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# Societies “against” and “in ” the State – from Exiwa to the Retakings

Territory, autonomy and hierarchy in the history  
of the indigenous peoples of Chaco-Pantanal

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to conduct an exercise in historic anthropology and an anthropology of territory, based on an ethnography of the experiences of domination and resistance experienced by the indigenous peoples of Pantanal, in particular the Terena, within the processes of colonization, formation of nation states and capitalist development in South America. We will analyze experiences of indigenous autonomy against and in the state, and their dialectical territorial expression in the colonial world and in the contemporary dynamics of territorial and interethnic conflict in twenty-first century Brazil.

**Keywords:** Indigenous peoples; policial systems; autonomy, social cartography.

# As Sociedades “contra” e “no” Estado - de Exiwa às Retomadas:

Território, autonomia e hierarquia na história  
dos povos indígenas do Chaco-Pantanal

## **Resumo**

O objetivo do presente artigo é realizar um exercício de antropologia histórica e do território, a partir da etnografia das experiências de dominação e resistência vividas por povos indígenas do Pantanal, em especial os Terena, no quadro do processo de colonização, formação dos Estados nacionais e desenvolvimento capitalista na América do Sul. Iremos analisar a constituição de experiências de autonomia indígena contra e no Estado e sua expressão territorial dialética, no mundo colonial e na dinâmica contemporânea do conflito territorial e interétnico no Brasil do século XXI.

**Palavras-chave:** Povos indígena, sistemas políticos, autonomia, cartografia social.

# Societies “against” and “in ” the State – from Exiwa to the Retakings

## Territory, autonomy and hierarchy in the history of the indigenous peoples of Chaco-Pantanal

*Andrey Cordeiro Ferreira*

The purpose of this article is to conduct an exercise in historic anthropology and an anthropology of territory, based on an ethnography of the experiences of domination and resistance experienced by the indigenous peoples of Pantanal, in particular the Terena, within the processes of colonization, formation of nation states and capitalist development in South America.<sup>1</sup> We will analyze experiences of indigenous autonomy against and in the state, and their dialectical territorial expression in the colonial world and in the contemporary dynamics of territorial and interethnic conflict in twenty-first century Brazil.

In this exercise, we use the analysis of territory and of territorialization processes as a starting point for a discolonial criticism of the official historiography and cartography, and of indigenous ethnology.<sup>2</sup> Official narratives about the history of Brazil and the Americas normally make indigenous history invisible and more specifically the importance of territorial control and of experiences with autonomous social structures that are alternative to colonialism and the nation state. Or the official narratives romanticize them with narratives about primitive communism or of insulated indigenous societies, in traditional sociocultural isolation.<sup>3</sup> The territorial expression of these societies becomes invisible, and is at most represented as areas that suppose a certain degree of cultural homogeneity, but which are normally not considered part of real history and its conflicts. This invisibility and romanticized perspective, is in our understanding, and expression of the colonality of knowledge (Lander 2005) and becomes a form of repression of histories and experiences of resistance and of indigenous autonomies that can help to denaturalize and relativize the official histories of formation of the national state. These histories and experiences of resistance give a dialectical character to indigenous ethnology and ethno-history (an ethnology in which indigenous societies are characterized by contradictions and ambiguities, which constitute their agency and historicity, but also recognize them as complex sociocultural systems doted with radical alterity and autonomy). The indigenous experiences and perspectives are not, from this

<sup>1</sup> The data that we use here were obtained from a long ethnographic and historiographic experience among the Terena in Mato Grosso do Sul (MS) - Brazil (a doctoral study conducted from 2001-2006, studies for demarcation of indigenous lands solicited by the courts and executive branch (2008-2010) and research projects about bioenergy and territorial conflicts (2010-2012). In the case of the Kadiwéu, we especially used data from theses in anthropology and history and also our historiographic research, as well as information obtained in field work in activities of the indigenous movement of Mato Grosso do Sul.

<sup>2</sup> By official historiography and cartography we understand the discourses produced not only by the state, but also from the point of view of the state. In general, the official historiography is that, which in Brazil is based on the narrative of the “Discovery” of America and creates the myth of three formative races. This narrative is also doted with great symbolic and institutional power. In this narrative, Brazil was a large space void of sovereignty and political systems that was occupied by Portugal and since 1500 frontiers have been delineated that have advanced progressively. The indigenous peoples appear in this narrative with an ambiguous function. In the reading of the old Portuguese colonial state, they were the enemies against which the state was constructed. After the independences, the indigenous peoples were portrayed in the nationalist narrative of the New States as the “originals”.

<sup>3</sup> The narrative of primitive communism portrays the indigenous as egalitarian and non-hierarchical societies, without internal contradictions and conflicts. This narrative was employed in both philosophy and in indigenist studies and is revised today in different forms, especially in the environmentalist discourse. This narrative, in affinity to a type of mythology of new states, impedes a suitable understanding of indigenous history.

perspective, traditional a-historic structures (mental or cultural) and the forms of resistance and societies “without a state” and “against the state” are not lost links from a pre-colonial past. To the contrary, they are the fruit of practical strategies and of forms of thinking that can be, and effectively are, revised in the forms of contemporary resistance and struggle.

It is in this sense that we will analyze territory as a function of types of autonomy, in which these projects for autonomy re-signify and re-functionalize the categories of indigenous thinking and invent new forms of territorialization. In this way, the indigenous ethnography and ethnology can be anti-hegemonic forms of narrative, expressing dissident perspectives and experiences that are made invisible in the official history and cartography. The analysis of territory and of territorialization processes are a starting point key to a discolonial indigenous ethnology.

Our focus will be a historic analysis of three territorialization processes (Pacheco de Oliveira 1999). In the first, we intend to show how a specific form of autonomous indigenous system (which is partially summarized by the indigenous toponym *Exiwa*) expresses a historic experience of a society without state, an autonomous political system that existed at the frontiers of Portuguese and Spanish colonialism, against and by means of them. *Exiwa* indicated the existence of symbolic, mythic and political space, a territory of ancestral occupation of a society without state, an autonomous social and political system. The first process of territorialization took place between the mid eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, when there was an overlapping of two types of society or political systems: the state societies (represented by the Portuguese and Spanish empires) and a society without or against the state (represented by what we call the Autonomous Indigenous System of the Chaco-Pantanal).

The second process was, from an indigenous perspective, a process of deterritorialization and took place between the end of the Paraguay War and the first half of the twentieth century in which the Autonomous Political System was destroyed and there was a large process of territorial expropriations, indigenous slavery and ethnocide. Its territory was fragmented during the formation of new states<sup>4</sup> and by the different types of national capitalist development, which formed a state and capitalist territorial web. This fragmented the territory that previously was self-governed by indigenous societies into dozens of deeded plots of land and administrative units. This then constructed an hierarchized society, with a large concentration of lands and power, in which the indigenous societies occupied a subaltern position. This situation lasted in a more or less stable manner until the 1970s, and was aggravated by the green revolution and a new form of the “March to the West”<sup>5</sup> (with the development of agroindustry and rice, soybean and sugarcane cultivation in the cerrado, especially in Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul).

The third process of territorialization took place in the late twentieth century, when the indigenous peoples of Mato Grosso do Sul had an uprising (Ferreira 2017; Salvador 2016) which triggered widespread territorial conflict that is continuing, characterized by the retakings.<sup>6</sup> The retakings are social and spatial units that express processes of cultural re-elaboration and experiences of resistance to forms of domination, they are discourses and forms of action of the indigenous movement. The retakings assume ambiguous forms simultaneously, because they inter-relate state and non-state forms of social

<sup>4</sup> We are using the term “new states” to indicate the nation states that arose from movements of independence from colonization processes. In the Americas, all of the nation states of the nineteenth century are new states in relation to the old Portuguese and Spanish empires.

<sup>5</sup> In Brazil, the expression March to the West was used to describe a policy of occupation of the frontiers in the 1940s, this second March took place in the 1970s.

<sup>6</sup> The idea of retaking was raised in Brazil by the “Brazil 500 More Movement”, realized by the indigenous movement and other social movements. The idea of “retaking” was based on anticolonial narratives and a critical reading of the official commemorations of the 500 years of the “Discovery of Brazil” by the Portuguese. Instead of “discovery”, it spoke of the colonial “invasion” that endured in different forms. The “retaking” is thus precisely a legitimate form of reappropriation by the indigenous peoples of the invaded lands. Therefore, the idea of retaking is not only a synonym for a peasant type of land occupation, but is also a specific historic narrative of an anticolonial nature, which expresses the indigenous condition.

organization that are hierarchical and autonomic. These three processes of territorialization express different forms of a dialectical relationship between domination and resistance, which is materialized in spatial terms. We will thus narrate how territorial conflict can be considered as a dialectical process of domination and resistance and of equilibrium of different autonomies, “in the state” and “against the state” and in forms of territorial dialectic.

### **Territorial dialectics: spatial relations, hierarchy and autonomy**

We will first define some categories, concepts and theoretical presumptions. We are beginning from a social anthropology approach, in particular the procedural studies of territorialization and ethnicity (Barth 1976; Ferreira 2013; Pacheco de Oliveira 1998, 1999), which consider territory as a support for and expression of cultural and social organization, and more specifically understand territory as a historic process. This approach breaks with the notions of absolute and independent “space” and “time” to consider them (as in the theory of general relativity) as a complex space-time, as relative units and in the final instance, interchangeable. In this way, territory (space) is a historic situation (time) and vice versa.

We now turn to the definitions of the concepts of space, territorialization and territory. Space, as we understand it, in a broad definition, is an extension that contains a part of the world. Space is not a reality “per se”, but a representation created by a subject to express limits (Haesbaert 2004; Rafestin 1993). Therefore, space can be understood as a basic category of thinking and of reality, a condition necessary for all phenomena in the material world. When we speak of territory in anthropological terms, we understand it as the space of a certain society, social structure, group or institution, that is, as socially controlled and projected limits. Space, thus constituted as territory, expresses a relation of power: by controlling the territory this society establishes its power over itself, its groups, material resources and also in relation to other societies. We should certainly warn that when we speak of territorialization we are referring equally to a process of deterritorialization, that is, it would be correct to speak of a territorial dialectic (territorialization/deterritorialization). By a process of territorialization/deterritorialization, we understand the production of limits/frontiers, flows/connections and points of occupation. That is, it is the historic process by which societies, their institutions or groups project new social and spatial relations, incorporate new spaces and reorganize old ones. The territorialization process is thus an action of creation-destruction and consequently of transformation of territories. In sum, when we speak of territory and of a territorialization process, we understand them as products of a dialectical social relationship of occupation and control of space in which societies are established. Space, territory and territorialization are basic categories for an anthropology of territory.

But if territory is understood as a type of sociologization of space, these social relations are relations of power and can have different forms and contents. In this sense, an anthropological theory of spaces would be needed, as delineated by Jean Loup Anselme, as a topological anthropology (Anselme and M'Bokolo 1985). An anthropology of territory would consider spatial or topological relations as an expression of power relations. The fundamental problem of topology is precisely how geometric limits and forms relate with each other. In cartography, territorial relations are represented by geometric forms, that is, the social and the geographic are represented topologically. These “geometric” forms, as sets, are topological precisely because they express different possibilities of relation. Considered in this way, territorialization processes can be expressed in different types of topological relations, of which we highlight the following: 1) relations of containment (contained/enclosed or encompassing/encompassed); 2) relations of adjacency (proximity); 3) relations of connectivity; 4) relations of intersection or overlapping; 5) relations of disjunction (separation or distancing).

Processes of territorialization/deterritorialization, as power relations, are expressed in different spatial relations, so that the production of relations of containment, adjacency, overlapping and disjunction delineate the forms that the territorialization assumes, with its content being essentially sociological. By this we mean to say that all territorialization processes assume forms of specific spatial relations, which are equally historic: to territorialize/deterritorialize is to encompass, approximate, connect, overlap or separate. It is precisely the analysis of processes of territorialization/deterritorialization as the transformation of spatial relations that we use to demonstrate our argument.

But if the forms of territorialization processes are spatial relations, their **contents** are social relations. To consider this content, we use a dialectical theory that considers the relations of domination-resistance, hierarchy and autonomy and of autonomies “in” and “against” the state (Bailey 1987; Ferreira 2013; Foucault 2003; Scott 2008). By autonomy we understand the condition in which a certain society and or its particular component subgroups can determine the form, function and meaning of its own social institutions and consequently, of its territory. By hierarchy we understand a historic relationship and condition in which a society and or its groups are subordinated and do not determine the form, function and meaning of its institutions and territories, which are determined by other societies or groups. This means that autonomy is a relationship of symmetric and hierarchical power an asymmetric relation and condition.

In terms of content, territorialization/deterritorialization processes can express different relations and tendencies. Territory can be a space of autonomy and symmetry or a space of hierarchy and dependency/subordination. In this way, when we think of territory, in sociological terms, we must always consider if the processes of territorialization and the spatial relations that they involve constitute spaces of autonomy or spaces of hierarchy. All processes of state formation, and particularly of colonial and modern nation states, consist in generating and integrating different hierarchies, creating a chain of relations of command and obedience that must go from the nucleus of central power to each most peripheral point of society (Bookchin 1982). Therefore, spatial relations (encompassing, connecting, approximating, overlapping and separating) are ways of creating or expressing these hierarchies and forms of domination that are socially and historically constructed. On the other hand, spatial relations can also express forms of resistance and autonomy. Resistance, understood as an action that is opposed to a force by aiming in a direction contrary to it, from a sociological perspective implies that the groups that are submitted to spatial relations of domination can develop spatial actions and relations (encompassing, connecting, approximating, overlapping and separating). Spatial relations and their forms can thus express different contents, actions of domination oriented to establish hierarchies or actions of resistance oriented to autonomy, considering all the complex mediations possible among them. Therefore, a fundamental problem for an anthropology of territory is to understand if the territorialization/deterritorialization processes tend towards autonomy or hierarchy, this is because the same forms (spatial relations) can express different contents (social relations).<sup>7</sup> It is important to observe that we are operating with a dialectical concept of autonomy. We understand that there are two large forms of autonomy, the “autonomies in the state” - in the sense that social groups seek to construct autonomy within the state by integrating with and strengthening the state - and the “autonomies against the state”, in the sense that there are common forms of organization and political systems that try to escape from existing states, constructing territories that are self-governed by different types of social structures (Ferreira 2016; Scott 2014).

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<sup>7</sup> We can also present this distinction as analogous to the distinction between signs/signifiers and meanings within symbolic analysis in anthropology. Spatial relations are thus like signs, they are formal representations analogous to sounds, signals or images; social relations are the social or cultural meanings immanent to these signs. In this way, spatial relations are also acts of communication that can be subject to an interpretive analysis.

But it is impossible to think of the relations of autonomy and hierarchy without characterizing their relationship with the state. One of the fundamental aspects of the modern state is the monopoly over control of territory in which all the spatial relations that express it tend to produce hierarchies and centralization. For this reason, we will make recourse to the elaboration of political anthropology. This dialectical approach critically recuperates the theorization of distinction between societies “with and against” the state and state societies. For the purposes of this article, we want to reconsider a problem that we understand is central to the analysis of territory; the problem of autonomy and hierarchy.

The main contribution of political anthropology was the denaturalization of the state as an institution and value. It demonstrates (in the works of authors such as Radcliffe-Brown, Evans-Pritchard, Gluckman, Leach and others) that various societies have existed “without state”, given that the functions of producing “social cohesion” and order were assumed by kinship relations and forms of social and religious organization (Balandier 1969; Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1987; Leach 1995).

Pierre Clastres, meanwhile, criticized the notion of “society without state”, affirming that this concept continued to operate with an evolutionist vision, and, at the limit, an ethnocentric one, because it demarcated “absence” as the main characteristic of these societies. For this reason he suggested the idea of a “society against the state”, which indicates that societies (indigenous, traditional) would have a conscious and voluntary opposition towards the state and, moreover, towards forms of coercive power (Clastres 2003). Nevertheless, Clastres attributed this opposition to the state as a condition inherent to indigenous peoples, which he denominated as “indigenous philosophy”, creating a homogenizing and even a romantic vision of indigenous societies, which he affirmed are “naturally” inclined to opposition to states and to coercive power.<sup>8</sup> This thesis ignores not only indigenous pre-Colombian state societies (such as the Incan empire), but also how various hierarchical relations existing within societies without a state, or how gender, gerontocratic or shamanic hierarchies can historically evolve into political inequalities and forms of coercive and hierarchical power<sup>9</sup> (Bookchin 1982). The main problem of the functionalist and structuralist approaches is that they conceive of societies with and against the state as a-historic forms (Ferreira 2011). This produces a history and ethnography outside of time and an homogenizing view of these societies. The problem is that these indigenous peoples maintain various relations, participate in the colonial world and integrate the state structures.

But the concept of society without and against the state can be a powerful tool for the denaturalization of the epistemologies of government and of the modern state itself, notions that inform the official history and cartography. For this reason we should understand it precisely as a dialectical category. Societies without and against the state should not be conceived in terms of a simplistic evolutionism (as belonging to a pre-modern past), or as a type of mental structure immanent to indigenous societies (as in structuralism), or from the structural functionalist perspective (in which societies without state only produce order and cohesion). We understand societies without and against the state as historic forms of social organization that maintain a dialectical relation with states. They are always constituted by an opposition to states as a way to escape their control, but often at the interior of the states or at their frontiers, and maintain with these state structures ambiguous and contradictory relations. It is often possible for single ethnic groups

8 Tania Stolze de Lima (2003) and Marcio Goldman, in an introduction to the book *A Sociedade contra o Estado*, began with a quote from Ailton Krenak (a Brazilian indigenous activist) who quoted Clastres saying that “according to him the indigenous are naturally against the state” (p.8). This vision exemplifies how the Clastres’ formulation tends to an essentialization of the indigenous who come to be “against the state” because of an immanent impulse. Thus, we understand that the notion of society without state remains valid, because even they can develop hierarchies that approximate states, therefore, anti-state activism is not an immanent property, but a historical one, of certain societies.

9 Nevertheless, it is essential to indicate that various “societies without state” were hierarchical societies and these hierarchies were accentuated in colonial situations. In this way, even societies without classes and without state could be hierarchical and, precisely for this reason, raise complex theoretical challenges for history and anthropology, as well as practical challenges to states.



and other social groups to participate in different political systems simultaneously, strategically using these contradictions and antagonisms, as in the classic example of the kachin and chan system, described by Leach in *Sistemas Políticos da Alta Birmânia*, in which the possibility is demonstrated of being able to simultaneously enter and leave a state and belong to state societies and those without a state (Ferreira 2014; Leach 1995; Scott 2014).

Finally, even understanding that the so-called societies without and against the state have a distinct scale, we understand that similar questions can be formulated today in terms of the type of experience of autonomy that each indigenous people will develop – if they are autonomies in the state (that is, if their projects suppose the construction or participation in structures of the national state as a condition for their autonomy) or if they are against the state (that is, if they suppose the need for self-governed territories, outside the realm of political control of the nation states (Ferreira 2016; González 2010).

Autonomy as a project and tendency emerges in the framework of the indigenous experiences and as being deeply linked to territorial conflicts. It is essential to critically analyze the nature of this autonomy. The retakings express this contradiction, because they place into conflict and interaction forms of autonomy in and against the state.

In this way, we can define here that our project of topological anthropology and anthropology of territory studies the dialectic of territorialization-deterritorialization and, through them, the relations between autonomy and hierarchy and between “autonomies in the state” and “against the state”. The big question that we intend to address here, through the history of the peoples of the Pantanal, is precisely how a society without and against the state is constituted and becomes fragmented, socially and territorially. We then analyze the rise of different expressions of resistance that arise by means of spatial relations, especially those materialized in the forms of the retakings. To do so, we use some principal instruments: a map of the ethnographic areas (which are critical re-elaborations of cultural areas); ethnohistoric maps, submitted to an epistemological criticism and also prepared based on a social cartography and not only on official documentation; maps of social cartography, understood here as the cartographic depiction of subaltern perspectives, that is, of repressed territorialities (symbolically and materially). These maps will be the fundamental starting point of our analysis of the territorial dialectic as a dialectic of domination-resistance expressed in spatial terms.

### **The Chaco-Pantanal as “ethnographic area”: culture as historic-social process**

We are defining here as the unit of analysis what we can denominate, according to Mellati, as an ethnographic area. More specifically, a specific region – that of Pantanal do Mato Grosso do Sul (MS) - Brazil, located within the ethnographic area of the Chaco. The notion of ethnographic area is a re-elaboration of the concept of cultural area, formulated in anthropology and in ethnology.<sup>10</sup> In general, it supposes a type of unity subjacent to the cultural area. Different proposals of cultural areas were developed, normally grouping the peoples of a region as a function of their linguistic unity or cultural traits (such as rituals, religion, technology, productive activity) and ethno-linguistic maps were prepared and those of cultural areas that classify the peoples of America as hunter-gathers, pastors, farmers etc..

The cultural areas would be forms of trying to transform time into space, that is, to portray the process of historic differentiation of culture in spatial terms. The problem is that these schemes tend

<sup>10</sup> “The notion of cultural area was born at the heart of U.S. anthropology and does not escape an orientation aimed at reconstituting the route of cultural traits among different societies, not on a world scale, as the centro-European diffusionists of the early twentieth century would like, but only on a region level, at most continental. Wissler, in 1922, was the first to propose for the Americas a division into cultural areas. And since then, other researchers have made new proposals” (Mellati 2016).

to be reductionist. In the first place, because the cultural areas were conceived as fixed, precisely by adopting linguistic, religious or technological criteria, which makes it difficult to sustain the existence of homogenous cultural areas over history. On the other hand, the linguistic criteria, which is often used, does not translate into an effective unit, in such a way that groups with the same language can have cultural practices and historic trajectories that are completely distinct. Cultural areas also do not consider the real history of violence and colonization, and thus produce a naturalist and abstract cartography in which indigenous peoples are represented as grouped points, which do not reflect the historic trajectories of these peoples within the states (old and new ones) in a process of formation and transformation, and are at most placed in the framework of representation of the natural world (hydrography, geographical relief, etc.).

By indicating these limitations, authors such as Eduardo Galvão<sup>11</sup> and Júlio Cesar Mellati proposed a critical reformulation of the concept of cultural area. Galvão would conduct a historic analysis of the concept of area, once again giving space the character of time, and therefore, recognizing its relativity: Galvão uses three innovative criteria —temporal limit of validity, “intertribal” contact and “contact with the national society”.

We thus see that the concepts of area are not static or exterior to colonization processes. Melatti, for example, reformulated the concept and denominated it as ethnographic areas,<sup>12</sup> adding to it the international dimension, that is, they are not only areas of Brazil, but of the Americas. This formulation is extremely important. The concept of ethnographic area, understood as a form of cartography, seeks to portray a space (of interethnic relations, of the relation with the national society, with the environment and with the very cultural alterity of each group). The concept of ethnographic area, developed in Brazilian anthropology as a critical appropriation of the concept of cultural areas, designates a theoretically constructed analytical unit based on the identification of certain ethnographic criteria.

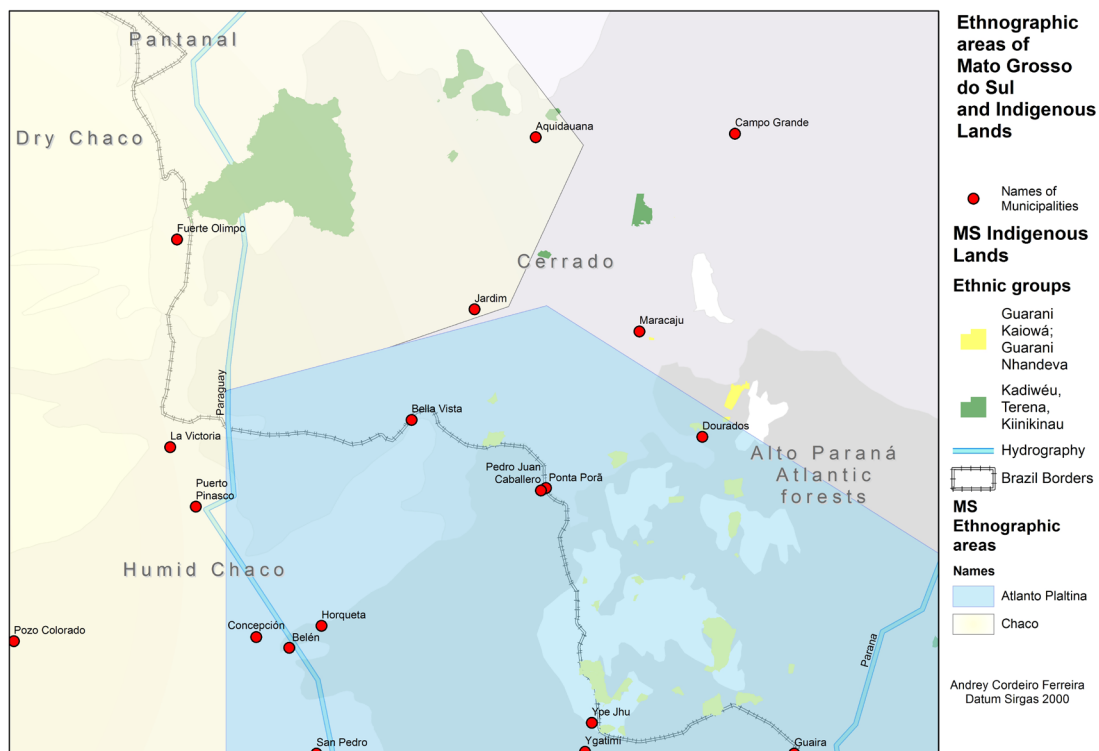
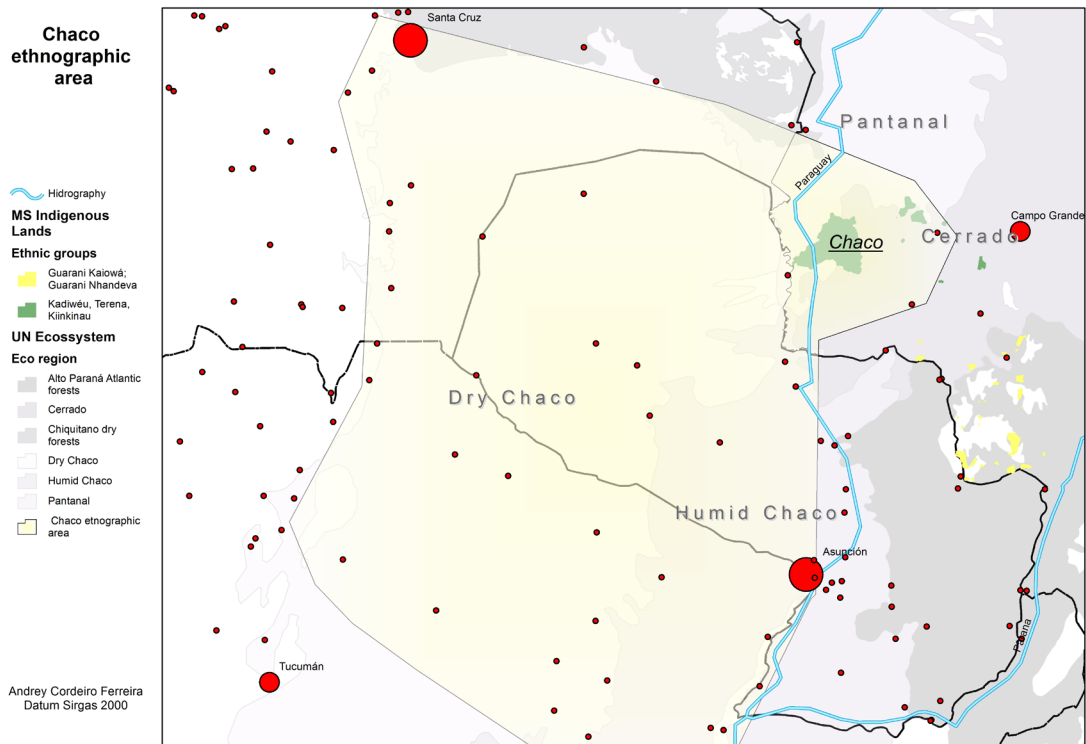
On the map below we indicate what today are two ethnographic areas that span the state of Mato Grosso do Sul – that of Chaco and the Atlanto Platina. The first includes the indigenous lands of the Terena and Kadiwéu and the second the indigenous lands of the Nhadeva and Kaiowá. As can be seen, the limits of these ethnographic areas are located in the Cerrado, in the Pantanal and in the Atlantic forest. But these biomes are interlaced with the biome of the Chaco and its subsystems. For this reason, we highlight within this ethnographic area a region that we call the Chaco-Pantanal. This unit of analysis is, in ecological and historic terms, an area of broad extension and a transnational territory that spans what today are Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay and Argentina.<sup>13</sup> We denominate this area, at least in Brazilian territory, the Chaco-Pantanal because it combines, in historic, cultural and ecological terms, elements of the Chaco, located to a large degree in Paraguay and Argentina, and of Pantanal, located in Brazil.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Galvão gives his division into areas a temporal limit valid for 60 years, from 1900 to 1959, the date when he first presented his work. He thus avoids considering on a single map current indigenous societies with others that disappeared during the colonial or imperial period, or the same society in two different points of the map, due to the dislocations suffered during the period of more than four centuries since the presence of the whites, an inconvenient choice made by other authors who design the map as if it was made at the initial moment of the conquest – as does Murdock’s division — forgetting that it did not occur simultaneously at all points of the continent, but was a gradual process.

<sup>12</sup> “Instead of speaking in “cultural areas”, it is better to say “ethnographic areas”, to accentuate that they do not exist entirely on their own, but that the researcher is who, in the final analysis, delineates them” (Melatti, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> “The geographic area known as Grã-Chaco, or simply Chaco, is located in southern Bolivia, west of Paraguay, north of Argentina and in a small portion of western Brazil. It is between the right bank of the Paraná and Paraguay Rivers, on one side and the base of the Andes on the other. For the northern limit we can use as a rough reference the railroad line that links Corumbá to Santa Cruz de la Sierra. To the south, it gradually runs to the Pampas” (Mellati 2016). What we call the Chaco-Pantanal is, thus a fraction of the ethnographic area of the Chaco.

<sup>14</sup> Júlio César Mellati, as we will see below, created a series of ethnographic areas to group the indigenous population of Brazil. One of these areas he denominated the “Chaco”, however, for reasons that will become more clear in this article, we decided to denominate this area as the “Chaco-Pantanal”.



When we consider the ethnographic area of the Chaco,<sup>15</sup> we are speaking of a region formed by a long historic process, but that presents as its main characteristic the fact of having overlapping territories and interlacing histories, to use an expression of Edward Said.

Two global characteristics of this area are fundamental: 1) the Chaco is a periphery of all the countries in which it is located in relation to their capital cities and regions of higher demographic occupation. Buenos Aires, La Paz, Brasília and Asuncion are presented in such a way that the Chaco constitutes a “peripheral center”, as a periphery at the interior in relation to all these capital cities and countries; 2) the Chaco encompasses a broad region of the international frontier, that is, it was an area of delimitation of frontiers and limits of new states. Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay waged wars that involved the indigenous peoples of the region. This condition of national periphery and international frontier give this ethnographic area a series of specificities influenced by the relations with the nation states and their societies and economies.

The Chaco-Pantanal region is composed of two main ethnicities – the Terena and the Kadiwéu. The Terena are one of the indigenous societies that currently occupy the region of transition between the Cerrado and the Pantanal of Mato Grosso do Sul, a state in Brazil’s Midwest. In twentieth century ethnology they were classified as a subgroup of the Guaná-Chané, a people that occupied a broad strip from the periphery of the Andes to the surroundings of Asuncion, Paraguay, and the margins of the Paraguay River, belonging to the Aruak linguistic group. The Terena appear in the historic and ethnologic literature in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in the chronicles of travelers and Spanish and Portuguese colonial authorities. The Kadiwéu, in turn, were considered in the literature as a subgroup of the Mbayá-Guaicuru, a society that had an important role in the colonial world of South America. Known in the colonial world as horsemen Indians, they occupied a broad territory along the Paraguay River. At the same time, the Guaná and Guaicuru (and even the current Guarani) had a historic relation that is essential to understanding their history and current culture.<sup>16</sup> In this portion of the territory, in the previous centuries, the Guaná were inserted in relations of alliance and servitude with the Guaicuru, and the Guarani were frequently kidnapped and absorbed as “captives” by these peoples.

When we consider the history of these two peoples, the notion of ethnographic area acquires full significance. The history of the groups, identities and ethnonyms tends to be discontinuous. Groups and ethnonyms disappear, merge or are simply made invisible by forms of power. At the same time, there were various types of exchanges (kinship, productive, economic) among the Guaná and Guaicuru of the past. For this reason, it is extremely difficult to write indigenous history based on a singular ethnic group found today. The current ethnonyms, ethnic identities and ethnic groups were completely transformed and re-signified during the past century.

<sup>15</sup> Mellati, by defining the ethnographic area, calls attention to some characteristics of the terminology of the Kadiwéu and Terena kinship system (the form of classifying cousins as “brother-cousins”) and some other elements of social organization. But, beyond this, there is the fact that the Kadiwéu and the Terena have been raised to the condition of ethnicities officially recognized by the national state, to the degree that the others were considered to be “extinct”. It is important to observe precisely how a process of cultural diffusion of certain rituals occurred, and particularly of a nationalist ideology that characterized the Kadiwéu and the Terena. In addition, there are various exchanges and circulation of people among the indigenous lands of Pantanal.

<sup>16</sup> At the same time, this distinction between two cultural areas should also be considered as historic, or that is, relative, because centuries ago the Guarani also occupied territories of the Chaco-Pantanal and maintained (and maintain) contradictory relations with the current Terena and Kadiwéu and the former Guaicuru and Guaná. These two ethnographies are largely the fruit of the process of formation of the “new state”, Brazil, and of different processes of indigenous resistance and adaptation strategies.

Below we present a scheme of some ethnonyms registered in the documentation and bibliography to exemplify this question.

<b>“Genealogy” of the Indigenous Peoples of the Ethnographic Area of the Chaco-Pantanal and its subgroups</b>							
Guaicuru (Guaicuru Language)				Guaná ou Chané (Aruak Language)			
Kadiuéu	Beaquiéus	Ejueus	Egaiegi	Terena	Laiana	Kinikinau	Echoaladi

Thus, the Guaicuru and Guaná – the main indigenous peoples in the region in question - were subdivided into groups. The main ones remaining are the Terena and the Kadiuéu. Today, some of these old Guaná subgroups are officially recognized as Terena.

During the twentieth century, the Brazilian state imposed the Terena identity as the official identity, so that the Laiano and Kinikinau were encompassed in this ethnic identity. In this way, we can affirm that the colonialization process involved a resignification of the ethnonyms and ethnic identities.

The current ethnographic areas, Chaco and Atlanto Platina, indicated above, historically took shape between the decades of 1910 and 1960. At that time there were different territorialization processes and policies of symbolic domination, nationalization and integration of the indigenous peoples in the society of capitalist classes. Certain ethnonyms were imposed and others repressed. The Terena and Kadiuéu emerged as official and surviving ethnicities, to a large degree because they were made official and reinforced by the administrative practices of the nation state and indigenist policy. For this reason, an “ethnohistory”, in the sense of a history focused on existing ethnic groups is not sufficient. It would lead to historiographic errors and distortions.

Therefore, when we speak of the indigenous peoples of the Chaco-Pantanal, we are referring to this region with this new composition of ethnonyms and ethnic groups that in the past constituted other forms of society and that had overlapping territories and interlacing histories. In this way, we understand that the concept of ethnographic area and of peoples of the Chaco-Pantanal allows realizing an exercise in historic analysis that breaks with the colonial nature of historiographic and cartographic knowledge. At the same time, it is a more fluid unit, because it is not necessarily focused on any particular group, and it is historic. The unity of the ethnographic area takes place through shared historic experience and not through the cultural, linguistic unity or social organization.

Even the notion of ethnographic area is not able to grasp the depth and complexity of the historic processes. One of the elements that singularize this ethnographic area is the fact that they have belonged to what we call the Autonomous Indigenous Social System of the Chaco-Pantanal, a society without and against the state that existed in the region for two centuries. Its history and experience were made invisible. Here we will present its constitution and transformation and then show how the indigenous peoples still face questions raised by the history and formation of the new states, which are manifest especially in the meaning of their territoriality. It is in this area that territorial dialectics develop, processes of domination and resistance, expressed in spatial relations and projects of autonomy in the territorial conflicts.

### **Exiwa/Society against and in the state: cartographic coloniality and ethnohistoric maps as a subaltern perspective**

In the 1950s, anthropologist Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira registered the following statement of an important Terena shaman:

There was a clump of *exerogupi* (tall grass) at a place called Etxi-uá, that is there in Pantanal (on the western bank of the Paraguay River), where today there are only Xamacoco and some Kadiweú who are fighting with

them. It is for this reason that the lips and ears of the Xamacoco are pierced... Young Terena removed all of the Terena people from below the earth, from the hole of the *exerogupi*. They came out shivering from cold and became stuck in the ground. They shivered vigorously. An old woman also came out who left her *Huapio* in the hole. She wanted to go back to get her *Hupaie* and returned there, and was tamped down by Pitanoé, one of the Terena twin brothers. Half of the Terena remained there and perhaps there are still Terena there (Cardoso de Oliveira 2002: 125).

Exiwa is a category of the Terena indigenous discourse that indicates a territory that is historically occupied and a mythic space. As it is possible to perceive by the ethnographic report above, Exiwa was simultaneously a place in Pantanal, on the margins of the Paraguay River (close to where the city of Corumbá is now located) and a mythic place of origin of the Terena, where a figure like Pitanoé removed the Indians from inside the earth. Exiwa, therefore, is a toponym that simultaneously indicates a certain region in the social world and a place of memory and cosmology of the group. Another fundamental component of this narrative is that the Exiwa was a space of interethnic conflict, a place of war between different indigenous societies.

The indigenous Terena category of Exiwa is thus a route for decolonizing this historiographic and cartographic narrative. This toponymic diversity expresses a struggle of symbolic classifications (Bordieu 2004) and a real political struggle for territorial control.

This brief description is key to considering the relations of domination and resistance and the spatial relations, especially how a society in and against the state is constituted amid the process of formation of the world system and colonialism in a peripheral region of South America. Nevertheless, in Portuguese and Spanish America, this region received another toponymic denomination, which is related to the territory that is now known as Pantanal:

The immense flood plain located at the interior of South America known today as Pantanal was transformed into lands belonging to the Spanish crown by the treaty of the Tordesilha in the late fifteenth century (...) since then, the floodable areas of the upper Paraguay river basin came to be recognized as the fabulous Xarayes Lagoon. (...) In the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, the same region came to be the Pantanal. This denomination was given by the Portuguese Del Brasil, the *monçoeiros*, who following the Paulista flags, advanced beyond the limits fixed in 1494 in Tordesilhas and, in the early 1700's, made those waters their route to the conquered lands (Costa 1999: 17-19).

In the Spanish-speaking countries, the toponym Chaco (from the Qêchua, "Chacu") first indicated the province of Tucúman and later came to designate the entire territory to its east, in an extension of 700 thousand square kilometers, encompassing territories of Bolivia, Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil. The region of Chaco was characterized by the existence of a large ethnic and cultural diversity, and was subdivided into "cultural areas": the Upper, Middle and Lower Paraguay. The Upper Paraguay or Chaco Boreal ranged from the Port of Candelária to the Jauru River, currently encompassing the region of Corumbá until Cuiabá.

During the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries there was a conflict for the appropriation and legitimate control of the territory of the Chaco, among the Spanish (later Paraguayans), the Portuguese (later Brazilians) and indigenous. This area was known by the Spanish as "Chaco", by the Portuguese as "Pantanaes" and by the Terena Indians as *Exiwa*. *Chaco*, *Pantanal* and *Exiwa* are, respectively, Spanish, Portuguese and Indigenous categories that described a territorial and environmental agglomerate. They designate an intersected territory, although they are not precisely the same, as we will see.

This overlapping of toponyms and in the definition of limits is the expression of the first process of territorialization to which we refer. This process involves the formation of the modern interstate system in the Americas, materialized by the Treaties of Tordesilhas, Madri and Santo Idelfonso. These treaties express

the tendency of colonization to produce spatial relations and cartographic representations that are part of the state-colonial power under formation. What we argue here is precisely that the border of what was known until the nineteenth century as the Gran Chaco and the Pantanaís are fluid and within them - more than a series of insulated indigenous groups - there was an autonomous indigenous system, a society without and against the state that combined a group of ethnicities and ethnonyms that, with colonization and the formation of new states, were transformed and some destroyed.

One of the characteristics of the process of colonization and statization of the territories is that the indigenous are under represented in the official cartography, in which the indigenous societies do not have territories *per se*. Cartography operates with three types of graphic representation: lines, points and polygons. The polygons represent sovereign units, a form of monopolistic relationship of territory, and materialize in geometric terms the concept of sovereignty and property (for this reason states and properties are represented as such). The indigenous peoples only appear in this cartography as points and often do not appear, except marginally (in sparse notations). Thus, the states have the privilege of cartographic representation, which is simultaneously a form of knowledge and power.

The ethnohistoric maps make the indigenous visible, although usually treat the colonial and state frontiers and limits abstractly and represent the space of indigenous societies as an empty space, occupied exclusively by them. Thus, two cartographic representations are created, in nearly separate ontological planes: the cartography of the states and the cartography of the indigenous peoples, the first with visibly expressed limits, under the form of polygons, and the second represented as an agglomerate of points or names dispersed in a space outside of world history. Our argument consists in affirming that it is possible, through critical ethnography and historiography, to reconstruct the ethnohistoric map as a tool of cartographic decolonization.

We developed the ethnohistoric map below based on data compiled by various authors and on criticism of colonial sources and reports. This map presents information that usually does not appear in the official maps and cartography, or in the common ethnohistoric maps. It was prepared precisely by superimposing two cartographies: the official cartography and an ethnohistoric cartography.<sup>17</sup> Three planes of information can be seen in this map, which in our understanding summarize the long term process that took place at the frontiers, and which corresponds to the process of formation of the new states (Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia and Argentina).

In the first plane, we have a map of location of indigenous peoples, of the Portuguese and Spanish colonial settlements and fortifications. This plane especially reflects the information for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The background of this localization map includes the limits of states in processes of formation and destruction, within which are indicated precisely the dynamic character of the limits and territories demanded by the states, which suffered great changes between the Treaty of Tordesilhas (1494) and the Treaty of San Idelfonso (1777). A large portion of Brazilian territory as an independent state was, at some moment, part of the Spanish empire. But what is most important, the line that marked Tordesilhas and later the line of the Treaty of San Idelfonso, created a complex relationship of overlapping with different indigenous systems, like the known Inca Empire (represented on the map), but also with a society without and against the state, an autonomous political system that existed in the Chaco-Pantanal region. This system was described and analyzed by Portuguese colonial authorities who produced a vast documentation about it. Various historic sources indicated the limits in which the Guaicuru and other indigenous peoples exercised control. The best category is used by Ricardo de Almeida Serra who spoke

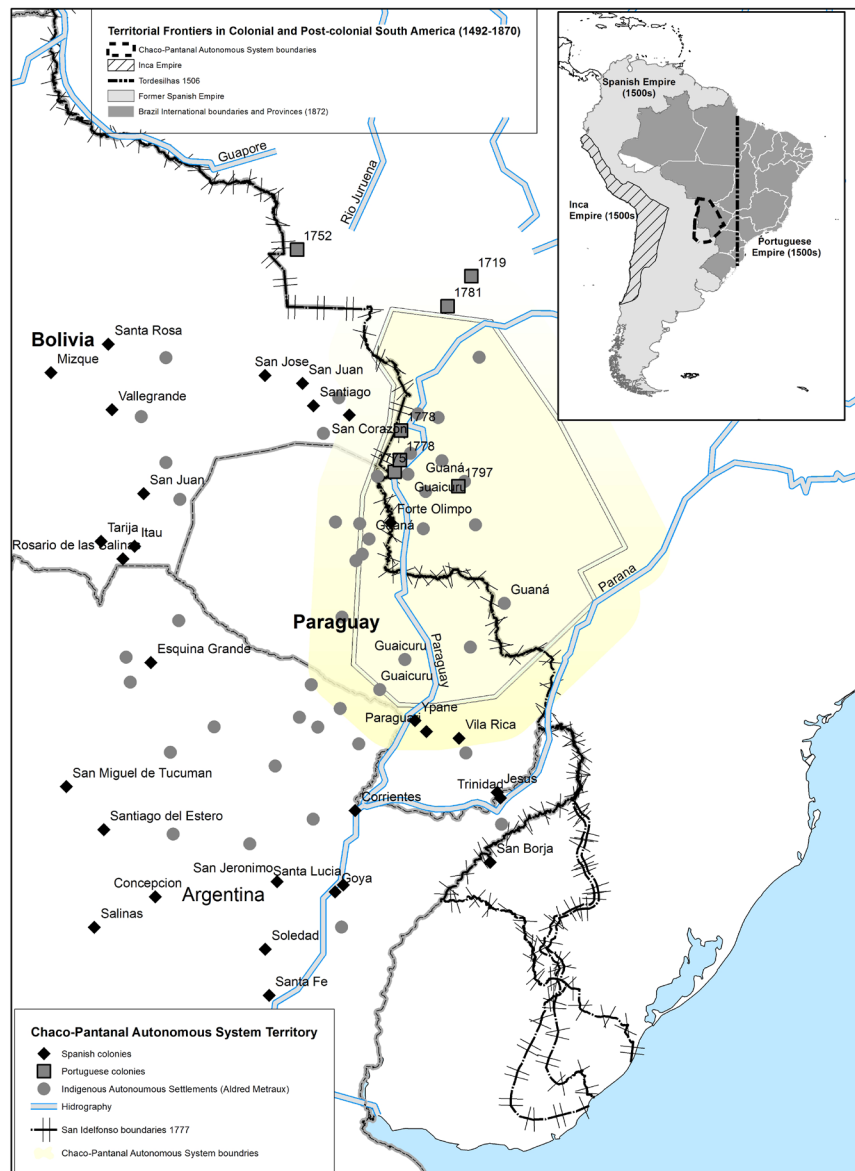
<sup>17</sup> We are particularly supported here by the reading of Portuguese military documents, such as those of Ricardo Almeida Serra, who wrote veritable ethnographies about the region. These documents describe the political and cultural systems and customs of the indigenous peoples. Between the lines, and even at times on the main lines, information of a cartographic nature is indicated that we used to construct the territorial limits. Moreover, we used an ethnohistoric map presented by Alfred Mettraux, which was geo-referenced and formed the basis for the historic location of the Chaco peoples.

of a “País Devoluto”<sup>18</sup> [the Unused Country] controlled by the indigenous. The ambiguity of the colonial discourse shows the difficulty in complete recognition of this form of autonomy:

Until the year of 1775 there were Uaicurus, together with the Payguás, with whom they lived in close alliance, and to whom they owed the intelligence of navigation, an extensive unused country that they occupied; the Paraná River was the eastern border; both margins of the Paraguay River on the West; on the south the surroundings of the Spanish city and government of Asuncion, and to the North until close to the source of the Jaurú [River] and Vila Maria. In this vast land the Uaicurus, always in a roving way of life, practiced their repeated incursions and damage, not only against other Indians, but over the weaker and distant establishments of the respective Portuguese and Spanish frontiers, always supported by their Paraguayan friends (Serra 1845: 381).

In this way, the affirmations that we have presented to sustain the thesis of existence of an autonomous indigenous system of the Chaco/Pantanal are confirmed here and synthesized in the idea of a “Guaicuru Country”. It is this territory that we portray on the ethnohistoric map.

**Ethnohistoric Map: Social System of the Chaco-Pantanal, 17th-19th centuries**



<sup>18</sup> *Terra devoluta* is a category used in Portuguese law to designate public lands not destined by the state for any purpose. That is, the expression is both a recognition and a negation.



The map above portrays different aspects of the territorialization process. The colonization process of America, seen from the perspective of the state, indicates a struggle for the expansion of the limits represented in the cartography of the treaties. The Treaty of Tordesilhas, for example, divided South America in two. When we confront the map of the Treaty of Tordesilhas and the cartography of the colonial limits with the ethnohistoric map, we see that this process of territorialization, which extended from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, was essentially a movement of imposition of spatial relations of overlapping and intersection: the proclamation of limits by the states in formation was a demand for sovereignty and property, but these limits encompassed the indigenous peoples. The current limits between Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia were delineated more or less in the eighteenth century, although this relationship of overlapping was never only between the states and the indigenous peoples, but was also between the Spanish and Portuguese colonial states and later between Brazil and Paraguay.

The ethnohistoric map attempts to portray not the state-colonial point of view, but the indigenous perspective. The circular points indicate precisely the broad distribution of indigenous peoples throughout the region. The region in yellow indicates the limits of what we call the Chaco Pantanal Autonomous System, a region that was more than an agglomerate of isolated ethnic groups as the ethnic-historic maps usually portray. For this reason, it is necessary to understand the social and spatial relations that are portrayed on the map.

In the eighteenth century the Spanish and Portuguese sought to expand and establish units of colonization in the region, mainly forts and prisons. Between 1750 and 1780, the indigenous peoples particularly maintained relations of disjunction and separation: revolting escapees from the colonial cities and missions sought to construct relations of distancing, these were forms of resistance expressed in spatial terms. The destruction of countless cities and attacks against the colonial peoples within this territory indicate precisely this. These spatial relations of disjunction were forms of resistance to colonialism and allowed the indigenous peoples to have an Autonomous System.

In the late eighteenth century, there was a peace treaty between the Guaicuru and the Portuguese colonial government, which after the Treaty of São Idelfonso (1777) was signed between Spain and Portugal, accelerated the process of construction of Portuguese military facilities within the autonomous indigenous territory. This relationship, combined with other relations of the Guaná – who came to construct their villages around the military forts – created a relationship of complementarity between the indigenous political system and the political system of Portuguese colonialism. The autonomy of the indigenous, who until then were considered to be “against the state” came to take place “in the state”, supporting themselves on the political and commercial alliance with Portuguese to remain viable.

This autonomy in the state was thus one of the main factors to make viable the territorial construction of the colonial state and later of Brazil during the Imperial period. Without this spatial relationship of overlapping of two systems, which in reality expressed a dialectical relationship of alliance and collaboration between indigenous societies and the states (the old Portuguese colonial state and later the New Independent State of Brazil) it is not possible to understand the colonization of the region.

Beginning in the 1790's, there was a substantial change. Until then, the Guaicuru and indigenous resistance was expressed in relations of disjunction. Since then, after the Treaty of Peace and Friendship was signed between the Guaicuru and the Portuguese colonial state, neighborly relations and those of connectivity began to exist between the indigenous peoples of the Autonomous System of the Chaco-Pantanal and the colonial state.

As indicated on the map above, it is possible to see that the military fortifications in the region date to the 1770's. The creation of the Miranda prison and of Fort Coimbra, are not only acts of imposition, but are negotiations with the indigenous peoples. Attempts to create *aldeamentos* would be realized around the

village of Albuquerque, alongside the Forte Coimbra, and close to the Miranda prison. The aldeamentos were state territorial and administrative units, in which the indigenous would be located and governed by authorities named by the state. When we consider the indigenous history, we see that the indigenous also sought a certain overlapping and approximation. They sought to establish themselves in the vicinities of the military facilities, either by adapting to aldeamentos or by creating autonomous villages nearby. The neighborly relations of proximity thus expressed a change in the political behavior and in the position in relation to the state. These relations between Portuguese colonial units and the Guaicuru and Guana peoples were also relations of connectivity. Not only in neighboring territories, but they were connected by different types of relations of cooperation and conflict.

Thus, there was a peculiar spatial and social overlapping, a territorial dialectic that also overlapped the old Autonomous System of the Chaco Pantanal and the colonial state in formation and expansion.<sup>19</sup> The indigenous society existed simultaneously “against” and “in” the state. The alliance with the Portuguese sought to give more power to the indigenous peoples to confront the Spanish. At the same time, the Guaná sought greater autonomy in relation to the Guaicuru, given that there were conflicts between these ethnicities. The Portuguese state also depended on this alliance to consolidate these positions and combat the Spanish advance. In this way, the colonial state was constructed “against” and “within” the Chaco Pantanal system.

The territory of the Autonomous Chaco-Pantanal System was not exclusive, and was not a monopoly, there were various overlapping demands for sovereignty. Nevertheless, the frontiers were occupied and administered, or in fact governed, by the indigenous peoples. The Autonomous System was not a unit exterior to the colonialisms and states, even if it had been pre-existing in relation to them. This system was simultaneously constituted “against the State” - by the affirmation of a segmented organization, based on indigenous lineages and inter-ethnic alliances based on a dual relation of alliance and descendency - and also as a society “within the state”, given that this territory encompassed Portuguese and Spanish colonial institutions, which constituted a commercial space and one of exchanges, essential to the reproduction of the Autonomous System of the Chaco Pantanal. For this reason, we are far from the ethnological narratives that place the indigenous societies in a condition of original insulation, from which they had only been removed later on by colonialism, or from visions that narrate a process of linear colonization in which the demands for sovereignty and ownership of territories (by colonial states) is misunderstood as occupation, possession and real use (that is with territorial management).

The Autonomous System of the Chaco-Pantanal constructed its autonomy in an ambiguous and antagonistic dialectical relationship “against” and “in” the state, according to the historic situation. This country, made invisible in the official cartography and historiography, was fragmented and deterritorialized since the end of the Paraguay War, in 1864. That is when a process of deterritorialization began, which would transform indigenous history, which we will now analyze. The process of colonialization, formation of the new state and development of the capitalist economy were expressed in a standard of spatial relations of overlapping and disjunction. These relations led to a structural territorial conflict which would prolong through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and that raised once again the projects of indigenous autonomy “in” and “against” the state.

<sup>19</sup> In the report of the president of the province of Mato Grosso, José Antonio Pimenta Bueno, dated 01/03/1838, we find the following commentary: “The number of domesticateds does not include the superb and intrepid nation of the Aaicurus horsemen, who are always roving and enterprising.(...) We have taken not a small advantage at the service of defense of the Lower Paraguay from the Guatós, Laianas, Terenos, Quinquinaos and Guanas...” (Relatório 1837: 18). We see two important elements here: the continued hostility that the Guaicurus maintained within the Empire and the consolidation of the use of the indigenous groups for the purposes of the Imperial policy.

## Deterritorialization and new spatial relations

The War of Paraguay (1864-1870) is a mark of definition of frontiers in South America. At its end, the interstate system was established and the colonialization process of the Chaco-Pantanal region had an accelerated beginning. This large process of deterritorialization began in the 1860's, although only acquired a definitive form in the 1900's.

There were countless Guaná and Guaicuru settlements in the nineteenth century, but few aldeamentos. Nevertheless, as we demonstrated above, the Guaná and Guaicuru, despite establishing alliances with the state (the Portuguese and later Brazilian), remained outside the orbit of the government and state hierarchy. The ambiguity of the historic situation would allow them to remain autonomous. Nevertheless, the cattle ranches advanced throughout the region, as well as the administrative subdivisions, with the growing creation of municipalities within the province and then state of Mato Grosso.

The deterritorialization process thus had a dual meaning: it sought to incorporate the lands within the relations of capitalist production and ownership and especially subordinate the indigenous peoples to territories integrated to the hierarchy of government authority. The territorial conflict was thus prolonged for a number of years and we can cite here the example of an *autonomous settlement* in the nineteenth century known by the toponym Piranhinha. This village was described by a Brazilian military engineer, Taunay, in a report of the Commission of Army Engineers prepared during the Paraguay War:

Indians – At the aldeamento of the Terenos at Piranhinha, we found the best disposition of people in the person of Captain José Pedro (This Indian, educated by Frei Mariano de Bagnaia, had notable qualities. He knew how to read, write, and taught the doctrine to the children in his village and maintained much discipline and order among those in his command). He died in the city of São Paulo, when he returned in 1867 from Rio de Janeiro, where he had gone to complain to the government about some lands): they presented to us 60 young good shooters, ready to serve as excellent troops in surprises and ambushes. At the aldeamento of Francisco Dias there are 40 robust men, ready to take up arms, which they have, and only lack ammunition.

Of the Quinquinao people, camped at various points, 30 men can be counted on. There are a total of 130 Indians who are in the case of serving as a strong contingent. We have, however, not visited two aldeamentos eight or ten leagues from here, one Quinquinao and another Laiano, which should increase the number of men and provide some *alqueires* of rice and corn. Beyond Miranda there are also other points at which there are escaped Indians (Taunay, 1869: 309-310)

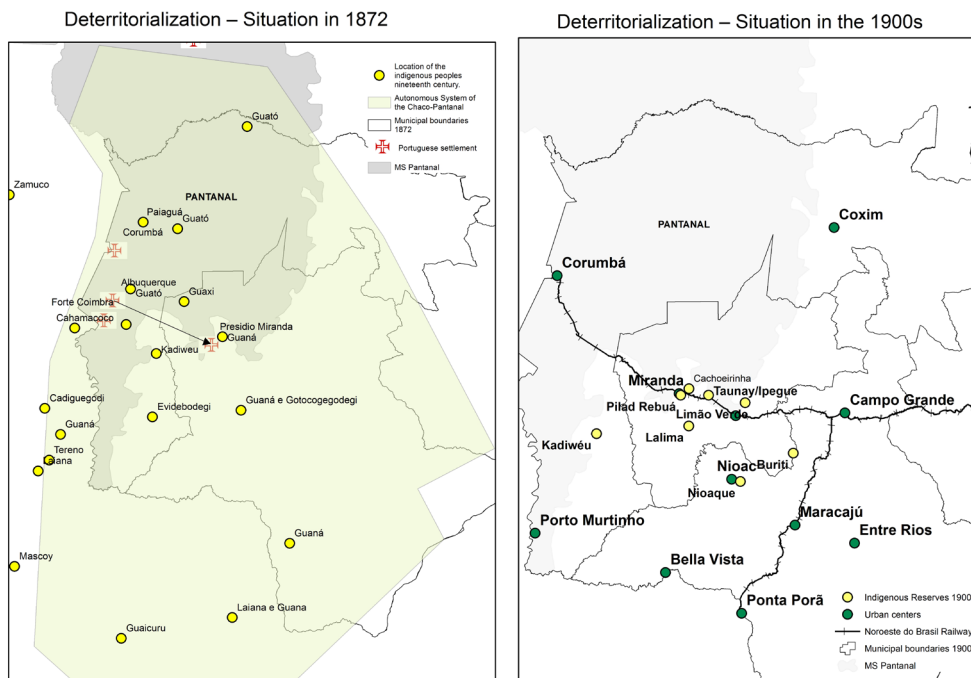
This document makes explicit the relationship with the state, especially the army, because the Indians were effectively recruited to serve in military activities of the Brazilian army. Moreover, Taunay spoke of two Terena leaders or captains, José Pedro and Francisco Dias, who commanded *aldeamentos* in the Morros. The *aldeamento* of Piranhinha served both as a point of support for the activities of the Army Commission of Engineers during the Paraguay War and also provided soldiers to the Brazilian troops. This *aldeamento* remained practically invisible in the sources of the twentieth century.<sup>20</sup> As can be seen reading between the lines of this document, the Terena and Kinikinau faced land conflicts and a Terena captain died upon return from a trip to the capital of the Empire, Rio de Janeiro, where he raised the issue.

We can say, therefore, that various domination strategies were employed by means of production of spatial relations. The settlers-farmers of the region of Mato Grosso and large monopoly capital (especially foreign) adopted a practice of overlapping in the region, by beginning processes of gaining land deeds, declaring as their properties the lands within the former territory of the Autonomous System of the

<sup>20</sup> The village of Piranhinha, according to the data indicated by Taunay, was located in the same region in which today is found the aldeamento of Limão Verde: between the Taboco and Aquidauana, near the Piranhinha and João Dias streams and within the branches and buttresses of the Serra de Maracajú. The village of Piranhinha is not mentioned in the literature and in the documents we studied after the Paraguay war.

Chaco-Pantanal. Through these processes, a type of primitive accumulation of lands began that was consolidated in the early twentieth century. The state expanded its action by multiplying the number of administrative units (municipalities) and large infrastructure projects (construction of the telegraph line and later the railroad Ferro Noroeste do Brasil).

In the first half of the twentieth century, this process was intensified and created the structure of the indigenist administration that finally settled the Indians, integrating them within a governmental hierarchy. Analyzing the spatial relations, we can extract important information. When we analyze two historic moments, a map of spatial distribution of the indigenous peoples up to 1872 and another of distribution in 1900, we see that some fundamental relations will be materialized in the territory. We can compare the two situations below:



In 1872, there was a great variety of points of Guaná, Guaicuru, Paiagua, Guato and Guaxi occupation (and there were even some points of occupation during the nineteenth century that were not represented on this map), especially along the Paraguay River, of the two sides of the border. The Pantanal was occupied by a variety of indigenous peoples. The region of Corumbá (within Pantanal and the Chaco Boreal) had a large aldeamento (known as Bom Conselho) and countless villages, but these were mainly shifted to the surroundings of the Miranda prison, while groups like the Guato, entered the Pantanal.

After the Paraguay war, a large race began to gain deeds to lands within the old territory of the Autonomous System of the Chaco Pantanal. Until this time, a spatial relation of overlapping prevailed in which the administrative frontiers, and political and productive structure of the Brazilian state expanded in relations of overlapping and intersection, based on a complex system of reciprocity and relations of dependence and reciprocal obligations in which the indigenous peoples believed it was the obligation of the state to meet their demands<sup>21</sup> (Ferreira 2011). Between 1872 and 1900, a broad and accelerated process of colonization took place, which would transform the social and spatial relations.

<sup>21</sup> During much of the nineteenth century these spatial relations of overlapping expressed social relations of asymmetrical reciprocity. In this way, the spatial relation of overlapping was ambiguous: it expressed a strategy of domination and strengthening of the state, but simultaneously gave the indigenous peoples a position of status. But the spatial relations of overlapping would increasingly acquire an expropriatory form. This relationship of asymmetrical reciprocity is essential to understanding the position of the indigenous peoples of Pantanal towards the state. The relations established between the indigenous systems and the modern state were analyzed in detail in the article “Dialéticas Coloniais” [Colonial Dialectics].

On the map from the 1900s, we can see how there is a process of “spatial centralization”. By this we understand the way the indigenous peoples of the Pantanal are joined in specific points of the territory: the Kadiwéu are centralized in their reserve in the municipality of Porto Murtinho, a mountainous region that is difficult to access. It should be observed that the Kadiwéu had a fate that was exceptional in the entire Chaco region, having obtained a reserve of 500 thousand hectares recognized by the Brazilian state.<sup>22</sup>

All of the dozens of points of indigenous occupation existing in the nineteenth century were reduced to reserves, created in the early 1900s. The broad territory was fragmented and the indigenous peoples placed in a spatial relationship of disjunction: the farms, which until then had a relationship of overlapping, came to “expel the Indians” or the state rounded them up and placed them on the reserves. The spatial separation was an element necessary to the construction of the private properties as a space of monopoly of the settlers-farmers.

It should be observed that the village of Albuquerque would give way to the city of Corumbá. Due to construction of the Port of Corumbá, a river network was established that made the city of Corumbá a strategic location for the establishment of an export center. The point of concentration of these relations of connectivity was the port. Thus, the indigenous deterritorialization process was provoked by the integration of the region of Corumbá to the world system, given that the region became a point of connectivity in a river and commercial network that linked it to commerce on the Plata River and thus to the Atlantic.

The indigenous peoples were expelled from the region denominated as Exiwa. In the case of the old Guaná, who were concentrated around the Miranda Prison, they were removed from the region of Albuquerque/Corumbá and from Pantanal, as can be seen by the map. The conquest of Pantanal, was thus realized for the construction of an international river network. The relations of territorial overlapping and the pact with the state were unable to impede a new territorial integration, promoted by the forces of the global market, which took advantage of these spatial and political relations to advance a new colonization project. Therefore, the indigenous territorialization process can be best understood if we understand the need to free up and pacify the entire region on the margins of the Paraguay River for this process of commercial integration (Targas 2012).

The peoples of the Chaco-Pantanal have different fates: the Kadiwéu had a large land reserved for them, while the Terena were centralized in small reserves, of at most 3 thousand hectares. The construction of the Noroeste do Brasil railroad intensified this process because the tracks cut through the Terena territory and deepened the integration of the region in the world economy, linking the Paraguay River and the city of Corumbá to the ports of Brazil’s southeast. The Kadiwéu Reserve was demarcated in 1903 and recognized by the state government of Mato Grosso (Flores 2009; Silva 2014). Then, the demarcations of the Terena lands took place. While on the Terena lands there was a spatial relation of disjunction (with the Terena expelled from the lands they occupied and enclosed on small reserves), the Kadiwéu were submitted to a spatial relation of domination by means of overlapping, under the form of leasings, primarily stimulated by the state. The leasings allowed the creation of countless farms within the Kadiwéu territory.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The Kadiwéu indigenous land was marked with its current limits in the 1980s. In the early 1900’s, however, there was already recognition of the “donation” of lands to the Kadiwéu by the state.

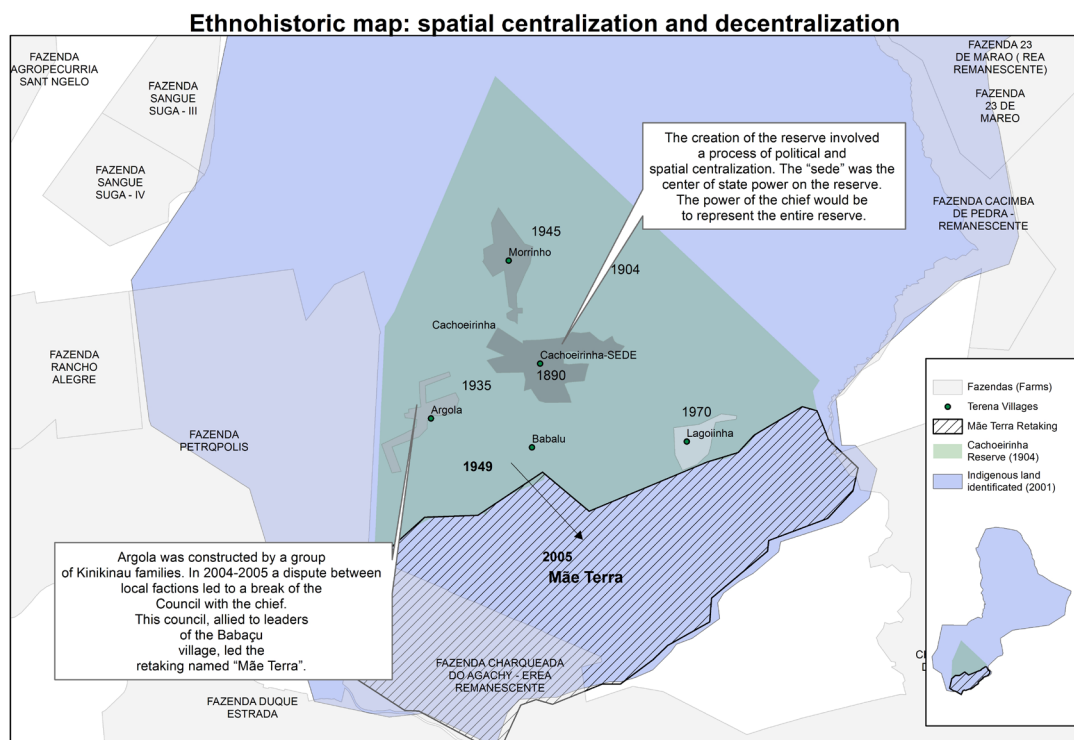
<sup>23</sup> “The permission given by the SPI [Indigenous Protection Service] for the farmers to remain on the Kadiwéu territory generated discomfort for the group, given that their lands were leased and negotiated. Facing this situation, some Indians began to work as employees for the farmers on their own land to guarantee their survival (...) At first, the leasings were not seen well by the Indians because it was the SPI that received the money and later FUNAI [the National Indian Foundation]. Over time, this changed because the administration of the leases was passed to the Association of Indigenous Communities of the Kadiwéu Reserve (ACIRK). The leasing practice that initially was seen poorly by the Indians became a source of subsistence for most of the family groups (...) in the 1980s, 89 farms were leased within the Kadiwéu area. In the Bodoquena village, most of the families received income from leasing of each one of the farms. The anthropologist commented that on the families of greater prestige in the village, each adult member, man or woman, had a farm and received income” (Flores 2009).

In this way, we can affirm that the colonization process was essentially a process of production of spatial relations of overlapping and disjunction. The first would allow the realization of a political-military and social “siege” and the beginning of fragmentation of the territory of the Autonomous Indigenous System. The second created an agrarian structure, by discriminating private properties and indigenous reserves, which integrated the indigenous peoples within a governmental hierarchy.

The reserves would be the space of a new type of government, in which the Indians would be administered by state authorities, which would indicate the “chief-captains”. Each reserve was to have a centralized system of power, in which each village would be governed and represented by a single chief-captain. Thus, the “top” of the indigenous political system would integrate the lowest level of the government-state hierarchy. The territorial system of the reserves therefore expressed the hierarchization and subordination of the indigenous peoples and the destruction of their autonomy.

### Indigenous autonomy and territorialities: the myth of the gift of land and the retakings

We will now analyze how the social relations would be transformed by a process of territorial conflict, which began in a more or less systematic manner in the 1980s. This process is illustrated by the indigenous retakings. We will analyze the general situation of the retakings in Mato Grosso do Sul and later analyze how the spatial relations express social relations and cultural meanings. The ethnohistoric maps allow us to analyze how the reserves express the territorial dialectic between spatial and political centralization-decentralization and how this dialectic led to the phenomenon of the “retakings”.



The ethnohistoric map above portrays the spatial relations in one of the Terena reserves, the reserve of Cachoeirinha. The 1904 limits of the reserve sought to create a merger between two spaces, in principle distinct ones: the Cachoeirinha village, which according to the narrative of its residents was created in the late nineteenth century, was chosen for being the center of the indigenist state administration. Thus, the state sought to have the limits of an autonomous village, which was shaped like many others, coincide with the space of the reserve.

In 1904, when the Rondon project began marking the Terena reserves, a spatial phenomenon occurred: the relationship of the political alliance induced the indigenous territoriality to become equal to that of the reserve, that is, it accommodated to the territorial organization of the nation state. Thus, the geometry of the territory was centralized, producing two superimposed “polygons”, that of the indigenous territoriality and that of the state territory. At the same time, the *cacicado* system was initiated in which the state appointed the chief who would be the leader officially recognized to speak in name of the Indians.

The spatial centralization was thus reproduced within the village, so that portion that was known as the “sede”, would also become the center of power. Nevertheless, a contradictory process took place. During the twentieth century other villages arose, Argola (1935), Morrinho (1945), Babaçu (1949) and Lagoinha (1970). This process was ambiguous. The villages were being created by state incentive, which wanted to intensify production of the reserves (the villages began as farm plots that were transformed into residential areas), but soon local leaders appeared who came to demand autonomy for the villages and to establish their own chiefs.

Another essential aspect is that indigenist policy imposed a Terena identity to groups coming from various territorialities and identities (Guaná, Guaicuru, Laiano, Kinikinau). Thus, the situation of the reserve centralized the indigenous population in the space of the reserve and the recognition in the Terena identity. But as can be seen, these groups maintained some differentiation, as in the case of the Kinikinau families who occupied the Argola village. These identities and territorialities remained significant in the realm of the domestic group and were essential for the rise of the retakings.

The situation of the reserves thus had two characteristics: 1) it would repress the indigenous territorialities, which should disappear in the assimilation process; 2) it would centralize the groups, establishing indigenous leaders who would be representatives of the state in relation to the ethnicities and would discipline them.

Despite this imposition, and precisely because of it, the decentralization process intensified, which was expressed by religious factionalism and then by territorial decentralization. In the late 1970's there were three latent antagonisms within the Terena reserve: 1) between different territorialities (for example between the Kinikinau territoriality and the others), expressing the ethnic and religious diversity, which was evident in spatial relations of disjunction (formation of new villages which were separated by natural limits, as is the case of the Argola village); 2) between these territorialities and the state territoriality of the reserve (which contains and represses the social relations); 3) with the limits of capitalist-monopolist ownership (especially farms). Thus there was a triple latent antagonism: inter-ethnic (between identities); between the indigenous territorialities and the reserve; and between the indigenous territorialities and the capitalist-monopolist ownership.

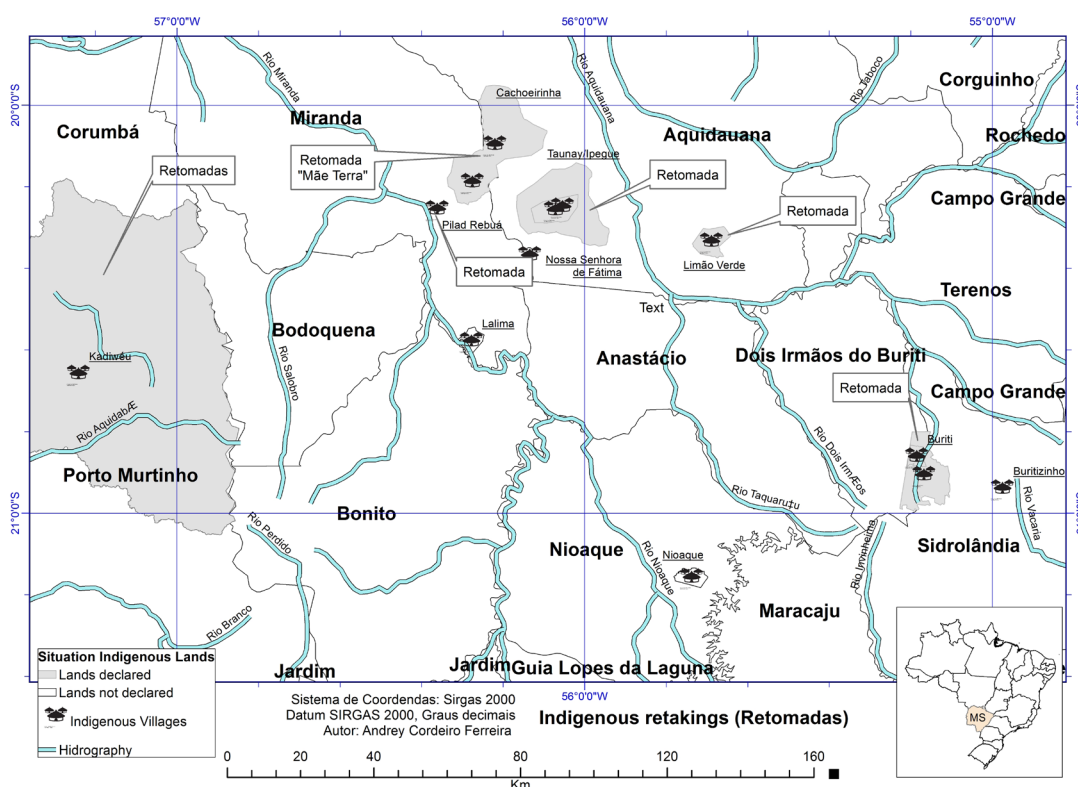
The response of the state, was then to try to centralize the reserve once again. Although the chiefs of the new villages were recognized, the position of the General Chief was created, who would be the leader of the central village and centralized power over the entire reserve. This process of political and spatial centralization, however, wound up combining with another, the movement for the demarcation of the indigenous lands, which sought precisely to break the limits of the reserve and give expression to the indigenous territoriality. This process resulted in the identification and declaration of the limits indicated in the ethnohistoric map. In this way, the indigenous demand and the state intervention produced a new spatial relation of overlapping: overlapping now expressed a territorialization movement, the indigenous peoples were expressing their territoriality in new limits that would annul the private properties.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> The process of demarcation of the Terena indigenous lands began in the mid 1990s, when different working groups were created for the Identification and Delimitation of the Indigenous Lands. Some of these groups concluded their works between 1999-2002, resulting

In 2005, there was a retaking of the Fazenda Santa Vitória, which was given the name “Mãe Terra” [Mother Earth], led particularly by groups of the Babaçu and Argola villages. This retaking was the synthesis of the contradictions and tensions indicated above. At the heart of this process, Terena families who were living on the Kadiweu indigenous land moved to the retaking and assumed the Kinikinau identity. The retaking was promoted by dissident leaders, who soon proclaimed that the retaking was outside the authority of the General Chief. The position of chief was abolished in the retaking, and an Indigenous Council was established for its administration. In this way, the small space of the retaking was used to materialize and express indigenous demands and subjectivities that had been repressed by the spatial and power relations of the reserve.

Thus, the retakings can be considered to compose three dimensions: 1) Narrative: it is an anticolonial criticism and a form of legitimation of the right to indigenous occupation. A retaking implies the idea of recovering a space that was previously expropriated; 2) Practical: As a tactic of peasant resistance that involves the retaking of lands through collective action; 3) Organizational: it rearranges social and spatial relations simultaneously.

In this sense, the retakings tend to question and break with the state hierarchies expressed in the reserves and in the administration of indigenous lands – even if relatively. The retakings are the expression of the insurgent and autonomous microterritories in a process of decentralization, which are counter to the centralized spatial relations imposed by capitalist development and the formation of the nation state, annulling property relations and production systems (such as the leaseings). The retakings break with the social and political hierarchies of the reserves and experiment with new forms of autonomy.<sup>25</sup>



in the identifications of the indigenous lands of Cachoeirinha, Limão Verde, Taunay-Ipegue and Dois Irmãos do Buriti, represented on the map. But the Indians could not take possession due to legal actions filed by farmers. The retakings were thus the political means the Indians found to progressively take possession of the demarcated lands. This process is underway and the territorial conflict assumes the form of struggle for their effective possession.

<sup>25</sup> At the heart of the retakings process an organizational process intensified, that of the formation of the Indigenous Assemblies and Councils. This is then reflected in an advance in the search for political structures that are capable of countering the existing social and political hierarchies (Ferreira 2017).



As we can observe on the map, five of the seven Terena reserves experienced retakings between 2005 and 2015 and various land retakings were conducted within the Kadiwéu reserve. However, there is a standard subjacent to this map of spatial distribution of the retakings: they all, with the exception of one, (Pilad Rebuá), were realized after the intervention by the state, through the Groups of Identification and Delimitation of the Indigenous Lands. In the case of the Kadiwéu land, they are actions taken within the demarcation realized in 1984, seeking to expel cattle ranches that were established on the indigenous lands.

The retakings are distributed throughout the ethnographic area of the Chaco-Pantanal, among the Terena and the Kadiwéu. Nevertheless, if the spatial relations today tend to decentralize power, they are also linked to still more complex cultural meanings. We can say that the meaning given by the indigenous to their territory, or that is, its territoriality, contains a historic relation with the state, showing how the historic experience of the group is transformed in cultural meanings.

Hilário, a Kadiwéu participant of one of the retakings, affirmed that the Kadiwéu land had been an area passed to them by Emperor Dom Pedro II in recognition of the participation of their ancestors in the Paraguay War. “It was a way for him to retribute the Indians that were in the war.”<sup>26</sup> The Terena have a similar narrative. A number of times we heard in the field research, in interviews or public events, indigenous people affirming that the lands of the Terena village had been given by the emperor in retribution for the participation of the Terena in the Paraguay War. In the case of Terena, we know that this narrative structure is also reproduced in a more specific way, for example in the Lalima village the indigenous people use the “physical markers” that had been placed by the Indigenous Protection Service and the Rondon project as the sign of the concession of lands to that community and in Passarinho and Moreira they cited documents related to the “donation” by the municipality.

The conception of territoriality of the Terena and Kadiwéu thus involves a complex memory and experience of the relation of these groups with the state. The Terena and Kadiwéu participated in the great Latin American war that defined the borders of the new states and in exchange for loyalty (gift) in the conflict the emperor of Brazil promised the demarcation of lands (counter-gift). In the case of the Kadiwéu, this concession was relatively concretized, but in the case of the Terena it was not. For this reason, the Terena experienced in the twentieth century a process of deterritorialization that the Kadiwéu experienced in another way. In this way, in the vision of the territoriality of the area of the Chaco-Pantanal the right to the territory concerns relations of “reciprocity” established with the Brazilian state, especially the payment of the counter-gift of the right to lands. This aspect is not the only aspect of the territoriality, but it is essential, because it is the element shared in the entire ethnographic area.

We can say that the element shared by the indigenous peoples of Pantanal is a historic memory of the Paraguay War, translated into rites and in what we can call the myth of the gift of the land. This myth is at the base of the visions of territoriality of the Terena and Kadiwéu and is also expressed in the retaking movements in Mato Grosso do Sul. This myth also indicates the ambiguities that mark the transformation of an indigenous autonomy “against the state” into an indigenous autonomy “in the state”.

For this reason, today we find three categories and spatial relations intertwined. Territoriality, an expression of the meanings attributed to space, is a form of conceiving and perceiving spatial relations, it is a subjective representation that can be objectified or not in borders, that is, in a territory. In this way, territorialities have latent and emergent properties, and their emergence is essentially historic. The concept of territoriality in the ethnographic area of the Chaco-Pantanal has as a generative meaning the myth of the gift of land, a fruit of a relationship of reciprocity and conflict established between the indigenous peoples and the Brazilian nation state.

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26 See more at: <https://www.campograndenews.com.br/cidades/na-luta-da-retomada-indios-veem-inimigo-publico-e-poucos-avancos>

Today this territoriality is expressed in retakings, which because of their conflictive dynamic, produce an autonomy against the state and are, to a large degree, a relative negation of the myth, because nothing more is expected than that the state fulfill the act of the gift, the indigenous peoples act on their own. In this way, the retakings, at the same time in which they reconstitute the territoriality, transforming it in territory, create a tension with the cultural and mythic meanings that motivate them. This territoriality partially overlaps the parcels of the old Ancestral Territory (the territory of the autonomous system of the Chaco-Pantanal), that is, the land occupied by the ancestors or by currently existing groups.

Finally, the territoriality and the ancestral territory are overlapped by the notion of Indigenous Land, which is how the state codifies and institutionalizes a vision of indigenous territory. Normally it is a fraction of the ancestral territory.

Therefore these three categories overlap but are still radically different. The symbolic overlapping of the concept of territoriality (an indigenous perspective on the use of territory) with that of the indigenous land implies an abdication of the ancestral territory. It is in this sense that there is a type of adaptation and renovation of the myth of the gift of land: the understanding is that the state would concede and regularize the indigenous lands on which would then be realized an “autonomy in the state”. In this way, the practice of resistance by means of the retakings and the appeal to the category of indigenous land revise a tension between the autonomies in the state and against the state in symbolic terms, expressing a polarity of the symbol, in the case of the myth of the gift of land, which is simultaneously a concession and an obligation of the state. But the search for autonomy continues along these contradictory paths.

Meanwhile, from the time of Exiwa or of the Autonomous System of the Chaco-Pantanal to the retakings there are qualitative differences and another that is quantitative. First, qualitatively, these social structures are able to construct a nearly total autonomy in relation to the neighboring colonial states. Therefore, even with internal hierarchies, these societies were thus a sovereign power and consequently a rival structure to the modern states (colonial and national) in process of formation. Secondly, quantitatively, these societies have a territorial and demographic extension that is much greater than any contemporary ethnic group considered in isolation.

We can say that societies without and against the state were rival and alternative social structures to the states (old and new) in processes of formation in South America. The societies without and against the state and the state societies, having a territorial expression, thus maintain a dialectical relation of historic antagonism and complementarity. Therefore, these societies without and against the state have a scale different from those of the currently existing ethnic groups, individually considered.

Today, the struggle for indigenous autonomy also takes place in the frameworks of the nation state within the limits of the praxis-myth it generates. This autonomy is not a rival structure that is alternative to the nation state, at least not on the currently existing scale, but this does not mean that it cannot move in this direction. The nations without state, which are organized under forms proximate to the Indigenous Confederations (like what we call the Autonomous System of the Chaco-Pantanal), passed on specific social and cultural forms, which are expressed in the struggles between autonomy and hierarchy of the indigenous peoples of today.

An anthropology of territory is increasingly needed to be able to consider spatial relations as social and power relations, and these as relations of meaning. In this anthropology, space is historic time and time is a social space of power and meaning.

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