

The cattle-ranching economy in the Bolivian Chaco during the 1800s

A economia pecuária no Chaco boliviano durante o século XIX

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Resumo: O Chaco boliviano às margens do rio Pilcomayo era uma área contestada durante o século XIX. Tobas e outros Povos Indígenas resistiram corajosamente à ocupação de seus territórios pelo Estado, mantendo a fronteira instável por décadas. Argumento que os colonos bolivianos ocuparam gradualmente as pastagens ao longo do rio com violência, incentivados por políticas estatais e apoiados por oficiais do exército estacionados em fortes. Mercadores locais, missionários franciscanos e neófitos Avá-Guarani desempenharam papéis importantes nesse processo. Busquei entender melhor os pontos de vista dos administradores do estado e dos colonos. A visão do povo Toba permaneceu opaca, além de suas ações para proteger suas terras da invasão dos colonos. Minha abordagem combinou métodos etnográficos e históricos para lançar luz sobre a expansão da economia pecuária a partir de uma perspectiva inspirada nos estudos sobre colonialismo de colonos.

Keywords:
Bolivian Chaco
Settlers
Ranching economy

Abstract: The Bolivian Chaco on the margins of Pilcomayo River was a contested area during the 1800s. Tobas and other Indigenous Peoples boldly resisted the state's occupation of their territories, keeping the frontier unstable for decades. I argue that Bolivian settlers gradually occupied the pastures along the river using violence, encouraged by state policies, and supported by army officers stationed in forts. Local merchants, Franciscan missionaries, and Avá-Guaraní *neófitos* played important roles in this process. I sought to better understand the viewpoints of state administrators and settlers. The views of Toba people remained opaque, beyond their actions to protect their lands from the ranchers' encroachment. My approach combined ethnographic and historical methods to shed light on the expansion of the cattle-ranching economy from a perspective inspired in settler colonial studies.

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Introduction

Since the early days of the emerging Republic of Bolivia, state's administrators and policymakers viewed the lands on the Chaco around Pilcomayo River as legally vacant and affirmed the nation's right of possession. The state upheld the principle of *uti possidetis de jure*—based on the estimated extension of the colonial district governed by the Spanish Audiencia de Charcas—to justify its right to the Chaco.

Influential Bolivian scholar Benedicto Medinacelli (1878), for example, discussing the still unsettled borders of the Chaco plains north of Pilcomayo River argued that the Chaco belonged to Bolivia, as much as the pampas belonged to the Argentine Confederation and Araucanía to Chile. Thinking otherwise would be ludicrous, argued Medinacelli, because it would suggest that the uncivilized wandering tribes in “state of barbarism” that lived on the Chaco had more rights than educated peoples and, therefore, were entitled to remain on their territories. Noticing the proximity of the international borders with Argentina, and Paraguay, he reasoned that the Bolivian state should occupy the Chaco; otherwise, any foreign power could seize a region considered vacant or belonging to no one, “since the geographical link that binds the vacant lands to the civilized part of the same countries is unknown” (MEDINACELLI, 1878, p. 20).

During the early republican period, accurate data on the extension of the Chaco region and the number of its native inhabitants were unavailable. José María Dalence (1851, pp.196-97, 202), the director of the first national census published in 1847, estimated the total population of the country in over two million. The census distinguished between 1,373,896 people “under the sovereignty of the Constitution and the laws of the Republic” and 760,000 *infieles*, members of non-Christian “savage” tribes. Dalence suggested that the “savage” tribes should be excluded from the total population estimate. He also suggested excluding the lands that were uncultivated or without cattle ranches from the approximate total extension of the country. Thus, during most of the nineteenth century, the “savage” tribes living in the Chaco were not viewed

as members of the nation (MENDOZA GONZÁLEZ, 1933; OCHOA, 1896) and their lands were considered as unoccupied.

European settlement of the Chaco was neglected during colonial times “because of hostile Indians or lack of interest” (ALARCÓN, 1905). To a large extent, Avá-Guaraní warriors who protected their villages on the valleys of the southern Cordillera during centuries halted the colonial expansion over the Bolivian Chaco (LANGER, 1989). The Avá-Guaraníes' capacity for sustaining forceful resistance to colonization began to weaken in the 1830s, giving settlers an opening to begin occupation of the plains.

Erik Langer's (2002) periodization for the eastern Andean frontier in Bolivia during the 1800s could be extended to the Chaco plains bordering the valleys of the Cordillera as it follows: (a) after a mid-1800s period during which the tribal groups retained control on much of their land, and (b) a transitional period in which Indigenous Peoples lost their relative capacity to hinder colonization; then, (c) the Bolivian state completed encroachment of the Pilcomayo River area between the late 1800s and early 1900s. The growing cattle-ranching economy supported by state policies that awarded frontier lands to nonindigenous settlers left the Toba and other Indigenous communities increasingly marginalized within their territories.

Bolivian administrators were aware that Toba, Weenhayek, Chorote, and Tapiete Peoples lived on the plains around Pilcomayo River (c.f. UNASUR, 2017), but state officials did not regard these mobile hunter-gatherers as legal owners of the land. Their condition was viewed as different from that of many Indigenous settlements in the highlands and some Avá-Guaraní villages in the Cordillera, that were considered titleholders. Mobile hunter-gatherer groups instead were not regarded as citizens of the Bolivian state. Those Indigenous Peoples did not provide labor force to the settlers and could only be turned into handmaids or farmhands if forcefully captured and enslaved. Policymakers defined this type of “forced assimilation” of mobile hunter-gatherers as beneficial “servitude” (c.f., VACA GUZMÁN, 1887).

I examine the settlers' expansive cattle-ranching economy on the Bolivian Chaco on

the margins of Pilcomayo River in the nineteenth century. I focus my narrative on the lucrative commerce of cattle and the response by members of the Toba nation to the ranchers that colonized their territory. The Tobas vigorously defended their land against encroachment until the late 1800s. The mounted warriors' ability to coalesce and organize long-distance raids, promptly returning to their camps with booty, kept the Chaco *frontera* (a term translated as frontier or border, it describes the imagined boundary between "conquered" and "unconquered" lands) unstable for decades.

I argue that *fronterizo* settlers—mostly poor Bolivians skilled on open-range cattle ranching and small-hold agriculture—gradually occupied the pastures along the river negotiating with Toba leaders but also enforcing their occupation with violence, organizing militias to punish alleged cattle-rustling, and coordinating their actions with army officers stationed in forts. Local merchants, Franciscan missionaries, Avá-Guaraní *neófitos*—neophytes or converted recruits living in the mission-stations—, as well as *nacionales* or nationals—mostly mestizo soldiers from the highlands, who pledged alliance to the Bolivian nation—all played important roles in this process of colonization. The proximity of the international borders with Argentina and Paraguay increased the geopolitical significance of the area that is the focus of this study (c.f., ANÓNIMO, 1851; BOLIVIA, 1893; VACA GUZMÁN, 1881, 1882; NINO, 1913).

Materials and procedures

I examined published materials about the Bolivian Chaco written by state administrators, scholars, army officers, and missionaries. I reviewed sources in digital collections such as Internet Archive (www.archive.org), Hathi Trust Digital Library (www.hathitrust.org), the Repository of Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (<http://repositorio.umsa.bo>), and other materials obtained through interlibrary loans at Waldo Library, Western Michigan University. I examined documents published by historians in edited collections or included in early twentieth century

studies by Bolivian authors who discussed the country's international borders with Argentina and Paraguay. Other collections were published by the Bolivian government.

I centered my library research on data about Tobas living along the Pilcomayo River during the 1800s in the context of state policies that (a) legally sanctioned the colonization of indigenous territories, (b) supported the ranchers' occupation of Indigenous Peoples' lands, and (c) ignored the Tobas' land rights and their pleas for justice, even denying them citizenship; and (d) justified the violence against them. I sought to understand the viewpoints of state officers, settlers, and missionaries towards the Tobas. In previous work, I developed ethnographic, demographic, and linguistic analyses about the Bolivian Toba (e.g., CARPIO; MENDOZA, 2021; MENDOZA, 2019a, 2019b). The views of Toba people remained nonetheless opaque, beyond their documented actions to protect their lands from the ranchers' occupation and a few first-person statements interpreted in Spanish and recorded during peace agreements. Thus, my study developed an approach that combined ethnographic and historical methods to shed light on the expansion of the cattle-ranching economy on the Bolivian Chaco from a perspective inspired in settler colonial studies (e.g., CASTELLANOS, 2017; CAVANAGH; VERACINI, 2017; TAYLOR, 2020).

Cattle-ranching on the lucrative Pilcomayo River frontier

The beginning of land occupation

In 1832, General Francisco Burdett O'Connor, head of the recently created Department of Tarija—which included Toba territory—began distributing land previously considered as property of the Spanish Crown. The government offered lots of one square league (one Spanish league measured approximately 5 km) as concessions to settlers. Grantees were required to establish ranches with livestock within a period of five years, otherwise the conditions of the land grant would expire (LAVANDEZ, 1925, p. 3). The new legislation

differentiated between land owned by Avá-Guaraní communities on the frontier of Tarija and land considered vacant or *res nullius* on the Chaco plains. “Vacant” lands could be granted to Bolivian soldiers who were veterans from the war of independence. Several former officers received land grants and established cattle ranches. Some of them pursued “a lucrative second career” as cattle-traders and merchants in the city of Tarija (LANGER; HAMES, 1994, p.301).

In those years, the French naturalist Alcide D’Orbigny (1836) estimated the population of Tarija in about two thousand. Avá-Guaraní neophytes from the Franciscan mission of Salinas (situated some 45 leagues away) visited the town frequently. D’Orbigny made an insightful commentary about them. He said that the neophytes who were living in the mission-station contributed to maintain peace between Avá-Guaraní and Bolivians of the province of Tarija because their peaceful interactions with *Tarijeños* (habitants of Tarija) inspired similar behavior among the large groups of non-Christian relatives who visited the mission. As a result, “...these frequent interactions have accustomed them to no longer regard the whites as their natural enemies” (D’ORBIGNY, 1836, p. 360).

In 1834, the Avá-Guaraní in the village of Caiza—just on the border of the frontier area occupied by the ranchers of Tarija— invited the government to establish a fort. The Avá-Guaraní wanted protection against frequent raiding by Toba warriors, a danger they considered more urgent than the advance of *fronterizo* cattle-posts.

Caiza, observed D’Orbigny (1836, p. 360), was a neat little town with a large church. It was the last settlement on the way to Potosí where a traveller could find horses and refreshments. All other intermediate stations had been destroyed by violence.

Owners of large cattle estates, like the Generals Bernardo Trigo and Francisco Burdett O’Connor, who claimed possession over vast extensions of the Chaco, paid the Chiriguano [Avá-Guaraní] caciques [leaders] so they would let the *fronterizos* and cattle pass through. In front of the national society, however, the ranchers pretended to have effective control over those lands. In fact, more

than actual possession, the ranchers’ occupancy could be interpreted as leasing. The government of Tarija used a tactic similar to that of the large cattle estate owners (LANGER; BASS WERNER DE RUIZ, 1988, p. vii).

In the 1840s, during the presidential administration of General José Ballivián, the government developed a colonization plan that included (a) exploring whether the Pilcomayo—a river originated on the mountains— could be navigated from the place where it entered the Chaco plains up to its mouth on the Paraguay River, (b) establishing colonies whose settlers would be protected by garrisons stationed on the riverbanks, and (c) enticing Bolivian settlers by granting them 10-year exemptions on taxes and mandatory service in the national army.

General Manuel Rodríguez Magariños, Prefect of Tarija, was charged with starting implementation of such plan. Magariños built a fort in Caiza—then called Villa Rodrigo—and distributed parcels of land for a colony. He also “reserved” land in Palmar Grande, a place located 45 km northeast of the colony, for a future Franciscan mission-station (CORRADO, 1884, p. 398). The reasoning was that a Franciscan mission on Toba land near the right bank of Pilcomayo would contribute to safeguard the residents in the colony. Sometime later, a Toba leader named Chocoriqui with a small number of families set camp in Palmar Grande. The Tobas who camped on Palmar Grande made frequent visits to the colonists in Villa Rodrigo/Caiza, and the Avá-Guaraní in Aguirenda—the Franciscans established a mission in Aguirenda in 1851 (LANGER, 2011). In those years, D’Orbigny (1839, p. 94) estimated the number of the aggregated Toba population on the Chaco plains of Bolivia in almost six thousand.

In 1843, Magariños organized an unsuccessful expedition to navigate Pilcomayo River departing from a place on the right margin then called Puerto Magariños. The Tobas called that place *lagarikagattani* or *cardizal* (CORRADO, 1884, p. 418) because of the abundance of large cacti. In the diary of the expedition, published by a local newspaper (MAGARIÑOS, 1844a, 1844b), the military officer described his exchanges—sometimes friendly, other times adversarial— with Toba people

and their leaders on the riverbanks. Clearly, the expedition was intruding through Toba territory. A second fluvial expedition on the following year was similarly unsuccessful (COMBÈS, 2021).

Commercial companies and development of the ranching economy

Commerce had been tied to economic development of the frontier area since the early republican period. Commercial companies in Tarija were very interested in the colonization of the Chaco because merchants "... made their money on the eastern frontier, trading not only with settlers and frontier soldiers but also with the vastly more numerous indigenous peoples, who were not controlled by the Bolivian state" (LANGER; HAMES, 1994, p. 314). Besides trading import-exports (mostly textiles), local wholesale merchants did long-distance intraregional commerce with cattle and other commodities. Large merchants and those doing petty retail in isolated settlements viewed Indigenous Peoples as consumers in the emerging economy of the region (SCHMIEDER, 1926). Langer and Hames (1994, p. 299) argued that "... small traders, often beholden to large merchant houses of Tarija dominated the life of small towns established in the former frontier as the cattle ranches proliferated along the edges of the Chaco." Some small traders (called *vivanderos*, OCHOA, 1897b, p. 453) were itinerants, travelling among Indigenous villages, camps, and forts.

For example, the 1843 peace agreement between the Avá-Guaraní of Caiza and officers with the *Comandancia Militar del Sur*, included one condition stipulating that the merchants should be allowed to pass freely through Avá-Guaraní lands, suggesting that trading with neighboring mobile hunter-gatherer groups had already some commercial value for the local merchants (LANGER; BASS WERNER DE RUIZ, 1988, p. xv; LANGER; HAMES, 1994, p. 294). Thus, in the 1840s, the owners of commercial capital in Tarija began to speculate with land grants around Caiza. The small merchants established cattle-posts and hired *fronterizos* to care for livestock on the savannas.

Criollo chaqueño cattle

Cattle were roaming, almost wild, on open ranges near the posts. In some way, as Franciscan Angélico Martarelli (1918, p. 303) said, "instead of being colonized by men, the frontier has been colonized by cows." The prairies that attracted the livestock had been maintained for centuries by wildfires and the intentional burning of vegetation cover by Indigenous inhabitants. Tobas and other hunter-gatherers burned the savannas for hunting and warfare, to harass unwelcome intruders, and to communicate among family groups. As the Indigenous Peoples moved away from the colonized grasslands along the Pilcomayo, intensive and expansive livestock grazing ended up reducing the frequency of intentional fires. Excessive livestock grazing and Toba withdrawal from their territory, both contributed to lower the overall quality of the grasslands along the Pilcomayo during the early twentieth century.

The *criollo Chaqueño* cattle that was managed in the Bolivian cattle-posts were well adapted to the dry forest xerophytic environment of the Chaco savannas. The herds had been selected mostly for consumption of meat. Traditionally, the livestock were moved seasonally—with a transhumant system—between the montane forests of Tarija and the grasslands. At the start of the dry season (April/May), the cattle were transferred to the montane forests until the rainfalls favored regrowth of the pastures; then, cattle were moved back to the grasslands (October/November). On the grasslands, *criollo Chaqueño* cattle were moved around between pastures during the annual cycle (BOTTANI CLAROS, 2020; MARQUARDT *et al.*, 2010; MARTÍNEZ *et al.*, 2012).

Ranches were small private enterprises; although, ranches produced the most wealth on the Caiza plains. President Ballivián issued an edict in May 1846 encouraging cattle ranching around Caiza. Many of the cattle that were grazing on the open savannas were brought there from the pastures near Orán, on the Bermejo River. At that time, Orán was the closest important city in Argentina. The price of one-year-old cattle in Villa Rodrigo/Caiza, said Hugh Weddell (1851), who visited the town in 1846, was five francs;

two-year-old cattle sold for ten francs; three-year-old livestock sold for fifteen francs; and so on. The animals were sold for twice as much in Caiza and were four or more times more expensive in Tarija. In addition to being a substantial market for livestock, Tarija was a trading post for the sale of tanned leathers (*suelas*) to the neighboring Bolivian departments of Potosí and Chuquisaca.

Local merchants took advantage of trading opportunities with the silver mines in the highlands by sending cow hides and live Chaco cattle to Potosí. Commercial revenues created a strong economic drive to increase production. But instead of using the land more efficiently, ranchers in the local cattle-ranching economy just extended their occupation of rangeland over Indigenous territories. Because many *fronterizo* ranchers were indebted to the merchants of Tarija, they sold cattle and hides to pay off their debts.

J. B. Minchin (1881, p. 415) surveyed the region in the late 1870s and informed to the Royal Geographical Society about "... large tracts of fine grazing country ... in the south of the Bolivian Chaco along the course of the Pilcomayo," an area inhabited by "savage" Weenhayek and Tobas. He said that cattle-breeding was a profitable business in Eastern Bolivia and anticipated that this industry would experience great development. For example, the region of Cordillera situated on the left bank of the river and extending on Eastern Chaco, exported cattle and sugar to Argentina. The region also imported horses, mules, and donkeys from Argentina, and foreign merchandise, flour, potatoes, salt, and other products from the highlands. Minchin's report included a map drawn by Henry Sharbau that described the entire Chaco plains on the left margin of the Pilcomayo to the north-east of San Francisco Mission (established in 1860) and Tarairí Mission (established in 1854) as "open bush and prairie with good pasture, but scantily watered" (MINCHIN, 1881, p. 448).

Violence on the Pilcomayo River frontier

In the 1840s, *fronterizo* ranchers in Caiza suspected that the Toba led by Chocoriqui were

stealing their cows and planned to eliminate them. According to the description by Franciscan Corrado (1884), the next time the unsuspecting Chocoriqui visited the fort, he was arrested together with eight or nine companions. They were detained for a short time in the *cepo* (a device generally made of wood to immobilize the suspects). Without further trial, the men were taken out of the *cepo* one by one tied to a horse girth. They were dragged a short distance from the fort. Their heads were crushed with clubs, and the corpses were hung from the posts of the corral. Corrado refrained from qualifying the incident but argued that the Tobas had considered this punishment unjust and inhumane, swearing revenge.

Their [the Tobas] fury increased when they saw the settlers' herds invading Palmar Grande which had been declared, as we said, mission land and consequently owned by the Tobas, who greatly appreciated it because it had an abundance of wild animals and was very convenient for their hunts. They protested this arbitrary invasion, and without achieving justice, they carried it out for themselves. They suddenly assaulted the new corral, killed one of the *fronterizos*, and took another man captive, and took three hundred and sixty cows (CORRADO, 1884, p. 399).

In different occasions, contemporaneous letters written by officers and missionaries shared news about Toba men approaching forts and settlements in peace and then—under suspicion of them being the culprits of robberies—the men were detained and executed (e.g., CALZAVARINI GHINELLO, 2006; GIANNECCHINI, 1882; LANGER; BASS WERNER DE RUIZ, 1988; RIVAS, 1882).

The killing of Chocoriqui and his companions in Corrado's narrative illustrates the interactions between Tobas, ranchers, and soldiers on the Pilcomayo frontier. Such interactions included the following characteristics: (a) negotiated occupation of Indigenous land; (b) frequent visits and friendly exchange of goods and occasionally labor; (c) a settler's allegation of cattle rustling; (d) a brutal attack on the Indigenous suspects, killing men, abducting women and children, and retrieving

booty and livestock; (e) further occupation of abandoned Indigenous campsites.

As they had done when occupying and/or passing through land owned by Avá-Guaraní villages on the fringes of the Chaco plains, *fronterizo* ranchers somehow communicated (possibly using Avá-Guaraní language as *lingua franca*) with the leaders of Indigenous communities camped around the Pilcomayo River area. They negotiated occupation and/or passage through the land. Contemporaneous letters by army officers and missionaries indicate that the Bolivians knew some Toba, Weenhayek, and Chorote leaders by name. Indigenous people in the communities would occasionally agree to provide labor to ranchers. The people would also provide labor to the officers in the garrisons. The workers were compensated with clothing, food, and goods. For example, Weenhayek and Tobas on the Pilcomayo provided labor to the settlers since at least the 1850s (NINO, 1913; RIVAS, 1882; WAGNER, 1910).

Cattle posts and forts on Indigenous territory were usually established on unoccupied campsites because those places had access to water, patches of edible plants, timber, and pastures. A government report published at the end of the century (OCHOA, 1897b, pp. 447, 451) recorded complains of Wichí/Weenhayek leaders to Bolivian officers about the occupation of their lands by the settlers on the place called Las Conchas, south of Toba territory. In another work (MENDOZA, 2019b), I identified several Toba campsites that were later occupied by ranchers.

Franciscan Calzavarini Ghinello (2006) argued that the relations of the Bolivians with the Indigenous peoples in the Chaco were friendly at the beginning but ended in warfare. Invariably, *fronterizo* ranchers accused the Tobas of stealing livestock. Neighboring ranchers formed small militias armed with new rifles—coordinating their plans with the officers in the forts—to attack Toba camps and recuperate some animals. Toba warriors would retaliate organizing revenge attacks. For decades, violence was ever present on the Chaco. Jorge Mendoza González (1933, p. 235) estimated that it may have resulted in “several thousand victims, including dead, wounded and prisoners.”

Contemporaneous accounts acknowledged that Tobas were often falsely accused of stealing livestock. On the local imaginary, just naming these dreaded adversaries provided cover for the actions of Bolivian *fronterizos* engaged in cattle rustling.

When militiamen and soldiers pursuing the accused “savages” on the savannas came across Toba families in their camps, the pursuers “... snatched the children to sell them in other areas, always preferring the little girls and young women, called *cuñas* [a reference to women in Avá-Guaraní language]. This has been the most serious reason why those Indians have a deep grudge and hatred towards the whites” (RIVAS, 1882, p. 12).

The peace treaty signed in 1884 between Bolivian army officers and Toba, Weenhayek, Chorote, and Tapiete leaders provided one of the rare first-person statements recorded from Indigenous leaders, interpreted in Spanish by the Toba Peloco. When Colonel Estensoro asked what they wanted to the people who were about to sign the treaty, the leaders replied:

That you close all the paths to war as we have done it, and if we find blood anywhere, we will cover it with dirt to forget all memories. We have inflicted great harm on each other but now we are friends, we do not have to make charges or claims of any kind because if it is true that we have stolen cattle, horses and mules and killed *carats* [a reference to whites in Avá-Guaraní language] and taken captive some women, we have always given them back, you too have taken from us horses and mules, killed a greater number of our people, have made captives of our women and children in an infinite number, you have never returned anyone to us, so there is nothing to remember about the past. (LANGER; BASS WERNER DE RUIZ, 1988, p. 252-253).

During my library research, I collected information from different sources about victims of violence on the Chaco frontier. I focused on violent events involving Bolivians and Tobas during the second half of the nineteenth century. The information presented in two tables below is not exhaustive, but the product of my incidental reading of the materials. Many other unpublished instances of violence may have occurred during the period. The sources also record instances of violence

between Tobas and Avá-Guaraní neophytes, and Tobas and other Indigenous Peoples. None of those are presented here.

Table 1 below provides an estimated aggregate number of Toba men, women, and children who were killed, wounded, or captured during attacks perpetrated by Bolivian soldiers or militiamen in the second half of the 1800s. This table documents the slaying of 68 individuals (men and women) and many more dead; 13 and many

more captured; two and some more wounded. The authors probably intended a quantitative difference between “many more” and “some more.” However, I do not have enough information to estimate such differences. Considering that Toba family groups (sometime called as “bands”) would on average include an estimated number of 50 people (MENDOZA, 2020, p. 650), documenting the slaughter of “many” could mean five to ten persons or more.

Table 1: Toba men, women, and children killed, wounded, or captured during attacks by Bolivian army soldiers or militiamen, 1843-1896.

Year	Tobas victims of violence	Source
1843	Bolivian soldiers killed some Chaco Indians, presumably Tobas, who came to the fort seeking peace	Langer and Bass Werner de Ruiz, 1988, p.265-266
1846	Bolivians from Caiza killed Chocoriqui and 9 or 10 Toba men, and occupied their camp in Palmar Grande	Corrado, 1884, p. 398-399
1859	Militiamen raided Imacu’s camp in Caranditi-Guasú, killed Imacu and the men , captured some women	Corrado, 1861, p.5
1868	Militiamen from Caiza killed “ many ” Tobas and took “ many more captives.” The militiamen were assisted by Tobas living in San Francisco mission	Corrado, 1884, p.439
1874	Bolivians and Avá-Guaraní allies killed 3 Tobas and wounded others near San Antonio mission	Langer and Bass Werner de Ruiz, 1988, p.327; Langer, 1989, p.139
1879	Soldiers from Fort Guacaya and Avá-Guaraní warriors killed 4 Toba men and captured 11	Calzavarini, 2006, p. 1244
1879	Bolivians from Caiza captured the son of leader Cayutí	Corrado, 1884, p.434
1881	Yallá , daughter of Caligagae, captured and sent to Tarija as domestic servant	Calzavarini, 2006, p.632-633
1882	Bolivian Nicanor Centeno, a militia leader, killed leader Socó	Calzavarini, 2006, p. 1291
1882	Soldiers from Fort Bella Esperanza killed 14 Toba men	Giannecchini, 1882
November 1882	Soldiers and militiamen from Caiza killed more than 20 Tobas	Bolivia, Ministerio de Hacienda, 1882, p. 19
1883	Bolivian Dr. Arancibía killed the brother of Cusarai in Colonia Crevaux	Calzavarini, 2006, p. 1293
November 1883	Bolivian soldiers killed Cusarai , Autagaicoluqui , and another Toba man who had approached in peace the Fort at Crevaux. Cutaicoliqui escaped wounded.	Calzavarini, 2006, p. 1250-51
1889	Bolivian settlers killed one Toba man in Laguna de las Conchas	Calzavarini, 2006, p. 1293
1889	Bolivian soldiers in Fort Crevaux killed 3 Toba men and wounded another Toba man during a fight to avert a livestock-stealing raid	Langer and Bass Werner de Ruiz, 1988, p. 265-268
August 7, 1896	25 estancieros (cattle-herders), who occasionally are national guards, attacked a Toba camp in Teyú, killed the leader Jayca and five other men, and stole the cattle of the Indians.	Nusser-Asport, 1897, p. 160
	<i>Total: 68 men and many more men dead; 13 men, women, and children and many more captured; two men and some more wounded</i>	

Table 2 below provides an estimated aggregate number of mostly Bolivian men, women, and children who were killed, wounded, or captured during attacks perpetrated by Toba warriors. Table 2 documents the slaying of 54 individuals (men and women) and some more dead; 13 captured; and one wounded. A similar challenge to interpret the

meaning of “some more” victims applies here. During the period, the area was sparsely populated by Bolivian settlers, and garrisons could be staffed by ten soldiers or less. Other estimates of Bolivians killed by the Toba for the period 1847-1859 by Corrado (1884, p. 399-400), and for the period 1882-1900 by Thouar (1906, p. 26), account for a total of 81 persons.

Table 2: Mostly Bolivian men, women, and children killed, wounded, or captured during attacks by Toba warriors, 1846-1900.

Year	Bolivian victims of violence	Source
1846	Tobas attacked a cattle-post near Caiza, killing one Bolivian man and captured another man	Corrado, 1884, p. 399
1846	Tobas killed a Bolivian man who ventured out looking for firewood	Corrado, 1884, p. 400
October 2, 1848	Tobas killed 15 Bolivians in Yaguacua, near Caiza	Corrado, 1884, p. 400
July 1847- January 1859	Tobas killed 31 Bolivians around Caiza	Corrado, 1884, p. 399-400
1862	Toba and Avá-Guaraní warriors killed Celestino Baldivieso and his son Doroteo in Taivaté	Corrado, 1884, p. 417
1863	Franciscan José Giannelli encountered Toba leader Aziyaiqui, who had killed some Christians around Caiza	Langer and Bass Werner de Ruiz, 1988, p. 294
1867	Tobas attacked Fort Bella Esperanza, killed two soldiers, and captured 4 Bolivians: 2 men, one woman with baby, and on 7-years old boy	Corrado, 1884, p.433-34
October 1867	Toba warriors killed 5 Bolivian men from Caiza, who were participating in an expedition to Paraguay	Corrado, 1884, p.436
1874	Toba warriors killed Bolivian Raimundo Rojas near San Antonio mission	Langer and Bass Werner de Ruiz, 1988, p. 327
1876	Toba warriors captured one Bolivian woman and officers negotiated her release	Langer and Bass Werner de Ruiz, 1988, p. 243, 244-45
May 1882	Tobas and warriors of allied tribes killed 5 Frenchmen, 2 Argentines, 8 Bolivians, and captured one Bolivian boy.	Bolivia, Ministerio de Hacienda, 1882, p. 36-37, 40-41, 44-45, 49-51
November 1882	Tobas killed 4 Bolivian military men (one officer and 3 soldiers) near Fort Santa Bárbara de Teyú	Bolivia, Ministerio de Hacienda, 1882, p. 9
1882-1900	Tobas killed 50 Bolivian men	Thouar, 1906, p. 23
1883	The son of deceased Toba leader Socó seriously wounded one Bolivian employee of <i>estanciero</i> José Mariano Gómez in <i>Y-Embochí</i> , a place called Laguna de la Conchas	Calzavarini, 2006, p. 1291
1884	Toba warriors killed 3 Bolivian soldiers and captured one woman and her young brother . Later both were returned by mediation of the Franciscans in San Francisco mission	Oviedo, 1884, p.2-3
June 1889	Tobas killed one Bolivian woman in Y-Embochí or Laguna de las Conchas; the same group of Tobas killed two Bolivian men, near the Fort in Taringuiti; they killed one Bolivian man and one woman in Palma Sola, and captured one woman and two children	Calzavarini, 2006, p. 1291-1292
<i>Total:</i> 52 men, 2 women and some more Christians dead; 12 men, women, and children captured; and one man wounded.		
Other estimates possibly overlapping with previous count during 1847-1859 & 1882-1900: 81 Bolivians dead.		

Overall, these historical references about individuals killed, wounded, or captured during attacks illustrate the extent of the violence along the Pilcomayo from the 1840s up to 1900. Aggressions, contagious diseases such as smallpox, social and individual distress, anxiety, and fear unquestionably affected the Indigenous Peoples and the settlers during that period.

Toba population estimates

After 1860, Franciscan Cardús (1886, p. 265) estimated the Toba population in about three to four thousand, considerably less people than the population estimated by D'Orbigny one generation before. In the late 1890s, Franciscans Sebastián Pifferi and Zacarías Ducci (1895, p. 24) calculated that the Tobas were no more than four thousand. In 1912, ethnographer Raphael Karsten (1970 [1923]) estimated that the population had declined to about 1,500. Many families of Bolivian Toba moved to the province of Salta, Argentina in the 1910s (NINO, 1918, p. 276-278). In 2012, the national census of the Bolivian population (INE, 2015, p. 29, graph 17) listed only 86 Toba people, the majority established in a rural area of the Department of Tarija (INE, 2015, table 11 and 12).

Settlement of Indigenous lands on the frontier

The Bolivian state supported the settlers' colonization of the pastures on the margins of Pilcomayo by building forts and selling or granting small lots of land to settlers and military personnel. Bolivian scholar Alcibíades Guzmán (1886, p. 21) said that, as the colonization expanded some tribes became allied with the government and fought along with the Bolivian army, other tribes were subjected to religious missions, but most were still "independent and aggressive."

The state initially favored the establishment of Franciscan missions to support colonization of Toba and Weenhayek territories, but towards the end of the nineteenth century state officials declined to move forward with the construction of a new

mission for the Tobas near Cabayurepotí. They devised a plan to take over or nationalize San Francisco and San Antonio, the two missions on the Pilcomayo. Such a plan, which was carried out in 1905, aimed to achieve state control of the Chaco. Bolivian lawmakers and scholars envisioned developing a sort of "frontera viva" (live frontier) that could advance the state dominion and sovereignty over the plains. Lawmakers had in mind broad objectives: (a) affirming the doctrine of *uti possidetis* de jure, (b) encouraging expansion of international commerce, and (c) resolving important geopolitical concerns related to international borders with neighbouring countries.

Minister José Vicente Ochoa's report to the Bolivian Congress provided interesting information about the colonization of the area that is the focus of our study (OCHOA, 1897a, 1897b) at the end of the century. In 1896, both the settlers' and the Indigenous Peoples in the area had been ravaged by smallpox and typhoid fever epidemics—some 150 residents of Caiza died from disease that year (OCHOA, 1897b, p. 446, 464). Overall, 345 settlers inhabited the grasslands on the right margin of Pilcomayo River, up to Fort Crevaux; 200 settlers lived in Palmar; and the town of Caiza had 370 residents. The report did not provide a count of the Indigenous population.

Most settlers were engaged in open-range cattle-ranching because "it was easier and gave them more benefits" (OCHOA, 1897b, p. 450). Local agriculture was "deficient" and limited to household consumption. The soil was fertile, but government officials complained that the few settlers who lived in the area lacked capital and suitable roads to develop a market for farm products. A well-traveled commercial route between Argentina and the Bolivian city of Santa Cruz run about three-quarters of a league west from the town of Caiza. In 1897, the government opened another route closer to the town to help the local economy.

The ranchers kept their cattle virtually undomesticated, grazing the herds on the pastures of the right bank of the river, far away from Caiza, and rounding them up only when the animals were fit to sell in the market. In 1896, for example, ranchers from around Caiza sold more than two thousand heads of cattle in Argentina, bringing into the local

economy more than 60,000 Bolivian pesos. Government officers estimated in 18,000 heads the number of cattle roaming on the right margin of the river up to Fort Crevaux. Since very few livestock were sold in the market of Tarija, the price fluctuated according to demand in the market of Salta, in Argentina. Each fat calf (“*novillo gordo*”) was sold for the fixed price of 30 Bolivian pesos (OCHOA, 1897b, p. 449). Horses and mules were much less abundant than cattle. Ranchers alleged that horses were robbed by Indigenous Peoples and by non-Indigenous cattle-rustlers. For example, the ranchers of Itiyuro asked the government for a military garrison (10 soldiers and one officer) to contain the robberies by the Wichí/Weenhayek and “some Christians who wander around Itiyuro taking cattle and easily getting to safety passing Tartagal and entering Argentine territory” (OCHOA, 1897b, p. 450).

A new colony and fort were planned some four leagues from Fort Crevaux, distant about four leagues from the international border with Argentina. Soon after the location of the new Fort Alfonso was decided, ranchers from Caiza requested lots of land to raise their cattle on the pastures that would be protected by the proposed garrison. Government officials proposed the following conditions for the distribution of land: (a) lots must have only a quarter of a league of access to the river, with the rest of the lot extending away from the riverine area; (b) lots should be occupied immediately; and (c) settlers should commit to always maintain an armed guard on the posts. Officials advised that once the settling of the right bank of the river were concluded, the government should plan for granting lots on the left bank, providing the ranchers “with franchises that would reward the dangerous existence in the desert” (OCHOA, 1897, p. 448).

By the turn of the nineteenth century, local administrators had supervised construction of five forts on the Pilcomayo River area, staffed by squadrons of the 2nd Regiment of Cavalry “Tarija,” and had granted several lots of land to ranchers.

In 1904, officer Leocadio Trigo (TRIGO, 1908) was designated to carry out the government colonization program. The state program included the following tasks: (i) Subduing and dominating

the “savage” population as to give easy access to the pastures around Pilcomayo for the “civilized industrial population;” (ii) opening roads and establishing regular communications, choosing appropriate sites to establish forts and resolving the difficult problem of supplying the forts; and (iii) studying the conditions under which it would be possible to navigate the upper Pilcomayo, and verifying the real course of the river.

During his first expedition to the Pilcomayo between December 1904 and January 1905, Trigo met with several Toba leaders gathered in Cabayurepotí, the site across Fort Crevaux on the border between Toba territory and the territory of the Chorote. With the assistance of an excellent interpreter, Trigo communicated his purpose to the Tobas. Then, leader Yaguareza, acting imperatively and walking back and forth in front of the Bolivian delegation, responded:

You have come to our territory, and we welcomed you and treated you as friends. The conduct we have had with the colonists who entered our land has been one of submission and respect. We have not touched their haciendas, even though we have not been paid for the right to settle in our land. The truth is that we are good people, that we do not do any harm, this being the best proof for our conduct (TRIGO, 1908, p. 4).

A new generation of leaders, proudly affirmed their rights and their willingness to collaborate with the state. After quoting the words of leader Yaguareza, Trigo reported: “And truly the Toba tribe has remained faithful, and loyal ally of our forts” (TRIGO, 1908, p. 4). Seven years later, Mariano Aparicio, Subprefect of the Chaco province, visited the new settlements and estimated that the settlers owned about 20,000 heads of cattle; 4,000 horses; 2,000 donkeys and mules; 3,000 pigs; and 4,000 sheep (APARICIO, 1912-1913, p. 12).

Conclusion

Bolivian lawmakers and state administrators did not consider as citizens of the emerging Republic the many the hunting and gathering Indigenous Peoples who lived on the semiarid

Chaco since precolonial times. State administrators, lawmakers, and scholars viewed the prairies along the riverbanks as “virgin” and vacant. In my reading of the materials, it appears that representatives of the Bolivian state did not think that the tribes had legal rights to their land. International legal regimes and moral discourses about savagery and civilization justified the dispossession of the tribes. To develop a cattle-ranching economy, the tribal nations had to be eliminated or displaced from their territories. The state stationed small garrisons to support the occupation of lands. The ranchers welcomed the soldiers’ armed protection and collaborated with the state by organizing militias and providing resources to build forts. The Tobas and other Indigenous Peoples forcefully contested and resisted occupation of their territories until the end of the century. Thus, Bolivian settlement on the pastures of the Pilcomayo could be interpreted as a particular case of settler colonialism, carried out by poor national frontiersmen and their families empowered by the state. Indigenous men, women, and children were killed or captured by militiamen and soldiers. Many were submitted to servitude under legal and moral pretenses. Initially, Bolivian lawmakers—who at the time were engaged in consolidating the state’s sovereignty on other regions of the country—favored opening Franciscan missions among the Tobas and the Weenhayek. However, by the first decade of the 1900s, the state had taken control of the former mission-stations and exercised its power on the Pilcomayo area. The Indigenous Peoples became integrated to the local economy and lost possession of much of their lands.

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