Big Water

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Published by University of Arizona Press

Blanc, Jacob, et al.
Big Water: The Making of the Borderlands Between Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay.

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PART I

ADAPTATION
Between 1628 and 1640 in the Guairá and Tapé regions of Spanish Paraguay, slavers from São Paulo and thousands of Native auxiliaries captured tens of thousands of Guarani from their villages and reductions and transferred them over six hundred kilometers to the São Paulo plateau, where they were made to serve as slaves on haciendas. Paulista slavers who led expeditions to the sertão, or Brazilian frontier, came to be known in the twentieth century as bandeirantes (bearers of the flag) and their expeditions as bandeiras. The raids on Guairá, the eastern limits of Spanish Paraguay, resulted in the enslavement of approximately thirty-three thousand Guarani from 1628 to 1632 alone.¹ This was one of the most destructive slave operations to occur on South American soil.²

Working from a Portuguese or Atlantic perspective, several excellent works examine Paulista slavers and explain the socioeconomic factors and ideological justifications behind Indian slavery. Most notably, John Monteiro’s classic Negros da terra employs civil documentation from São Paulo to elucidate the social practice of the bandeiras and Indian slavery in the São Paulo plateau.³ Many scholars have argued that Spaniards and Portuguese alike enslaved Indians, leaving us with a narrative that flattens colonials, casting them as the antagonists and the Jesuits as the heroes.⁴ Historians writing from nationalist (Brazilian or Paraguayan) positions absolve frontiersmen from any wrongdoing or credit them with performing the morally ambiguous work of “clearing the
While recent ethnohistorical research has helped to elucidate Guarani attitudes toward Jesuit evangelization, what remains unclear are Spanish, Portuguese, Jesuit, and indigenous attitudes as they interacted with one another. In this chapter, I place indigenous actors in the context of a dynamic imperial borderland. I contend that a borderland framework helps to clarify behaviors and provides nuance to a narrative that has been shaped by nationalist imperatives. By triangulating Portuguese- and Spanish-language sources along with Jesuit records, I suggest that what constituted borders for colonials in the region were indigenous bodies and souls. Many Natives exploited the constantly shifting territorial boundaries (i.e., the migration of their own communities in and out of colonial jurisdictions) to seek material and social benefits. Seeing borders as mobile bodies of indigenous communities helps clarify colonial activities in the region and narrate the buildup to the 1628 bandeira that devastated the Guairá.

Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron’s frontier/borderland framework is useful for analyzing Guairá because it provides for multiple and conflicting sources of power and colonial relations. These authors define frontier as a “meeting place of peoples in which geographic and cultural borders were not clearly defined.” Intercultural mixing and accommodation marked interethnic relations, not outright conquest. A borderland constitutes the “contested boundaries between colonial domains.” According to this definition, Guairá was simultaneously a frontier and a borderland. From 1570 to the 1630s, Spanish Guairá was a space of intense intercultural exchange evidenced by the emergence of a variety of transcultural institutions, practices, and actors. While the two small Spanish cities of the region—Villa Rica (100 vecinos or citizens) and Ciudad Real (50 vecinos)—wielded significant power over several Guarani communities, the majority of the region’s Natives were claimed as colonial subjects in word only. That the tiny Spanish population survived in Guairá was a result of transcultural patterns of interethnic alliance. The lack of clear Spanish domination over the Guarani marks the region as a frontier, and intense transimperial exchange and conflict between Spaniards and Portuguese mark it as a borderland. Spanish Guairá (delineated by the Piquiri, Paraná, Paranapanema, and Tibagi Rivers) was at the geographic center of the Big Water region. The rivers of Guairá—flowing from east to west and into the Río de la Plata basin—served as highways of commerce and mobility and facilitated the economic and social exchanges between Spanish, Portuguese, and indigenous domains. What further facilitated interimperial exchange was the fact that the Portuguese and Castilian crowns
were united during the period under study (1580–1640). The official boundary between the two imperial realms, the Tordesillas demarcation line of 1494, was all but ignored.

As with most borderlands, political identities on the Spanish Portuguese borderland got mixed up, making it difficult to distinguish between distinct imperial subjects and priorities. Nonetheless, Spanish and Portuguese colonial frameworks for Indian labor remained distinct. To provide for more nuance in discussing the identities and goals of colonials in the region, I use three basic categories: (1) Guaireños, who were vecinos of the two major Spanish cities of Guairá; (2) Paulistas, who were vecinos of São Paulo; and (3) Jesuit priests. Even though the Jesuit mission enterprise in Guairá was aligned with Spanish imperial goals, its particular evangelical mission and corporate aspirations often placed it at odds with Guaireño interests.8

Tamar Herzog argues that local interests and actors, not crown officials and royal armies, defined Spanish–Portuguese borderlands throughout the Atlantic world. In this chapter I describe how the activities of the borderland “agents”—Natives, mestizos, encomenderos, slavers, priests—who lived in contested communities experienced and contributed to the process of enacting territories.9 Natives in Guairá sought autonomy, protection, and economic gain even as colonials sought to territorialize their communities. The principal objects of colonial ambitions were indigenous bodies and souls, not geographic territories. The claims of sovereignty I document in Guairá correspond to some of Lauren Benton’s findings. In her work A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900, Benton argues that subjecthood was portable and that colonial “agents” generated sovereignty through geographic corridors such as rivers.10 I contend that colonials in Guairá generated sovereignty not only through corridors but through indigenous bodies. Unlike the contestants for colonial domains in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British, French, and Spanish North America, colonials in Guairá did not define political boundaries as spatial territories. Instead, mobile Native communities and the juridico-spiritual assertions that colonials made on them marked boundaries for colonials. Guaireños, Paulistas, and Jesuits each made specific claims on which bodies they had the right to enslave, demand labor from, or claim as spiritual subjects. Some of these claims were based on perceived ethnic differences, but Guarani communities were often on the move in and out of colonial jurisdictions, thereby confounding colonial claims. Like unmoored and mobile buoys in open water, boundaries between the Spanish and Portuguese realms
FIGURE 1.1 Settlements in the Spanish Guairá in the seventeenth century. Map by Frederico Freitas.
in Guairá were Guarani communities whose alliances or subjectivities were in a state of flux due to colonial pressures and the opportunities they sought out. Guairá was home to a large concentration of Tupi-Guarani peoples, organized in small villages of anywhere from one hundred to one thousand individuals. It was estimated that around 160,000 to 200,000 Natives inhabited the region.\(^1\) Hal Langfur’s definition of a frontier as a region “remote to settled society but central to indigenous peoples” is certainly apropos in this context.\(^2\)

**IMPERIAL AGENTS**

The origins of Guairá as a colonial frontier and borderland must take into account three colonial powers: Portuguese São Paulo, Spanish Guairá, and the evangelical reduction enterprise.

**SÃO PAULO**

Few Portuguese ventured to the São Paulo *planalto* in the decades following Pedro Álvares Cabral’s discovery of Brazil in 1500. It was difficult to access from the coast, from which it is separated by a mountain range. Efforts to colonize the region began only after the 1532 arrival of the first Portuguese governor-general, Afonso de Sousa. In 1553 the Vila de Santo André da Borda do Campo was established, followed shortly by the founding of a Jesuit college in 1554. In the 1550s Jesuit and settler interests clashed, leading the governor-general Mem de Sá to initiate in 1560 *aldeias d’el rei*, or Indian villages of the king. Jesuits administered the *aldeias*, but Paulistas used them for their labor needs. Throughout the sixteenth century, Paulista settlers took on Indian concubines and referred to their Indian allies as kin and friends. Paulistas of mixed Native and Portuguese parentage were abundant. Spaniards referred to them as *mamelucos*, the Portuguese counterpart to *mestizo*. Priests and settlers alike gifted copious amounts of iron tools to establish relations with Natives. Paulistas exploited conflicts between indigenous groups and enslaved captives taken in war.

São Paulo remained a poor colonial backwater dependent almost entirely on Indian labor. Tupi-Guarani groups dominated the region, but there were also Jê speakers in the vicinity.\(^3\) Paulistas applied a variety of ethnonyms to identify the Natives they encountered, but they came to call Indians with whom they had the most reciprocal relationship *Tupt*. Over the years, kinship linkages faded and
were replaced with outright slavery. As the population of São Paulo grew in the
late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and market factors increased the
profitability of production, Paulistas ventured into Spanish Guairá to acquire
more labor hands for their farms and ranches.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{SPANISH GUAIRÁ}

Spanish colonization of Guairá began in the 1550s. After the governor distrib-
uted the first encomienda grants in Asunción, he enticed those not fortunate
enough to receive them to seek new territories for conquest. The two main poles
of Spanish power in Guairá were in the towns of Ciudad Real and Villa Rica.
Santiago de Xérez was founded to the north, but it was even more isolated
and sparsely populated than the former two towns. There was very little immi-
grantion to Guairá and perhaps more attrition; by the 1620s, there were around
fifty Spanish \textit{vecinos} in Ciudad Real and one hundred in Villa Rica.\textsuperscript{15} Of the
Guaireños, the Jesuit provincial, Nicolás Durán said,

They are not familiar with money, they have no stores nor merchants, and among
them they have no officials of mechanical arts. None leave for Spain nor any other
part because they have nothing to leave in. They do not concern themselves with
affairs in Spain or Flanders. They eat nothing but cassava cakes; they have no
cattle or sheep; the meat that they rarely eat is from chickens or pigs or sometimes
from tapir when they catch them in the mountains or rivers. . . . They have no
ambition or desire to achieve honor in this life or to extol their lineage because
the highest office that they can aspire to is \textit{alcalde}. And so with this they live in
peace, content with sustaining themselves day to day on vegetables and fish from
the river.\textsuperscript{16}

While Durán’s patronizing tone is unmistakable, there is no disputing the pro-
vincial nature of this corner of Paraguay. By the seventeenth century, most of
the settlers of Guairá were creoles or mestizos, and most had very little contact
with the church. In describing his firsthand account of Guairá to the crown,
onel governor remarked, “These, your subjects, have lived as barbarians these last
ninety years. Their houses are like those of gypsies.”\textsuperscript{17}

Following established practices in Asunción, colonials who immigrated
to Guairá hoped to acquire Indian servants and corvée laborers under the
encomienda system. In Paraguay, the encomienda was a system of assigning
extended families or villages to a meritorious Spaniard (encomendero), giving him or her the right to use the Indian community for productive tasks. Spanish officials molded the legal framework of encomienda around Spanish-Guarani relations, which were rooted in Guarani kinship. From the beginning, Spaniards offered Guarani iron tools in exchange for provisions. Moreover, Guarani chieftains (called caciques or principales) offered Spaniards female concubines who lived with Spaniards permanently and provided essential services, such as farming and domestic work. Sometimes Spaniards’ gifts were large enough that a cacique would give not only female wives but would also require her male relatives to serve the Spaniard. Through these exchanges Spaniards became kin to the Guarani and even employed the Guarani terminology of kinship, being called tovayá, or brothers-in-law (cuñados in Spanish), to their cacique kin. This cuñadasgo, as the settlers called it, was a crucial element of interethnic relations and the encomienda. Through these political and affinal networks, Spaniards acquired personal servants who lived in their homes and access to corvée labor living in pueblos. By 1620, nine Guarani villages were subject to the encomenderos in Villa Rica.

If kinship was the cultural pillar of Spanish-Guarani relations, then the gifting of iron tools was the material pillar. Guaireños needed a steady supply of iron tools. Luckily for them, shortly after their settlement in the region they discovered raw iron ore in what Guaireños called the Campos de Coraçy Berá. Soon locals were producing iron tools for gifting, especially cuñas, or ax heads. These tools became critical to Spanish-Native relations in Guairá and the Río del la Plata generally. Colonials, both conquistadors and priests, relied on the gifting of iron tools to initiate and sustain peaceful relations with Natives. The introduction of European iron tools produced a virtual iron revolution among Natives in lowland South America. For the Tupi-Guarani, iron tools became essential for clearing land for farm plots, for building homes, for creating defensive palisades for the villages, and for use as trade items. Reflecting on the importance of iron tools for interethnic relations, the Jesuit father Diego González noted that “one can win a lineage of Indians with an ax head,” implying that a priest or conquistador could gain the alliance of a cacique and, therefore, access to a Guarani extended family unit. González noted that the ax became the essential tool for Guarani when preparing their garden plots, linking the production of foodstuffs to this colonial commodity. Iron tools became so central to the political economy that officials in Ciudad Real and Villa Rica made them the official currency, setting specific values for each iron object.
When an encomendero sought a female personal servant, he approached the cacique with an offer of material goods (iron tools or clothing), and the cacique might have negotiated for better terms and attempted to determine which of his kin went with the encomendero. Guarani social groups were relatively small, and most encomenderos possessed multiple lineage groups, each with its own cacique. This required that encomenderos negotiate with each individual cacique. In the earliest years, Spaniards recognized several important regional Guarani principales (Tayaobá, Araberá, Yaguaaracuré, and Macaçu) who possessed kinship ties with several villages. These had the potential political power to raise war parties against Spaniards.23

As Spaniards put greater pressures on Guarani communities for personal servants, Guarani either responded with violence or withdrew from Spaniards’ reach. Spaniards, therefore, frequently organized military campaigns to subdue rebellious or migrating communities, and these expeditions were always bolstered by scores of Guarani allies. In the aftermath of skirmishes, Spaniards often took women and children as captives and used them as personal servants. They legitimated this practice under the laws of “just war.” An anonymous Jesuit priest in 1620 succinctly described how relationships of kinship could descend into violence: “after the Indians saw that the Spanish did not treat them like brothers-in-law and kin but like servants, they began to withdraw, not wanting to serve the Spaniard.”24

Kinship, gifting of iron tools, and violence animated the region, setting already semimobile peoples on the move, either pulling them closer to Spanish centers or repelling them. In 1630, an encomendero named Francisco de Vallejos provided his opinion that the Spanish presence in the region was very fragile: “these Indians . . . were not reduced, or baptized, or conquered, nor did they pay the labor draft of right and obligation; rather, it was service of their own free will in exchange for payment [of cuñas].”25 The migrations in and out of colonial jurisdictions and the heavy reliance on gifting and kinship placed Guaireños in a position of weakness.

NASCENT BORDERLAND ECONOMY

Before discussing priestly imperial agents, I will describe the emergence of the regional economy. Much of the Guarani’s service to Spaniards was related to small-scale agricultural production for regional barter and subsistence. Ambitious vecinos, however, applied their tributaries to yerba production, which was
gaining in importance from around 1600 to 1630. An indigenous tea, yerba mate became a regional commodity in the sixteenth century. By at least 1616, the tea was being shipped from Paraguay across the Andes to Chile and Peru. By the 1620s and 1630s, yerba had a strong consumer base in cities such as Lima, Cusco, and Potosí. Guairá was strategically located near the wild yerba groves of Mbaracayú, which lay to the west of the Paraná.

The rising importance of yerba caught the eyes of crown officials. A newly appointed governor, don Luis Céspedes Xeria, arrived in Guairá in September of 1628. After surveying the economic landscape, one of his primary goals was to systematize and regulate the yerba trade. Céspedes Xeria referred to the wild yerba groves as “mines,” thus allowing him to claim the groves of wild trees as subterranean and therefore subject them to the royal quinto. A mita-like system was imposed on the yerba trade, and individuals who hoped to “mine” the yerba were required to obtain a lease from the crown through the governor. On the question of labor, the new governor sided with encomenderos against the Jesuits, arguing that the nascent economy was best left in the hands of colonists, not priests. Defining trees as mines in order to tax and regulate them was also part of the crown’s strategy to block Portuguese from accessing the silver wealth of the Andes. These strategies for creating sovereignty in Guairá represent the first of many attempts by subsequent modern states to control and regulate the resources of the Triple Frontier.

The center of the yerba trade was Mbaracayú. It was remote, and its lack of development ensured that it was never anything more than a small port village. Locals disliked their existence there to such an extent that they referred to the town as a “purgatory.” Before the bandeiras, a significant portion of the labor to harvest and process the yerba was provided by encomienda Indians from Guairá. The biggest financial winners in the yerba trade were the traders from Asunción, Santa Fe, and Corrientes. The producers in Mbaracayú and Guairá remained poor and were forced to sell cheap. The trade in yerba drew a number of Paulistas to the region who managed gangs of yerba laborers and supplied the region with black slaves and other miscellaneous materials or foodstuffs. In 1629, Céspedes Xeria found twenty-two Paulistas in Mbaracayú out of a total of around 100–150 vecinos. In Villa Rica there was a similar ratio, with seventeen Paulistas out of a total of one hundred vecinos. This Paulista minority had significant social ties to the region. Of the twenty-two Paulistas in Mbaracayú, three were married and two were betrothed to women in Asunción. One declared that his wife was Portuguese but lived in Asunción; two had wives
in Mbaracayú; three in Villa Rica; five were bachelors; and four claimed their wives were in São Paulo.

As the first governor to come to Guairá, Céspedes Xeria’s visit signaled that Paraguay finally had a viable export product in yerba mate. Céspedes Xeria was also the first governor to come to Paraguay through São Paulo, and he used his trip to Brazil to enhance his social networks (see fig. 1.2). As a freshly minted governor, Céspedes Xeria employed his new social prestige to contract an illustrious marriage to doña Victoria de Sá, niece of the infamous governor Martim de Sá and cousin to Salvador de Sá, governor of Rio de Janeiro. He also bought several plantations in the planalto, which were worked by Guarani slaves.\(^{31}\) Céspedes Xeria’s interest in Guairá represented the growing economic opportunities of the Guairá borderlands as well as the growing need for mediation between encomenderos and the increasingly powerful Jesuits.

CATHOLIC EVANGELIZATION: FRANCISCANS AND JESUITS

The first priests to arrive in Guairá were Franciscans. Eighteenth-century sources indicate that the priests established two reductions in 1580, Pacuyu and Curumiai, but extant contemporary records from Guairá do not mention them. There were stretches of years when no Franciscan was present in the region. Contradictions in the scant sources about Franciscan activities make it difficult to tease out their influence there. The peripatetic presence of Franciscans in Guairá is best explained by their focus on the Asunción region. Overwhelmed with their work with almost twenty reductions founded in the Asunción region, Franciscans made Guairá less of a priority.\(^{32}\)

Christian evangelization in Guairá began a second phase in 1609 with the arrival of Jesuit priests. Given the incomplete nature of the conquest in Guairá, the Spanish governor, Hernando Arias de Saavedra, petitioned the crown to allow Jesuits to begin establishing reductions in the region. A champion of the Jesuits, Saavedra hoped that they would create larger populations of sedentary Guarani. Between 1609 and 1628, Jesuits oversaw the construction of some fifteen reductions in Guairá.

The arrival of Jesuits in Guairá initiated a dramatic shift in the region’s political landscape. Whereas the Franciscans had worked closely with encomenderos to establish villages, Jesuits sought greater autonomy and resisted the encomienda. Franciscans had worked with Guarani communities in close proximity to Villa Rica and Ciudad Real. The Jesuits, by contrast, pushed east into
FIGURE 1.2 Map drawn up under the direction of Governor Céspedes Xeria detailing his voyage from São Paulo, Brazil, to the cities of Ciudad Real and Villa Rica in Guairá. Courtesy Archivo General de Indias, Buenos Aires, Mapas y Planos, 17.
territories where encomenderos had fewer kinship networks, thereby pushing the Spanish colonial presence into communities Paulistas claimed. Part of the broader political context is that the Jesuits entered Guairá during a moment of intense debate about the legality of the encomienda in Paraguay. To the benefit of the Jesuits, in 1611, audiencia judge don Francisco de Alfaro arrived in Asunción and issued a series of reforms in Paraguay that sought to severely restrict encomenderos’ claims on tributaries. A friend of the Jesuits and father to a Jesuit priest who would work in Paraguay, Alfaro exempted from encomienda service all Jesuit missions that formed independently of encomendero pueblos. Magnus Mörner suggests that it was this exemption that lured Guarani to join the missions. While there is probably some merit to this argument, it also ignores other factors that contributed to the success of the Jesuit missions, including transcultural methods of preaching and the borderland dynamics that made missions protective institutions from Paulistas and encomendero claims.

The work of establishing reductions must be understood as a mutual project directed not solely by priests but also by Guarani caciques. If encomendero-tovayá employed the Guarani codes of kinship to gain access to Guarani communities, then Jesuit activities borrowed Guarani codes of shamanism in order to acquire converts. Guarani perceived Jesuits as karatí, or itinerant shaman, and competed with them for Guarani followers. A shaman moved between spiritual and temporal realms or from the forest to the village, ordered economic and political activities, healed the sick, led the community in rituals, and competed with other shaman. Jesuits recognized different levels of shamanic power and tried to outdo them in spiritual contests. Shamans’ recognition of Jesuit spiritual power and engagement with them as competitors gave Jesuits legitimacy among Guarani communities. As Jesuits gained the trust of specific caciques, they began creating reductions, often initiated within a preexisting Guarani village. As new groups joined the community, space was made, and the reduction expanded. Caciques made explicit choices to enter or exit reductions, which marks this space as a frontier. Each reduction featured a wooden palisade or stone wall, suggesting that just like traditional Tupi-Guarani villages, they provided protection. As bandeirante raids became more frequent after 1610, Guarani found strength in numbers and in the Jesuits assistance to repel enemies—besides their sermons on heavenly protection and salvation, the Jesuits provisioned mission Guarani with firearms.

Spanish and Jesuit approaches to Guarani differed in many ways but were identical when it came to reciprocity: both gifted copious amounts of iron
tools. The importance of axes for building reduction palisades, churches, and lodges cannot be overstated. While the Jesuits often denied that they gave gifts to initiate and maintain peaceful relations with Guarani—claiming that because Spaniards used gifting so frequently it cheapened the interethnic relationship—it is clear that they used this method as frequently as the Spaniards did. In fact, there is evidence that Jesuits employed mission Indians in the iron mines at Campo de Coraçy Berá.

Jesuit activities in the region upset any balance that existed between Guaireños, Paulistas, and Guarani. With the offering of firearms, protection in numbers, and the allure of Jesuit spiritual power, many Guarani fled their encomiendas and moved into Jesuit reductions. The location of the Jesuit missions put them closer to São Paulo, and this instigated flight from Paulista aldeias to the Jesuit reductions in Guairá. By pushing the embodied border between the Spanish and Portuguese realms closer to São Paulo, the Jesuits elevated the level of competition for Indians in the region.

**MAKING CLAIMS, DEFINING BORDERS**

Excellent historical work on the Tapé region around the southern Paraná and the Uruguay Rivers in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries describes the many treatises, geopolitical factors, and local actors that made that space a dynamic Spanish Portuguese borderland. Generally, the borderland conflicts in Guairá do not fit these models. While the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas provided a vague demarcation of imperial territories, local officials on either side largely ignored it. For Paulistas, territorial boundaries meant little; the primary goal was to find slaves (and potentially mineral wealth). The tiny population of Guaireños also sought labor, but they pursued it through the encomienda-cuñadage system, not enslavement en masse. The Jesuits, for their part, sought to create fixed communities free of the encomienda and safeguarded from Paulista enslavement. What complicated all of these local goals was that from 1580 to 1640 the Spanish and Portuguese crowns were united. Following the death of the last heir of the Portuguese Aviz dynasty in 1578, a war of succession determined that Philip II would become the ruler of the two kingdoms. Although Philip prohibited free interimperial trade and communication, there was little stopping the networks that already existed. Locals during this period used the farce of political unification to justify generating and extending exchange between subjects of the two kingdoms.
By the early seventeenth century, officials in Asunción hoped that Guairá would forge commercial networks with São Paulo and vice versa. In 1604, lieutenant governor Antonio de Añasco, the highest local officer in Guairá, ordered that locals open a road to São Paulo. Paulista officials authorized the same action. Local officials estimated that the distance from Villa Rica to São Paulo was 120 leagues (one league is around three miles) on boat and another twenty on foot. One year later, a vecino of Villa Rica, Francisco Benítez, loaded up with trade items and made his way to São Paulo. There he married the daughter of a Paulista vecino, Joseph Camargo. Paulista traders brought to Guairá goods of all kinds from Brazil, including African slaves from Guinea. In 1607, the governor of Paraguay, Hernando Arias de Saavedra, encouraged such networks and trade between the two regions. Saavedra asked the crown for a license for Guaireños to contract with Portuguese in São Paulo to “subdue” or “pacify” the land and reduce the Indians, adding that Paulistas had offered their services in the past. This proposal, written in 1607, before the arrival of the Jesuits, confirms the tenuous Spanish presence in Guairá and, in the context of the rise of yerba mate, the desperation of local officials to secure a fixed labor source. Of course Saavedra’s proposal was never enacted, and despite the close ties between São Paulo and Guairá, some marked differences in how colonials in the borderland legally defined Indians shaped later conflicts.

Guairéno encomenderos employed the juridical tools of conquest, especially the padrón, or census, to claim Indian communities. Censuses recorded the names of the caciques (and sometimes the names and ages of all members of a community) assigned to a specific encomendero and were an attempt at keeping encomienda units whole and distinct. These acts of recording/claiming and then distributing tributaries to an encomendero could be arbitrary. In 1630, after Guairá had been all but deserted, Captain Francisco Vallejos (cited above) provided a rather bleak account of Spanish dominion in Guairá. After explaining that Spaniards essentially bought Indian personal servants with axes, he noted that local officials decided to “distribute (encomendar) the Indian villages, gathering information through their caciques about their location in relation to rivers and how many fires each village possessed, without ever having seen them. And with this confused knowledge they counted, distributed, and gave out the encomiendas.” Humbled by the destruction of the region, this Guaireño admitted that the encomienda was not a system of colonial subjugation but rather a system of reciprocity. When Jesuit reductions began attracting former encomienda Indians to their communities, encomenderos responded by
demanding the return of their Indians to their original villages. They used official censuses as their primary juridical tool.

For their part, Jesuits made jurisdictional claims on indigenous bodies based on the status of their souls. They asked whether or not an Indian had been baptized before associating with a Jesuit reduction. Early Spanish American law charged encomenderos with evangelizing encomienda Indians, so according to Jesuit logic, if Indians had not been baptized they were not encomendados. This contest over the juridical status of Indians is evident in the following episode. In November of 1628, Governor Céspedes Xeria, who we will remember sided with encomenderos, sent Captain Francisco Romero to all the Jesuit reductions to conduct an inspection and specifically to verify the status of the Indians the Jesuits claimed. Romero was instructed to identify Indians who were subject to encomenderos. Moreover, if he found Tupis or Mbiobes, these belonged to Paulistas and were to be returned to Villa Rica, where they would be transferred to São Paulo. As Romero conducted the census in San Francisco Javier, one of the newest reductions, father Francisco de Ortega had asked the Indians if they preferred to submit themselves to royal authority as opposed to encomenderos. Legally, this implied that they were blank political slates, coming under imperial subjectivity for the first time and therefore nullifying any encomendero or Paulista claims. Romero told the priest to stop this “ruse” and argued that Indians could not be presented as crown subjects anew. He accused the Jesuits of harboring encomendados. The priest retorted that “you cannot encomendar unbaptized Indians (infieles), and if they were found in this state, their status as encomendados would be null and void.” For the Jesuits, then, defending their claim on Indians was a matter of determining whether they were baptized. Encomenderos, by contrast, employed censuses and lineages that linked tributaries to encomienda pueblos and therefore tributary status.

Paulistas had very different approaches to Indian labor. John Monteiro has shown that bandeiras were not colonizing activities along the lines of territorial expansion; rather, they were “depopulating” activities, and “virtually every aspect of the formation of São Paulo during its first two centuries was tied in some fundamental way to the expropriation, exploitation, and destruction of indigenous populations.” Paulistas, unlike Guaireños, fully embraced Indian slavery, and the language they employed reflects the institutionalization of slavery: “Expressions such as peças do gentio de terra (Native heathen pieces) or negros da terra (Native blacks) paralleled the terms peças do gentio da Guiné (Guinea pieces) or negros da Guiné (Guinea blacks), which designated African slaves.”
The ideological correlation between African chattel slavery and Indian slavery is striking and markedly different than encomienda in Spanish America generally and in Guairá particularly.

Paulistas’ methods and institutional structures of Indian enslavement developed gradually over the course of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, growing out of small-scale “trade and raid” campaigns, which involved engaging Natives at trading sites and then surrounding and shackling them. All of these expeditions were mounted by teams assembled by individual Paulistas or groups of Paulistas and were not regulated by the crown, although many local crown officials encouraged or even invested in the bandeiras, especially the city council.49 These efforts evolved into massive slaving expeditions, culminating in the largest bandeiras, the campaigns of 1628–1632 and 1635–1637. All bandeiras included Natives whose motives for participating as “ethnic soldiers” covered a spectrum of coercion. Some went willingly as hired agents motivated by inter-ethnic rivalries while others were conscripts. Many of these had only recently become slaves.50

Paulistas first targeted Carijó, or Guarani who inhabited a region Paulistas called the Sertão dos Patos and the Sertão dos Carijós. This latter region included Spanish Guairá and was home to various Tupi-Guarani speaking groups as well as nomadic Jê speakers. Because Guairá was only a forty-to-sixty-day march from São Paulo, it soon became the principal destination for Paulista slavers. The expeditions to the sertão became so frequent that bandeirantes began planting crops along the routes to the slaving territories.51 To the east and north of Spanish Guairá, in the Paranapanema Valley, Paulistas encountered two groups, the Tememinó and the Tupinaé. Some of these the Paulistas enslaved, others were settled in aldeias, or Jesuit-controlled villages. Paulistas and Guaireños often used the ethnonym Tupi when referring to Tememinó. The Tememinó/Tupi were enemies of the Guarani, and this probably explains why they made up a large portion of the auxiliary warriors in bandeiras to Guairá.

The next section examines the effects of the arrival of bandeiras in Guairá, the first of which was in the year 1611. In that year, around thirty Paulistas and a large number of Tupi attacked a Guarani pueblo, but a militia from Ciudad Real defended it. Apparently the captain of the bandeira carried a commission from the Portuguese governor granting permission to enslave Indians. Unconvinced, the Guaireños engaged the bandeira and prevailed in taking five hundred Guarani from the slavers. Importantly, they sent these Guarani to Jesuit reductions, indicating that Guarani and Guaireños alike saw the reductions as
places of refuge from slavers. After this year, with the looming threat posed by *bandeiras*, Guaireños became more careful about which Indians pertained to which colonial power. Guaireños and Paulistas seemed to agree that Tupi and Mbiobe Indians belonged to São Paulo. As we saw earlier, when governor Céspedes Xeria arrived, he ordered any Jesuit or encomendero who found Tupi or Mbiobe in their communities to return them to São Paulo via Ciudad Real. As the Jesuits pushed eastward and created reductions closer to São Paulo, the ethnic groups designated for each colonial group were mixed together in the missions, setting the stage for increased Paulista aggression and jurisdictional disputes.

**BORDERLAND FLUX**

The Jesuit provincial Fray Diego de Torres said that Guairá was the “last corner of the earth, the most distant place from human commerce.” Indeed, Guairá, was far removed from major colonial centers of commerce and production, and yet transatlantic commerce had a strong pull on Guairá, motivating Paulistas to enslave thousands of Natives. Luís Felipe de Alencastro’s analysis of African and Indian slave labor in colonial Brazil demonstrates how deeply the Paulista *bandeiras* were embedded in Atlantic dynamics. When the Dutch invaded and occupied Portugal’s colonial holdings in the 1620s and 1630s, the Portuguese African slave trade fell sharply: 150 thousand Africans from 1600–1625 dropped to 50 thousand Africans from 1625–1650. The decline in slave imports in the Brazilian northeast caused the intensification of the traffic of Indians throughout the colony. In 1625 and 1628 respectively, slavers in Pernambuco and Bahia went on slaving expeditions, and as a result the trade in Indian slaves surpassed the trade in Africans during the 1625–1650 period.

Until John Monteiro’s *Negros da terra*, most historians assumed that Indian slaves from the south were being shipped to the northeast, but he shows that the majority of Indians were used in the wheat fields, plantations, and trade networks around São Paulo. Alencastro confirms Monteiro’s argument but adds that there was a causal relationship between the Atlantic African trade and the *bandeiras* to Guairá-Tapé. During the Dutch-Portuguese wars, the price of African slaves in Brazil doubled, making Indian slaves a necessary alternative. São Paulo became the breadbasket for the northeast, supplying Rio de Janeiro and Bahia with supplies for military activities against the Dutch. The markets
of the northeast imported all kinds of goods from the São Paulo plateau. Nearly all of the sweat and toil for this production was indigenous.58

This economic and Atlantic paradigm is crucial for understanding the ban-deiras, but the picture is incomplete without a sociopolitical perspective from the borderland itself. Some Natives in Guairá were able to exploit the borderland flux or the confusion of jurisdictions by moving from one colonial jurisdiction to another or outside of it completely. With the arrival of the Jesuits in 1609, Indian communities shifted their allegiances to whichever group—Guaireños, Jesuits, and Paulistas—could best benefit them. Guaireños used words like “rebellion” (alzado) and “commotion” (alboroto) to describe Native activities, but these words implied many things. There were several violent rebellions against Spanish-Jesuit power during this period, but officials documented a plethora of other activities, including migration from one reduction to another and warfare between Native groups.

In 1612, a vecino named Bartolomé de Torales documented one episode of migration. Torales led a robust militia including Indian allies to attempt to recapture a group of nine hundred Guarani led by thirteen caciques who had abandoned their pueblos. Torales caught up with them and forced three hundred back to the Ciudád Real area. Two hundred fled into the forests under the leadership of a great karaí, or shaman. Importantly, five caciques with an untold number of followers moved to São Paulo and were guided by a Paulista named Sebastián Preto, who “took them with pure gifting,” suggesting that he convinced them to relocate with the offer of iron tools.59 Others followed a shaman to some untold destination. Torales indicated that at least a part of this fleeing group was relocating to a new Jesuit reduction. This episode reflects the new dynamism that existed in the region after the arrival of the Jesuits. As the Jesuits established reductions in the territory between Spanish Guairá and São Paulo, Native groups had more choices about which colonial power they might interact with. Simultaneously, Guarani shamans in competition with Jesuits represented yet another force that put people in motion.

The Jesuits’ influence in the region also drew the ire of Paulistas whose slaves or servants fled to the reductions. In 1619, a Paulista named Manoel Preto (brother to Sebastián, mentioned above) traveled to the cabildo of Ciudád Real with some twenty soldiers. He came representing the vecinos of São Paulo to reclaim “many Indians” who had fled to Guairá from plantations in São Paulo. He lashed out at the Jesuits in the new reductions of Pirapó and Nuestra Señora de Loreto for receiving Indians who were not theirs and breaking canon law.
by keeping Indians who were married in the *aldeias* of Pirapó (São Paulo) from returning to their spouses. The Ciudad Real cabildo gave Preto permission to go to the reductions and take the Indians he claimed were his. There could have been a variety of reasons why the cabildo ceded to Preto’s demands, but I want to emphasize the logic employed by Preto and confirmed by the cabildo, which was that “Tupi and Temimino” Indians belonged to Paulistas. The particular logic active in the official document was that of embodied borders: each imperial power had rights to ethnic groups, and when these ethnic bodies relocated they could reclaim them.

In mid-January 1620 Preto was in the reductions of San Loreto de Pirapó and Ypaunbuçu to request the return of Tupi and Tememino. The Jesuits refused, and Preto threatened violence. When the caciques were asked to confirm Preto’s claims that they were married in São Paulo, they stated that they had been married in the reductions, lending weight to the Jesuit’s position. In a scene that could have come from the pages of a wild west novel, Preto and his soldiers, enraged by the Natives’ and Jesuits’ firm stance, fired their weapons in the air and threatened to return with more soldiers and destroy the reductions. Preto left for São Paulo with only a handful of Indians from the reductions. His words would prove to be prophetic, as he would lead one of the biggest columns during the 1628 *bandeira*.

In the years after the 1623 *bandeira*, six new Jesuit reductions were established, suggesting that many Guarani joined Jesuits to build reductions for the protection they offered. By September 1628, when Céspedes Xeria arrived, the situation for Guaireños was dire. Guarani throughout the region were abandoning their encomienda pueblos because of internal conflicts, the pull of Jesuit reductions, and the threat of *bandeiras*.

Céspedes Xeria attempted to use his clout as governor and his supplies of gift items to try to regain some Natives’ allegiance and impose some kind of calm amid the shifting allegiances and migrations he found in Guairá. He called a meeting with two powerful *principales*, Tayaobá and Maendi, who had relocated their communities to a Jesuit reduction. The two caciques initially ignored the governor’s invitation but finally agreed to see him in Villa Rica. As Tayaobá and Maendi traveled to meet the governor, their Jesuit priest accompanied them but did not command them. The governor received the caciques with much pomp and circumstance, including a gun salute, banquet, and many gifts (presumably ax heads). The special treatment that these caciques received stands in stark contrast to the “capture and return” approach detailed above and
suggests that Spanish officials understood the political landscape and made strategic decisions about which caciques required diplomacy and which a heavy hand. Guaireños were optimistic that Tayaobá and Maendí would return to pay tribute under the encomienda, but it appears that Tayaobá and Maendí were playing Jesuits and Guaireños off each other to acquire more gifts or beneficial arrangements for their communities.  

Before he came to Guairá in 1628, Céspedes Xeria had learned of the impending bandeira because he had observed its organization in São Paulo and had even traveled with one of the columns up to a certain point. Céspedes Xeria made no moves to stop it because according to the embodied borders logic, Paulistas had every right to claim certain categories of Indians. Céspedes Xeria instructed the Guaireños that if the Paulistas came into the reductions to take reduced Indians, they were to arm themselves, assemble friendly Indian warriors, and “die fighting.” He also ordered that if the bandeirantes were to attack the reductions, the lieutenant governor was to bring all reduced Indians to Villa Rica so as to better protect them. He added, however, that if the Paulistas came to take indios infieles or unbaptized gentiles, Guaireños were to leave them alone. The order that Tupi and Tememino Indians were to be returned to Paulistas also remained in force.

Columns of the bandeira finally arrived in late 1628. When the attacks on the reductions began, the lieutenant governor moved to congregate all Indians to Villa Rica. Jesuit Ruiz de Montoya suspected that Guaireños were trying to enslave the Indians, and so he forced his way through Villa Rica and led the exodus of thousands of Indians south into the Paraná region. Scholars working from the Paulista perspective suggest that Guaireños and Céspedes Xeria were in cahoots with Paulista slavers. No doubt some Guaireños were, but given Céspedes Xeria’s orders and Spanish records indicating that Guaireños engaged in combat with bandeiras, it is a dubitable claim that there was a general agreement between Spanish Guairá and São Paulo over Indian enslavement. Thanks to Jesuit litigation, Céspedes Xeria lost his governorship and was charged by the audiencia of colluding with the slavers. All told, the 1628 bandeira destroyed thirteen reductions and enslaved thousands of Natives. Two Jesuit reductions survived but migrated to the southern Paraná region. In 1641, at the battle of Mbororé, an armed Guarani-Jesuit army routed a bandeira, dealing a devastating blow to Paulista confidence. Thereafter, Paulistas mounted much smaller and more nimble expeditions. When gold was
discovered in Minas Gerais in the 1690s, Paulistas shifted their attention away from slaving to this new source of wealth.

After the attacks, Ciudad Real and Santiago de Xérez were abandoned and Villa Rica relocated to the west of the Paraná River. Several other \textit{bandeiras} attacked Paraguay, including a devastating raid in 1676, which forced the migration of thousands of Indians south from Itatín (north of Asunción to the east of the Paraguay River). Efforts to reclaim Guairá were not attempted until the eighteenth century when Spanish officials established the fort of Curuguaty just to the west of the Paraná in order to stop the advance of Portuguese settlement. A contraband trade grew up in Curuguaty and the nearby Portuguese fort of Ygatimi until the Spanish governor ordered the militia to destroy Ygatimi in 1777.\textsuperscript{68} This and other borderland disputes in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reflected modern goals related to the demarcation and defense of imperial and national territories.

**CONCLUSIONS**

In the absence of strong regal motives and imperial identities among Guaireños and Paulistas, colonial boundaries were literally mobile Native communities. The competing yet partially overlapping colonial goals and actors coupled with the existence of indigenous political conflict created political flux. Indigenous bodies constituted jurisdictional borders, and since those borders were mobile, they were impossible to fix. Paulistas used this borderland logic to legitimate their enslavement of the entire region’s inhabitants. Along with brute force and the gifting of iron tools, Paulistas employed the embodied borders logic of possession shared by Guaireños as well as the gifting of iron tools. Scholars have repeatedly argued that all colonials in the region were enslaving Indians, but I contend that the legal framework of the encomienda and its melding with Guarani kinship practices shaped Guaireños’ actions. Guaireños did not simply follow São Paulo’s lead when it came to colonial practice but instead shaped their colonial presence around trade in iron tools and political kinship.

A borderlands framework reveals a lacuna in the historiography: Native perspectives on their experiences as “ethnic soldiers.” Neil Whitehead and Brian Ferguson define ethnic soldiers as troops inflicting violence under the influence or control of state agents. This paradigm could be applied to Guairá and the
Paulista bandeiras, but the lack of a “state” makes this framing less useful. With loosely organized columns of bandeiras and highly autonomous auxiliaries, Laura Matthew and Michel Oudijk’s concept of “Indian conquistadors” poses important questions. These authors argue that the conquests of Mesoamerica were more culturally Mesoamerican than Castilian and that the conquests took on sociocultural meanings beyond the interest of the Spanish conquistadors. This perspective challenges us to consider, for example, the political and cultural meaning bandeiras possessed for Tupi warriors who participated in them either willingly or unwillingly. What meaning, for example, did taking a captive in these expeditions have for a Tupi-Guarani warrior if he was not allowed to consume his captive?

Many Native participants in the bandeiras, however, were impressed into militia columns organized by their Paulista masters or were hired out. Soldiering on Spanish Portuguese borderlands was thus part of their new enslaved experience. One such soldier, named Pablo, was a second-generation slave born to Guarani parents who had belonged to a Jesuit reduction in the vicinity of Villa Rica when the Paulistas came in 1628. His parents were forcefully taken to São Paulo as slaves, and it was there that Pablo was born. Later, as a young man, he and his uncle were conscripted into a bandeira that went to Paraguay. Pablo and his uncle escaped their overseer and fled to Villa Rica, then Mbaracayú, then the Asunción region, where Pablo was assigned by a city official to an encomendero. Apparently unhappy with his situation, Pablo moved to Caazapá, a Franciscan pueblo subject to encomenderos. Pablo’s experiences reflect the borderland dynamics of Eastern Paraguay and provide a social portrait of a small number of Indians who survived the bandeira ordeal and forged a new life for themselves in Spanish Paraguay. Their movements highlight Natives’ use of porous borderlands to seek a better life.

As the birthplace of the Jesuit enterprise in Paraguay, Guairá deserves close scrutiny. This analysis has shown that the Jesuit reductions emerged out of a relationship of tension and mixed cooperation between Spaniards, priests, Paulistas, and Guarani leaders. By emphasizing Native agency and internal conflict, the reductions appear more prominently as strategic communities that Guarani used to navigate the political and social transformation brought about by the various goals of Jesuits, Guaireños, Paulistas, and other indigenous groups. Employing a frontier/borderlands framework highlights the many factors influencing Guarani communities’ actions and adds nuance to a narrative of conquest and conversion that has traditionally favored conquistadors, pathfinders, and priests.
NOTES


11. Ruy Díaz de Guzman noted that Governor Irala took count of the population of Guairá in the 1550s and found 40,000 fuegos, a term denoting the smallest kin units in a Guaraní longhouse. If each “fire” represented a unit of four, the total population was around 160,000. Ruy Díaz de Guzmán, *La Argentina, historia del descubrimiento, conquista, y población del Río de la Plata*, ed. Enrique de Gandia (Madrid: Historia 16, 1986), chap. 3.


14. The literature on bandeirantes is too extensive to review here. A few brief mentions will have to suffice. The most important and recent works are Monteiro, Negros da terra, and Alencastro, O trato dos viventes. See also Richard M. Morse, ed., The Bandeirantes: The Historical Role of the Brazilian Pathfinders (New York: Knopf, 1965); and John Hemming, Red Gold: The Conquest of the Brazilian Indians (London: Macmillan, 1978). Morse attempts to bring the Brazilian “pathfinder” into the realm of frontier heroes familiar to the North Americas. Hemming’s work Red Gold is a classic that sought to center on indigenous peoples in Brazil’s history, but it consistently reifies Natives as either docile or bellicose. When discussing the bandeiras in Paraguay, Hemming relies almost entirely on Jesuit sources.


22. Fray Diego Gonzalez, Carta anua, 1611, cited in Iglesia: Cartas anuas de la provincia del Paraguay, Chile y Tucumán, de la Compañía de Jesús, vol. 19, ed. Emilio Ravignani


28. Cabildo of Mbaracayú to Asunción, March 10, 1612, ANA, Civil y Judicial (hereafter CJ), vol. 1599, no. 6.


32. See Salas, “Villa Rica.”


41. Ibid., 54.
47. Monteiro, “From Indian to Slave,” 105.
48. Ibid., 114.
49. The social organization of the bandeiras is detailed in Monteiro, *Negros da terra*. On crown support for bandeiras, see Alencastro, *O trato dos viventes*, 192.
58. Ibid., 198.
60. ANA, CJ, December 11, 1619, vol. 2183, no. 6, fol. 112r. This unusual document contains petitions in Portuguese from Preto, in his hand. A special thanks to Jeffrey Erbig with the transcription and translation.
63. Monteiro, Negros da terra, 72.
64. Céspedes Xeria to the lieutenant governor, 1629, cited in Romero Jensen, El Guairá, 180–81.
65. Monteiro, Alencastro, and Herzog all reach a similar conclusion. Romero Jensen demonstrates that while there were Guairénos who supported Paulistas, many defended encomendados and mission Indian populations. Romero Jensen, El Guairá, 221–31.
66. Ibid., 221–22.
67. Ibid. and Mörner, Political and Economic Activities, 91.
68. Herib Caballero Campos, “La frontera del Paraguay en el siglo XVIII: Relaciones y disputas entre Curuguaty e Igatemi” (paper presented at the Río de la Plata Workshop, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA, February 22, 2014).
69. Ferguson and Whitehead, War in the Tribal Zone, 18.
71. Visita de los Pueblos de Caasapá, Expedientes Coloniales, 1625, no. 16, fol. 40r, Archivo y Biblioteca Nacional de Bolivia, Sucre.

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