (re)enactment of sovereignty, which are intimately dependant on the (re)formation of collective subjectivities. As it was

²²⁶ Artistic-literary referents that deserve to be highlighted are the theatrical appearances of Bascuadé Inchalá, especially with its recent play named *Oyendau: El grito de la memoria*, the artistic groups *Inambí*, *Choñik*, the recently published book *La leyenda del Gato Negro*, by the Charrúa Sergio Cruz, and the 2019 released award-winning movie *El País sin indios*, directed by Leonardo Rodríguez and Nicolas Soto. Academically, one can highlight thesis such as CAMARERO, Leticia. **Entre el bronce y el tambor**. Montevideo: Udelar, 2014; REPETTO, Ana Francesca. **Uma arqueologia do apagamento: narrativas de desaparecimento Charrúa no Uruguai desde 1830**. Dissertação de Mestrado (MN-UFRJ). Rio de Janeiro, 2017, CORTE, José Inácio Gomeza. **Em busca da memória e da identidade: a resistência do povo Charrúa no Uruguai**. Dissertação de Mestrado (PPGMS-UNIRIO), 2017 and MAGALHÃES DE CARVALHO, Ana. **Procesos de reemergencia indígena en Uruguay: reflexiones sobre las estrategias del pueblo charrúa frente a los discursos de invisibilización**. Tesis de Magister en Antropología Social (FLACSO), 2018.

²²⁷ Proposals for the renaming of parks and streets that carry the name of Bernabé or Fructuoso Rivera were also raised, and achieved a relative degree of public mobilization.

discussed, Charrúa reemergence finds most of its social resonance among those who have familial histories of “state terrorism” and others (especially women born in the interior) who have lived up with experiences of silencing and shame in between public and private realms. Indigenous identity has, therefore, not only been a means of collectively rendering these experiences symbolically intelligible, but also of positively reevaluating them under the transnational sign of indigeneity. All Charrúas I have talked to are proud of being part of a global community of Indigenous peoples whose (various) stories of struggle are interpreted as marks of endurance and resistance, echoing a relational vocabulary of belonging. This has mostly been possible due to the construction of networks that have allowed for the interexchange of histories, symbols and political agendas. Moreover, the production of disaggregated socioeconomic data, the spaces provided for the vocalization of collective claims and the cession of financial resources for identity-based projects are examples of how transnational articulations have actively impacted the formation of local Charrúa reemergence.

Claims for the legal acknowledgement of Charrúa preexistence, as well as for the adoption of public policies of reparation in favor of the Indigenous descendants could open, in Gustavo Verdesio’s (2016, p. 210) terms, “a can of worms” in Uruguay. Although both the number of engaged militants and self-identified Indigenous descendants is not high, this is so because of the much debated foundations of Uruguayan nationality. That is, such acknowledgement could have direct influence on how statist claims of authority draw their legitimacy. Recognizing a legal continuity between the Charrúas ambushed and dispossessed by the “foundational genocide” (CULTELLI, 2020) and contemporary subaltern citizens would challenge the limits of political activity whose definitions are themselves the (re)affirmed over the legitimate existence of the Uruguayan sovereignty. From another perspective, the formal recognition of the state’s guilt in the genocidal campaign of Salsipuedes towards living Indigenous descendants would politicize the *par excellence* a-political moment, which is the institutionalization of sovereignty and the definition of the “limits” of the political.

Reassessing some of what has been discussed in the first chapter, it is through the production of meaning that civil authority legitimates itself and defines the limits and possibilities of political activity (SHAW, 2008). When Enrique Auyanet put his body in defense of the sacredness of Perú's remains against state-backed researchers, a potent fracture against a sovereign nation that had centralized all symbolic authority over that territory was opened. Although Perú's bones now (against the will of some descendants) rest alongside figures that represent the (genocidal) "founding fathers" of the state, they materialize a call for an unpaid debt. Such debt is intimately attached to the institutionalization of the limits of the political: the circumvention of the "inside", the institution of national time and a promise of civilization. As advanced by Finn Stepputat (2014), remains' pure materiality produces an affective excess that escapes ordering and governing, defying full symbolization or governance. According to Verdesio (2016), much of the government's resistance in signing ILO 169 Convention is due to worries about possible identity-based "expensive" claims for material reparations. One may think, though, that the weak strings of continuity that link non-existing "pure" autonomous natives with Uruguay's contemporary "acculturated" population may not be meaningful. Nevertheless, in relation to a state that has occluded native pasts and narrated itself as a white-European bid for civilization for more than a century, the *mestizo* (or descendant) is less worrisome for its difference than it is for its similarity.

Conclusion

Along this dissertation, we have assessed different debates and situations. From the start, I have tried to argue that both the Indigenous subject and Indigenous politics, with all variations, paradoxes and ambivalences, are interrelated with central and defining features of International Relations. Most especially, with the institution of the sovereignty state, that both defines and renders intelligible “the political”. Reassessing some of what has been discussed in the first chapter, the ontological enactment of sovereignty is dependent on the setting of limits, which not only territorialize authority, but also inaugurate a symbolic order. Therefore, the relationship between sovereignty and subjectivity is an intimately political one.

Indian or indigenous are categories which are inextricably related to colonialism and modernity. As it was argued for Latin America, strategies of governing indigeneity have been important components of national projects, which mostly claimed a territorial inheritance of the former colonial empires. Managing otherness, however, has never been trivial, whereas defining national belonging and administering national territorialities have often depended on violent action against non-conforming territorial practices and life ways of natives. The region of the Banda Oriental, and its native inhabitants, as discussed in the second chapter, were subject to particular schemes of classification that evince the borderland dynamics that prevailed in Banda Oriental until early nineteenth century. Although implicitly recognized in some documents and treaties back in eighteenth century, autonomous native control of the region's hinterland was never officially (*de jure*) acknowledged as a sovereign authority. The constant disputes that opposed Iberian crowns and Jesuit missions in the region were settled with the constitution of a borderline that divided Portuguese from Spanish land control. If the participation of native partialities was central to the process of drawing the line, along the period that succeeded demarcation, which witnessed the emergence of proto-national militias, the countryside became ever more inhospitable to their mobile lifeways.

With the formation of post-colonial independent states in the region, native autonomy was already at a low point. Many of them had already left their traditional territories and lifeways, many of them by complete coercion. Some *tolderías*, though, remained practicing nomadic lifeways in what would become the northern region of recently-independent Uruguay. Attending calls from landowners, whose documented claims in favor of violent action against mobile natives date back to as early as late eighteenth century, the first constitutional government of Uruguay conducted a series of planned massacres from 1831 to 1834. Besides those who were killed, hundreds were brought as captives to the urban centers and slavishly distributed among wealthy families to be “properly civilized” and acculturated. These episodes were purposefully silenced during most of the country’s history. Moreover, the dispersed and disaggregated condition of historical records, correlated with nationalist-inspired scholarly efforts to reassemble ethno-historical accounts, have contributed to a profound silencing of the region’s native pasts.

Under that scenario, Uruguay has forged its nationality under a consensual and homogeneous narrative that conceived its nationals as European immigrants. To attend needs of territorial legitimacy, though, the figure of a “national Indian” began to be cultivated and pedagogically reproduced from the last decades of the nineteenth century onwards. The Charrúas would often be depicted as a previous society whose territorial dominions mirrored the modern contours of the Uruguayan nation-state, which was their natural “inheritor”. Such a narrative depended on split temporalities, in which the contact between settlers and natives was impossible beyond natural “civilization clash”, or “historical necessity”. With the exhaustion of the welfare Batllist model in the 60s, the figure of “the Indian” was claimed by left-wing revolutionary organizations such as the *Tupamaros* as symbols of oppression, resistance and endurance.

After the end of the civil-military dictatorship that ruled the country until 1985, a push for the refashioning of the national story has gained momentum with the “Indian renovation” aesthetic movement, which provided a fertile scenario for the foundation of the first national Indigenous organization in 1989. In 2002, the repatriated remains of Vaimaca Perú have produced an affective excess that

escaped nationalist symbolization efforts, exposing fractures in core dimensions of Uruguayan sovereignty and nationality. Notably, it allowed for groups to claim a collective common ancestry with Perú, and to ask for symbolic and material reparation. Indigenous Charrúa associations gained momentum and were able to collectively sustain their claims in international spaces and forums. Most importantly, international lobbying has led other countries and institutions to endorse formal suggestions to the Uruguayan state on the matter of Indigenous rights, such as the signature of the ILO 169 Convention. The very nature of such spaces, whose working principles are indebted to a global legal concept of indigeneity, have also contributed to refashion local patterns of organization and identification. Moreover, the symbolic recognition that Charrúas obtain within these spaces, where they are able to obtain financial support for the development of local projects, finds resonance with the concept of “legalizing identity” (FRENCH, 2009), allowing us to understand both cultural practices of belonging grounded on sedimented affects, and symbolic and legal provisions of indigeneity as interrelated.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Charrúa reemergence sustains its cultural belonging through a deep emotional attachment with Salsipuedes, whose memory is yearly celebrated, and whose legal acknowledgement as genocide is among their main claims. In this sense, their pledge for legal reconnaissance is not only for present times. Rather, they pledge to the recognition of their collective preexistence in relation to the state. As it was largely discussed, this movement poses a challenge to the split temporalities on top of which the Uruguayan nation was built. Recalling that sovereignty and subjectivity are tied in a deeply political relation – determining the limits of the political community –, one ought to remember that “the political” stands for the conditions under which and the practices through which authority is constituted and legitimated. Therefore, challenging some of the foundational pillars of state authority and legitimacy is a potent endeavor in the sense of “repoliticizing the political”, which is also notable because “the problems confronted by Indigenous peoples in relation to sovereignty discourses are not only ‘their’ problems, but go to the heart of contemporary understandings and practices of politics” (SHAW, 2008, p. 9).

As we have discussed in the first chapter, Indigenous politics is about expressions of alternative experiences of time that persist along settler imperatives (RIFKIN, 2017, p.39). Those are intimately related to dynamics of “storying” that (re)conceptualize time through an embodied sense of belonging. Notably, their annual rituals, performances and the itinerant methodology have allowed for the productions of communitarian attachments to culture, place and time that exceed those “governed” by the nation-state. As we discussed, the collectivization of silent, repressed memories and affects has been central to the constitution of Charrúa reemergence. These memories are deeply interwoven with state practices and dynamics of authority imposition (notably, state terrorism and the institutionalized silencing over indigenous pasts), thereby offering alternative embodied perspectives over national time. In that sense, the “foundational genocide” (CULTELLI, 2020) is (re)interpreted not as an isolated event, but as a (violent) *modus operandi* for stateness. That reading sheds light on the “constitutive outsides” of the “hiperintegrated” or “buffer” society, as interpreted by Germán Rama (1987) and Carlos Real de Azúa (2000).

It is notable, though, that the most significant portion of reemergent Charrúas lives in (peripheral) urban contexts (let’s remember that Uruguay as a whole has only 5% of rural population). Many have urban jobs and interact in a daily basis with “non-indigenous” people and society, and do not embody explicitly differentiating diacritics. As it was also argued, some of them are frequent participants in street demonstrations in favor of the promotion of human rights, antiracism and ecologism. Notably, their indigenous identity (until now) is not claimed under the banner of neither territorial nor cultural “radical alterity”. In this sense, as it was argued in the last paragraphs of the previous chapter, we understand their potency over the limits of the political that constitute and (re)enact Uruguayan sovereignty in their similarity with “ordinary Uruguayans”. The (re)signification of places, memories and embodiments under an identity that is not fully controlled or governed by the statist symbolic apparatus may be a potent means for “repoliticizing the political” (SHAW, 2008).

Since the relationship between state and Indigenous peoples is always grounded on ambiguities, cultural/ethnic distinctiveness sometimes intersects with

symbols of nationality. For the case of the reemergent Charrúas, that becomes clear, for example, in the way some of them passionately claim their kin's co-participation in José Artigas' political projects. Although historical records show that Artigas' military power was indeed composed in alliance with Charrúa partialities during the 1810s, it is also true that his image was later incorporated²²⁸ by the same state that proudly boasted to be the only one in Latin America who was not haunted by the "Indian problem". In that sense, it is not rare that some contemporary Charrúas frame their indigenous belonging in a patriotic nationalistic tone, claiming to be descendant of those who were more loyal to the nation's *prócer* than it was Rivera, who would have not only betrayed Charrúas in Salsipuedes, but a whole national project. In that sense, the "national Indian" narrative has an intimately ambiguous relationship with reemerging Charrúa groups. That is precisely the reason why my second chapter has been focused in exposing the problematic of the state and the construction of nationality as a heuristic axis of the processes of indigeneity. Reassessing Manuela Picq (2018, p. 98), Indigenous politics cannot be divorced from the study of world politics for they stand as the other that informs stateness.

If, on the one hand, I have recognized the potentially destabilizing power Charrúa reemergence has in "politicizing the political", I have also raised discussions regarding how international initiatives such as REDD+, to which much of what there is about Charrúa recognition and informed consent is indebted, may "govern" the significance of being indigenous, fixing essentialist regimes of representation. Notably, such awareness does not wish to ignore or disregard Indigenous agency. Rather, it purposely shows how Indigenous identity – most especially in the case of Charrúa people, whose fatal destiny was thought as sealed for more than 150 years – is a matter of positioning, one that is highly dependent on transnational articulation and translocal spheres of intelligibility²²⁹.

²²⁸ Shifting historical contexts and opposing ideological groups have often pushed for distinct meanings on Artigas' history and symbolism. The vast majority of them did so in a consensually positive stance. As an example, both the conservative civil-military rule and revolutionary movements for agrarian reform draw symbolic legitimacy from Artigas' nationalism and/or revolutionism. For more on that, see FREGA, Ana (comp.). **Purificación**, La memoria histórica del Artiguismo. Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 2016.

²²⁹ We hereby bring an important reflection advanced by Ronald Niezen (2003, p. 227): "Indigenous peoples are not only those who say they are indigenous, but also those who are

In this sense, “[c]ooptation coexists with transgression, governance with transformative potential. (...). [In] contemporary spaces of recognition and multiculturalism, ambivalence becomes a kind of method” (CLIFFORD, 2013, p. 18)²³⁰.

Charrúa leader M.M. is herself aware of the eventual changes that an official acknowledgement by the Uruguayan state would impose. When I asked about the outcomes of the eventual signature of the ILO 169 Convention, she said that

[I]t can also be a trap. If Uruguay recognizes us, it will want to delimit what the indigenous population is (...), who is Charrúa and who is not. That is a tough question... among ourselves we have different criteria. Some say that self-recognition is enough. Some others [herself included] say that being Charrúa is having a common history of oppression, racism, exclusion and discrimination. (...) [With ILO 169], we would enter a new level, much different than the one we are now (interview with M.M., 22/06/2020, our translation²³¹).

My interest in discussing Charrúa reemergence had to do with the global-local dynamic and ambivalent relationship that constitutes contemporary dynamics of indigeneity (MERLAN, 2009). As we have argued, the signature of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and its further adoption by international institutions are capable of constraining states towards norm-compliance, and pave the way for the emergence of “legalizing identities” (FRENCH, 2009). By discussing central elements of Uruguay’s national story, as well as regional pre-national ethnohistory, I tried to construct a parallel that matched both these global and local dynamics, which are, notably, far from unambiguous, still rendering the question of Charrúa reemergence a wide margin for future (re)significations and (re)enactments.

accepted by a global network of nations and communities with similar claims and sources of recognition”.

²³⁰ For an interesting further discussion on that matter, see HALE, Charles. Rethinking Indigenous Politics in the Era of the “Indio Permitido”. **Nacla**, online, 2007. Available at: <<https://nacla.org/article/rethinking-indigenous-politics-era-indio-permitido>>.

²³¹ Originally: “A la vez, es como una trampa. Si Uruguay nos reconoce, también va a querer delimitar cual es la población indígena, (...) quien es Charrúa y quien es no. Y eso es una cuestión muy difícil... Nosotros tenemos diferentes criterios entre nosotros mismos. Hay algunos que dicen: solo la cuestión del auto reconocimiento basta. Y hay otros que decimos (...) que ser Charrúa es tener una historia en común, de opresión, de allanamiento, de racismo, de exclusión y discriminación que no la puede tener una persona que no tiene esos orígenes. (...) Ahí entraríamos a una etapa muy diferente de la que estamos ahora”.

Regarding that matter, I highlight three recent initiatives that may signalize further directions for Charrúa reemergence: i) the creation by the Universidad Autónoma de Entre Ríos (Argentina) of an Extension Program about *interculturalidad y pueblos indígenas*²³², co-coordinated by Ukabivera Gladys do Nascimento, from Charrúa community Itú, and intended to “promote and develop significant actions of extension, teaching from a viewpoint (...) [that] incorporates the cosmovisions of native peoples, particularly the Charrúa people, acknowledging its preexistence and permanence in our territories” (CONSEJO SUPERIOR UADER, 2019, p. 2); ii) the approval by the Deliberative Council of the Municipality of Concordia (Entre Ríos, Argentina) in April 2019 of a bill²³³ that granted the possession of a rural piece of land to the Charrúa community of Itú²³⁴ for ten years with possible further extension (RADIO NACIONAL, 2019), creating an important precedent for future Indigenous land claims, and iii) the recent formation of the *Alianza de Pueblos Originarios del Cono Sur*²³⁵, in San Luis (Argentina), committed to create “an Indigenous sovereign body to work in parallel with state organisms” in different matters, such as land claims, food sovereignty and nature rights (GRUPO LA PROVINCIA, 2020).

This dissertation has offered a relational perspective that may be valuable for further researches regarding reemergent indigenous collectives, incorporating debates on sovereignty and the international, and their relations with the constitutive limits of “the political”. In other words, it advocated that Indigenous reemergence may provide an insightful locus of analysis regarding the constitutive (violent) ontological groundings through which modern political authority is enacted and legitimated, therefore allowing for new margins of political possibility. This is situated in a global arena, when and where “diverse peoples

²³² More information available at: <<http://uader.edu.ar/intercultural/>>.

²³³ The bill was proposed by Representative Julia Saenz (*Frente para la Victoria-Partido Justicialista*). A video of her oral sustention in favor of the bill is found in: <<https://www.facebook.com/julia.saenzconcordia/videos/2246741535392782/>>. Interestingly, Concordia is an Argentinean city located on the western margins of the Uruguay River, standing just a few kilometers away from Salto, in Uruguay.

²³⁴ The Charrúas of Itú Community have good relationship with some of the members of CONACHA. See for example: <<https://r2820.com/notas/recordaron-la-masacre-charra-de-salsipuedes.htm>>.

²³⁵ The founding meeting gathered representatives from distinct Indigenous, such as Comechingones, Diaguitas, Kollas, Charrúas, Guaraníes, Mapuches, Qom, Kunzas, Chicha, Lules y Quechuas. Notably, *Cono Sur* is a geographic region that often accounts for the territories of Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Paraguay and southern Brazil.

throughout the world are self-consciously claiming and indigenous identity, often for the first time in history. That is, ‘aboriginal’ minority peoples (...) across the globe are, individually and together, becoming indigenous” (LEVI; MAYBURY-LEWIS, 2012, p. 107). Notably, this is possible due to the liberation of the term “indigenous” from its colonial entanglements, realizing collective calls for social justice and empowerment in contingent manners, and allowing for creative mechanisms of remembering, reconstructing and reconciling. In that sense, inasmuch the Charrúas are improvising ways of being Indigenous, they are also practicing, challenging and doing International Relations.

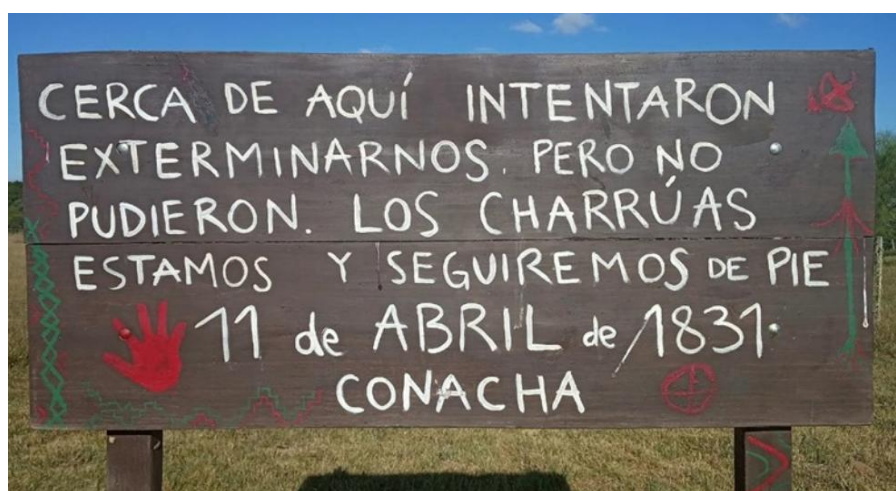


Fig. 8 - Sign fixed by CONACHA near Arroyo Salsipuedes

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