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**Encountering Sovereignities:**

**Popular Politics and State-Building in the Río de la Plata (1810-1820)**

By

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Doctor of Philosophy

History

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Popular Politics and State-Building in the Río de la Plata (1810-1820)**

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Abstract

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By Rachel Lora Lambrecht

During the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, rebellions involving elite and plebeian groups exploded across the Spanish Empire. The May Revolution of 1810 in Buenos Aires, a byproduct of the Napoleonic invasions, threw the Río de la Plata viceroyalty into this wave of territories calling for independence. Throughout the region, elite groups made alliances as they tried to impose their preferred models for these newly created independent political units. The popular sectors of society, likewise, participated vigorously in the battles that preceded the formation of the Argentine and Uruguayan states. During this time, groups that were commonly located on the margins of political life, such as Indigenous peoples, African slaves and their descendants, and poor *Criollos*, carved out spaces and played an active role in redefining the rigid social and economic structure imposed on them during the colonial period. My dissertation examines the roots of this participation, particularly the Indigenous groups, focusing on the Río de la Plata's Littoral region, whose population united as a proto-political body called "The League of Free Peoples" to antagonize the former viceroyalty's capital – Buenos Aires – and challenge its centralizing aspirations. Led by José Gervasio Artigas, from Montevideo, the League integrated personalities from a wide social spectrum under an inclusive notion of citizenship. I analyze how these groups conversed and combined common interests under his mediation. Additionally, I explore popular interpretations and applications of sovereignty, used to redraw spaces of territorial and political authority within this dynamic context. Guaraní leader and Artigas' adoptive son Andrés Guacurará embodied the constant drive for questioning previously established tangible and intangible frontiers. Finally, I evaluate the challenges and limitations faced by popular groups when becoming active players in this political arena. Considering the repercussions of their intense activity throughout the decade, it becomes clear that popular groups significantly impacted political life in the aftermath of the May Revolution in the Río de La Plata.

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*To the cafecitos of Buenos Aires*

*Milonga para que el tiempo  
vaya borrando fronteras;  
por algo tienen los mismos  
colores las dos banderas.*

–Jorge Luis Borges, Milonga para los Orientales

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## Introduction

On October 5, 1820, Juan Vicente Gómez Botello, inhabitant of the town of Goya, nowadays in Corrientes, Argentina, arrived at a conclusion. For the past five years, local residents had knowingly been “drinking the poison” that was now leading to their “destruction.”<sup>1</sup> Ongoing attacks by Indigenous groups – the Abipones – were decimating the town’s farms and provoking violent confrontations. Gómez Botello was not referring to the attacks, though. Hostilities in the area were not new. The Abipones were one of the “infidel” (non-Christian) groups that inhabited the Chaco and conserved an autonomous lifestyle that ignored European notions of private property, which often caused conflicts with residents of nearby Spanish towns. Instead of the attacks, the “poison” that Gómez Botello identified were the “prudence and moderation” with which, in his perspective, they had been treating the Abipones for what had been now half a decade. They had done so, he argued, following the recommendations of José Artigas, one of the *Criollo* political leaders that emerged during the independence movements in the Río de la Plata.<sup>2</sup>

The animosity in the Chaco-Corrientes frontier had been somewhat contained as diverse social groups, such as wealthy landowners, merchants, small farmers of Criollo ancestry, and popular sectors like Indigenous populations, enslaved and liberated Africans, and those of mixed race, worked together under Artigas’ leadership, for various, at times contrasting, reasons. As the “Protector” of the League of Free Peoples, an alliance in favor of local political autonomy that he

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence from Juan Vicente Gómez Botello to Francisco Ramirez, Goya, October 5 1820, in folio 26, Correspondencia Oficial 10, Archivo General de la Provincia de Corrientes, Corrientes, Argentina [hereafter AGPC].

<sup>2</sup> *Criollos* were Spanish descendants born in the Americas.

formed in the Littoral region, Artigas had influenced and managed to promote dialogue between diverse social and ethnic groups. They had accepted this association considering it was the political system that best offered a chance for the exercise of their sovereignty after the significant power alteration that they were experiencing since the May Revolution of 1810, an event that took place in Buenos Aires, then capital of the viceroyalty, and is considered to have unleashed the revolutionary movements in the region. After Artigas was defeated and exiled to Paraguay in September of 1820, this unexpected collaboration was put to a halt, and hostilities resumed with full force. For Gómez Botello, the only solution to the conflict was the Abipones' "total extermination."

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The story narrated above exemplifies some of the predicaments that surfaced in the Río de la Plata region as the Spanish political structure crumbled during the preceding decade: for affluent groups, to what extent was it possible to amplify the access to political rights and grant legitimacy to a new government, while still guaranteeing their long-standing privilege? Or, exploring the challenges from a different perspective, in what ways could people with different needs work together with the aim of building a new political entity? The Río de la Plata, a relatively tranquil area in comparison to other imperial regions like Upper Perú, witnessed major political agitation since the Napoleonic Invasion of Spain that started in 1808 and led to the removal of the Spanish king. This change in power triggered reactions across the Atlantic World, and both in the Iberian Peninsula and the colonies subjects tried to organize *juntas*, instances of local administration, to resist. The instability materialized in Buenos Aires in the week between

18 and 25 of May, 1810, following the dissolution of the Supreme Central Junta in Sevilla.<sup>3</sup> A meeting with the most well-off residents, *vecinos*, decided for the removal of Viceroy Baltasar Hidalgo de Cisneros and the creation of the *Primera Junta*, a local general assembly, on May 25.<sup>4</sup> The May Revolution represented a cry for political autonomy and separated those in favor of maintaining ties with the Spanish Crown, who received labels like *realistas* or *sarracenos*, from those who advocated for local rights, self-called *patriotas* or defenders of the “American” cause.<sup>5</sup>

In history textbooks throughout Argentina, the “Week of May” is recorded as the moment in which Criollos, men of Spanish ancestry who had been born in the American continent, said “enough” to the exclusion from political administration imposed by the colonial regime. The narrative usually comes accompanied with a drawing that portrays the Plaza de la Victoria – since then called Plaza de Mayo – occupied by an elegant crowd that looks anxiously at the Cabildo, as the meeting unfolds. There, outside the building, they wait for the men in their morning coats to come out to the Cabildo’s balcony and announce the future of the territory. Markedly absent in these representations is the *bajo pueblo*, the popular groups, who supposedly took no part in the process.<sup>6</sup> This depiction of the May Revolution and of the revolutionary process in the Río de la Plata as a whole as a Criollo seize of power has been perpetuated

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<sup>3</sup> This is a brief account of short-term causes and major events surrounding the May Revolution. Other structural changes like the Bourbon Reforms and the dissemination of Enlightened ideas in America should be considered for more thorough explanations.

<sup>4</sup> During colonial times, *Vecinos* were men of “tradition and prestige” that established residence in the city and owned property. After the May Revolution, it could be any free resident that enrolled in the militias. Oreste Carlos Cansanello. “Ciudadano/Vecino”, in Oreste Carlos Cansanello, “Ciudadano/Vecino,” in *Lenguaje y revolución: conceptos políticos clave en el Río de la Plata, 1780-1850*, ed. Noemí Goldman (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Prometeo Libros, c2008), 20.

<sup>5</sup> American in this sense is used to determine those born in the entire American continent - *Americanos*.

<sup>6</sup> The term “popular” is used to refer to non-elite groups, in conformity with the meaning it carries in Latin America.

through generations and become part of the imaginary of the country. However, Criollos were not the only social group engaging in the political activities of the period.<sup>7</sup> In 1810, and increasingly throughout the decade, people belonging to the lower economic ranks of this society, such as poor Criollos, those of mixed race, Indigenous populations, enslaved and liberated Africans, made themselves visible in the political arena, raising a set of questions that challenged the plans imagined by the well-off groups of Buenos Aires for the territory.<sup>8</sup>

What was the most adequate political system for this new political entity being created? Who should be a part of this decision? Even if these questions were up for debate, there was little doubt in the mind of politicians from Buenos Aires that they would be the ones leading the process of institutional reorganization. Still, in the episode that unfolded on May 25 the *cabildantes*, town councilors, made sure to include the pueblo when trying to legitimize their decisions, and claimed that the removal of the viceroy had been a product of the “pueblo’s will.”<sup>9</sup> These politicians also trusted that, as long as their decisions were anchored on an idea of *Americanidad*, the American cause, inhabitants by and large would support their actions moving forward.

Following the establishment of the Primera Junta, the political elites of Buenos Aires set out to expand support beyond the capital’s borders. One of the main targets were the areas surrounding the Río de la Plata basin, known as Littoral, which included the Paraguay, Alto

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<sup>7</sup> Gabriel Di Meglio, *Viva el bajo pueblo!: la plebe urbana de Buenos Aires y la política entre la revolución de Mayo y el rosismo (1810-1829)* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Even before the May Revolution that happened that year and unleashed the revolutionary process in the region, residents were crossing social boundaries to cooperate, as illustrated by the defensive efforts against the British invasions of 1806 and 1807 in Buenos Aires and Montevideo. In those episodes, various social groups had to work together to secure local autonomy.

<sup>9</sup> Raúl Fradkin, ed., “*Y el pueblo dónde está?*”: *contribuciones para una historia popular de la revolución de independencia en el Río de la Plata* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2008), 11.

Paraná, and Uruguay Rivers.<sup>10</sup> It was selected due to its proximity to Montevideo and Paraguay, which had become strongholds of Spanish rule. The now-called *Junta Grande* expected to find little resistance from those groups born in American territory during these campaigns launched to expand the revolutionary ideals.<sup>11</sup> However, they soon found out that support would not happen organically, even within those who agreed to break away from colonial rule. Being born on American soil did not guarantee an automatic shared identity – wealthy Criollos had a very different experience compared to other local communities, who faced daily tribulations that hailed from circumstances that went much beyond their place of birth. Ingrained prejudice and a harsh system of exploitation established by the colonial system created deep divide in the society and limited the possibility of association.<sup>12</sup> We witness this social fracture in the relationship between the Abipones and the residents of Goya. The creation of a new Criollo government did not automatically guarantee improvement for the different stakeholders. For this reason, Buenos Aires did not find the automatic support it was expecting. While some residents saw participation in the military campaigns as an opportunity, others openly rejected engagement, and even escaped if forced to join, significantly impacting troop numbers and results. The contrasting experiences of colonial times also meant that, in order to have their claims heard, popular groups had to actively engage in the political decisions that were taking place, stating their own needs and providing their own understandings to the debates.

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<sup>10</sup> This area is known as Littoral because of its many rivers. During colonial times, it corresponded to present day Argentine provinces of Corrientes, Misiones, Entre Ríos, Santa Fe, parts of Buenos Aires, the west of Uruguay, south of Paraguay and Brazil.

<sup>11</sup> *Junta Grande* was the name that the *Primera Junta* received when it incorporated representatives from the provinces of the Río de la Plata.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Morse, “The Heritage of Latin America,” in *The Founding of New Societies: Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada, and Australia.*, ed. Louis Hartz (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964); Jeremy Adelman, *Colonial Legacies: The Problem of Persistence in Latin American History* (New York: Routledge, 1999).



As these debates intensified, popular groups were not the only ones rejecting the model proposed by Buenos Aires. In initial stages of defense of revolutionary ideals, Criollos from most provincial cities endorsed the calls for help in these military expeditions. Later, as Buenos Aires increased its centralist practices, Criollo political leaders, landowners and merchants from the provinces came to question its authority and proposed political system, opening a new front of conflict that antagonized individuals within the revolutionary side and exposed other kinds of underlying fractures. When doing so, they offered alternatives of political engagement for the popular groups.

José Artigas, a Criollo political leader of the Banda Oriental, became one of the main names to openly reject the centralist decisions imposed by Buenos Aires. Considered one of the main national heroes in Uruguay today, Artigas envisioned a political system for the Río de La Plata that he called “Sistema de Pueblos Libres” and which defended more autonomous, locally based notions of authority and sovereignty, as well as a very inclusive understanding of citizenship. Extending through the entire Littoral, his propositions deeply resonated with popular groups, who became a pillar of the implementation of his system in the region. This popular support allowed for the movement known as Artiguism to become the main antagonist of Buenos Aires starting in 1811. The more the conflicts within the revolutionary ranks intensified, the larger was his ability for military mobilization and political engagement.

Within the Littoral, the area known as Mesopotamia, located between the Uruguay and Paraná rivers, registered one of the most massive movements of popular groups during the 1810-

1820 decade.<sup>13</sup> The array of fluvial corridors allowed for the presence of an intense trade and marked economic development, which in turn led to the interaction of peoples from different backgrounds. There, Indigenous peoples, freed and enslaved Africans and their descendants, and poor whites, engaged in military and political activities that became more constant with the advent of Artiguism. In the words of Ramón de Caceres, a military official, “although the most ignorant, [they were] the ones who ha[d] true love for the system, who have gone to Corrientes, to Entre Ríos, and will go to wherever they are needed to save the fatherland.”<sup>14</sup> Not only did these groups choose sides to support, but they also discussed political models and sources of authority through tentative definitions, displaying conceptual thinking as a tool to legitimize their participation as well as drive their decisions. Furthermore, in a few cases they found space for implementing these understandings by occupying positions of power.

It is the main goal of this dissertation to connect the political changes taking place in the Mesopotamia between 1810 and 1820 with the significant engagement of popular groups with Artiguism, through the lens of popular politics. For Charles Tilly, popular politics has at its core “the making of contentious claims in public arenas.”<sup>15</sup> These claims can have roots in people’s “social base” and “culture,” as well as be a product of “opportunity structure.”<sup>16</sup> I seek to elucidate origins of political participation for groups traditionally excluded from the exercise of

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<sup>13</sup> While this dissertation draws heavily on case studies that took place on the territory that today encompasses Corrientes and Misiones, with brief mentions to Entre Ríos and Santa Fe, I prefer the concept of Mesopotamia, as provincial units were just emerging in the early nineteenth century and borderlands were constantly altered and trespassed.

<sup>14</sup> Ana Frega, “Los “infelices” y el carácter popular de la revolucion artiguista” in *¿Y el pueblo dónde está?* 274-275.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Tilly, “Contention and the Urban Poor in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Latin America,” Conclusion to *Riots in the Cities: Popular Politics and the Urban Poor in Latin America, 1765-1910*, ed. Silvia Arrom and Servando Ortoll (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources, 1996), 229.

<sup>16</sup> Tilly, “Contention and the Urban Poor,” 233.

authority, outlining their motivations, the extent of mobilization, and repertoires for political action. Within this last topic, I explore the use of political concepts as a tool for admittance into the debates regarding state models and systems of government, as well as the appeal to shared experiences and culture as means to legitimize authority.

The core of my analysis lies on the intense relationship between Artigas and the popular groups in the Mesopotamia, especially those of Indigenous ancestry. As individuals or Indigenous towns, they established a solid collaboration rooted on political exchanges and economic interests. The main symbol of this collaboration was Artigas' partnership with his adoptive son of Guaraní ancestry, Andrés Guacururí y Artigas, or simply Andresito, who came to govern the territories of Misiones and Corrientes.<sup>17</sup> While I focus heavily on these Indigenous experiences lived in the Mesopotamia, the term “popular” is preferred, as it allows for the maintenance of plural experiences within these groups, and an analysis that extrapolates ethnic affiliation.<sup>18</sup> I use the definition of “popular” that historian Raúl Fradkin proposed to understand the history of the “common people of the cities, the villages, who shared a social status as subordinate in the colonial order” and struggled to find a political space following the independence movements.<sup>19</sup> Whenever possible, I will indicate claimed identities, while also keeping in mind the highly *mestizo* character of the Rioplatense society.

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<sup>17</sup> Andresito was the appointed commander of Misiones between 1815 and 1819, and the *de facto* governor of Corrientes for eight months, between August of 1818 and March of 1819.

<sup>18</sup> This study does not claim to tell a complete story of popular political participation in the Littoral. The variety of cases within Indigenous groups, African and Afro-American populations, people from countryside areas, requires continued investigation into the topic. See, for example, Jeffrey Alan Erbig, *Where Caciques and Mapmakers Met: Border Making in Eighteenth-Century South America*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020); Silvia Ratto, “Los indios y la revolución en el Río de la Plata. El proceso independentista entre los indígenas soberanos de Pampa y Chaco,” in *Entre la colonia y la Republica: insurgencias, rebeliones y cultura política en América del Sur*, edited by Beatriz Bragoni and S. Mata (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2008), 143-168, the works of Sonia Tedeschi, María Laura Salinas, Gabriela Molina, Fátima Valenzuela.

<sup>19</sup> Fradkin, *¿Y el pueblo?*, 10.

As imaginary illustrations of the May Revolution indicate, for a long time, popular groups were thought to be mere recipients of decisions inspired by political ideas. As we unveil the reasons for popular political engagement, it becomes evident that these groups not just participated, but were also major actors in the revolutionary movements of the period. In the Mesopotamia, we witness Indigenous peoples using political concepts to inform decisions regarding support, to serve as a catalyst for political engagement, and to outline imagined power structures. Their presence and engagement made the difference in defining military outcomes and the establishment of political systems. *I argue that popular understandings about sovereignty and citizenship, rooted on shared experiences of subordination and exclusion that crossed ethnic boundaries, impacted political life in the aftermath of the May Revolution in the Littoral of the Río de La Plata.*<sup>20</sup>

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The level of participation and engagement of popular groups in the political life during the revolutionary period has sparked debate among historians of Latin America. If at first understandings about the essence of “modernity” focused on how elites perceived and constructed it, later interpretations sought to recognize the participation of various sectors of society in these debates.<sup>21</sup> Either in urban settings or rural areas, the historiography has shown that the popular sectors participated in the debates and construction of the new states and nations

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<sup>20</sup> While my case studies are located within the boundaries of the Mesopotamia, repercussions of these understanding and engagement affected larger areas.

<sup>21</sup> Tulio Halperín Donghi, *Reforma y disolución de los imperios ibéricos* (Madrid: Alianza, 1985); François-Xavier Guerra, ed., *Las revoluciones hispánicas: independencias americanas y liberalismo español* (Madrid: Editorial Complutense, 1995); Peter F. Guardino, *The Time of Liberty: Popular Political Culture in Oaxaca, 1750-1850* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

that emerged after the independence. However, how much these groups were able to propose and provoke change, and influence state models in the different areas across Latin America, is under dispute.<sup>22</sup> Another point of contention is whether the engagement of Indigenous rural sectors in revolutionary politics back then was oriented internally, towards the needs of specific communities, or engaged with wider movements and ideologies.<sup>23</sup> More recent works have called into question the seeming straightforward association between popular groups and the revolutionary cause.<sup>24</sup>

As scholarship advanced, it became clear that to study variations in political culture and engagement after the wars of independence, it was necessary to expand chronological frameworks and lift geographical restrictions.<sup>25</sup> Concepts such as the “age of revolution,” or the “middle period” sought to highlight the connections between the colonial and post-colonial

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<sup>22</sup> Cecilia Méndez, *The Plebeian Republic: The Huanta Rebellion and the Making of the Peruvian State, 1820-1850* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Florencia E. Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Richard A. Warren, *Vagrants and Citizens: Politics and the Masses in Mexico City from Colony to Republic* (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources, 2001); James E. Sanders, *Contentious Republicans: Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

<sup>23</sup> Some representative works are John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico. Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and the Mexican Le for Independence, 1810- 1821* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2001); Florencia E. Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Peter F. Guardino. *Peasants, Politics, and the Formation of Mexico's National State: Guerrero, 1800–1857* (Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1996); Sinclair Thomson, *We Alone Will Rule: Native Andean Politics in the Age of Insurgency* Clair Thomson, *Living in Latin America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> Marcela Echeverri. *Indian and Slave Royalists in the Age of Revolution. Reform, Revolution, and Royalism in the Northern Andes, 1750-1825* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> Sergio Serulnikov. *Conflictos sociales e insurrección en el mundo colonial andino. El norte de Potosí en el siglo XVIII* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2006); Sergio Serulnikov, “En torno a los actores, la política y el orden social en la independencia hispanoamericana,” *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* [En ligne], Débats, mis en ligne le 18 mai 2010, consulté le 28 avril 2020. <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.59668>.

world.<sup>26</sup> In this fashion, scholars have demonstrated a continuity between 18<sup>th</sup> century political thought and the proposed state models that emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and evaluated how popular groups leveraged their purported knowledge about colonial/ Iberian law as a tool to position themselves within the debates of the revolutionary era.<sup>27</sup> Continuities within legal frameworks have been identified in the Río de la Plata as well.<sup>28</sup> Some interpretations offered insight into how popular groups accessed political concepts of the period, focusing mostly on rural areas.<sup>29</sup>

The first studies to identify the participation of popular groups in the revolutionary movements in the Río de la Plata highlighted their engagement through the military.<sup>30</sup> The elevated levels of militarization in the territory meant that, in the countryside as well as in the

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<sup>26</sup> Mark D. Szuchman, *Middle Period in Latin America: Values and Attitudes in the 18th-19th Century* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989); Stuart F. Voss, *Latin America in the Middle Period, 1750-1929* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2002); Victor Uribe Urán, *State and society in Spanish America during the Age of Revolution* (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 2001). For the Río de la Plata, see Fabricio Prado, Viviana L Grieco, and Alex Borucki, *The Rio de La Plata from Colony to Nations Commerce, Society, and Politics* (Cham: Springer International Publishing; Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-60323-6>; María Elena Barral, Raúl Fradkin, and Natalia C Wiornos, *Guerra y gobierno local en el espacio rioplatense (1764-1820)* (Luján, Argentina: EdUNLu, Editorial Universidad Nacional de Luján, 2016).

<sup>27</sup> Charles Walker, *Smoldering Ashes: Cuzco and the Creation of Republican Peru, 1780-1840* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Sergio Serulnikov, *Subverting Colonial Authority: Challenges to Spanish Rule in Eighteenth-Century Southern Andes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Brian P. Owensby and Richard J. Ross, *Justice in a new world: negotiating legal intelligibility in British, Iberian, and Indigenous America*. (New York, New York University Press, 2018); Bianca Premo, *The enlightenment on trial: ordinary litigants and colonialism in the Spanish empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Gabriela Ramos and Yanna Yannakakis, *Indigenous Intellectuals: Knowledge, Power, and Colonial Culture in Mexico and the Andes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

<sup>28</sup> Dario Barrera, *Historia y Justicia. Cultura, política y sociedad en el Río de la Plata (Siglos XVI-XIX)* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2019).

<sup>29</sup> Raúl Osvaldo Fradkin, *El poder y la vara: estudios sobre la justicia y la construcción del estado en el Buenos Aires rural (1780-1830)* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo libros, 2007); Raúl Fradkin y Jorge Gelman (eds.). *Desafíos al orden. Política y sociedades rurales durante la Revolución de Independencia* (Rosario: Prohistoria Ediciones, 2008); Fradkin, “Cultura política y acción colectiva en Buenos Aires (1806-1829): un ejercicio de exploración,” in *¿Y el pueblo dónde está?*

<sup>30</sup> The most influential work about militarization and the revolutionary period is that of Tulio Halperín Donghi. *Revolución y guerra. Formación de una élite dirigente en la Argentina Criolla* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1979).

main cities, popular groups were joining the army or urban militias, either forcibly or by choice.<sup>31</sup> The past decade has seen a surge of works that analyze this militarization, looking at the daily lives of soldiers, their motivations and engagement.<sup>32</sup> Among the possibilities was the chance of freedom from slavery.<sup>33</sup> After a long tradition of seeing the May Revolution as the bearer of an Argentine national identity conceived by those who were descendants of colonizers, studies began to propose that it was in fact just the start of a process that would drag on for decades and culminate with the creation of the Argentine nation-state only in the second half of 19th century.<sup>34</sup> New studies that focused on the “*bajo pueblo*” for the first time consider plebeian urban sectors as active participants of the revolutionary process.<sup>35</sup> Expanding the scope, a new historiographical wave has sought to look at the political life of the period through the lens of

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<sup>31</sup> Mark D. Szuchman and Jonathan C. Brown, eds., *Revolution and restoration: the rearrangement of power in Argentina. 1776-1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1994). George Reid Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires, 1800-1900* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980).

<sup>32</sup> Alejandro Martín Rabinovich, *Ser Soldado En Las Guerras De Independencia: La Experiencia Cotidiana De La Tropa En El Río De La Plata, 1810-1824* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2013); Mauricio Bruno et al., *Los orientales en armas. Estudios sobre la experiencia militar en la revolución artiguista* (Montevideo: Ediciones universitarias, 2015).

<sup>33</sup> Magdalen Candiotti, “Ciudadanos Negros En El Río de La Plata. Repensar La Inclusión Política de Los Emancipados Entre La Revolución y La Constitución.” in *Estudios Sociales*, n. 53 (July 2017): 183–213; Fátima Valenzuela, “De esclavizados a libres y libertos. Formas de alcanzar la libertad en Corrientes (1800-1850)”, *Trashumante. Revista Americana de Historia Social* 10 (2017): [...]. DOI: [dx.doi.org/10.17533/udea.trahs.n10aXX](https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.trahs.n10aXX)

<sup>34</sup> The foundational works of Bartolomé Mitre and Vicente Fidel López represent the traditional view that for long was taken as indisputable and taught in schools. Most recent works that challenge this interpretation include José Carlos Chiaramonte, *Ciudades, provincias, estados: orígenes de la Nación Argentina, 1800-1846* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 1997); Pilar González-Bernaldo, *Civility and Politics in the Origins of the Argentine Nation: Sociabilities in Buenos Aires, 1829-1862*, (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 2006); Ariel De la Fuente, *Children of Facundo: Caudillo and Gaucho Insurgency During the Argentine State-Formation Process (La Rioja, 1853-1870)* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000); Hilda Sabato, *The Many and the Few: Political Participation in Republican Buenos* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2001).

<sup>35</sup> Di Meglio, *Viva El Bajo Pueblo!*; Lyman L Johnson, *Workshop of revolution: Plebeian Buenos Aires and the Atlantic World, 1776-1810* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011); Inés Cuadro Cawen and Ana Frega, ed., *La vida política en Montevideo: elites y sectores populares en tiempos de revolución* (Montevideo: CSIC de la Universidad de la República, 2018); Alex Borucki, Silvia C Mallo, and Ignacio Telesca, eds., *Negros de la patria: los afrodescendientes en las luchas por la independencia en el antiguo virreinato del Río de la Plata* (Buenos Aires: SB, 2010).

popular history.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, it proposes a regional approach that surpasses national borders, to look beyond Buenos Aires and include experiences of people from various territories that once belonged to the Viceroyalty.<sup>37</sup>

This dissertation is framed within this contemporary approach that combines the need to look beyond modern-day national borders and a top-down drive to study politics within the revolutionary period. Thus, the concepts of region and frontier are a key part of my analysis, in addition to the idea of popular politics. Historicizing the region that is the focus of this study means recognizing that, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was not yet – nor was it necessarily predestined to be – Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, or Paraguay as the nation-states that we recognize today. For this reason, thinking of Mesopotamia as a region is fitting, as it does not limit our analysis to fixed national borders that were drawn later. Rather, it enables us to consider the fluid dynamics of frontier. The frontier in the Latin American historiography has been understood as “contested ground[s],” zones of “negotiation,” over which different sources of

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<sup>36</sup> Fradkin, *¿Y el pueblo dónde está?*; Raúl Fradkin and Gabriel Marco Di Meglio (eds.), *Hacer Política: La Participación Popular En El Siglo XIX Rioplatense* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Prometeo Libros, 2013); Daniel Santilli, Jorge Daniel Gelman, and Raúl Oscar Fradkin, eds., *Rebeldes con causa: conflicto y movilización popular en la Argentina del siglo XIX* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2013).

<sup>37</sup> Included in those are studies by various authors on Salta and Jujuy (Gustavo Paz), the Banda Oriental (Ana Frega), the Cuyo region (Beatriz Bragoni), the Pampas and Patagonia (Silvia Ratto), in the aforementioned book edited by Fradkin, *¿Y el pueblo dónde está?*. See also Beatriz Bragoni and Sara E. Mata, *Entre la Colonia y la República. Insurgencias, rebeliones y cultura política en América del Sur* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2008); Fradkin and Di Meglio, *Hacer política*, and Santilli, Gelman and Fradkin, *Rebeldes con causa*, for studies that include Paraguay (Nidia Areces), Córdoba (Sonia Tell), Tucumán (Flavia Macías and María Paula Parolo), La Rioja (Fernando Gómez and Virginia Macchi), and the Upper Perú (Sergio Serulnikov). Geneviève Verdo and Angela Krieger, “Organizing Sovereign Provinces in Independent America,” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 69th Year, no. 2 (June 25, 2014): 349–81. Many of these authors have published independently about each of these areas as well (see bibliography).



authority sought to ascertain their power.<sup>38</sup> As a “meeting place of peoples” where intercultural relations took place, the concept of frontier embodies zones of contact and dispute, and at the same time, “lived spaces” where novel understandings about society and its relation to economy and politics emerged from the interaction of diverse peoples.<sup>39</sup> More recently, the term “borderland” has been reclaimed, along with “successive frontiers,” to accommodate for this more encompassing approach.<sup>40</sup>

In the case of the Mesopotamia in the 1810s, the frontier was indeed contested ground, as it relates to a tangible territory with imagined borders, over which the Portuguese, the Spanish, the various Indigenous groups who occupied the territory, and later opposing revolutionary forces, aspired to sovereignty. The frontier was also a zone of contact and interaction, where folks living under the Spanish or Portuguese rule, or later within the blurry lines of emerging provinces, could negotiate positions, close deals and alliances, and seek to advance their economic and social status; in that sense, frontier was a place of “political interactions” that created more possibilities than limitations.<sup>41</sup> Above all, Mesopotamia was an area of intercultural

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<sup>38</sup> Donna J Guy and Sheridan, Thomas E, eds., *Contested Ground Comparative Frontiers on the Northern and Southern Edges of the Spanish Empire* (Tucson (Ariz.): University of Arizona Press, 1998); Amy Turner Bushnell, “Gates, Patterns, and Peripheries. The Field of Frontier Latin America,” in *Negotiated Empires. Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500–1820*, eds. Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy (New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>39</sup> Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History,” *American Historical Review* 104 (Summer 1999): 814-841.

<sup>40</sup> Works in recent decades have promoted an understanding of borderlands as “zones of socio-historical interface where people with different cultural backgrounds, economic and political interests interact thereby creating new forms of resource appropriation, production, and distribution as well as new ways of understanding and representing the world and new modalities of inter-subjective relations, while reproducing and imposing at the same time elements of their own worldview and structures of power.” Danna A. Levin Rojo and Cynthia Radding, “Introduction: Borderlands, A Working Definition,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Borderlands of the Iberian World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 6.

<sup>41</sup> Charles Tilly, “Social movements and (all sorts of) other political interactions - local, national, and international - including identities,” *Theory and Society* 27, 4 (1998): 453-480.

contact, where people with different customs and heritages could exchange experiences and knowledge, as well as appropriate distinctive realities to generate novel social experiments and identities.<sup>42</sup> Anthropologists, and more recently historians, have sought to move away from purist notions about culture, and highlight its fluidity and the constant process of transformation, generating concepts such as “ethnogenesis” and “hybridization.”<sup>43</sup> When exploring contact between Indigenous and European worlds, historians have applied concepts such as “*mestizaje*,” “middle ground,” and “*mistura*.”<sup>44</sup> As we apply these concepts to the reality of this case study, we identify a fertile ground for the emergence of hybrid political practices. So, the Portuguese interacted with the Spanish, settlers with Crown officials, Christians with “infidels”, the Abipones with the Guaraní, the Guaraní with Criollo families, and “Americans” with Europeans, just to name a few of the possible combinations.<sup>45</sup> These groups learned from each other as they sought to position themselves within this frontier society, and that fluidity was part of their upbringing and formation as individuals.<sup>46</sup> Their experiences as political actors were generally

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<sup>42</sup> Peter Burke, *Cultural hybridity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), 76.

<sup>43</sup> Guillaume Boccard, “Mundos nuevos en las fronteras del Nuevo Mundo,” *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos. Debates* (2005). <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.426>; S. Elizabeth Penry, *The People Are King: The Making of an Indigenous Andean Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2019); Jonathan D. Hill, “Identity politics: histories, regions and borderlands, in *Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis XIX, Studia Anthropologica III* (2009): 25-47. Jonathan D. Hill defines ethnogenesis “as a process of authentically re-making new social identities through creatively rediscovering and refashioning components of ‘tradition.’”

<sup>44</sup> These categorizations seek to look further than just biological mixing. Serge Gruzinski, *The Mestizo Mind: The Intellectual Dynamics of Colonization and Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991); João Pacheco de Oliveira, “Uma Etnologia dos ‘Índios Misturados’? Situação Colonial, Territorialização e Fluxos Culturais,” *Mana 4, no. 1* (1998): 47-77.

<sup>45</sup> Guillermo Wilde, *Religión y poder en las misiones de guaraníes* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sb, 2009), 292; Eduardo Neumann, “A fronteira tripartida: a formação do continente do Rio Grande - século XVIII” in *Capítulos de História do Rio Grande do Sul*, eds. Luiz Alberto Grijó, Fábio Kuhn, César Augusto Barcellos Guazzelli and Eduardo Santos Neumann (Porto Alegre: Editora da UFRGS, 2004): 25-46.

<sup>46</sup> In his writings about the state of frontier matters in the Río de la Plata as a royal administrator, Felix Azara already identified this element of interaction between people, beyond a political boundary. Karen Stolley, “Eighteenth-century Hispanic worlds and a global Enlightenment,” in *The Routledge companion to the Hispanic*

conditioned by the place they occupied according to their ethnicity in the fixed class structure of the colony.<sup>47</sup> However, as we will see, ethnic affiliation should not be considered to solely determine political orientation. Social and economic relations played a significant role in this equation.

Differing views on the divisibility of sovereignty sparked much of the conflict within the revolutionary side. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a more traditional understanding of the term that was aligned with the Hapsburg mixed-state, in which sovereignty was shared between multiple corporate bodies, co-existed with the liberal, Enlightened, more centralized idea of “popular sovereignty,” which was implemented by Bourbonic rule.<sup>48</sup> The notion of frontier as a contested ground, with blurry limits and jurisdictions, added more layers of uncertainty to this already complex debate. Besides a territorial query, redefinitions regarding the exercise of political rights and the creation of new state institutions elevated the debate.<sup>49</sup> The combination of these elements created a context that historian Antonio Annino has identified as one of “sovereignties in conflict.”<sup>50</sup>

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*Enlightenment*, eds. Elizabeth Franklin Lewis, Monica Bolufer Peruga, and Catherine M. Jaffe. (London; New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), 22.

<sup>47</sup> Alex Borucki, *From Shipmates to Soldiers: Emerging Black Identities in the Río de La Plata* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015).

<sup>48</sup> The debate about the origin of sovereignty was one that surrounded the intellectual life and revolutionary movements in Europe and America. José Carlos Chiaramonte has written extensively about this matter regarding the Río de la Plata. Some of his publications include “La cuestión de la soberanía en la genesis y constitución del Estado argentino” in *Revista Electrónica de Historia Constitucional N. 2* (June 2011); *Nación y Estado en Iberoamérica. El lenguaje político en tiempos de las independencias* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2004); “Autonomía e Independencia En El Río De La Plata, 1808-1810” in *Historia Mexicana*, vol. 58, no. 1 (2008): 325–368. See also Antonio Annino and François-Xavier Guerra, ed., *Inventando la nación: Iberoamérica siglo XIX* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003), 155; José Carlos Chiaramonte, *Nación y Estado*, 85, 184.

<sup>49</sup> Charles Tilly, “Reflections on the History of European State Making,” in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, ed. Charles Tilly (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 42.

<sup>50</sup> Antonio Annino, “Soberanías en lucha,” in *Inventando la Nación. Iberoamérica siglo XIX*, eds. Antonio Annino and François-Xavier Guerra (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003).

José Artigas actively engaged in this debate. Rather than thinking of pueblo as a whole (as people, a collective), an indivisible unity from which all authority emanated, Artigas accepted that the variety of pueblos (towns) that existed in the territory emanated power. Instead of the old monarchist Hapsburg model, though, in this system, autonomous towns would freely choose to associate with one another to form a confederation. Only through the ample exercise of citizenship, which contemplated participation in elections and assemblies, was it possible to evoke that power and authority, and make legitimate political decisions. For Artigas, peoples of all social groups should be a part of the conversation, since “every man [was] equal before law.”<sup>51</sup> In his communications, he advocated for Indigenous towns to be governed by Indigenous peoples, and for people of all classes, but mostly the “miserable,” to be rewarded with the benefits of political organization under federalism, with a strong component of local autonomy.<sup>52</sup> Artigas specifically highlighted the significance of “rural citizens” in this process.<sup>53</sup> Institutions should exist to expand and guarantee citizenship, rather than limit it. With this rhetoric that identified and rejected several of the restrictive practices of colonial times and by mediating between diverse groups, he was able to gather considerable support.

By March of 1815, Artigas’ ideals had spread and been accepted by a vast portion of the populations in the provinces of the Banda Oriental, Corrientes, Entre Ríos, Santa Fe, Córdoba, and the territory of Misiones. Many of these areas had declared their independence as provincial states in order to reassert their sovereignty in the face of centralist policies, and only Córdoba

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<sup>51</sup> José Artigas to José Silva, Paraná, April 9, 1815 in *Comisión Nacional Archivo Artigas* vol. 20, 314 [hereafter *AA*].

<sup>52</sup> José Artigas to José Silva, Paraná, May 9, 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 57. “Recomiendo a V. a todos esos infelices (...) Demosles la mejor importancia en los negocios.”

<sup>53</sup> Jose Artigas to the cabildo of Corrientes. Cuartel general, April 28, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 55.

participated in the declaration of independence led by Buenos Aires in Tucumán in 1816.<sup>54</sup> Popular groups played a major role in this process of reinforcing local autonomy, by bolstering support and constructing a solid alliance with Artigas, who strongly believed in this regional connection and never really advocated for the creation of an independent Uruguay. The participation of elite groups was remarkable as well. Even though they constantly appropriated Artigas' proposals to fit their own needs, popular political activity forced them to cede spaces in this system, generating initiatives of a truly regional integration, and creating a moment of balance and prosperity. As a reaction, the government in Buenos Aires, now called Directory, worked to put a stop to the League. Besides organizing military expeditions, their envoys in Brazil orchestrated an invasion led by the Portuguese, whose territorial aspirations in the region had always been made clear. They entered the territory in 1816, increasing tensions and the likelihood of conflict even further, and provoking a strong reaction from the local population.

The Guaraní people living in the former Jesuit missions' area, known as Misiones, were amongst those who most actively rose to the defense of the region. Their historical experience of conquest and colonization combined newly imposed European religious practices with the maintenance of indigenous mechanisms of authority and social organization, with a blended economy that combined communal and private production of goods and crops. Guaraní leaders that were caciques maintained certain levels of power that was passed on through kinship. Others gained influence by collaborating with Jesuit priests in the mission administration. Despite privileges such as receiving an education, their power was still restricted by the weight of colonialism. Missions declined with the Jesuit expulsions from Spanish America in 1767, but

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<sup>54</sup> Banda Oriental did so in 1813, Corrientes and Entre Ríos in 1814, Santa Fe in 1815.

many Indigenous Cabildos remained active. The start of the revolutionary process in the Río de la Plata provided an opportunity for a new rise in indigenous leadership. A few names that stood out in this process were that of Domingo Manduré and Artigas' son, Andresito, who at different times occupied the role of Commander of Misiones. Raised in mission towns, these men anchored their power on a strong social basis and acute reading of local circumstances to establish their leadership, applying the cultural understandings that emerged from exchange on the frontier to debate political terms and systems and delineate authority.<sup>55</sup>

Because the participation of popular groups is an emerging topic, available studies on the reach of political rhetoric focus mostly on elite perspectives.<sup>56</sup> We now have evidence that popular groups in fact had access to and engaged with notions present in Iberian political traditions.<sup>57</sup> During the revolutionary period, these notions informed their repertoire of political

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<sup>55</sup> Tilly, Conclusion to *Riots in the Cities*, 229.

<sup>56</sup> Noemí Goldman and Marcela Ternavasio, “Construir la república: semántica y dilemas de la soberanía popular en Argentina durante el siglo XIX,” *Revista de Sociología e Política* 20, no. 42 (2012): 11–19; Noemi Goldman, “Soberanía, constitución, Estado, nación y opinión pública en Iberoamérica: concepto y realidad,” in *Revista de Estudios Políticos* n. 134 (Madrid, 2006): 257–63; Noemi Goldman, ed., *Lenguaje y revolución: conceptos políticos clave en el Río de la Plata* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2008); Marta Irurozqui, *El tribunal de la soberanía: el poder legislativo en la conformación de los estados: América Latina, siglo XIX* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, Ediciones Jurídicas y Sociales, Marcial Pons Ediciones Jurídicas y Sociales, 2020).

<sup>57</sup> Miléna Santoro and Erick D. Langer, eds., *Hemispheric Indigenities: Native Identity and Agency in Mesoamerica, the Andes, and Canada* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018); José Carlos Chiaramonte, *Nación y Estado en Iberoamérica*; Ana Frega, *Pueblos y Soberanía en la Revolución Artiguista: la Región de Domingo Soriano desde fines de la Colonia a la ocupación Portuguesa* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 2007); José M. Portillo Valdés, *Crisis Atlántica: Autonomía e Independencia en la crisis de la monarquía Hispánica* (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2006); Jeremy Adelman, *Sovereignty and revolution in the Iberian Atlantic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Pilar González Bernaldo de Quirós, ed., *Independencias iberoamericanas. Nuevos problemas y aproximaciones* (Buenos Aires, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2015); Silvia Escanilla Huerta, “‘They Will Live without Law or Religion’: Cádiz, Indigenous People, and Political Change in the Viceroyalty of Peru, 1812–1820,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 101:2 (2021) doi 10.1215/00182168-8897464; Jaime Peire (ed.) *Actores, representaciones e imaginarios, nuevas perspectivas en la historia política de América Latina: Homenaje a François Xavier Guerra*, Buenos Aires, Editorial Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, 2007; Monica Quijada, “Los límites del “pueblo soberano”: territorio, nación y el tratamiento de la diversidad. Argentina siglo XIX,” in *Historia y política: Ideas, procesos y movimientos sociales*, N° 13 (2005): 143–174.

action, along with strategies beyond a more theoretical, “de jure,” view of sovereignty.<sup>58</sup> Popular groups created spaces to exercise sovereignty in their daily lives, a practice that sociologist Finn Stepputat explained as “formations of sovereignty.”<sup>59</sup> Stepputat identified this phenomenon particularly in areas in which the state was absent or incipient, and more inventive, out of the political system claims of sovereignty were required. When needing institutional support, the Mesopotamia residents often clashed with fragmented judicial and political structures, and resorted to such practices.

Indigenous leaders traveled from town to town disseminating ideas connected to the meaning of Natural Law, freedom, and equality, to ensemble support. They also engaged in debates about “sovereignty” within Indigenous groups, arguing over whether they had the right to govern and defend themselves, or be respected in their wishes should they decide not to. Indigenous Cabildos wrote letters to have their rights respected. In these communications, ideas connected to political citizenship and representation emerged.<sup>60</sup> These understandings gave way to a deep political experimentation led by Andresito that borrowed elements of the Indigenous and Criollo worlds and attempted to organize the territory of Misiones as an autonomous political entity with a *misionero* identity. Besides these more abstract takes on the concept, Indigenous peoples sought creative ways to exercise sovereignty, forming claims outside the existing legal frameworks, such as providing resources to the causes they believed in, or

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<sup>58</sup> Lauren Benton, “In defense of ignorance: frameworks for legal politics in the Atlantic world,” in Brian Philip Owensby and Richard Jeffrey Ross, (eds.), *Justice in a New World: Negotiating Legal Intelligibility in British, Iberian, and Indigenous America* (New York: NY University Press, 2018).

<sup>59</sup> Finn Stepputat, “Formations of Sovereignty at the Frontier of the Modern State,” in *Conflict and Society: Advances in Research* 1 (2015): 129–143.

<sup>60</sup> Orestes Carlos Cansanello identifies the first explicit connection between citizenship, sovereignty and voting rights in the Provisional Statute published by the junta that replaced Director Carlos María de Alvear in 1815. The document should instruct representative practices to the United Provinces, but was not accepted by most of them due to political discrepancies. Orestes Carlos Cansanello, “Ciudadano/Vecino,” in *Lenguaje y revolución*, 26.

advocating for the improvement of administration in their towns.<sup>61</sup> Combined, these measures worked towards pushing for the expansion of citizenship, seeking to establish an inclusive interpretation of this concept.

The question of Indigenous rights and political inclusion in Argentina has been a contentious one. Projects of state formation in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century actively sought to erase the participation of Indigenous groups by fostering “civilizing” national ideals that highlighted European roots and conflicted with “barbarian” practices of mestizos, gauchos and Indigenous groups.<sup>62</sup> Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Argentine state moved to actively eliminate the Indigenous presence in coveted areas, conveniently called “desert” to accentuate the disregard towards their cultures. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this invisibilization only consolidated, despite some minor recognition of Indigenous movements during the Peronist governments.<sup>63</sup> The image of a white, “civilized” Argentina, built on the work of those who came “on boats,” using European ideals, contrasts heavily with the scenery that we witness in the

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<sup>61</sup> Raúl O. Fradkin has highlighted the need to look beyond an intellectual history approach to identify popular practices connected to the appropriation of the notion of citizenship. Raúl O. Fradkin, Review of *Poder y gobierno local en México, 1808-1857*, by María del Carmen Salinas Sandoval, Diana Birrichaga Gardida and Antonio Escobar Ohmstede, *Relaciones. Estudios de historia y Sociedad* 135, (2013): 245. [http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0185-39292013000300012&lng=es&tlng=es](http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0185-39292013000300012&lng=es&tlng=es).

<sup>62</sup> Domíng Faustino Sarmiento was the main proponent of this dichotomy between a backward past of barbarism and a “civilized” future for the Argentine State, condensed in his book *Facundo o Civilización y Barbarie* from 1845. For a summarized overview of the Indigenous question in Argentina, see Gastón Gordillo and Silvia Hirsch, “Indigenous Struggles and Contested Identities in Argentina Histories of Invisibilization and Reemergence,” *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 8, no. 3 (2003): 4–30, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jlca.2003.8.3.4>.

<sup>63</sup> Matthias Hau and Guillermo Wilde, “‘We Have Always Lived Here’: Indigenous Movements, Citizenship and Poverty in Argentina,” *The Journal of Development Studies* 46 (August 1, 2010): 1283–1303, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2010.487098>.



Mesopotamia in the 1810s.<sup>64</sup> The constant presence of Indigenous groups in the political arena and their contributions to the debates regarding sovereignty and citizenship in the period defined political systems, their extension and limitations, and left a significant mark in the territory.

### **Sources and Methodology**

Following popular politics is often challenging, since illiteracy was widespread and records are scarce. In the case of the Guaraní, though, many of these Indigenous leaders were literate or traveled with secretaries who registered their ideas. Besides a vast body of scholarship, to gather information about possible opportunities for political engagement, I relied on government papers (communications, political treaties, pamphlets) and correspondences between people in several pueblos in Corrientes, Misiones, Entre Ríos, Santa Fe, the Banda Oriental, and Buenos Aires. To explain the motivations that drove popular groups to engage or not in the political activities that followed the May Revolution, I combined the close reading of correspondences between local authorities as well as residents, Cabildo records, personal accounts, criminal cases and military proceedings, with information registered in censuses and military rosters. The criminal cases, housed in the archives of Buenos Aires, Corrientes and Santa Fe, were generated after political unrest such as rebellions and social/political upheavals. Military proceedings (*sumarios militares*) and lists of deserters complemented my study of popular political involvement. These cases reflect conscious choices made by these individuals,

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<sup>64</sup> The idea that Argentines came “from the boats” is a reference to the significant immigratory waves that arrived in the country during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and usually ignores earlier contributions to the foundations of the country. It still finds recipients in the political elites, as exemplified by Argentine President Alberto Fernández’s comments in 2021. “‘Los mexicanos salieron de los indios, los brasileros salieron de la selva’: la polémica frase del presidente de Argentina por la cual tuvo que disculparse,” *BBC News Mundo*, accessed December 13, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-57422159>.

actively deciding to whom to provide their support. As unfortunate as their capture was for them, their depositions allow for the direct and indirect access of motivations of those involved.

To explore the mechanisms of mobilization and the degree of their effectiveness, I utilized Cabildo records to track the discussions of local leaders, as well as their connections with individuals and groups inside each province. These connections revealed how political activity defined the approach to popular groups. The “Archivo Artigas,” a published collection of correspondences and administrative papers related to Artigas, is a rich source of information about Artigas’ troops. Corrientes and Entre Ríos house similar documents, from major cities as well as small towns, including indigenous ones. I tracked how political leaders discussed the organization of troops, what kind of benefits they offered, and, when available, inspected reception, particularly through military enrollment, and the dispatch of resources. I also considered the mention of economic aspects. Similar documentation, either published in the Archivo Artigas or gathered in the archives, allowed me to inquire into the ways in which political repertoires were shaped. Private letters were useful in this regard, as well as letters of complaint, from regular individuals and Cabildos de Indios. Correspondence between indigenous leaders was particularly useful to inquiry into the ways in which these groups engaged with notions of sovereignty and citizenship, and the interplay between local and regional aspirations.

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Chapter one, *The Río de la Plata’s Littoral: Setting the Context for Political Change*, offers a broad picture of the Río de la Plata region, with a special focus on the Littoral at large, and the Mesopotamia area more specifically. I outline the main social, economic, and political characteristics that defined experiences of those who lived in the territory, how they organized

themselves, how the Spanish colonial enterprise impacted it, and the beginning of the revolutionary process.

Chapters two and three capture the political and societal fissures present in the Río de la Plata's Littoral region, and how they were further exposed after the May Revolution. In chapter two, *Dreams of an American Unity: Manuel Belgrano's expedition through the Littoral (1810-1811)*, I demonstrate the difficulty in gathering support for Belgrano's expedition to Paraguay, the lack of shared meaning behind ideas such as "Americano," and the rise of political systems and ideals that opposed those offered by Buenos Aires. In chapter three, *Finding the Voice of Freedom: Popular Understandings of Sovereignty in the Mesopotamia (1811-1813)*, I turn to the strong political engagement of Indigenous groups from Misiones, not only through military movements, but also in discussions over conceptual understandings about sovereignty and freedom.

Chapter four, *Crafting a reciprocal alliance. Artigas and the Pueblos of the Rioplatense Mesopotamia (1814-1815)*, explores the consolidation of the League of Free Peoples in the Río de la Plata's Mesopotamia, against multiple understandings of the word "pueblo," and their implications for those living in this territory and their construction of sovereignties. More regional understandings are superposed with local practices. I look at perspectives coming from popular groups as well as the elites, using the pueblos and towns within the jurisdiction of Corrientes as a case study to establish the character of the reciprocal alliance that Artigas managed to construct.

Chapter five, "*The pueblo de Indios of Santa Lucía: Claims of Sovereignty and Citizenship*," tracks the Indigenous town of Santa Lucía de los Astos in Corrientes and the experience of its residents throughout the decade, as they engaged in traditional and alternative

declarations of sovereignty. I analyze the changes in their political status and the strategies implemented to expand the meaning of citizenship, particularly during the first provincial Congress of Corrientes. The Congress also provides an opportunity to explore political conflicts between the city of Corrientes and the rural towns within its jurisdiction.

Chapter six, *Crossing Frontiers: Andresito Artigas and the establishment of Indigenous Authority in the Mesopotamia*, follows Andresito's trajectory as he crafted his leadership and worked to set the foundations for a hybrid state in Misiones that fused Guaraní and Criollo traditions, highlighting the distinctive imprint of the frontier life. I lay out his understandings regarding authority and leadership, his relationship with followers, and the reception of his message by different stakeholders, in Misiones, Corrientes, and the Mesopotamia as a whole.

The historical experiences discussed and analyzed in these chapters – daily-life political strategies, local and regional interests and sources of authority, the claims of popular groups imbedded in different experiences – resulted in multilayered sovereignties. As these claims expanded, it became increasingly complicated to accommodate them. For example, despite opposition from Criollo commanders and against the Portuguese invasion, Andresito was successful in fusing his project of political autonomy with the aims of residents of Misiones, mostly of Indigenous ancestry. However, as he extended the reach of his influence and his aspirations of authority to what were considered Criollo landscapes, the fissures present in the *rioplatense* society became apparent and the long-standing prejudice against Indigenous peoples delimited a barrier that proved arduous to cross. His term as the *de facto* governor of Corrientes between 1818 and 1819 was met with outrage by at least some of the residents and revealed the

limits of the regional alliance.<sup>65</sup> Representatives of the Directory in Buenos Aires, which already rejected decentralized understanding of sovereignty, also opposed more inclusive notion of citizenship. The Portuguese invasion in different fronts turned out to be quite convenient to stop the spread of these ideals. For this reason, it was promoted by some of these representatives and found support among members of the Criollo elites. The need to stop the Portuguese advancement demanded constant economic contribution and fostered even more political engagement from popular groups wanting to defend their recently acquired rights. The conflict led the tenuous management of these multilayered sovereignties to crumble. Eventually, it brought about the capture of Andresito by the Portuguese in 1819, the end of the League and Artigas' exile to Paraguay in 1820. The federalist model in conception, though, lived on. Despite the contraction of political rights for popular groups, the significance of their support to specific ideas regarding sovereignty deeply impacted the revolutionary experience and shaped political systems that had an enduring existence in the Río de la Plata.

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<sup>65</sup> Manuel F. Mantilla, *Crónica Histórica de la Provincia de Corrientes* (Buenos Aires: Espiase y cía, 1928).

## **Chapter 1. The Río de la Plata's Littoral:**

### **Setting the Context for Political Change**

As the May Revolution and its aftermath unfolded, a significant wave of change took over the Río de la Plata. It is our aim in this dissertation to explore the significant political movements that spread over the territory, and particularly how popular groups participated in them, providing their own meanings to the debates over sources of power and authority. Despite this marked change that started in 1810, however, some elements of this society remained quite similar to those of colonial times. These elements greatly impacted the way society was shaped, relationships were constructed, and decisions were made. For this reason, to understand the period between 1810 and 1820, it is fundamental that we look back, to the world before that. In this chapter, I will present a broad picture of the Río de la Plata region, with a special focus on the Littoral area, whose name derives from the abundance of rivers in it - the Paraná, Paraguay, Uruguay, to name a few. Besides a part of Argentina, what was the Littoral in the past encompasses portions of what is today Uruguay, Paraguay, and Brazil. I will outline its main social, economic, and political characteristics to provide an account detailing who lived in the territory, how they organized themselves and how the Spanish colonial enterprise impacted it.

#### ***The Río de la Plata and the Spanish Colonial Enterprise***

The Río de la Plata region was one of the last areas explored by the Spaniards, who founded the city of Asunción del Paraguay, the first settlement in the region, in 1537. However, the exploitation of its resources would begin in the second half of that century, when the towns

of Santiago del Estero and the Royal City of Guayrá were founded.<sup>1</sup> Buenos Aires slowly acquired economic importance and eventually became the capital of a new viceroyalty in 1776. The city was first founded in 1536, but failed due to Indigenous resistance; the second foundation by Juan de Garay in 1580 proved more successful. Around the same period, other cities south of Asunción were founded - Santa Fe de la Vera Cruz in 1573 and San Juan de Vera de las Siete Corrientes in 1588. Both of these cities became central points of the so-called Littoral region, due to their proximity to the Paraná river.<sup>2</sup>

In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Governorate of the Río de la Plata was split in two, forming the new Governorate of Paraguay and the Governorate of Buenos Aires, with the latter responsible for administering the villages of Santa Fe and Corrientes. Little by little, Buenos Aires overtook Asunción in inhabitants and economic importance, as it was slowly integrated into the economy of trans-Atlantic trade. Given its location on the outskirts of the colony, at first, Buenos Aires suffered the restrictions imposed by the Spanish Crown regarding commerce. However, due to its strategic location close to the Portuguese colony of Brazil and its access to Potosí and Peruvian silver, Buenos Aires soon became a trading port connecting east and west, receiving goods such as iron, cloth, wine, and oil in exchange for precious metals, either legally - using special permits- or through contraband.<sup>3</sup> It is also in the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century that

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<sup>1</sup> Raúl Fradkin and Juan Carlos Garavaglia, *La Argentina Colonial. El Río de la Plata entre los siglos xvi y xix* (Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, 2009), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Juan Carlos Garavaglia, "The Crises and Transformations of Invaded Societies: The La Plata Basin (1535-1650)," in *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*, ed. Frank Salomon and Stuart B. Schwartz, vol. 3, South America 2 (Cambridge University Press, 1999): 7.

<sup>3</sup> Susan M. Socolow, *The merchants of Buenos Aires, 1778-1810: family and commerce* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 3.

Spain started to introduce slaves in increasing numbers.<sup>4</sup> The few Indigenous groups living south of the Paraná river, far from being docile, resisted conquest and would not be enslaved as a labor force. The Spanish Crown thus allowed Portuguese slave traders to enter the region bringing in Africans, fulfilling the need of working hands to explore the region's natural resources.

If, at first, the Buenos Aires economy depended on the Peruvian market and resources, starting in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, we can identify a slow but steady shift in the economic organization of the Río de la Plata.<sup>5</sup> The so-called Littoral started to emerge as a major player in this regional economy. The Peruvian market - although still important - slowly gave way to an economy facing the Atlantic Ocean. At first, the plains around Buenos Aires proved ideal for wheat production, attracting migrants from the northern areas of Santiago del Estero that stimulated population and economic growth. At the same time, cattle appeared as a potential commodity suitable to the region, integrating areas such as the Banda Oriental (the East bank of the Uruguay River), Entre Ríos, Corrientes, and Santa Fe into a network of goods and people. Initially, it was responsible for "a few and erratic exports," but after 1750, land use for cattle ranching became more intensive when the Southern areas were incorporated.<sup>6</sup>

Buenos Aires' geographical location, while giving the city an excellent position to expand economically through its port and fertile plains, also made it an easy target for other European powers seeking to extend their influence in the region, especially the Portuguese and the British. Thus, the Spanish Crown decided that Buenos Aires should receive a share of the

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<sup>4</sup> During the 16<sup>th</sup> century 2,749 slaves legally entered the Río de la Plata. In the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century that number increased almost tenfold, with 25,624 slaves arriving to territory, according to the Slave Voyages Database (accessed on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Fradkin and Garavaglia, *La Argentina Colonial*, 84.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Amaral, "Rural Production and Labour in Late Colonial Buenos Aires," in *Journal of Latin American Studies* 19, n. 2 (Nov., 1987): 238.



Royal *situado*<sup>7</sup> (a subsidy from the richer Andean region) to create a military garrison, while at the same time bringing in soldiers to fortify the region. This meant an even greater rise in the town's population and more significant participation in the colonial structure. Hence, because of its function as a port to Atlantic commerce, its economic production and its location—constantly under risk, but also strategic for the frontier defense—Buenos Aires had become the primary urban center in the area, followed by Asunción de Paraguay and Córdoba, toward the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup>

By the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Buenos Aires' share of the *situado* had skyrocketed, reaching almost 80% of totals distributed to the region.<sup>9</sup> The influx of Potosí's silver enabled an even greater participation in the slave trade. Its location was also a privileged one with respect to the expansion of economic activity that would serve as fuel for the development of the region: contraband. While the Spanish empire officials complained about the silver smuggled out through the Río de la Plata, the revenue it provided for Buenos Aires inhabitants also sustained the Spanish Crown's bureaucratic institutions. With time, these bureaucrats and the local merchant elite would develop strong family ties to one another, and the sale of offices became a common way of becoming part the colonial body.<sup>10</sup> This strong trade network of both legal and illegal activities supported the region's development and paid for a significant part of its

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<sup>7</sup> The "Real Situado" was an annual allowance in silver from the Crown used to protect the frontier lands. Martín L. E. Wasserman, "Real Situado y gestión patrimonial del recurso fiscal. Remesas para la defensa del puerto de Buenos Aires en el siglo XVII." In *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* [online], accessed on Feb 27<sup>th</sup> 2017. <http://nuevomundo.revues.org/69317>

<sup>8</sup> Fradkin and Garavaglia, *La Argentina Colonial*, 64.

<sup>9</sup> Wasserman, "Real Situado," 20.

<sup>10</sup> Zacarías Moutoukias, "Gobierno y sociedad en el Tucumán y el Río de la Plata, 1550-1800," in *Nueva historia argentina.*, ed. Enrique Tandeter, vol. 2 (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2000), 377-378. See also Susan Socolow, *The Bureaucrats of Buenos Aires, 1769-1810: Amor Al Real Servicio* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 243-48.

administrative structure, thus sparing the Spanish Crown from having to support a bureaucratic body all on its own.<sup>11</sup>

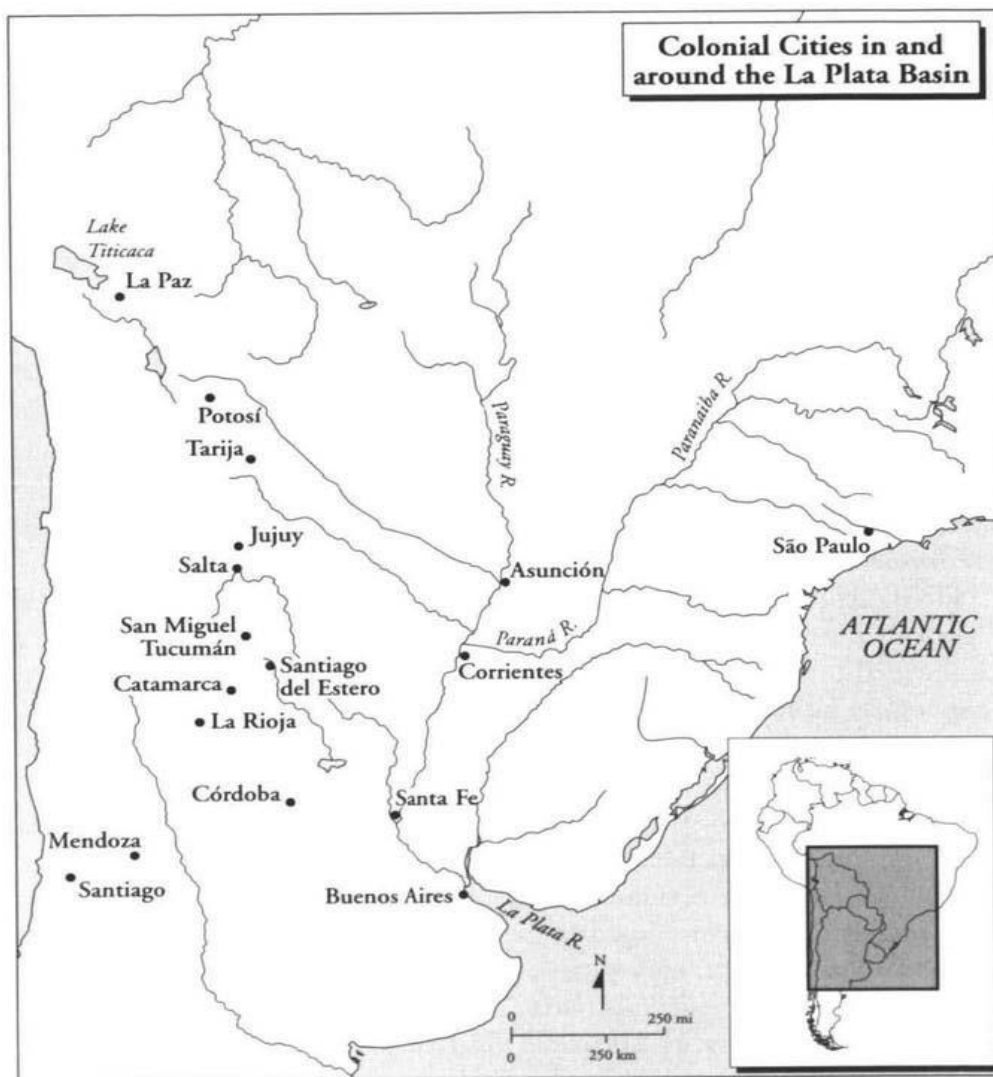


Figure 1. Colonial Cities in and around the Plata Basin<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Zacarías Moutoukias, *Contrabando y control colonial en el siglo XVII. Buenos Aires, el Atlántico y el espacio peruano* (Buenos Aires, CEAL, 1988).

<sup>12</sup> Source: Adapted from Garavaglia, "The Crises and Transformations of Invaded Societies," 6.

### **The Social Composition of the Río de la Plata in the Colonial Era**

Starting in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, society and social relationships in the Río de la Plata were conformed from different ethnic groups who were divided along constructed racial lines. Many of the newcomers that were previously excluded from the upper classes in Spain, saw in the New World an opportunity for social mobility and to obtain titles of nobility and distinction. The vast territory to be occupied and its immeasurable natural resources proved an excellent magnet for those who wished to acquire through force what was denied to them by birth. When establishing the first settlements in the New World, the colonizers carried with them notions of social and racial distinctions that defined everyday life in the Iberian Peninsula. Placing themselves on the opposite side of the social hierarchy in relation to Indigenous peoples, ethnic and racial divisions would soon gain new meanings through inter-ethnic relationships. They would be further complicated by the arrival of African slaves.

In the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, the discovery of silver in Potosí mobilized the southern side of the Spanish Colonial Empire. The extraction required a vast amount of resources from the surrounding areas. Quito, Lima, Cuzco, Charcas, Tucumán, and the Río de la Plata were involved in feeding and clothing men and transporting the metal.<sup>13</sup> Opportunities in mining, agriculture, cattle ranching and manufacture opened up for Spaniards, who migrated in considerable numbers in search of upward social mobility. These first settlers and their descendants formed the basis of the Spanish and Criollo society in the area. If the first generations to arrive to the region generally accepted forms of racial mixing, or *mestizaje*, soon only Spaniards and a handful of those considered “pure” descendants would be able to occupy

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<sup>13</sup> Ana María Presta, “La Sociedad Colonial: Raza, etnicidad, clase y género. Siglos XVI y XVII,” in *Nueva Historia Argentina*, ed. Enrique Tandeter, vol. 2, 63.

the top bureaucratic jobs. To produce a stable society, the Spanish Crown encouraged the arrival of Iberian women, who were brought to the Americas in increasing numbers throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup> Honorifics such as “*Don*” (or “sir”) were incorporated into daily life, granting to those who had shown merit a form of social distinction for their personal achievements.

The heavy work in the mines and fields depended mostly on natives that inhabited the region. Indigenous groups, whose lives only merged with the conquistadors and the first Spanish settlers when their labor was being extracted, were kept separate from the social worlds of the Europeans. The Spanish Crown was keen to draw a strict distinction between the Republic of Spaniards and the Republic of Indians, organizing the latter as a mass of people whose aboriginal hierarchies were only preserved should it benefit conquerors and settlers. Indigenous peoples were placed in reductions, also called *pueblos de indios*, where they were segregated from the rest of the territory. If, before conquest, land was seen as a place of solidarity where production was shared, with the new colonial administrative system in place, *corregidores*, captains, and even some Indigenous leaders allied with the Spaniards ruined these relationships of cooperation and reciprocity among communities.<sup>15</sup> Part of the Inka kinship system was preserved, however, in order to organize labor extraction. Thus, for the purposes of paying tribute and serving as labor force, the Indigenous peoples in the southern territory of the Spanish Empire were divided among *originarios* (from the land), *forasteros* (from outside the land), and *yanaconas* (those who had left their family clans). Many Indians migrated to escape this system of forced labor. Many also learned to use the judicial system to their benefit, petitioning authorities regarding land and

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<sup>14</sup> Susan M. Socolow, *The Women of Colonial Latina America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 61.

<sup>15</sup> Presta, “La Sociedad Colonial,” 75.

water rights. As mentioned before, some *curacas*, or indigenous chiefs, functioned as links between settlers and their subjects. As such, they were able to preserve their authority in the indigenous world while also enjoying social mobility in the Spanish world - what Steve Stern has called “resistant adaptation” to colonial rule.<sup>16</sup>

In spite of the vast oppression, many Indigenous groups were able to maintain their cultural practices, thanks especially to the work of Indigenous women who preserved clothing, food, musical, and religious traditions.<sup>17</sup> In the Río de la Plata, contact with Indigenous groups varied according to geographic location. The northwest region near Jujuy, Salta, and Cuyo (Mendoza) maintained access to an indigenous workforce linked to the Upper Peru region, despite continuous resistance in some areas.<sup>18</sup> In the Littoral, Indigenous groups had either been incorporated into Jesuit and Franciscan reductions, participating actively in yerba mate production, or resisted Spanish penetration and were scattered throughout the region.<sup>19</sup>

Another ethnic group, slowly incorporated into the colonial world, were the Africans and their descendants, brought to the Americas as slaves by the different empires occupying the continent. Their role in the Spanish world was to replace the labor force and do the work that Indigenous groups could not, or were no longer allowed to perform, following the New Laws.<sup>20</sup> In the Río de la Plata during the early colonial period, the lack of Indigenous groups subject to

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<sup>16</sup> For the Andean region and adaptation of Indigenous elites into the Spanish world, see Steve J. Stern, *Peru's Indian Peoples and the Challenge of Spanish Conquest: Huamanga to 1640* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982); Karen Spalding, *Indian rural society in colonial Peru: the example of Huarochirí* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984).

<sup>17</sup> Presta, “La Sociedad Colonial,” 77.

<sup>18</sup> Today the provinces of Salta, Tucumán, Santiago del Estero, Catamarca, La Rioja, Córdoba, San Luis, Mendoza, and San Juan.

<sup>19</sup> Silvia Mallo, “Negros y mulatos rioplatenses viviendo en libertad,” in Rina Cáceres Gómez, *Rutas de la esclavitud en África y América Latina* (San José, C. R.: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 2001), 309-310.

<sup>20</sup> Presta, “La Sociedad Colonial,” 80.

the *encomiendas* made slave labor vital to the first conquistadors.<sup>21</sup> In Buenos Aires, slaves were mostly involved in urban labor. According to Lyman Johnson, during the late colonial period slaves were fundamental to the local economy, taking part in artisan manufacture and trade, small retail, and distribution of basic staples around the city, becoming sometimes the source of income to their masters.<sup>22</sup> Throughout the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Africans and their descendants living in Buenos Aires, whether enslaved or freed, were approximately 30% of the total population, a percentage that stresses their importance in the local economy and participation in the city's everyday life.<sup>23</sup> Studies of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century have shown that landowners relied heavily on slave labor in the Buenos Aires *campana* (countryside), whether to provide wheat and live cattle to the local markets or in export-oriented estancias.<sup>24</sup> The provinces that bordered the Uruguay and Paraná rivers also received their share of slave laborers, although in lesser numbers. Available numbers estimate that in Corrientes the population of African descendants (enslaved and free) was around 11.6% in 1778.<sup>25</sup>

Within colonial society the group of those “in-between,” the *castas*, grew as colonization advanced. They originated from Spanish, Indigenous and African interracial mixing, and the social place of castas was determined mainly by their skin color and place of origin. Castas

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<sup>21</sup> Marta Beatriz Goldberg, “Los africanos de Buenos Aires, 1750-1880”, in Rina Cáceres Gómez, *Rutas de la esclavitud en África y América Latina* (San José, C. R.: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 200), 271.

<sup>22</sup> Lyman L Johnson, *Workshop of revolution: plebeian Buenos Aires and the Atlantic world, 1776-1810* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011), 38.

<sup>23</sup> George Reid Andrews, *Los afroargentinos de Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 1989), 81 (cuadro 5.1).

<sup>24</sup> Juan Carlos Garavaglia, “Los labradores de San Isidro (siglos XVIII – XIX),” in *Desarrollo Económico*, Vol. 32, No. 128, (Jan. - Mar., 1993): 513-542 Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3467176> Accessed: 01/05/2008 p. 537; Amaral, “Rural Production and Labour.”

<sup>25</sup> Mallo, “Negros y mulatos rioplatenses,” 313.

would take part in the Spanish American world, working as peons on estancias in rural areas<sup>26</sup> and participating in guilds and *cofradías* alongside Indigenous natives and slaves,<sup>27</sup> sometimes also taking on small jobs around town. According to Lyman Johnson, casta migrants, African slaves and freed blacks represented around 35% of Buenos Aires population and an even larger portion in small towns in the campaña.<sup>28</sup>

### **Indigenous Resistance and the Frontier of Colonization**

If the Spanish colonies flourished in the Southern Cone, it was not without resistance from the Indigenous groups that inhabited the region. Spaniards struggled for almost two centuries to conquer specific territories close to the Río de la Plata, creating a “frontier” between what had been occupied and what was yet to be conquered. In this frontier zone, ethnic and economic interaction occurred as different worldviews collided, giving space to social and cultural practices diverse from those found either in the colonial centers or the indigenous world. As Fradkin and Garavaglia have noted, this was an “entirely mestizo system,” a “transitional space.”<sup>29</sup>

Many different Indigenous groups occupied the territory (see figure 2 below). Since the first settlement attempts of the Chaco region in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Spaniards had to face the challenge of negotiating with semi-nomadic societies that refused to accept European rule. At first, the Crown managed to build alliances with the natives, who used them as an advantage to

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<sup>26</sup> Amaral, “Rural Production and Labour,” 260.

<sup>27</sup> Johnson, *Workshop*, 10.

<sup>28</sup> Johnson, *Workshop*, 19.

<sup>29</sup> Fradkin and Garavaglia, *La Argentina Colonial*, 112.

fight local enemies, such as the well-known pact with the “Carios of Lambaré” in Paraguay. Soon, however, these pacts became “sharply asymmetrical relationship[s]” that involved violence to enforce and a clear demonstration of power by the Spanish.<sup>30</sup> This violence was met with a refusal to obey the pact, and organized resistance, like the movement led by Shaman Overa, “the Resplendent” in the latter part of the 1570s, was brutally repressed.

After initial contact between Indigenous groups and settlers, religious regular orders began to settle in the region. Franciscans were the first ones to arrive, founding the first resettlement villages of converted Indians, known as *reducciones*, on Guarani land, east of the Paraguay river. They would slowly transform Indigenous groups’ social organization, while evangelizing them and exploiting their work force.<sup>31</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Jesuits arrived in Paraguay, establishing one of the stronger relationships between missionaries and Indigenous groups in the colonial world. On one side, the Guarani populations were pressured by Spanish settlers who wanted to extract their labor. On the other, Portuguese *bandeirantes* raided their villages and enslaved their people, in attempts to expand the Portuguese territory and to provide arms to propel the Portuguese enterprise. In addition, the Guarani, who were sedentary and harvested corn, manioc, and sweet potato, faced constant invasions by war-like Indigenous groups that lived in the area.<sup>32</sup> In this context, the Jesuit reductions seemed like the least harmful alternative for them.<sup>33</sup> Seeking material benefits, the Guarani accepted the mission.<sup>34</sup> The Jesuit

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<sup>30</sup> Garavaglia, “The Crises and Transformations,” 9.

<sup>31</sup> Garavaglia, “The Crises and Transformations,” 18.

<sup>32</sup> Silvia Palomeque, “El Mundo Indígena. Siglos XVI-XVIII” in *Nueva Historia Argentina*, vol. 2, ed. Tandeter, 101.

<sup>33</sup> Garavaglia, “The Crises and Transformations,” 22.

<sup>34</sup> James Saeger, “Warfare, Reorganization, and Readaptation at the Margins of Spanish Rule – The Chaco and Paraguay (1573–1882),” in Salomon and Schwartz, 274.



reductions followed a paternalistic model, with priests replacing Indigenous leaders as authority figures. They worked to reestablish reciprocity bonds. The rhetoric of evangelization was solidified, and religion was used as an ideological and political tool to justify submission.<sup>35</sup> The Society of Jesus founded more than 25 reductions that exerted social control, extracted a labor force, deepened the colonization process, and protected the frontiers from Portuguese hands, while providing relative security to the Guaraní.<sup>36</sup> As we can see, the relationship amongst the different groups in the frontier zone could be occasionally tense, but also mutually beneficial. Settlers and natives alike saw the opportunity to use the figure of the “other” to build alliances and to profit economically. Therefore, in the Chaco frontier, the historic animosity between the Guaraní and the Guaycuru was used to the advantage of both the Portuguese and Spanish empires.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, Indigenous groups sided with Europeans in order to gain a more advantageous position in relation to local enemies.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Fradkin and Garavaglia, *La Argentina Colonial*, 53.

<sup>36</sup> For further reading about the relationship between the Guaraní and the Jesuits, see Barbara Ganson, *The Guaraní Under Spanish rule in the Río de la Plata* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), and Julia J. S. Sarreal, *The Guaraní and Their Missions: A Socioeconomic History* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014).

<sup>37</sup> The Guaycuru language family included various Indigenous groups that inhabited the southern and central Chaco plains and the Paraguay River: Toba, Abipon, Mocoví, Pilaga, Payagua, Guasarapo, and Egiyuayegi-Mbaya. Robin Wright and Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, “Destruction, resistance, and transformation – Southern, Coastal, and Northern Brazil (1580-1890)” in Salomon and Schwartz, 324.

<sup>38</sup> Wright and Carneiro da Cunha, “Destruction, resistance, and transformation,” 296.

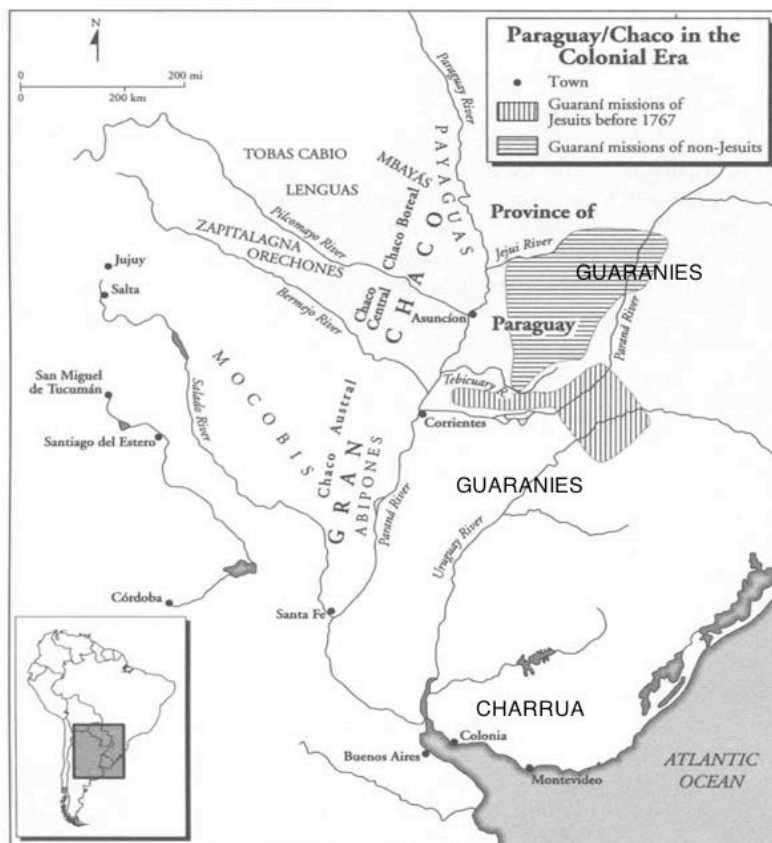


Figure 2. Paraguay / Chaco in the Colonial Era <sup>39</sup>

The Chaco area west of the Paraguay river remained essentially unapproachable to the Spaniards throughout the colonial period and was used as a safe haven by Indigenous peoples running away from other areas. At different moments, various Indigenous groups such as the Mocovies and Abipons reached deals with the Spaniards, profiting from seasonally inhabiting the Jesuit missions.<sup>40</sup> The Guaycuruan people also incorporated European technologies and customs into their culture, enabling them to continually deter Spanish penetration. Horse riding made their available territory wider, and their escape faster and more secure. Iron knives and arrow and

<sup>39</sup> Source: Adapted from Saeger, "Warfare, Reorganization," 259.

<sup>40</sup> Fradkin and Garavaglia, *La Argentina Colonial*, 118.

lance points slowly made their way into use in their settlements, strengthening their military and hunting proficiency, while consequently aiding in their ability to resist.<sup>41</sup>

The history of the “frontier” region is one of constant conflicts within the Spanish colonial enterprise, deriving from the competing interests of Spanish settlers, Indigenous peoples, and the Church. If the latter aimed at evangelization, the first sought to control the native population to extract their labor in those areas where colonization had been more successful. Paraguay’s soil was filled with *Ilex paraguarienses*, also known as yerba mate, a tree whose leaves provided a caffeinated infusion widely consumed by the Guaraní. Yerba mate soon became a staple in the local diet, and its leaf extraction proved to be a lucrative business for settlers and Jesuits alike, who constantly fought over the control of knowledgeable indigenous hands that could collect them. At different moments, these clashes turned into rebellions, such as the ones that took place between 1720 and 1735, when Spanish settlers disputed missionary power, thereby shaking the region both economically and politically.<sup>42</sup> Indigenous groups as well became protagonists in these conflicts. In 1756, the Guaraní War contested the Treaty of Madrid and the forced reallocation of several missions. The bloody conflict, that opposed the Guaraní groups of the Jesuits reductions to a joint Portuguese and Spanish army, showed the Spanish Crown officials that Indigenous groups could actively participate in the political life of the region to defend their own interests, even if meant great loss of life.<sup>43</sup> Resistance also took the form of flight. After the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1767, many Guaraní families and

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<sup>41</sup> Saeger, “Warfare, Reorganization,” 260.

<sup>42</sup> Fradkin and Garavaglia, *La Argentina Colonial*, 97.

<sup>43</sup> Population numbers for the seven missions declined from 29,000 in the beginning of the war to 14,284, according to a 1756 census. Robert H. Jackson, *Missions and the frontiers of Spanish America: A comparative study of the impact of environmental, economic, political, and socio-cultural variations on the missions in the Río de la Plata Region and on the Northern Frontier of New Spain* (Scottsdale: Pentacle Press, 2005), 262.

individuals decided to leave the missions, either moving to the woods or migrating to towns and the countryside in the Río de la Plata and southern Brazil, where they occupied jobs in rural and urban areas.<sup>44</sup> At least in these moments, their resistance was held mainly within the colonial system, much as a result of discontent with native leaders, local instability due to constant attacks from other groups, and consequent economic decline. Several missions, however, survived into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and at different times the Guaraní used their military knowledge to partake in the political disputes sweeping through the territory.

### ***Transatlantic Connections: Enlightenment in the Río de la Plata***

The 18<sup>th</sup> century brought significant changes not only to the Río de la Plata, but to the Spanish colonial world as a whole. After the Spanish War of Succession, ended in 1713, the Habsburgs were replaced by the Bourbons as the reigning dynasty in Spain. At the core of their initiatives, the Bourbon kings took measures to transform the Crown's administration. Philip V attempted to centralize government and counter the decline of Spanish power in Europe. He increased the numbers of the armed forces and instituted mercantilism to protect the local economy from competition. His son, King Ferdinand VI, concentrated his efforts on strengthening internal politics, but his reign was short-lived. Ferdinand VI's successor and half-brother, Charles III, was responsible for implementing the most radical reforms that the Spanish colonies would ever experience, sparking mixed reactions throughout the territory. These changes became known as Bourbon Reforms.

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<sup>44</sup> Ganson, *The Guaraní Under Spanish rule*, 136.

## The Bourbon Reforms

Inspired by Enlightenment ideas sweeping throughout Europe, King Charles III and his advisors sought to dramatically change the colonial society and economy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>45</sup> Their objective was to stimulate economic, commercial, and fiscal development, as well as to bring efficiency to the administration. This meant that imperial control ought to be increased to oversee their subjects. The administrative changes imposed over decades included the ban on Criollos, Spanish descendants born in the Americas, serving in bureaucratic positions and territorial restructuring, with the creation of new viceroyalties and the system of *intendencias* that replaced the *corregimientos*. The new “Decree of Free Trade,” imposed by the British, no longer restricted commerce to only four ports in Spanish America. Now, ports could trade directly with each other and other European ports. The system of *intendencias* reorganized and increased revenue collections, installing officials directly connected to the monarchy. In order to secure control over the territory, the army force, which was almost nonexistent, had to also be intensified, and money from the new taxes was put towards it. Initially, soldiers arrived directly from the Iberian Peninsula, but soon locals filled most positions, opening up the possibility of social mobility through the participation in militias. The Crown also sought to increase control over the Church, whose influence in America had been constantly rising. Consequently, the Society of Jesus was expelled in 1767. It had been the most important missionary order in the colony and gathered strong support from Indigenous groups in some areas.

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<sup>45</sup> For a thorough account of the Bourbon Reforms, see Mark Burkholder and D. S. Chandler, *From impotence to authority: the Spanish Crown and the American audiencias, 1687-1808*, (Columbia & London: University of Missouri Press, 1977).

In 1776, as a result of these reforms, the Crown transformed Buenos Aires into the capital of the newly created viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata. It divided the large viceroyalty of Perú into three entities: New Granada, Perú, and Buenos Aires. A Real Audiencia, a court of appeals, was also established in 1783. If the Bourbon reforms were met with resistance in places such as New Spain and Peru, in the Río de la Plata it meant a new opportunity to integrate the colonial economy. In 1778, the approval of the Decree of Free Trade officially inserted the port city into the Atlantic economy. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Littoral region as a whole solidified its place as a major exporting power, attracting migrants from various areas in an ever-growing economy based on cattle products.<sup>46</sup> At first, production relied on *vaquerías*. These expeditions to hunt wild cattle were later replaced by *estancias*, the cattle-breeding ranches that would profoundly change the social structure throughout the region.

Merchants from various Spanish kingdoms, as well as France, Italy and England, arrived in large numbers, and three commercial corridors converged in Buenos Aires. The first one connected Buenos Aires to the Banda Oriental, Entre Ríos and Montevideo areas through the Uruguay River; the second one moved up and down the Paraná River, providing goods to and from Santa Fe, Corrientes and Asunción; and the third one went all the way up to the Potosí and Upper Peru markets, passing by Córdoba, Santiago del Estero, Tucumán, Salta and Jujuy.<sup>47</sup> Alongside this development fueled by local production, the army and a freshly installed bureaucracy helped boost the inflow of resources. The region experienced steady progress,

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<sup>46</sup> Fradkin and Garavaglia, *La Argentina Colonial*, 38.

<sup>47</sup> Socolow, *The merchants of Buenos Aires*, 7-8.

consolidating its place within the greater Spanish colonial economy and ranking fourth among the Spanish colonies in exports to Europe.<sup>48</sup>

The economic transformations that brought people from the northern areas of Santiago del Estero and Tucuman in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century would also impact the social composition of the territory. The colonial society that was established in the Río de la Plata followed the characteristics of most of the Spanish world, with a rigid class hierarchy, based on racial and ethnic divisions that permeated every aspect of life. Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Buenos Aires and the Littoral region grew exponentially. Estimates mark the population of the city of Buenos Aires at about 5,000 inhabitants in the beginning of the century and about 70,000 by 1810.<sup>49</sup> Besides natural population growth, this increase was the result of immigration from Europe and the interior, as well as the increased number of arriving slaves.<sup>50</sup> The exact moment when population growth picked up is still under historiographical dispute, but it surely took place before the Viceroyalty was created, as the city became a regional center. Thus, if in the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Buenos Aires population was scarce, it grew dramatically due to legal and illegal trade, administrative and military activity, internal and external migration, and

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<sup>48</sup> Fradkin and Garavaglia, *La Argentina Colonial*, 89.

<sup>49</sup> Martín Cuesta, “Evolución de la población y estructura ocupacional de Buenos Aires, 1700-1810” in *Papeles de Población* 49 (July-September 2006): 212. The 1810 census counts 42,872 souls living in Buenos Aires in the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Using crude birthrate statistics, Lyman Johnson was able to calculate a much more realistic population, of 76,450 inhabitants by 1810. Johnson, *Workshop*, 30.

<sup>50</sup> For full numbers, see the following: Louisa Schell Hoberman and Susan Migden Socolow, *Cities & society in colonial Latin America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press in association with the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University, 1986); Marisa Díaz, “Las migraciones internas a la ciudad de Buenos Aires, 1744-1810,” in *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana ‘Dr. Emilio Ravignani’*, Tercera serie, n. 17; Judith Farberman, “De las ‘provincias de arriba’. Labradores y jornaleros del interior en la campaña porteña 1726-1815”, in *Actas XVI Jornadas de Historia Económica Argentina* (1999); Lyman Johnson, “Estimaciones de población de la ciudad de Buenos Aires 1744-1810”, in *Desarrollo Económico*, vol. 19, núm. 73 (April- June, 1979); Lyman Johnson and Susan M. Socolow, “Población y espacio en el Buenos Aires del siglo XVIII”, in *Desarrollo Económico*, vol. 20, núm. 79 (1980).

the growing arrival of slaves - Afro-Argentines accounted for about 30% of the city's population by 1810.<sup>51</sup> Population growth would position the city as a thriving commercial and administrative center that attracted an ever-growing population whose economy was facing the Atlantic world more than ever before.

### **The British Invasions**

As the 18<sup>th</sup> century unfolded, Europe was swept by a wave of revolutionary ideals that sought to bring significant continental changes in political authority and sovereignty. It also created spaces for strong competition between European powers that incurred in wars. Early on in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Río de la Plata suffered as a result of the impact of these disputes.<sup>52</sup> In 1806 and 1807, the British Empire decided to take a chance and invade both the ports of Buenos Aires and Montevideo. They first arrived in Buenos Aires in 1806 and were received by an ineffective viceroy, Marquis of Sobremonte, who, believing Montevideo would be the city attacked, had previously dispatched the local troops to the other side of the river. Finding the city unguarded, Sobremonte's only strategy was to run off into the interior, seeking to safeguard the capital's treasury from British hands. His inability to organize a defense of the city opened up space for the rise of local leaders, who had no choice but to organize resistance. One particular authority figure rose to the occasion, Santiago de Liniers, a Frenchman working for the Spanish government. He was soon made a military commander and later on the new Viceroy. Recalling troops back from Montevideo and organizing volunteer militias, Liniers was able to defeat the

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<sup>51</sup> George Reid Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires, 1800-1900* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), 66.

<sup>52</sup> José Carlos Chiaramonte, *Ensayos sobre la ilustración argentina* (Paraná: Universidad Nacional del Litoral, 1962).



invaders and forced the British troops to exit the port.<sup>53</sup> A year later, the British returned, this time landing in Montevideo, which they successfully occupied for seven months. Upon attempting to conquer Buenos Aires for a second time, they were once again defeated by the local troops and finally withdrew their forces from the region.

The need to organize resistance and fight against the British invasion drove locals to mobilize politically and militarily. When the British arrived, Criollos were left to fend for themselves, demonstrating the inability of the Spanish Crown to protect its overseas territory in a time of need. This incident called into question the colonial order. The experience of the British invasions led to the development of a feeling of self-determination in the Río de la Plata that drove the local population to engage politically, which altered the power configuration in the region. New liberal ideals also crossed the Atlantic Ocean on British vessels, adding to the array of political possibilities for the region.<sup>54</sup> The individuals organizing the improvised military forces, especially the Regiment of Patricians and *Húsares*, became the new leaders who would govern and decide the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata's future. The commercial and bureaucratic elite solidified their place as the local power base. Criollos increasingly expressed their views and participated in the public sphere as political and military leaders.<sup>55</sup> Popular

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<sup>53</sup> According to Alejandro Rabinovich's categorization of the military in the Río de la Plata, the militias belonged to the "sporadic mobilization" kind, as opposed to the troops that were "permanently mobilized". This latter kind would be less frequent in the territory until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while the former could assume different forms, such as regulated militias (mandatory), urban, civic, passive, active, frontier, volunteer, etc... They would have a crucial participation during revolutionary times. See Alejandro Rabinovich, "La Militarización del Río de la Plata, 1810-1820. Elementos cuantitativos y conceptuales para un análisis," in *V Jornadas de Historia Económica de Asociación Uruguaya de Historia Económica* (Montevideo, 2011); Emilio Fabián Harari, "La justicia militar y los milicianos durante la primera década revolucionaria en la campaña de Buenos Aires (1810-1820)" in *Naveg@mérica* 12 P. 2. Revista electrónica (2014).

<sup>54</sup> When in Montevideo, the British troops took to the press to communicate their ideas of economic and political freedom, founding a periodical called *The Southern Star*.

<sup>55</sup> Noemi Goldman, *Nueva Historia Argentina 3: Revolución, República, Confederación (1806-1852)* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1998), 34.

groups too used this opportunity for social ascension: joining the much-needed armed forces granted a steady income and a transference of financial resources from the Spanish Crown to the popular ranks of society. An increasingly militarized society took form, deeply influencing the political life of the region and the formation of the future nation-states that emerged in the Río de la Plata during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>56</sup>

### **Napoleonic Invasion of Spain**

If the colonies had to fight on their own to defend the territory, it was, in part, due to the fact that Spain was involved as an ally of France in other conflicts that were drawing away its resources. The loss of most of Spain's armada at Trafalgar in 1805 was emblematic of this period. The year 1808 started with difficulties for the Spanish Crown, which was involved in internal disputes between the King Charles IV, his eldest son Ferdinand, the First Minister Manuel Godoy, and Queen Maria Luisa. Taking advantage of this moment, Ferdinand, heir of the throne, created an image of himself as a restorer of the order, gaining support from many of his father's political opponents.<sup>57</sup> In March, he finally convinced his father to abdicate the throne, and he soon became Ferdinand VII. Napoleon, who had thus far been an ally of the Spanish Crown, invited both father and son to Bayonne and forced them both to abdicate the throne, placing his brother Joseph Bonaparte on the throne as King of Spain. Following the appointment of Joseph Bonaparte, Spain entered a period of turmoil, with people on the streets, be them liberals, conservatives, fighting what they considered a French invasion.

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<sup>56</sup> See Tulio Halperin Donghi, *Revolución y guerra. Formación de una élite dirigente en la Argentina Criolla* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1979).

<sup>57</sup> José Claudio Williman and Carlos Panizza Pons, *La Banda Oriental en la lucha de los imperios: 1503-1810*, vol. 1 (Montevideo: Banda Oriental, 1977), 163.

In order to organize resistance, the Spaniards formed Provincial Juntas, led by the Junta of Seville—the Supreme Central and Governing Junta of the Kingdom. The Junta was divided between liberals, regalists, and a small number of “Americans”, who debated several models of government.<sup>58</sup> Liberal ideas were thus starting to influence the substitute government. The Central Junta was recognized by the territories overseas, but its legitimacy was questioned for being composed exclusively of peninsular delegates. Soon, the debate to decide whether to convoke representatives from the Spanish Americas gained momentum and by January of 1809, a decree declared that the American territory was an integral part of the Spanish Empire rather than a colony, and that *Americanos* should elect representatives for the Cortes.

Montevideo anticipated resistance, and in September of 1808 the city’s governor Francisco Javier de Elío led the creation of a local junta to reject the French occupation and safeguard Ferdinand VII’s authority over the territory. It also sought to fight the influence of liberal ideas brought by the French.<sup>59</sup> In this context, Montevideo leaders questioned Santiago de Liniers’ authority because of his French ancestry, and Buenos Aires’ desire to pledge alliance to the deposed King. On the other side of the river, the Viceroyalty’s capital felt threatened by Montevideo’s growing influence over the region. The Royal Audience understood that the creation of the junta was an assault on the territory’s integrity and ordered its extinction.

Montevideo resisted, but a new viceroy, Baltasar Hidalgo de Cisneros, arrived to declare the end of the first Hispanic American Junta. Despite its dismantlement, the existence of the

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<sup>58</sup> Ignacio Fernández Sarasola, “La constitución española de 1812 y su proyección europea e iberoamericana,” in *Fundamentos: Cuadernos monográficos de teoría del estado, derecho público e historia constitucional* 2 (2000): 359-457.

<sup>59</sup> Edmundo M. Narancio, *La independencia de Uruguay* (Madrid : MAPFRE, 1992), 56.

Montevideo junta had heightened the possibility of regional conflict and commercial rivalry between the cities on each shore of the Río de la Plata.

In Europe, the Napoleonic forces kept advancing in Iberia and occupying territory. In the end of January, 1810, the Supreme Central Junta was dissolved and replaced by The Council of Regency of Spain and the Indies, that assumed the power void left by Ferdinand VII. One of the main questions of the period was whether the American colonies were obligated to respect the Council's authority. Behind this uncertainty was the argument of retroversion of sovereignty, which asserted that power would be conceded to the King by the people. However, if the King were to be absent, the people and *pueblos* recovered authority and could rule themselves.<sup>60</sup> The consolidation of this understanding in the Pact of Subjection (*pactum subjectionis*) sparked a series of movements around the American continent rejecting the authority of the Council of Regency while promoting the creation of local juntas to relocate power. According to José Carlos Chiaramonte, these first movements were characterized by the need to “neutralize peninsular pretensions” rather than challenge the Spanish monarchy.<sup>61</sup>

The news about the fall of the Supreme Central Junta arrived in Buenos Aires. Following the idea of locally preserving the King's rights, the local elite mobilized to form an autonomous local junta. Wishing to justify its existence, Mariano Moreno, a Criollo lawyer who had been influenced by Enlightened ideas, explained the situation: “on one hand we have a nation with all

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<sup>60</sup> The debate about the origin of sovereignty was one that surrounded the intellectual life and revolutionary movements in Europe and America. José Carlos Chiaramonte has written extensively about this matter regarding the Río de la Plata. Some of his publications include “La cuestión de la soberanía en la genesis y constitución del Estado argentino” in *Revista Electrónica de Historia Constitucional N. 2* (June 2011); *Nación y Estado en Iberoamérica. El lenguaje político en tiempos de las independencias* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2004); “Autonomía e Independencia En El Río De La Plata, 1808-1810” in *Historia Mexicana*, vol. 58, no. 1 (2008): 325–368.

<sup>61</sup> About the Juntista movement and how it has been treated by the historiography, see Chiaramonte, “Autonomía e independencia en el Río de la Plata.”

of its rights, and on the other a King with the plenitude of his, who is unable to work on behalf of the happiness of the society.” “If this society’s happiness is compromised because it lacks a constitution previously inexistent and that its King cannot provide”, then the solution was to act to protect the King’s interest by creating a legitimate government.<sup>62</sup>

### **The May Revolution and the Primera Junta**

During May of 1810, Buenos Aires decided to form their own junta. At first, the junta, under the leadership of Viceroy Cisneros, was subject to the Cabildo’s power. However, the rising Criollo elite soon rejected and repealed it in order to form a new junta, which was recognized by the civil, ecclesiastic and military authorities. The *Primera Junta*’s main goal was to maintain the “representation of the monarch’s sovereignty” while he was under arrest. After the establishment of the Primera Junta, the first local government to exclude Peninsular authorities, representatives in Buenos Aires worked extensively to gather support from the other towns and cities that composed the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata. They utilized its status as the regional capital to make decisions that extended throughout the whole region.

By December of 1810, after convoking the main pueblos to participate, a Junta Grande was formed with representatives from various parts of the territory. Their first action was to ask for the creation of multiple local juntas in the provinces, that should report to the Junta Grande.<sup>63</sup> The idea faced resistance from some areas, such as Asunción and the Intendancy of Paraguay, Montevideo, Córdoba and the Upper Perú, which were still willing to safeguard the Crown’s

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<sup>62</sup> Cited in Edberto Oscar Acevedo, *La independència de Argentina*. (Madrid: MAPFRE, 1992), 87.

<sup>63</sup> The Buenos Aires Audiency had four intendencies: Buenos Aires, Salta, Córdoba, and Paraguay, and two Governorates, Misiones and Montevideo.

rights. In attempts to organize resistance, Francisco Javier de Elío, who had formed the first junta in Montevideo, transferred the Crown's authority to that city, declared himself the new viceroy, and condemned the Junta of Buenos Aires' members as rebels and traitors. War became imminent and solidified the rivalry between the two port cities. While in Asunción, the revolutionary ideals finally touched ground in May of 1811, Montevideo remained under Spanish occupation until 1814. The Upper Perú was the region to show the most enduring opposition to the revolutionary cause, and remained under Spanish influence until at least 1822.

### ***The Littoral Region: Forming a Society on the Edges of the Empire***

Given its location on the fringes of the Spanish Empire, the Littoral was highly affected by the political and military conflicts that followed May Revolution. The Littoral was one of the first areas colonized by the Spaniards in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and it encompassed the Guaraní territory, which included the Paraguay, Alto Paraná, and Uruguay Rivers. To the east, the border with the Portuguese territory made it a difficult settlement area. As the colonial enterprise continued, expeditioners founded cities that connected the Littoral to the Buenos Aires port. In its first moments, the Littoral region was included in the New Andalusia and Río de la Plata Governorate. In 1776, with the creation of the Río de la Plata Viceroyalty, the Littoral fell under the jurisdiction of the Buenos Aires Intendancy. This intendancy included the city of Buenos Aires and its surrounding rural territory (the campaña), the Government Tenancies of Corrientes and Santa Fe, the Guaraní Missions and Montevideo Governments, and the Commandancies of Entre Ríos and Patagones. During the initial stages of colonization, the region's economy developed in the northwest, supplying cotton, yerba mate, and mules to the Potosí mines. When

gold supplanted silver's place as the preferred means for commercial exchange, the mining economy went into decline, and the Littoral found its calling in cattle raising. The territory between the Paraná and Uruguay Rivers in Entre Ríos and the Banda Oriental were the first regions to engage in cattle ranching, and other regions followed soon after.<sup>64</sup> Historian Tulio Halperín Donghi identified in the Littoral of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century four main centers, based on the characteristics of their settlements and economy: Asunción, Corrientes, Santa Fe, and Buenos Aires and its countryside.<sup>65</sup>

### **From First Settlements to Cities**

The colonial history of Corrientes, “the poorest and most rustic of the three,” began when the city of San Juan de Vera was founded by Juan Torres de Vera y Aragón in 1588, to serve as a mid-point between Buenos Aires and Asunción.<sup>66</sup> The existence of a natural port cultivated by the Paraná River provided for its success within the region's commercial transportation routes. As colonization progressed, new cities and towns, like Goya and Esquina, were founded along the river. Corrientes' natural features include several rivers and lakes, among them the Corrientes River and the Iberá Wetlands, a region with a vast water concentration that made the circulation of people and goods difficult. As a result, the territory of Corrientes featured a natural, geographic barrier that promoted the establishment of two main socio-economic regions divided by the Corrientes River. To the west, the region was dependent upon the merchant economy along the Paraná River, and to the southeast, newer settlements engaged in cattle ranching. In the

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<sup>64</sup> Tulio Halperin Donghi, *Revolución y guerra: Formación de una elite dirigente en la Argentina criolla*. 3a. ed. – (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2014), 37.

<sup>65</sup> Halperin, *Revolución y Guerra*, 38-39.

<sup>66</sup> Halperin, 38.

north, the Jesuit missions prospered through agriculture. The natural barriers also impeded the solidification of full control of the territory by the long-established landowners, who struggled to infiltrate the almost lawless countryside. *Estancia* workers alternated between regular job duties for the landowners, and diverting cattle products illegally along the Paraná River.<sup>67</sup>

To the east of Corrientes, was the territory that would later become the province of Misiones. Initially under Jesuit administration, when the Spanish Crown ousted the Society of Jesus from the Spanish colonies in 1767, it formed a *Gobernación* to administer the territory, at times responding to the Intendencies of Paraguay and also Buenos Aires. The missions were divided among the remaining religious orders, Franciscan, Dominicans, and Mercedarians regarding religious affairs, but had now Crown officials to decide on other matters. These missions were constantly ransacked by their newly appointed administrators in connection with traders from the surrounding areas, particularly Asunción and Corrientes. Through time and under increasing exploitation, the mission model went into decline and many local and Guaraní families and individuals started to depart the reductions, leaving for surrounding areas. Julia Sarreal estimates a population decline in the mission of about 30% between 1772 and 1783.<sup>68</sup> Many Indigenous peoples moved to the lands of Paraguay, or to the outskirts of their *encomiendas*, seeking to distance themselves from the character of “reduced” Indigenous.<sup>69</sup> Others went to areas in the Upper Uruguay River, gradually moving south. As labor force was much needed to bolster the growing market economy in that region, many individuals used this opportunity to benefit from the economic development that the viceroyalty was experiencing

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<sup>67</sup> Halperin, *Revolución y Guerra*, 38.

<sup>68</sup> “Between 1772 and 1783, the Guaraní mission population declined by almost 25,000, from almost 81,000 Indians to just over 56,000”. Sarreal, *The Guaraní and Their Missions*, 141.

<sup>69</sup> Saeger, “Warfare, Reorganization,” 271.



then.<sup>70</sup> There, they worked directly with export goods in the estancias – mostly in the south, or as part of the food supply chain, in *yerbales* and cotton fields, located towards the north. Evidence shows Guaranies working in the Banda Oriental, Entre Ríos, Corrientes, engaging in “farming, estancias, factories, labors, livestock, transportation, and other [enterprises] in service to the Spanish.”<sup>71</sup> Local descriptions account for at least 7,000 Guaranies living in Corrientes and the surrounding areas following the Jesuit expulsion.<sup>72</sup> Those who stayed in the original mission lands experienced little chance of economic growth, as their lands and wild cattle in it were constantly targeted by people seeking to take advantage of the economic boom stimulated by the Free Trade act. During the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, then, we witness a “gradual ruralization of the Guaraní people.”<sup>73</sup>

Further south on the shores of the Paraná River, the early attempts of colonizers clashed with the interests of the Guaycurú, an Indigenous group that was hardly acceptant of the Spanish authority. The Spanish Crown founded the city of Santa Fe in 1573 in an attempt to solidify conquest, but conflict was so sustained that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century villagers were obliged to move to more peaceful areas. To strengthen defense, the Crown dispatched a frontier regiment of *Blandengues* to the area, as to enable a more stable development, based on manufactured goods. The new location proved strategic for merchandise distribution to the interior and inspired the Spanish Crown to use Santa Fe as an entrepôt between Buenos Aires and Asunción, funding a post office (Correo, Postas y Caminos) and a mandatory port (Puerto Preciso) to regulate trade

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<sup>70</sup> Sarreal, *The Guaraní and Their Missions*, 150.

<sup>71</sup> Lieutenant treasurer of the Royal Treasury of Corrientes to royal officials in Buenos Aires, January 14, 1773, quoted in Sarreal, *The Guaraní and Their Missions*, 155.

<sup>72</sup> Juan Valiente to Juan José de Vértiz, October 13, 1778, in Sala IX, 17-6-3, AGNA. Quoted in Sarreal, *The Guaraní and Their Missions*, 155.

<sup>73</sup> Ernesto J. A. Maeder, *Aproximación a las misiones guaraníicas* (Buenos Aires: EDUCA, 1996), 120.

on the Paraná River.<sup>74</sup> When Buenos Aires became the new trade center after the creation of the Río de la Plata Viceroyalty, Santa Fe was able to protect its economic importance by turning to exporting mules to the interior and raising cattle for hides and meat production. This resulted in what Halperín Donghi called an “increasing ruralization of life”.<sup>75</sup>

Entre Ríos and the Banda Oriental, located east of the Paraná River and split by the Uruguay River, would complement the Littoral as an economic region with a diverse population. According to Roberto Schmit, the space closer to the Uruguay River shore, the “*oriente entrerriano*,” housed a frontier society that articulated “human, institutional, commercial and cultural factors,” integrating the Guaranies and Spanish descendants, with a strong circulation of people from the Banda Oriental, Buenos Aires, and Brazil, who sought economic profit by trading within the local economy (yerba mate, tobacco, sugar, grains), or overseas (cattle products).<sup>76</sup> Its soil was ideal for both agriculture and ranching, and it was also filled with wild cattle, which further attracted new settlers. The so-called Bajada del Paraná, the lands close to the Paraná River, formed the first settled area, founded in 1730. It received people from Santa Fe and Buenos Aires who came in search of economic profit.

Following the Bourbon Reforms, the Spanish Crown promoted occupation aiming to safeguard the frontier, founding the towns of Gualeguay, Concepción del Uruguay, and Gualeguaychú, closer to the Uruguay River.<sup>77</sup> In the eastern side of the river, the Banda

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<sup>74</sup> Sonia Tedeschi, “Santa Fe en el litoral fluvial rioplatense. Los enlaces entre la economía y la política en época de revolución y guerras.” in Hernán Asdrúbal Silva, Dir., *Historia Económica del Cono Sur de América. La Era de las Revoluciones y la Independencia*. (Mexico, DF: Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia, 2010), 703.

<sup>75</sup> Halperin, *Revolución y Guerra*, 40.

<sup>76</sup> Roberto Schmit, *Ruina y resurrección en tiempos de guerra: sociedad, economía y poder en el Oriente entrerriano posrevolucionario. 1810-1852* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2004), 33.

<sup>77</sup> Schmit, *Ruina y resurrección*, 44.

Oriental's original settlers were a myriad of Indigenous groups, amongst them Charrúa, Minuane, Bohan, Güenoa, Yaro, Chana, and Guaraní.<sup>78</sup> Located on the frontier with the Portuguese territory, the circulation of peoples and goods—both legal and illegal—increased. The existence of cattle in high numbers drove the installation of the first *saladeros* (salted meat manufactures). On the other side of the territory, where the Río de la Plata meets the Atlantic Ocean, the Spanish Crown founded the city of Montevideo, seeking to profit from this advantageous geographical location. In 1776, Montevideo was declared the Spanish Crown's main naval base for the South Atlantic, attracting a merchant population that hailed from the Iberian Peninsula and whose economic profile was very different than that of the northern areas. Historians have suggested that the significant difference in population composition and economic structure had a strong impact on the regional wars that took place following the May Revolution.<sup>79</sup>

The difficulty in subjecting the local Indigenous populations initially halted the development of an agricultural powerhouse in the Buenos Aires's countryside. Toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the abundance of wild cattle and the arrival of migrants from other areas created the conditions for economic development. The establishment of the viceroyalty in 1776, and the influx of resources that came with it, served as the impetus for Buenos Aires and the region as a whole to join the export economy once the Free Trade Act that was signed in 1778.<sup>80</sup> The Littoral, surrounded by rivers and pastures, was the ideal place to expand the production of primary and secondary goods, which were increasingly shipped to other parts of the world. By

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<sup>78</sup> José Pedro Barrán, "El Uruguay Indígena y Español," in Red Académica Uruguaya (1995\_). Retrieved from <http://www.rau.edu.uy/uruguay/historia/Uy.hist1.htm>

<sup>79</sup> Halperin, *Revolución y Guerra*, 46.

<sup>80</sup> Socolow, *The Bureaucrats of Buenos Aires*, 2.

the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, almost 80% of tithes collected by the Catholic Church in Santa Fe and Entre Ríos came from cattle ranching, the preferred export good.<sup>81</sup>

Although late to develop economically in comparison to the northern expanse of the empire, at the southern end of the Spanish colonies, the Littoral region increasingly emerged as a player essential to the maintenance of the colonial structure. If, at first, the main purpose of the settlements was to claim possession of the territory, geographical features promoting economic development soon attracted additional waves of internal migrants from older settlement areas. The creation of the viceroyalty in 1776 consolidated this process, and towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the region known as the Littoral accounted for roughly 170,000 people.<sup>82</sup> The population was a combination of White Europeans, Peninsulars and their descendants, Mixed-race people who lived in the world in-between, Indigenous groups struggling to continue existing inside this system, and Africans and their descendants who were brought as slaves in substantial numbers. At various levels and stages, these groups took part in a growing agricultural economy, fueled by an integrated network of local, regional and external markets controlled by a merchant class and a rising, cattle ranching elite. “Progress” was on the horizon for the region. However, the Littoral had to endure the unpredictable territorial reorganization that shook the Río de Plata after May 1810.

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<sup>81</sup> Fradkin and Garavaglia, *La Argentina Colonial*, 107.

<sup>82</sup> The numbers are a result of various populations found in Ernesto Maeder’s and Adela Pellegrino’s studies. They are constructed with traveler’s accounts and official censuses. Number for Buenos Aires (72,168), Corrientes (18,728), Entre Ríos (11,700), and Santa Fe (12,600) hail from Felix de Azara’s observations from 1797. Numbers for Misiones (23,258) come from an Indigenous census from 1802, and for the Banda Oriental (30,685) from Jose Pedro Barrán and Benjamin Nahún’s book from 1973, *Battle, los estancieros y el Imperio Británico*, totaling 169,139 people in the region. Ernesto J. A. Maeder, *Evolución Demográfica Argentina 1810-1869* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1969); Adella Pellegrino, *La población de Uruguay. Breve caracterización demográfica* (Montevideo, UNFPA, 2010), 33.

### **Corrientes and Misiones on the Verge of independence**

During the moments that preceded the May Revolution, the definition of boundaries was not clear in the area that encompassed Corrientes, Misiones, and Paraguay. As previously mentioned, following the Jesuit expulsion, the missions were reorganized several times. In 1807, the Crown named Tomás de Rocamora as governor of the Guaraní missions. When the Revolution came, Rocamora supported Buenos Aires' claim, but pressure from Asunción resulted in the splitting of the missions between the two conflicting centers. The districts of Santiago and Candelaria were controlled by Asunción, and Yapeyú and Concepción by Buenos Aires. The established limit was the Paraná river, although it was regularly questioned by the powers involved. Belonging to the Yapeyú department were the villages of Yapeyú, La Cruz, and Santo Tomé, controlled by subdelegate Bernardo Pérez Planes. Concepción was composed of Concepción, San José, Apóstoles, San Carlos, Santa María la Mayor, San Javier, and Mártires, under subdelegate Celedonio José del Castillo's rule. It is evident that, for the people living in these areas, these boundaries were artificial and cumbersome and were therefore destined to be crossed. The circulation of individuals continued. People came and went, trading, visiting families, looking for opportunities. For this reason, it is also quite challenging to establish a clear population composition for the area, although we will attempt an estimate with the available numbers.

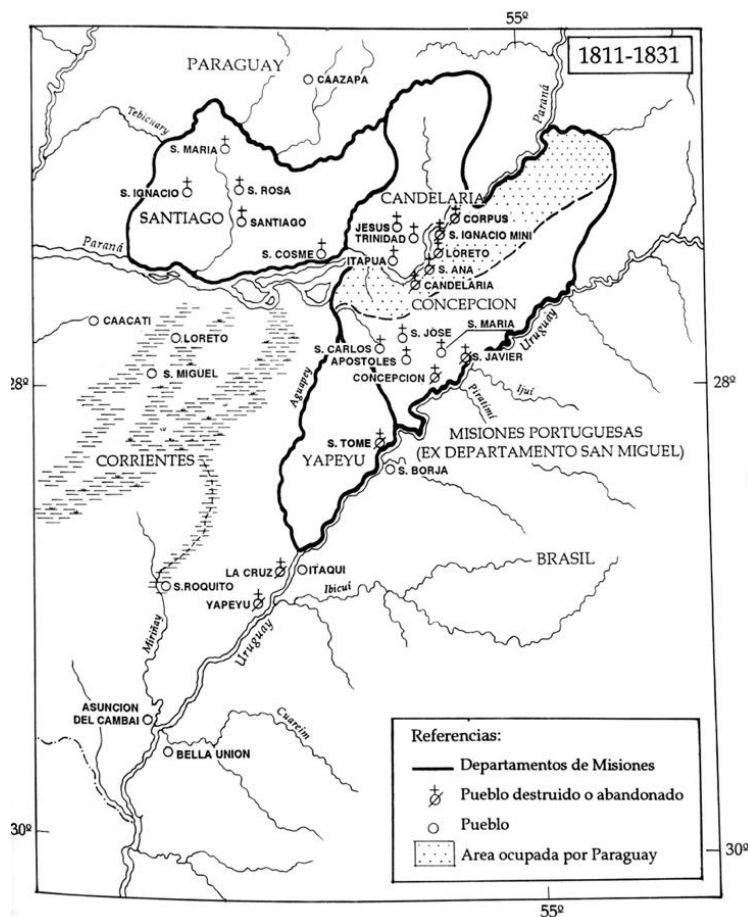


Figure 3. Territorial composition of Misiones, 1811-1831<sup>83</sup>

### Demographic composition of Corrientes and Misiones

Population numbers are unclear for the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Estimates for the mission territories that were located in what is today Argentina are of 23,258 inhabitants in 1802.<sup>84</sup> Of these, 9,982 people belonged to the three towns of the Yapeyú department, located on the shore of the Uruguay River and later incorporated to the Corrientes territory. In 1797, Felix de Azara

<sup>83</sup> Source: Ernesto J. A. Maeder and Ramón Gutierrez, *Atlas Histórico del Nordeste argentino* (Resistencia: IIGHI, 1995), 85

<sup>84</sup> Taken from Guillermo Furlong, *Misiones y sus pueblos guaraníes* (Buenos Aires, 1962). Cited in Maeder, *Evolución Demográfica Argentina*, 65.

had estimated for the same towns a population of about 9,500 people, and for the areas surrounding the Paraná river about 9,228 souls, totaling then 18,728 people in the entire jurisdiction.<sup>85</sup> The first official census of the independent period was produced in 1814, in the early moments of Corrientes' participation in the *Liga de los Pueblos Libres*, as a necessity to assess Corrientes' capabilities in supplying the unfolding war with financial and human resources. In the middle of such a conflictive period, the data gathered, even though incomplete, provides us with a representation of the region's demographic structure: in that year, the city of Corrientes had an estimated population of 4,771 inhabitants, while the countryside accounted for 25,413, totaling 30,184 people in the areas that were reviewed.<sup>86</sup> Unfortunately, due to the intense conflicts, the areas on the margins of the Uruguay and Miriñay rivers, where towns like Yapeyú and La Cruz were located, as well as the Iberá Wetlands up to the northern missions, were not surveyed (see figure 4).

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<sup>85</sup> Maeder, *Evolución Demográfica Argentina*, 36.

<sup>86</sup> Estimates for the city of Corrientes are based on the 1820 census for three of the four blocks. Ernesto J. A. Maeder, "Demografía y potencial humano de Corrientes, el censo provincial de 1814," *Nordeste*, n. 5 (1963): 144.

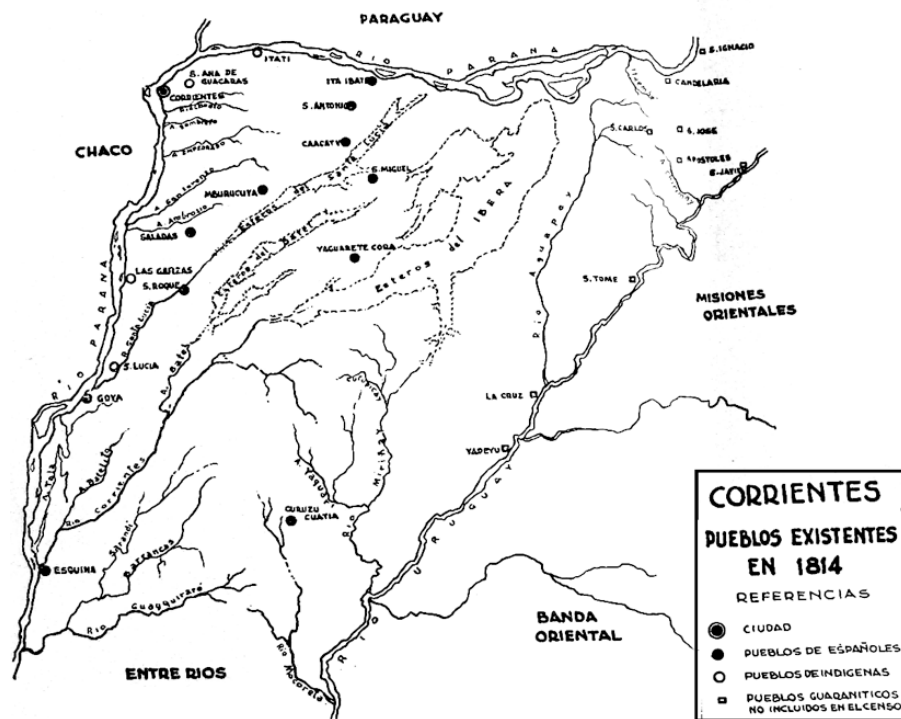


Figure 4. Corrientes in 1814<sup>87</sup>

Recent studies have been able to estimate the composition population as follows: in 1814, 70.8% of the population was considered “White” – of Spanish descent. Indigenous peoples were estimated at 17.2%. African and of African descent individuals comprised 11.1% of the total. The change seen for 1820 relates to increase in “Whites,” who amounted to 76.6%, while Indigenous peoples had fallen to 13.5%. The African and African descent population had slighted decreased as well, and was now 9.14% of the total population of the province.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Source: Maeder, “Demografía y potencial humano de Corrientes,” 148.

<sup>88</sup> Estimates for 1814 are constructed without data for 3 out of 4 blocks in the city of Corrientes. Fátima Valenzuela, “De esclavizados a libres y libertos. Formas de alcanzar la libertad en Corrientes (1800-1850)”, *Trashumante. Revista Americana de Historia Social* 10 (2017): 5. DOI: dx.doi.org/10.17533/udea.trahs.n10aXX. Valenzuela’s numbers represent a significant innovation for population studies in Corrientes during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The author complements the census data available with notary and manumission records, as well as parish records. She also disaggregates racial categories like “casta,” to identify the presence of “pardos”, “morenos,” and “mulatos” using definitions from the period.



In the 1814 census, the areas that showed highest percentages of Indigenous population were the ones towards the middle and the South of the province, amounting to 18% and 23% respectively.<sup>89</sup> As mentioned before, areas that were heavily populated by Indigenous groups, such as the towns of Santo Tomé, La Cruz, and Yapeyú, are not represented in these numbers, distorting the overall picture. We can suggest, though, that if accounted, the indigenous component would exponentially surpass the 17.44% officially registered for the whole province. Having painted a picture of the demographic composition in the area during the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we will now look at how the region reacted to the political changes of 1810.

Corrientes population	1797	1814	1820
Capital	9,228 (includes countryside)	4,771	5,308
Countryside (available areas)	See above	25,413	31,389
Yapeyú jurisdiction	9,500	x	
Total	18,728	30,184	36,697

*Table 1.1 Population of Corrientes (1797-1820)<sup>90</sup>*

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<sup>89</sup> Maeder, “Demografía y potencial humano de Corrientes,” 146.

<sup>90</sup> Source: Ernesto J. A. Maeder, “La estructura demografica y ocupacional de Corrientes y Entre Ríos, en 1820,” *Cuadernos de Historia*, Serie 1. N. 4 (1969): 21

### **The May Revolution and its Aftermath in the Littoral**

In the Littoral, the reaction to the creation of the Buenos Aires Junta was mixed.<sup>91</sup> With Montevideo's refusal to accept Buenos Aires' consolidation of power, it stood with the Spanish Crown (in the form of the Regency and Cortes) to defend their interests. Paraguay, on the other hand, despite initial opposition to the idea, formed an independent Junta and openly fought to become the sole leader of the resistance to the Spanish Crown in the Río de la Plata. Towns such as Corrientes and Santa Fe were among the first to recognize the Junta's rule and to elect representatives to participate in the General Congress convoked by Buenos Aires. While support in Entre Ríos was mixed, some of the small towns closer to the Banda Oriental remained faithful to the Council of Regency.<sup>92</sup> It is necessary to stress, though, that the rejection of the local Cabildos did not mean that the majority of the population was against the Revolutionary cause. Rather, resistance came from the vecinos participating in the governing institutions, many of whom were of Spanish descent. On the other side of the political spectrum, and despite verbal support from the Cabildos in Santa Fe and Corrientes as well as their allies in Misiones and Entre Ríos, many elite members remained hesitant about the revolutionary cause. Their hesitancy led to the fragmentation of Criollo society into two contrasting groups.<sup>93</sup>

The town of Santa Fe was the first in the Río de la Plata to adhere to the cause promoted by the Primera Junta. Buenos Aires' emissary José Espínola y Peña arrived on June 5, bringing

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<sup>91</sup> Even though for most of the dissertation we will limit our analysis to the provinces of Corrientes, Misiones, and some of Entre Ríos, for contextualization I will include Santa Fe here as well, as towns and its homonymous city were very much integrated into the social and economic life of the Mesopotamia, and played a significant role in securing Artiguist rule in the overall Littoral region.

<sup>92</sup> Facundo Arce, *Entre Ríos en los albores de la Revolución de Mayo* (Paraná: Museo Histórico de Entre Ríos "Martiniano Leguizamón", 1960), 21.

<sup>93</sup> Dardo Ramirez Braschi, *Patriotas y Sarracenos. La Lucha revolucionaria en la Provincia de Corrientes (1810-1812)* (Corrientes: Moglia, 2009), 11.

the news of Santa Fe's support of the junta. In the note, Buenos Aires suggested that, following receipt of the news, the Cabildos should express support and then elect a representative for the forthcoming Congress. On that same day, the townspeople of Santa Fe heard the church bells commanded by Lieutenant-Governor Prudencio María de Gastañaduy, which accompanied the sound of cannons and rifles celebrating the installation of the Junta and signaling their integration into the administrative entity.<sup>94</sup> The Cabildo gathered to compose a note in support of those feelings, which was published in the *Gaceta de Buenos Ayres* newspaper on June 21.<sup>95</sup> Not trusting the current governor, Spaniard Prudencio de Gastañaduy, the representatives of Buenos Aires also instructed Santa Fe to replace him. During this political transition we find an interesting example of what would become a common trait of the period: the meddling of Buenos Aires in local affairs. The Cabildo of Santa Fe strongly endorsed the name of Francisco Antonio Candiotti, an established resident, to the position. To the exasperation of locals, however, Buenos Aires appointed its own candidate, Colonel Manuel Ruiz, who took office on August 18<sup>th</sup>, in a demonstration of growing conflicts over authority and the degree of autonomy exerted by local towns. Still, after the episode, the Cabildo elected Juan Francisco Tarragona as Santa Fe's representative in the Congress, giving him ample powers. Continuing demonstrations of support, they intercepted communications between Montevideo, Asunción, and Córdoba – cities that had rejected the Primera Junta's authority. As it was clear that the support of Santa Fe was critical because of its location, Buenos Aires sent a militia company of about one hundred free people of color (*pardos libres*) to provide defense to the area.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Alcira Marioni Berra, "El Estado autónomo" in *Historia de Santa Fe* 3 (Santa Fe, 1995), 1.

<sup>95</sup> Leoncio Gianello, *Historia de Santa Fe*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Buenos Aires, Plus Ultra, 1986), 177.

<sup>96</sup> Gianello, *Historia de Santa Fe*, 180.

After José Espínola y Peña gathered Santa Fe's support, the Buenos Aires' emissary continued his journey up the Paraná River to persuade the town of Corrientes to become another critical ally. He arrived on June 15<sup>th</sup> and received festive treatment. The town quickly showed their support and willingness to follow the Junta instructions, calling a meeting to define what the *cabildantes* referred to as the "better" part of the city—those individuals who met the required conditions to vote and elect a representative. The May Revolution inaugurated a window of opportunity for political groups in Corrientes to use to their advantage; they thus elected José Simón García de Cossio, a lawyer who was born in Corrientes but worked at the Royal Audience in Buenos Aires, to represent their interests.<sup>97</sup> He became the first representative elected to participate in the Congress in Buenos Aires. García de Cossio's local leadership was not novel; he had previously been elected as a Corrientes representative to the Spanish Supreme Central Junta in Cádiz, a position that he would never get to fill because the Río de la Plata ended up not sending their representatives. The electoral process was similar to the one carried out during the first election, and this was an indication that local politics had been influenced by the Regentist movement, which took shape after the May Revolution.<sup>98</sup> Those individuals leading the process, however, would soon feel the impact of the transformations arriving to the region. Similarly to what had happened in Santa Fe in July of 1810, Buenos Aires also demanded that the Spaniard Pedro de Fondevila, Lieutenant-Governor of Corrientes, was to be replaced by Elias Galván, a *Correntino* teacher who lived in the capital and had ties to the newly-elected government members.<sup>99</sup> In the same letter sent to the Cabildo on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Primera Junta

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<sup>97</sup> June 22, 1810, in *Actas Capitulares del Cabildo de Corrientes*, t. 43. f. 57v. Sala I, AGPC.

<sup>98</sup> For a debate about the impact of this first instance of suffrage in the American colonies after the French invasion, see Chiaramonte, "Autonomía e Independencia."

<sup>99</sup> August 28, 1810, in *Actas Capitulares del Cabildo de Corrientes*, t. 43. f. 68v. Sala I, AGPC.

instructed Corrientes to withhold any communication with Paraguay and the Banda Oriental, thus centering the revolutionary cause in the capital.

The Criollo government of the Guaraní missions was also quick to comply with Buenos Aires' request. On June 18<sup>th</sup> Governor Tomás de Rocamora sent his support and recognition of the Junta's power, offering to contribute any necessary supplies and to propagate the ideals needed to sustain the integrity of the territory.<sup>100</sup> Several Guaraní Cabildos within the territory gave their consent as well. The region was, however, under pressure from its neighbor Asunción, which remained loyal to the Council of Regency. Due to social and economic ties, or even military influence, some towns such as Candelaria, Santiago, and Concepción favored the option of supporting Asunción, which further intensified political divisions within the region.<sup>101</sup>

In the area that would later become the province of Entre Ríos, support was scattered. When Buenos Aires sent official communications announcing the creation of the Primera Junta, areas such as the Bajada del Paraná and Concepción del Uruguay received the change with joy, and expressed their feelings in the *Gaceta de Buenos Ayres*. Other towns, such as Gualeguay and Gualeguaychú, that had a high concentration of a Spanish population, were reluctant to show enthusiasm.<sup>102</sup> This reaction may be explained by pressure from Montevideo to maintain their support, or what Ana Frega has analyzed as a product of “domination” rather than “hegemony” of the Crown.<sup>103</sup> It is, then, an arduous task to uncover the different levels of support received by

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<sup>100</sup> Pablo Camogli, *Asamblea del Año XIII: historia del primer congreso argentino* (Buenos Aires: Aguilar, 2013), 46.

<sup>101</sup> The adhesion of the Guaranies in this area is a point for further research. Ramirez Braschi, *Patriotas y Sarracenos*, 35.

<sup>102</sup> Facundo Arce, *Entre Ríos en los albores de la Revolución de Mayo* (Paraná: Museo Histórico de Entre Ríos “Martiniano Leguizamón”, 1960), 42-43.

<sup>103</sup> Ana Frega, *Pueblos y soberanía en la revolución artiguista*, 90.

the Spanish resistance from each of these towns, especially those located on the shores of the Uruguay River.

Regardless of the changing support to the revolutionary cause, the fact is that the May Revolution installed conflict in the region. The Littoral was exactly in the middle of counterrevolutionary movements orchestrated by Asunción and Montevideo. Soon enough, the whole area was swept by military combats and troops moving north and south. Corrientes was invaded by Paraguayan troops on multiple occasions – events we will discuss in chapter 2. In Entre Ríos and Santa Fe, Royalists and revolutionaries fought to seize control over the area. In September of 1810, Peninsular residents sympathetic to the Council of Regency helped the Royalist navy forces block the Uruguay River and seize the villages on its shores. In November, these forces coming from the Banda Oriental also managed to take control over the Paraná River and reached as far north as Corrientes. After a few months, though, they were repelled by a collective of military forces and local residents defending the revolutionary ideals. By March of 1811, most of the towns around the Uruguay River were again backing the government located in Buenos Aires.<sup>104</sup> Montevideo, however, remained under Spanish control, and became the last stronghold of Spanish resistance in the area.

### **Portuguese Invasion of 1811**

The regional situation worsened with the entrance of the Portuguese in the conflict. Taking advantage of the vulnerability of the Southern Cone since the rupture with the Council of Regency, the Portuguese Crown, which had crossed the Atlantic Ocean to settle in Rio de Janeiro

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<sup>104</sup> Frega, *Pueblos y soberanía*, 101.

after their defeat by Napoleon, saw an opportunity to occupy lands that it had disputed with the Spanish since the early moments of the colonial enterprise.<sup>105</sup> The conflict zone extended from the east of Corrientes, including the territory of the Missions, to the Banda Oriental. Officially, the Portuguese entered the conflict in answer to Elío's request for help, since Ferdinand VII was the brother-in-law of the King of Portugal. Outnumbered and now under the leadership of the First Triumvirate, Buenos Aires signed a truce with Montevideo in October 1811. The truce promised an end to the siege and recognized the Viceroy's authority over the towns located on the coast of the Uruguay River in exchange for the retreat of the Portuguese troops. The patriot troops complied with the agreement, but the Portuguese forces stayed in the territory, seeking to take control of an area that the Portuguese Crown had desired since the early colonial days.

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As we have seen, in the beginning of the 1810s we find three main players seeking to develop control over the territory, that is, representatives of the government created by Buenos Aires, the defenders of the Spanish Empire (Royalists), and the Portuguese Crown. Buenos Aires was aware that the Littoral was crucial for the success of the revolutionary cause. Support from Santa Fe, Corrientes and Entre Ríos to the Junta Grande would enable the circulation of troops and guaranteed the establishment of lookout posts in the region. It permitted organized resistance against the Spanish and the Portuguese. Therefore, Buenos Aires invested into expanding its influence up north. They also claimed levels of authority that had not been granted to them under this new political structure. The armistice signed by Buenos Aires angered residents in the whole

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<sup>105</sup> Adriano Comissoli, "Comunicação e fronteiras imperiais na região Platina durante a "era das Revoluções", in Jonas M Vargas, ed., *Belicosas Fronteiras: contribuições recentes sobre política, economia e escravidão em sociedades americanas (século XIX)* (Editora Fi: Porto Alegre, 2017), 25.

region, who had wished to break free from Montevideo's control. With a large population but a fragmented political body, the territory required substantial political reorganization.

The first triumvirate's actions, which took a conservative turn in comparison to the *Junta Grande*, garnered opposition in an area that was suffering the high costs of a year-long military conflict. Santa Fe, left without a military defense, lost a significant part of its land to indigenous attacks.<sup>106</sup> Corrientes had lost its cattle, fields, men, and inhabitants as well. Whole towns were devastated close to the Uruguay River. The Littoral's economic conditions went from prosperous to dire, and the presence of the Portuguese only worsened the situation. Conflict extended in several directions, with pueblos siding with the Spanish Crown or the Junta Grande leadership of Buenos Aires. Slowly, alternative forms of governments gained momentum. Colonial institutions were combined with new experimental systems, in hopes of setting new government models. The provinces that emerged from this new configuration sewed alliances seeking to bolster their place in the region while aligning with each other, at times, for political and economic reasons. These models, however, rarely pleased the society and political class as a whole, in an indication that the region was far from being a unified entity, either from a *rioplatense* or an "American" perspective. It is within this scenario that we find the Littoral region in the wake of the May Revolution.

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<sup>106</sup> Tedeschi, "Santa Fe en el litoral fluvial rioplatense", 709.



## Chapter 2. Dreams of an American Unity:

### Manuel Belgrano's expedition through the Littoral (1810-1811)

“Now, we are all one,” said Manuel Belgrano while founding towns, gathering men and arms, and journeying through the Littoral region on his way up north to Paraguay.<sup>1</sup> In his view, that the Junta of Buenos Aires had “wisely determined” this aspired unity, should be enough to make it a reality to the people living in the Río de la Plata. Belgrano, a Criollo politician educated in Spain and now the envoy of the Primera Junta, would soon find out that this unity was nothing but an aspiration, and that reality on the ground was quite different. As the conflicts following the May Revolution plagued the Littoral, they further exposed the distinctive experiences of the men and women who lived in this territory. The high demand for resources and ongoing military conflict altered economic life. Within the political realm, rapid changes in authority exposed discrepancies regarding sources of legitimacy. Initial attempts of state organization were met with skepticism, and exposed fissures that went beyond the obvious revolutionary versus royalist (or *patriotas y sarracenos*) dichotomy. Disagreements reached the insides of the revolutionary band as well, evidencing that the hoped American unity was not within close reach. Yet, at a time so volatile and tumultuous, marginalized groups started to emerge as protagonists of these conflicts. By providing human and economic resources, in addition to ideas and projects, they came to occupy central spaces in the political life of the territory.

This chapter and the next seek to capture the political and societal fissures present in the Río de la Plata's Littoral region, and how they were further exposed after the May Revolution.

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<sup>1</sup> “Fundación de Curuzú Cuatiá,” Cuartel General de Curuzú Cuatiá, November 14, 1810. Museo Mitre, *Documentos del Archivo de Belgrano* (Buenos Aires: Coni Hermanos, 1914), 3: 109-113.

After 1810, the first conflict to engage the population as a whole in the Littoral was the one between revolutionaries, acting in name of the local Junta ruled by Buenos Aires, and defenders of the Crown's interests, located especially in the cities of Montevideo and Asunción. As the *Primera Junta* made efforts towards putting together an organized offensive in these areas, it became evident that negotiations with envisioned allies would be far from straightforward. At that moment, rather than the expected and proclaimed unity that the Revolutionary Junta aspired, what was found in the ground was a diversity of experiences that privileged local and regional alliances. In these initial movements that followed the May Revolution, the various layers of power that were a characteristic of the old colonial regime started to emerge, and the concept of sovereignty recovered significance. Several competing local sovereignties clashed with the model that hailed from the center of the former viceroyalty, which proposed that sovereignty could not be divided and was represented by Buenos Aires. This debate directly impacted in the daily lives of people, because it had the capacity to include or exclude provinces and municipalities from political decisions.<sup>2</sup>

The initial interactions between Buenos Aires and the towns and cities in the interior illuminate how structures of power were laid out in the region, and how this impacted political participation for popular groups. I will focus on analyzing motivations to engage – or not engage – in the military movements that took place following the May Revolution. I propose that, as traditionally marginalized groups increased their participation in political life, the discussions regarding the origin of power and the existence of various, diverging state models, was amped up as well. As Criollo elites resigified political terms and power structures to accommodate

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<sup>2</sup> Chiaramonte, *Ciudades, provincias, estados*.

interests in a revolutionary context, popular groups conversed with and challenged these understandings. We will start by looking at the level of engagement of Indigenous groups of Corrientes and Misiones in Belgrano's expedition through the Littoral, who increasingly found spaces to express their political understandings and desires.

### *Spreading the Ideals of the Revolution in the Littoral*

The Cabildo of Corrientes was quick to send their support to the Junta organized by Buenos Aires. However, despite this seeming respect, expressions of support on the ground were not so upfront. The movements that followed the May Revolution demonstrate how Buenos Aires' position as the capital of the former viceroyalty did not automatically grant them authority to demand support for the revolutionary cause, organize and dismantle Spanish resistance, or, principally, call the shots over the political future of the region. The contacts between Asunción and Corrientes are indicative of this. Although on paper it looked like support for the Junta was consolidated in Corrientes, on the ground negotiations were really just beginning. Asunción, as one of the points of Spanish loyalist resistance, was geographically much closer to Corrientes than to Buenos Aires. Furthermore, their proximity went beyond geography, as many families on both sides shared social and economic interests, and residents lived in seeming harmony. Only when the First Junta ordered Corrientes to confiscate Paraguayan ships navigating the Paraná River, in September of 1810, was this harmony broken. Paraguay's governor Bernardo de Velasco mandated that a fleet should go down to Corrientes and rescue the stolen vessels. He also took the opportunity to instruct his men to persuade Corrientes' residents against Buenos Aires' rule. Even then, and with the refusal of Corrientes to side with Asunción, the invasion was

quite brief, and only took the time necessary to guarantee that the Paraná River would be reopened for transit.

In the communications between the governor of Corrientes Elías Galván and colonel José Antonio Zavala, what transpires is precisely a feeling of collegiality and closeness between the residents of the two areas. Zavala reaffirmed how, “since time immemorial,” Asunción and Corrientes had had the “best correspondence” and their inhabitants “cultivated good harmony and fraternal friendship.”<sup>3</sup> In his defense, Galván expressed that he was just following orders from Buenos Aires, but that he would proceed to open the river “as evidence of his commitment (*adhesión*) to the Paraguayan brothers.” This exchange of fraternal sentiments is not new to the historiography. But what interests us here is the indication that the influence of Buenos Aires was far from being consolidated in the region. In this case, Paraguay and Corrientes seemed to have firm bonds with each other. In Misiones too, when Paraguayan forces decided to work towards curbing revolutionary influence, they got the people of Candelaria to again pledge allegiance towards the Council of Regency – in an indication that support to the junta was actually not as strong as imagined – and forced Rocamora out of the territory, to Yapeyú.

As a result of Paraguay’s desire to stay loyal to the Spanish authorities, Buenos Aires decided to act. The First Junta commanded the organization of local forces to resist the influence of Asunción, and also ordered an expedition led by Manuel Belgrano to go north. To fulfil the first request, in Corrientes Governor Galván, with the help of vecino Ángel Fernández Blanco, convoked and formed artillery and infantry troops. He also offered the help of 100 “*naturales*” from the indigenous towns of Santa Lucía, y Guacarás, and “eighty beautiful brown men

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<sup>3</sup> José Antonio Zavala to Elías Galván, Corrientes, October 1, 1810, in Julio César Chávez, *Historia de las relaciones entre Buenos Aires y el Paraguay. 1810-1813*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nizza, 1959), 51-54.

(*pardos*).<sup>4</sup> In Misiones, Buenos Aires instructed Rocamora to organize provincial and urban Guarani militias.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps creating a formal defense structure was found necessary because, when left to their own will, Corrientes' residents did not show much of an interest to stop Paraguay's influence. Accounts of Belgrano regarding the invasion of Zavala's troops mention the "cowardice", lack of "patriotism or fire in the people of Corrientes."<sup>6</sup> He understood it as a consequence of their inability to hold arms against "50 or 60 men," as his follow up was to instruct them to be trained, but we could also see it as evidence that the revolutionary ideals really had not sunk in yet in those people. Still, when Buenos Aires demanded the organization of the battalions, residents collaborated by providing "money, cattle, horses, means of transportation, vessels and anything that could be of use."<sup>7</sup> Political lines were still evidently blurred in the region.

After several peaceful attempts to convince Asunción to recognize the Junta, and as Paraguay used this closeness to Corrientes and Misiones to establish an area of influence, Buenos Aires organized a military expedition to both consolidate its power in the Littoral and force Paraguay to join revolutionary ranks. The Cabildo of Corrientes had warned Buenos Aires about the need to send more troops if they were to help patrol the territory, including Misiones. Cornelio Saavedra, the Junta's president, agreed to the request.<sup>8</sup> Manuel Belgrano was appointed

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<sup>4</sup> Elías Galván to the Junta. Corrientes, November 2, 1810. Instituto Belgraniano Central, *Documentos para la Historia del General don Manuel Belgrano, 1792-1811* (Buenos Aires: Instituto Nacional Belgraniano), 3, vol. 1: 312.

<sup>5</sup> Guillermo Wilde, *Religión y poder en las misiones de guaraníes* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sb, 2009), 311.

<sup>6</sup> Belgrano to Galván, December 11, 1810, Correspondencia Oficial, t. 1, f. 151, AGPC.

<sup>7</sup> Manuel Florencio Mantilla, *Crónica histórica de la Provincia de Corrientes* v. 1 (Buenos Aires, Espiasse y Cia., 1972), 1: 167.

<sup>8</sup> Cornelio Saavedra to Elías Galván, Buenos Aires, September 19, 1810, Correspondencia Oficial, t. 1, f. 88, AGPC.

Chief Commander and received control over the territory of the Banda Oriental, Santa Fe, Corrientes and Paraguay, an area considered of much value both for their natural and human resources. At this moment, an overwhelming mobilization of peoples and resources started to take place, provoking massive change in the lives of the Littoral residents.

***Belgrano and the Expedition to Paraguay:***

***A Sweeping Wave of Military Mobilization in the Río de la Plata's Mesopotamia***

The conflicts that emerged as a result of the clash between empires in Europe changed the landscape and social configuration throughout America, and the Río de la Plata saw the consequences of this political instability early on. An increasingly militarized society was born after the British invasions, and the revolutionary movement that started in 1810 served as a boost for this process.<sup>9</sup> According to Alejandro Rabinovich, it is safe to say that by 1818, 1 in 9 adult men were serving in the regular army.<sup>10</sup> Besides disrupting daily life, these transformations brought in new participants that entered politics in both traditional and new ways and united with conventional players to find their space in this rapidly-changing world. From north to south of

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<sup>9</sup> For studies related to the process of militarization in the Río de la Plata during the late colonial and early national period, see Tulio Halperin Donghi. "Militarización revolucionaria en Buenos Aires, 1806-1815," in *El Ocaso del orden colonial en Hispanoamérica*. (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1978); Juan Carlos Garavaglia, *Las fuerzas de guerra en la construcción del Estado. América Latina, siglo XIX* (Rosario: Prohistoria, 2012); Alejandro Rabinovich, "La militarización del Río de la Plata; Lyman Johnson, "The Military as Catalyst of Change in Late Colonial Buenos Aires," in Szuchman, *Revolution and Restoration*; Schmit, *Ruina y resurrección en tiempos de Guerra*; Ana Frega, "'La patria me hizo libre'. Aproximación a la movilización militar de los sectores populares en la revolución en la Banda Oriental," in *Negros de la Patria": Los afrodescendientes en las luchas por la independencia en el antiguo Virreinato del Río de la Plata*, ed. Silvia Mallo and Ignacio Telesca (Buenos Aires: Editorial SB, 2010): 171-186.

<sup>10</sup> Rabinovich. *Ser soldado*, 26.

the territory the level of mobilization was high. Belgrano's expedition through the Littoral was one catalyst to this process, as it activated troops and sought to motivate ideals.

Notwithstanding the purpose of Belgrano's expedition of reaching Paraguay being to curb royalist resistance, the movement of his troops through the territory created momentum for strong political engagement, by increasing militarization and carrying ideals that could be considered a novelty to the region. Belgrano left Buenos Aires in October 1810 with 200 men. His idea was to mobilize local troops along the way. He marched through the Littoral, passing by San Nicolás de los Arroyos (Buenos Aires), Santa Fe, Bajada del Paraná (Entre Ríos), and the interior of Corrientes, incorporating forces into his ranks on his way to cross the Paraná River that separated the region from the territory controlled by Paraguay. The various towns also collaborated with horses, cattle, artillery, and money. Before that, Belgrano received the promise of Rocamora's help – he would send about 400 Guaraní militiamen that would form the "*Milicia Patriótica de Misiones*."

Belgrano crossed the Paraná River on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1810, entering Paraguay through the Itapúa-Campichuelo access.<sup>11</sup> The objective of getting Paraguayans to collaborate proved to be much more challenging than the Junta or Belgrano were expecting. By mid-March, the Paraguayan forces had successfully pushed Belgrano's troops away from the territory. Essentially defeated, he changed his destination and marched to the Uruguay River area, to help with the first Montevideo siege. Even if the campaign was not successful, though, we can look at his passage through the Littoral to analyze how locals engaged into the political conflicts of the

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<sup>11</sup> It is not this chapter's intent to narrate all of the battles that took place during the campaign. For an analysis of the invasion through the perspective of political identities in Paraguay, see Nidia Areces, "La construcción de identidades políticas en Paraguay. De la invasión porteña a la dictadura de Francia," in Mata, *Entre la Colonia y la República*.

moment, and assess the level of influence the revolutionary cause, and Buenos Aires, achieved. When looking at criollo participation, what transpires is the fragility of this influence. It is when popular groups take the stage, by actually deciding not to completely answer to military mobilization, that we see how Buenos Aires' authority was far from consolidated. Of special importance to this analysis is the collaboration Belgrano requested from Indigenous groups in Corrientes and Misiones, and their level of response, which varied widely according to their interests.

### **Early Moments of Political Engagement and Indigenous Participation in the Mesopotamia**

The participation of Indigenous groups in the realm of politics was not a novelty in the Littoral region. The very system that sought to conquer and impose domination on the Natives provided spaces for the implementation of new practices. Although perhaps normalizing of colonial rule and processes, these practices schooled them on this same system, and enabled the incorporation of previously foreign elements into their daily lives. The particularity of the Jesuit missions on the frontier of the Spanish empire accounted for a unique experience of indigenous integration into the colonial world. The election of Indigenous officials was a key component of its administrative organization, offering chances of political participation to selected inhabitants. The *Cabildos de Indios* that existed in the Corrientes jurisdictions, like the Franciscan reductions of Itatí, Santa Lucía, Santa Ana, and Garzas, also provided spaces of restrained autonomy and decision-making for at least a small portion of inhabitants whose long-established indigenous leadership was accepted by the colonial authorities.

Revolts and rebellions allowed for the political participation of Indigenous groups as well. According to Fradkin and Garavaglia, the way society in itself was structured made it a



fertile ground for any dispute to reach deep into the fabric of social life, since kinship networks were fundamental to social relationships.<sup>12</sup> Thus, local landowners and vecinos were joined by mestizos, mulattoes, Indigenous groups and other people who depended upon them when skirmishes took place, even though many of the causes did not directly relate to their needs. On a broader level, disputes between the Spanish and the Portuguese crowns over the territory created the opportunities for the teaching of Indigenous groups in military skills -- the Spanish used indigenous militias to defend the territory against Portuguese advancement. Some of these disputes brought indigenous participation to the forefront of political life. When both the Spanish and the Portuguese united forces to provoke the reallocation of several Jesuit missions, Indigenous groups organized in autonomous ways. The Guarani War of 1756, mentioned in chapter one, provided an exercise of indigenous political and military organization, while reinforcing a sense of belonging to the missions that was shared between Indigenous leaders and the mission populations who refused to abandon their lands and properties to follow Iberian law.<sup>13</sup>

After the Guarani War and following the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1768, the Guaranies sought to redefine their place within the colonial system. A geographical movement that had started prior to the war accelerated, resulting in a considerable number of Indigenous populations leaving for other areas, and seeking accommodation elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> In the remaining missions, the

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<sup>12</sup> Raúl Fradkin and Juan Carlos Garavaglia, *La Argentina Colonial. El Río de la Plata entre los siglos xvi y xix* (Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, 2009), 175.

<sup>13</sup> Robert H. Jackson, *Missions and the frontiers of Spanish America: A comparative study of the impact of environmental, economic, political, and socio-cultural variations on the missions in the Río de la Plata Region and on the Northern Frontier of New Spain* (Scottsdale: Pentacle Press, 2005), 262.

<sup>14</sup> Barbara Anne Ganson, *The Guaraní under Spanish rule in the Río de la Plata* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 136.

distrust in Jesuits had led some inhabitants to seek connections with Spanish authorities, sustained by open campaigns conducted by the Crown to attract indigenous support. The merging of Indigenous officials - not always the traditional *caciques* - with the colonial administrative structure resulted in a divide within the indigenous elite, in which a sort of indigenous bureaucracy connected to the Cabildos and militias increasingly gained power over other forms of traditional leadership.<sup>15</sup>

The previous period of open confrontation was then followed by an attempt of improvement of living conditions within the system. Some individuals adopted what was seen as a more European work ethic and market orientation, while others, although also discontent with the situation of the missions, kept their customary understandings of land use and communal life.<sup>16</sup> In this context, towards the end of the colonial period the Guaraní were experiencing “a conflict of values” while they acclimated to a world without the Jesuits.<sup>17</sup> The period that started with the May Revolution brought about even more change, as Guarani, and several other Indigenous groups, were expected to identify as “Americanos” and collaborate to the work of the Buenos Aires Junta.

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<sup>15</sup> Guillermo Wilde, “Entre las tipologías políticas y los procesos sociales: elementos para el análisis situacional de los liderazgos indígenas en una frontera colonial” in *Anos 90* 19, n. 34 (December 2011): 19-54.

<sup>16</sup> Julia J. S. Sarreal, *The Guaraní and Their Missions: A Socioeconomic History* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014), 141.

<sup>17</sup> Ganson, *The Guaraní under Spanish rule*, 127.

### **Belgrano's Expedition and the Participation of "Naturales"**

When Belgrano started moving north, he knew too well the value of amplifying the voice of the revolution to engage all sectors of society. He was keen to enlist representatives of marginalized sectors in his troops. Having them close was an opportunity to instruct them on the revolutionary cause. He saw in the "Naturales of the American Soil," that is, the Indigenous peoples that abounded in Corrientes and Misiones, the perfect fit for the cause of freedom.<sup>18</sup> Royalist forces had already made use of popular sectors of society in previous moments of conflict, freeing slaves to enlist them in the army ranks, and assembling subjected Indigenous groups.<sup>19</sup> Now, Belgrano had to work with local military and political leaders to inspire and mobilize them towards the revolutionary cause, promoting changes to their legal status that supposedly materialized principles of the May Revolution. At the same time that it offered opportunities of military engagement, Belgrano's expedition created spaces for those interested in engaging in the active political life of the period.

In his first communications with Elías Galván when organizing the expedition, it is clear who were his main targets of recruitment. Belgrano insisted that the leaders in Corrientes "inspire patriotic feelings not only on those of us with a Spanish background, but also, and particularly, on the Naturales (...), to attract and unite them with us, teaching them how to love the military service."<sup>20</sup> His intentions encompassed the Indigenous peoples of Corrientes and

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<sup>18</sup> Manuel Belgrano to Elías Galván, October 2, 1810. *Recopilación de documentos históricos de la independencia Argentina bajo los auspicios el superior gobierno*. (Corrientes: Artes Graficas A. Ingimbert. 1910). Accessed at UCLA Special collections. Original in AGPC.

<sup>19</sup> Lucía Sala, "Democracia durante las guerras por la independencia en Hispanoamérica" in *Nuevas Miradas en torno al artiguismo*, ed. Ana Frega and Ariadna Islas, (Montevideo: Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, 2001), 87.

<sup>20</sup> Manuel Belgrano to Elías Galván, October 2, 1810, in *Recopilación de documentos históricos*.

Misiones that had been reduced by religious orders, as well as the so-called “infidels” of Chaco. One of Belgrano’s strategies to gather followers was to send ahead individuals to pave the way for his troops’ arrival. While some Indigenous groups had been exposed to military conflicts and therefore collected some experience, others had not. This is especially true to those inhabiting the *pueblos de indios* of Corrientes, mostly former Franciscan reductions. In order to test their ability with arms, then, Belgrano instructed the governor of Corrientes to “experiment” with recruits from the town of Garzas, populated exclusively by Indigenous peoples. In attempts to preserve and make use of their fighting style, the trial included the formation of a Company of Spearmen (*Lanceros*), thus using their traditional weapon.

Rather than their sole participation in the army through forced means, we identify in Belgrano’s communications a desire to attract these Naturales by convincing them of the value of the revolutionary cause. For this reason, his envoys traveled with papers, and talked about the ideals of the revolution. With that purpose, also, he recommended that assigned Captains should be able to satisfactorily communicate with these Indigenous groups through their own language. Many of his communications and proclamations were also translated into Guaraní. This way, he believed, his army would have a total understanding of the art of war as well as of the cause that they were defending.<sup>21</sup>

While the Indigenous groups were learning about the revolutionary ideals, Belgrano was witnessing first-hand how the dire conditions of their domination by the Spanish Empire was still in place. To the Junta, he expressed how, when the conflicts slowed down, it was necessary to

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<sup>21</sup> For an innovative study that examines the translation of these letters, see Capucine Boidin, “Textos de la modernidad política en guaraní (1810-1813),” *Corpus* [En línea], Vol 4, No 2 (2014). URL: <http://corpusarchivos.revues.org/1322>

think about Indigenous groups, “since they remain in misery, and their administrators, [called] *mayordomos*, sub delegates (...), still profit off of their sweat and make them suffer.”<sup>22</sup> Perhaps as a result of what he saw, and admittedly seeking to stop their “ruin,” after arriving in the town of Candelaria, Belgrano issued a document reforming the political and administrative system for the people of the missions.<sup>23</sup> This Regulation would be considered the first constitutional project of the territory and the first time the discourse of equality between Criollos and Indigenous peoples was converted into something more than just empty rhetoric.<sup>24</sup> The new regulation proposed to “free [the pueblos] from the community method, all of the tributes and injuries that they have suffered.”<sup>25</sup> It opened the opportunity for them to occupy administrative positions and participate in trade, prohibited physical punishment and established rules for hiring their work. To those who enlisted in the army, he offered to end the *casta* system, integrating Indigenous peoples into *Patricios* and *Arribeños* regiments, rather than maintaining separated ones for them.<sup>26</sup> He also promised that they could become officials, attempting to “homogenize” the Indigenous populations, in the words of Guillermo Wilde.<sup>27</sup> The Junta of Buenos Aires took more than a

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<sup>22</sup> Belgrano to the Junta. Costa Sur del Paraná, December 4, 1810. Instituto Belgraniano Central, *Documentos para la Historia* 3, vol. 1: 338.

<sup>23</sup> Belgrano to the Junta. Tacuarí, December 30, 1810. Instituto Belgraniano Central, *Documentos para la Historia* 3, vol. 1: 372.

<sup>24</sup> Reglamento enviado por Manuel Belgrano a la Junta Grande estableciendo “el Régimen Político y Administrativo y Reforma de los 30 Pueblos de las Misiones.” *Documentos del Archivo de Belgrano*, 3: 126-128. Similar projects were taking place in the rest of Latin America. See, for example, Marcela Echeverri’s article on the Junta of Santa Fe, New Granada, that acted to emancipate Indigenous people, abolishing tribute, communal land, against their will. Marcela Echeverri, “‘Sovereignty has lost its rights:’ liberal experiments and indigenous citizenship in New Granada, 1810-1819” in *Justice in a new world: negotiating legal intelligibility in British, Iberian, and indigenous America*, ed. Brian P. Owensby and Richard J. Ross (New York: New York University Press, 2018). Kindle, 5741-5743.

<sup>25</sup> Proclamation by Manuel Belgrano, Santa Fe, October 2, 1810, Correspondencia Oficial, t. 1, ff. 96-97.

<sup>26</sup> Proclamation by Manuel Belgrano. Corrientes, November 1810. Instituto Belgraniano Central, *Documentos para la Historia* 3, vol. 1: 329.

<sup>27</sup> Wilde, *Religión y poder*, 317. The author suggests that this “cultural and political homogenization” was in place since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

month to approve his draft, and after that, emissaries circulated the papers so that every pueblo – even in Paraguayan territory – would hear about it.<sup>28</sup> During his march, Belgrano also formally recognized the villages of Curuzú Cuatiá and Mandisoví as to promote “development and progress.”<sup>29</sup> The areas surrounding these towns were slowly being occupied by vecinos from Corrientes, following the Jesuit expulsion.

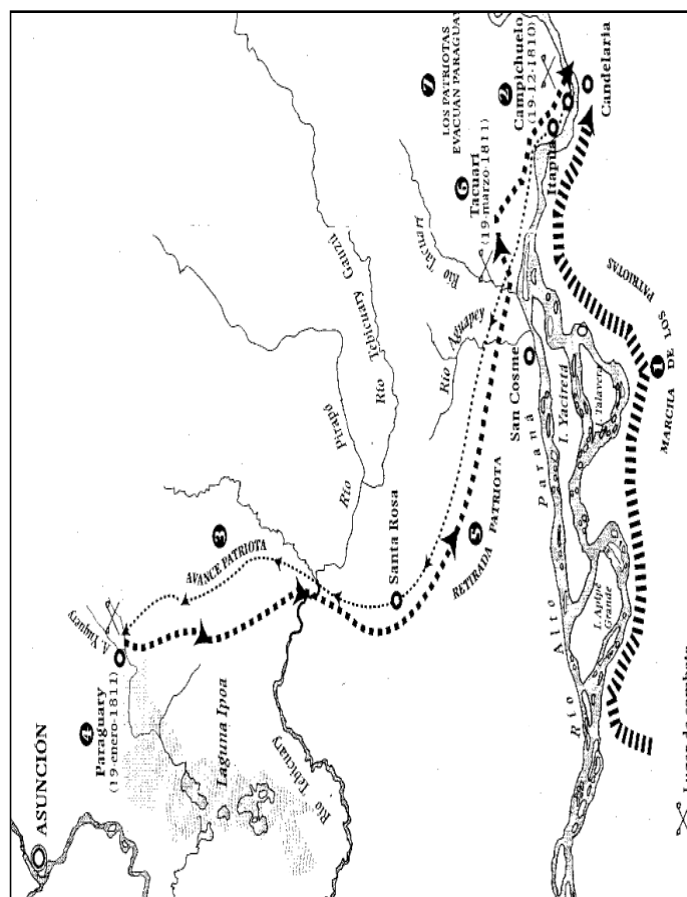


Figure 5. Manuel Belgrano's expedition to Paraguay (1810-11)<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Belgrano to Saavedra. Cuartel General de Santa Rosa, January 31, 1811, in Instituto Belgraniano Central, *Documentos para la Historia...* 3, vol. 1: 415.

<sup>29</sup> *Documentos del Archivo de Belgrano*, 3: 109-113.

<sup>30</sup> Source: José Teófilo Goyret, *La guerra de la independencia. Nueva Historia de la Nación Argentina vol. 4. La configuración de la república (1810-c. 1914)* (Buenos Aires: Planeta/Academia Nacional de la Historia, 2000), 285, as cited in Wilde, *Religión y poder*, 314.

As his promise of “freedom, property, and security” spread throughout the territory, some Indigenous peoples started to show signs of sympathy, but others refused to participate.<sup>31</sup> Along the way, he received “demonstrations of respect and affection” from Indigenous peoples of Misiones and Corrientes.<sup>32</sup> He was able to incorporate into his troops the requested Regiment of Spearmen from the town of Garzas, composed of 40 Indigenous men, accompanied with 56 horses. Another 100 men from the indigenous town of Santa Lucía y Guacarás also joined.<sup>33</sup> While a further request of men to the town of Santa Lucía was denied because “it only remains in this Pueblo sixteen Indians, totally useless,” it indicates to us that most of the men suited for combat had been sent to Belgrano’s troops.<sup>34</sup> After learning about the Regulation, some men who had “escaped to the hills” to hide started to present themselves.<sup>35</sup> The “infidels” Guaycurú people of Chaco, however, refused to side with him, in spite of being traditional enemies of the Spanish empire. This rejection indicates that, despite talks of equality, for some Indigenous groups the Buenos Aires cause did not come with the understanding of emancipation.<sup>36</sup>

For those who did join, we have no clear evidence of whether enrollment worked on a forced or voluntary basis. Since the beginning of recruitment, though, we do find indications of desertion, hinting at the idea that not every man was on board with participating. For instance,

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<sup>31</sup> Proclamation by Manuel Belgrano. Corrientes, November 1810, in Instituto Belgraniano Central, *Documentos para la Historia 3*, vol. 1: 329.

<sup>32</sup> Belgrano to the Junta. Costa Sur del Paraná, December 4, 1810, in Instituto Belgraniano Central, *Documentos para la Historia 3*, vol. 1: 338.

<sup>33</sup> José Domingo Montaña to Elías Galván, November 19, 1810, Correspondencia Oficial, t. 1, f. 121, AGPC; Elías Galván to the Junta. Corrientes, November 2, 1810. Instituto Belgraniano Central, *Documentos para la Historia 3*, vol. 1: 312.

<sup>34</sup> Pedro Allende to Elías Galván, Santa Lucía, October 20, 1810. Correspondencia Oficial t. 1, AGPC.

<sup>35</sup> Belgrano to the Junta. Itapúa, December 21, 1810. Instituto Belgraniano Central, *Documentos para la Historia 3*, vol. 1: 365.

<sup>36</sup> Manuel Belgrano to Elías Galván, Curuzuquatia, November 11, 1810. Correspondencia Oficial, t. 1, f. 119, AGPC.

Josef Luis de Madariaga, administrator of the indigenous town of Itatí and the person who was in charge of gathering troops, informed governor Galván about “people from Corrientes fugitives of the [military] service,” who were hiding in the islands located on the Paraná River, close to Paso de Yahapé.<sup>37</sup> Belgrano also started to feel that it was necessary to further instill the revolutionary ideals to the “Naturals” and “incite” in them “patriotic love,” so that they would understand why they were fighting and also the value of death in the name of the *Patria*.<sup>38</sup> We can understand this need as an indication that support was not secure.

As Belgrano entered Paraguay and the battles began, we see evidence that desertion became increasingly problematic, jeopardizing the chances for success of the expedition. The “Naturales” were amongst those who deserted the most. From a group of 150 men dispatched by Rocamora to join Belgrano in the Tebicuary River, 30 deserted before arriving to their destination, carrying with them their valuable arms.<sup>39</sup> Of the 400 remaining in the Patriotic Militia of Misiones, about 130 “or more” deserted. If we add both desertions, that accounts for about 29% of the Militia’s forces. He clothed, fed, and motivated those who chose to stay, redistributing them amongst the *Patricios* and *Arribeños* Regiments. By March, though, Belgrano had essentially given up on support from “Naturales,” as well as *Correntinos*. “I cannot count on (...) Naturales and Correntino troops,” he said.<sup>40</sup> Their “lack of instruction,” and “patriotic enthusiasm” scared them off easily. More revealing is his belief that “they [we]re alike

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<sup>37</sup> Josef Luis de Madariaga to Elias Galván, Itatí, November of 1810, Correspondencia Oficial, t. 1, f. 138v, AGPC.

<sup>38</sup> December 1810, Correspondencia Oficial, t. 1, f. 150-151, AGPC.

<sup>39</sup> Belgrano to the Junta, Tacuarí, February 17, 1811. *Instituto Belgraniano Central, Documentos para la Historia 3, vol. 1*: 439.

<sup>40</sup> Belgrano to the Junta, Tacuarí, March 7, 1811. Instituto Belgraniano Central, *Documentos para la Historia del General don Manuel Belgrano, 1792-1811* (Buenos Aires: Instituto Nacional Belgraniano), 3:1, 476.



the insurgents,” in an indication that, despite an initial desire to bring them to the patriotic cause, Belgrano had little hope of actually seeing it happening. After defeat in the battle of Tacuarí on March 9<sup>th</sup>, Belgrano informed the Junta of the status of his forces. More than 66% of the remaining troops “hid and flew.” Only 230 out of 689 stayed by his side.<sup>41</sup> Without much leverage to negotiate, Belgrano signed a surrender, withdrew his forces, and relocated to the Banda Oriental, seeking a new opportunity to help undermine resistance against the Junta Grande.

### **Reactions to Belgrano’s Expedition**

It is clear that towards the end of the expedition, Belgrano was struggling to keep the support of Indigenous groups. It is also clear that while some participated in it, most were reluctant to accept his authority and follow his leadership. Some episodes during and after his march help us unveil reasons for his inability to maintain and expand his support basis. By looking at his propositions, and the reaction that followed, we can infer that Belgrano’s lack of understanding about the social dynamics of the region, combined with his presuming attitude towards Indigenous peoples’ desire, crumpled the possibility for collaboration.

In the Regulation written by Belgrano, his desire to erase distinctions between Criollos and Indigenous peoples stands out. He eliminated the *casta* system in the army, and gave rights so that Indigenous men could participate in “civil, politic, military, and ecclesiastical

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<sup>41</sup> Belgrano to the Junta. Candelaria, March 21, 1811. *Instituto Belgraniano Central, Documentos para la Historia 3, vol. 1*: 522. Belgrano stated that his forces counted with 1,264 men. 575 of these were left to block the entrances in the frontier. Of the remaining 689, 459 flew away.

employment.”<sup>42</sup> During the foundation of Curuzú Cuatiá, he made the remark that began this chapter about how, from then on, the people of the Río de la Plata were all one and the same.<sup>43</sup>

Guillermo Wilde has identified this desire to “homogenize the Indigenous population according to the principles of those ‘born in the land’.”<sup>44</sup> In this sense, Belgrano recognized the revolutionary cause as the “American” cause, imagining that all of those who were born in America should, and would, share one common identity and participate in guaranteeing the rights of the Junta. It is as if, through the publication of a document or a couple proclamations, the indigenous status, long used to keep Indigenous peoples segregated and away from basic rights, would disappear, and be replaced by that of “American.” Many of the reforms of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, such as that of Viceroy Gabriel de Avilés, had actually tried to dilute the “Indian” category, bolstering Indigenous elites through Iberian means and logic, to reinforce a “Spanish” identity. This “cultural and political homogenization” had then started before the arrival of Belgrano.<sup>45</sup> In practice, these Indigenous men had no more connection to Belgrano than they had with the monarchic system in itself. Even that system, by recognizing them as vassals, at least provided them a legal identity, and allowed for the development of a legal tradition that sought to protect basic rights. This new government represented by Belgrano had yet to define a shape or form that came close to that.

There is no indication that Belgrano consulted with Indigenous peoples regarding their needs in this new “American” system that he was promoting. The regulation denotes a feeling

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<sup>42</sup> Reglamento enviado por Manuel Belgrano a la Junta Grande estableciendo “el Régimen Político y Administrativo y Reforma de los 30 Pueblos de las Misiones.” *Documentos del Archivo de Belgrano*, 3: 126-128.

<sup>43</sup> Fundación de Curuzú Cuatiá, *Documentos del Archivo de Belgrano*, 3: 109-113.

<sup>44</sup> Wilde, *Religión y poder*, 317.

<sup>45</sup> Wilde, 318-321.

that he knew what Indigenous groups wanted – to be freed from the community system, to engage in commerce, to move and populate new towns such as Mandisoví, and to participate in local governments following the Spanish legal and administrative tradition. From a liberal perspective, all of these changes seemed logical steps towards improvement. When we have access to indigenous voices from the period, however, we find that it was actually not an idea shared by most.<sup>46</sup> Early in 1801, one of the reforms implemented by Avilés had changed the former Jesuit Missions, liberating a portion of the Indigenous population from the community system, in which collective labor and shared ownership were combined to fulfill the missions' demands.<sup>47</sup> In this context, the indigenous Cabildo of Itatí discussed the possibility of following the same path.<sup>48</sup> In February of 1805 they deliberated and decided they were opposed to the change. Their reasoning for this was as follows: at first, they were in awe when they heard they would be “free like the Spanish, treated as such, and capable of disposing of their assets.” However, when considering the faith of the Spanish farmers that surrounded them, who did not even have the means to “bury their dead,” they came to the conclusion that they “preferred to remain in community,” as to keep a stable economic status. In their traditional system, they always had “meat, yerba, salt,” and their basic needs fulfilled. Maintaining the community system also meant keeping at least part of the indigenous political structure, and the leadership of caciques. Although we only have this one pueblo's understanding of the communal system and position regarding the changes happening at that time, but knowing the difficulties faced by

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<sup>46</sup> For a deeper exploration, see Brian P. Owensby, *New World of Gain: Europeans, Guaraní, and the Global Origins of Modern Economy* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2021).

<sup>47</sup> These reforms will be discussed more in depth in chapter 5.

<sup>48</sup> María Laura Salinas, “Trabajo, tributo, encomiendas y pueblos de indios en el nordeste argentino. Siglos XVI-XIX,” in *Revista Iberoamericana* IX, 34 (2009): 40.

Spanish settlers in the region, we can imagine they were not alone. Studies about the insertion of liberalism and the abolition of communal property in other areas show a similar pattern. In the Upper Perú, for example, Sergio Serulnikov indicated how the defense of communal land was a main cause of indigenous unrest in the late colonial period.<sup>49</sup> Relatedly, in comparing Oaxaca and Yucatán, Karen D. Caplan demonstrated indigenous attempts at reinterpreting liberalism to preserve autonomy over their land.<sup>50</sup> In New Granada, Marcela Echeverri has shown that elimination of tribute and communal land in a Creole call for equality, actually erased distinctions that had for a long time granted Indigenous peoples access to justice, and in fact “alienated” them.<sup>51</sup> The case of the pueblos of Misiones most likely followed a similar path. Belgrano’s resolution, much a product of a liberal mind that lacked consultation of Indigenous groups, more than promoting mobilization and an aspired unity, possibly clashed with indigenous understandings of land and generated discontent.

Belgrano also failed to realize the level of resistance this integration of Indigenous peoples into the “Spanish world” would receive not only from “Naturales,” but from Criollos as well. Josef Luis de Madariaga, for instance, warned the Corrientes Cabildo about the problematic nature of their support. To him, the “Naturales” were not fit for the military service, “because the Indians are useless for a commitment of this nature”, and “of little zeal.”<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, Madariaga was afraid of their participation, as armed Indigenous people could become “perhaps our own executioners”. Madariaga, the administrator of Itatí, belonged to what William Parish

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<sup>49</sup> Serulnikov, *Subverting colonial authority*.

<sup>50</sup> Karen D. Caplan, *Indigenous Citizens: Local Liberalism in Early National Oaxaca and Yucatán* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010).

<sup>51</sup> Echeverri, “Sovereignty has lost its rights.”

<sup>52</sup> Jose Luis de Madariaga, Itatí, November 16, 1810; Jose Luis de Madariaga, Itati, Nov 19, 1810, in *Correspondencia Oficial*, t. 1, ff. 125, 133, AGPC.

Robertson called “the great people of Corrientes.”<sup>53</sup> His pronoun choice indicated a clear separation between “us”, the Spanish descendants, and “them”, the Indians, who, he argued, were not reliable. He used his own experience to justify his view to the Cabildo, indicating the existence of previous conflicts between the two groups. He possibly fit the description of what Belgrano called the “*Mandonos* (Bossy leaders) who treated [Indigenous peoples] according to the old style, as animals, more or less.”<sup>54</sup> In this sense, discrimination and social prejudice still played a tremendous role in the minds and hearts of those interacting in the region. It is also not difficult to imagine that being recruited by someone like Madariaga was unlikely to inspire these Indigenous men to fully adhere to the cause and believe that meaningful change would actually occur. Economically and socially, then, this integration seemed far more difficult than what Belgrano imagined. A society that was deeply rooted in racial segregation and caste hierarchy could not possibly become cohesive and erase centuries of conflict, exploitation, and discrimination overnight.

Besides the lack of support from these Indigenous peoples, within the Criollo elite, too, support for the cause was problematic. Talking about Galván’s actions that should favor the expedition, Belgrano communicated seeing “more expressions on paper than actual deeds.”<sup>55</sup> Sometime after the expedition had started, and following failed attempts to enter Paraguay, Belgrano confided to Cornelio Saavedra, president of the Junta Grande, that he had “absolutely

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<sup>53</sup> The Parish Brothers, British salesmen, visited the territory of Corrientes in 1815. They registered their impressions of the trips and society in *Letters on South America, comprising Travels on the Banks of the Paraná and Rio de la Plata*, v. 1 (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1843), 57.

<sup>54</sup> Belgrano to the Junta. Tacuarí, February 17, 1811, in Instituto Belgraniano Central, *Documentos para la Historia 3, vol. 1*: 439.

<sup>55</sup> Belgrano to the Junta. Tacuarí, November 23, 1810, in Instituto Belgraniano Central, *Documentos para la Historia 3, vol. 1*: 452.

no trust in the correntinos.”<sup>56</sup> In fact, despite the offer of about 300 men from Corrientes to join his forces, he chose to assign them to Paso del Rey, away from his troops. Belgrano could not observe in them “actions or efforts (...) needed in situations like this.”<sup>57</sup> He had lost trust in the support of those people living close to the border with Paraguay. As stated before, Belgrano started to realize that residents from Corrientes had much more in common with Paraguayans than with a presumed central power hailing from Buenos Aires. The strong social connections, allied with unclear boundaries between the territories of Corrientes, Misiones, and the southern part of Paraguay effectively posed a challenge when gathering support and demonstrated that the region was far from feeling united under an undisputed umbrella of *Americanidad*.

Belgrano’s expedition to Paraguay also exposed another problem that followed the May Revolution. Many times, the pueblos were forced to neglect their own defense in order to help the general cause. The expedition essentially devastated the defense lines of many areas on which it passed. The situation was especially critical in this borderland area, constricted by Royalists, the Portuguese, and unruly Indigenous groups. Santa Fe was left almost defenseless when Belgrano commandeered their forces. As a result, it was brutally attacked by Indigenous groups and its production and economy greatly damaged.<sup>58</sup> In Misiones, Rocamora complained that part of the border was left open, risking Portuguese entrance, an occurrence that actually took place some months after. Corrientes too was left without men and ammunition, as Belgrano

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<sup>56</sup> Belgrano to Saavedra. Cuartel General de Santa Rosa, January 31, 1811, in Instituto Belgraniano Central, *Documentos para la Historia 3, vol. 1*: 414.

<sup>57</sup> Belgrano to the Junta, Candelaria, March 15, 1811, in Instituto Belgraniano Central, *Documentos para la Historia 3, vol. 1*: 511.

<sup>58</sup> Sonia Tedeschi, “Santa Fe en el litoral fluvial rioplatense. Los enlaces entre la economía y la política en época de revolución y guerras,” in *Historia Económica del Cono Sur de América. La Era de las Revoluciones y la Independencia*, ed. Hernán Asdrúbal Silva (Mexico, DF: Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia, 2010), 708-709.

took its forces with him when leaving to the Banda Oriental. Unable to defend its limits, in April of 1811 Corrientes was once again invaded by Paraguayan forces, which were now much more aggressive and occupied the territory.

We see, then, that despite a seeming desire to collaborate with the general cause at least from a sector of the Criollo side, on the ground vecinos started to feel the toll of war. It became increasingly difficult to fulfill Buenos Aires' requests, especially when it came to the expense of their own safety. Besides that, even though they collaborated and joined the expedition, many of these residents would find themselves having to fight with their own families and friends on the other side of the Paraná River. For the Indigenous groups, whose support was considered crucial for the success of the cause, Belgrano's changes to their legal status did not resonate as he expected to attract support, mostly because something of these changes actually ignored indigenous perspectives on these matters. As resources shortened and problems increased, the lack of a legitimate central power that united sectors of society and provided meaning to their struggle became evident.

Despite the low level of support to Belgrano's expedition, looking back, it is undeniable that the expedition shook the region militarily and politically. At least on the surface, some of his proposed changes opened talks that would serve for later manifestations for equality. Slowly, sectors of the society who had been marginalized for so long would find spaces for political engagement. On the downside, the expedition also made much more evident the absence of an administration that was able to instill authority and legality, to lead the process of state organization required following the disintegration of colonial Río de la Plata.

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*Political Debates Within Revolutionary Ranks*

In a context that lacked clear political structures, Buenos Aires' singular and costly decisions started to be questioned by other provinces, and accusations of an excessive authority that had not been formally granted or discussed sparked conflict within the revolutionary side as well. As previously mentioned, the Junta demanded sacrifices that many times placed the provinces in dire conditions. Corrientes, for instance, lost a sizeable chunk of its territory following a deal between Buenos Aires and Asunción. As the latter had gone through a revolutionary process of its own in May of 1811 and was extending its zone of influence, to stop this alternative source of authority Buenos Aires decided to recognize Asunción's junta, if Asunción recognized the power of Buenos Aires. The agreement, signed in October of 1811, established geographic boundaries and jurisdictions. Paraguay was given a considerable portion of land north of the Paraná River that was traditionally occupied by correntinos. To the residents there, the decision made it clear that Buenos Aires' interests and desire came before those of Corrientes. It sparked ire throughout the ranks of local political groups. Only two months after the treaty, Galván wrote to the Junta warning about "the lack of attention that [Corrientes] has deserved in more than 160 years, since its foundation." He urged Buenos Aires to act differently, if the Junta had any hope of getting their support.<sup>59</sup>

Close to the Uruguay River, the politics regarding the relationship with Montevideo was also bringing discontent. Now as the sole symbol of the Crown's power in the region, the conflicts to stop Montevideo's resistance spread along the shores of the Uruguay River.

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<sup>59</sup> Elías Galván to the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata. Corrientes, January 17, 1812, in *AA* vol. 8, 7.



However, after the constant requests for resources from the area, the First Triumvirate signed a controversial armistice with the Spanish authorities, which gave control over the Banda Oriental as well as several villages in Entre Ríos to the viceroy. Many pueblos responded negatively, seeing the treaty as harmful to their rights. From all the areas in the Littoral, criticism towards Buenos Aires' centralist policies flourished.

In this context of high militarization, local leaders emerged as expressive commanders, gathering support along the way in order to defend the revolutionary cause, while also proposing alternative views of state organization and political representation. These leaders managed increasing numbers of contingents, formed by peoples of various ethnic groups and economic backgrounds, and spread their leadership across the region. They also became a component of this intricate power struggle, fighting on a provincial and local level. One of the names that took the lead in opposing Buenos Aires' decision was that of José Gervasio Artigas, from the Banda Oriental.

Artigas rejected the armistice with Spanish authorities and moved his troops to the western side of the Uruguay River, weakening the Triumvirate's forces. He was accompanied by about 15,000 people, who brought their possessions with them and settled in Ayuí Grande, a stream in Salto Chico, nowadays the city of Concordia, Entre Ríos. In this movement, known as the "Oriental Exodus," it became clear that a good portion of the population in the Banda Oriental preferred to abandon the territory and their properties rather than succumb to viceroy Elío or the Portuguese's rule, in an indication of a clear and conscious decision for autonomy.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Schmit, *Ruina y resurrección*, 160.

The area, already suffering attacks by the Spanish and Portuguese, became ground for regional conflicts that divided politics along centralist – mostly Buenos Aires allied - and locally-based, autonomist, propositions of government. Artigas, a former captain of *blandengues*, the rural police used by the Crown to watch the frontier, became the leading figure of this latter viewpoint. As the scarcity of resources became more evident, and Buenos Aires' endless requests did not seem to weigh in the local needs, the Littoral became a fertile ground for his ideas to prosper. At the core of this dispute, were discrepancies regarding the understanding of sources of legitimacy, and the meaning of sovereignty. Besides the revolutionary leadership, these debates also resonated within Indigenous groups, who engaged with available concepts and proposed their own applications to the political questions of the period.

## Chapter 3. Finding the Voice of Freedom.

### Popular Understandings of Sovereignty in the Mesopotamia (1811-1813)

“When creating us, God gave us Freedom, and we know that, before him, we are all equal, and the same before the Law.”<sup>1</sup> With these words, Domingo Manduré addressed the Indigenous Cabildo of Yapeyú, to let them know the principles that guided him and his men to fight against Bernardo Pérez Planes and the government of Buenos Aires. Manduré, who descended from a family of caciques in Yapeyú and who possessed land and prestige in the region, was trying to convince those who he called his “brothers,” the Cabildo officials, to stop helping Pérez Planes, a fervent defender of the ideals promoted by Buenos Aires.<sup>2</sup> In his view, Pérez Planes had only his own interest in mind, and in this manner had been working to persuade the Cabildo that it was natural that them, as Indigenous men, were subject to “superiors.” He urged them to see that it was time that the people from Yapeyú “govern [them]selves,” because their fight was based on the “Natural Right (...) that all of the pueblos have of being free.”<sup>3</sup>

As a strategy to demonstrate his knowledge about the vocabulary and concepts at play during these moments of state formation, and also as a means to explain the difference between Natural Law and the Pact of Subjection, this communication between Manduré and the Cabildo

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<sup>1</sup> “Sabemos que dios nos dotó al criarnos con la libertad, y sabemos que ante él somos iguales, y lo mismo ante la ley.” Domingo Manduré to the Corregidor, Cabildo and Mayordomo of Yapeyú. Campamiento de Arapey, September 8, 1813, in *AA* vol. 11, 392.

<sup>2</sup> The actual ethnicity of Manduré is not clear. Most historians suggest he was Guaraní (Frega, 2008; Poenitz 1993, to name a few). However, others suggest that he was of Minuane descent (Fradkin, 2010; Di Meglio, 2012). He owned land in Salto Chico.

<sup>3</sup> “Es tiempo que (...) dirijanse Vms. de por si. (...) el derecho natural sobre la defensa de nuestra libertad, y el derecho que acompaña a todos los pueblos de ser libres.” Domingo Manduré to the Corregidor, Cabildo and Mayordomo of Yapeyú. Campamiento de Arapey, September 8, 1813, in *AA* vol. 11, 392.

is an example of how Indigenous groups actively engaged in the political conflicts of the period, not only from a military, but also from an ideological standpoint.<sup>4</sup> In the disputes that were intensifying within the revolutionary band, we find a plurality of Indigenous voices discussing concepts such as sovereignty and freedom, and using those to define loyalty. While, as we saw, representatives of Buenos Aires like Pérez Planes were still able to gather their support, José Artigas emerged as the key figure that would represent a more encompassing political project. In Manduré's words, Artigas' "intent is none other than we defend our natural right."<sup>5</sup> This chapter will delineate what his main views were, how the Indigenous groups of the region first received them, and what were some of the elements that enabled him to successfully activate popular political participation. The key to understand this collaboration lies in Artigas' respect of indigenous social dynamics and lifestyle, but, above all, the opportunity that these Indigenous groups found to become dynamic agents during this context of change, as purveyors of alternative state models and also as decision-makers, rather than just receptacles and followers of instructions.

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### *Sovereignty in the Political Discourse of Independence*

The growing institutional uncertainty after the May Revolution was fueled by the Triumvirate's hesitant stance regarding the territory's connection with Spain. Despite rejecting allegiance to the

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<sup>4</sup> "El derecho natural es uno, y el derecho de libertad que dicen Vms otro. La sujeción a nuestros superiores." Domingo Manduré to the Corregidor, Cabildo and Mayordomo of Yapeyú. Campamento de Arapey, September 8, 1813, in *AA vol.* 11, 392.

<sup>5</sup> "El intento de nuestro general es que defendamos nuestro derecho que es natural." Domingo Manduré to Joaquín José Mendan, Alcalde de 1er voto in Yapeyú. Campamento de Arapey, September 8 1813, in *AA vol.* 11, 391.

Council of Regency, the Revolutionary government made no formal declaration of independence. In 1811, the armistice with the Spanish authorities alarmed those with strong independentist aspirations. Furthermore, the Cabildos and provinces had not been able to coincide on a political model to govern the territory. The discussions hailed very much from different interpretations regarding the origin of sovereignty. Based on the principle of retroversion, when Ferdinand 7<sup>th</sup> was taken prisoner, the “people” recovered their sovereignty. The new government in Buenos Aires now debated whether it was indivisible or not.<sup>6</sup> The communications that went out to the interior right after the composition of the *junta* calling for representatives implied that sovereignty had returned not only to the *pueblo* (people), but rather to the *pueblos* (towns) that occupied the territory and should be responsible for defining the new type of government. After that initial understanding shared by the first Junta and the Junta Grande, the first Triumvirate that occupied power in September of 1811 was guided by an antagonist interpretation that envisioned Buenos Aires as the “center of [the] glorious revolution” because of its role as the viceroyalty’s capital, its greater economic resources and “enlightenment.”<sup>7</sup> This alternation of interpretations provided space for political instability – and the internal conflicts that emerged were very much a result of that hesitation, amplified by the strains caused by continuous war.

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<sup>6</sup> José Carlos Chiaramonte, “Autonomía e Independencia en el Río de la Plata, 1808-1810,” *Historia Mexicana*, vol. 58, no. 1, (2008): 325–368. I will further present these debates in chapter 5.

<sup>7</sup> Chiaramonte, “Autonomía e Independencia,” 100.

### **José Artigas and the “Individual Sovereignty of the Pueblos”**

While the officials of the First Triumvirate were the main representatives of the view that placed Buenos Aires at the center stage, local leaders in the provinces strengthened their defense of local autonomies. José Gervasio Artigas became one of the main defenders of the rights of the pueblos.<sup>8</sup> His figure is fundamental to understand the political process taking place in the littoral during the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Artigas was born in Montevideo in 1764. Besides being raised in a traditional Criollo family and receiving the best education possible in the city, he took part in the rural activities of his family's estancia and developed a strong relationship with the rural world, having lived with Charrua Indigenous groups during his early adult life. It is possible that he may have engaged in contraband before joining the unit of *blandengues* in 1797, after being granted amnesty in a Crown's movement that sought to expand its military personnel. His main function during that time was to patrol the frontier and stop Portuguese attacks, moving around the territory of the Missions, including Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina. This experience gave him a deep knowledge of the region and the frontier dynamics. Artigas ascended quickly in the army ranks, having participated in the defense against the British Invasions of 1806 and 1807, thus winning respect inside the corporation.

With the May Revolution in 1810 and the immediate reaction and transference of the viceroyalty's capital to Montevideo, Artigas, still in the royalist troops, was sent to Entre Ríos, but deserted his post as Captain in February of 1811 and joined the Buenos Aires forces.<sup>9</sup> He was

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<sup>8</sup> A Blandengue was a Cavalry lancer whose mission was to watch the frontier. Leonel Cabrera Pérez, “Cuando los ‘infelices’ eran perseguidos...,” in *Nuevas miradas el torno al Artiguismo*, ed. Ana Frega and Ariadna Islas (Montevideo: Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación de la Universidad de la República, 2001), 237-246.

<sup>9</sup> *AA* vol. 3, 419.

appointed Lieutenant-colonel and defeated the Spanish forces in the Battle of Las Piedras on May of 1811, opening way for the first blockade of Montevideo. After Buenos Aires signed the armistice with Elío and the Oriental Exodus took place, the conflicts between Artigas and Buenos Aires only deteriorated, but his relationship with the littoral cities and peoples was reinforced.

Artigas has traditionally been placed in the historiography as one of the first advocates of a federalist model for the Río de la Plata government.<sup>10</sup> More recent interpretations actually connect his ideas to the defense of a Confederation rather than a federal State, yet recognizing he was planting the seeds to a transition that saw more value in the independence process seen in North America than the French Revolution.<sup>11</sup> In his own writings, Artigas defended the principle of “individual sovereignty of the pueblos,” whose association should form a “defensive and offensive confederation.”<sup>12</sup> According to Washington Reyes Abadie, the Artiguist model offered to the people of the Río de la Plata, “the first useful and practical integration format, and provided the instrument for an ‘immediate’ government capable of assuring the direct exercise of their “individual sovereignties” without demeaning national unity.”<sup>13</sup> The model also brought back early *pactista* notions, anchored in a contract between multiple sovereign bodies, present in

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<sup>10</sup> Facundo A Arce and Manuel Demonte Vitali, *Artigas: Heraldo Del Federalismo Rioplatense* (Paraná: Nueva Impresora, 1950); Pablo Blanco Acevedo, *El Federalismo de Artigas y la Independencia Nacional* (Montevideo: Impresora uruguaya S. A., 1939); Eugenio Petit Muñoz, *Artigas: Federalismo Y Soberanía* (Montevideo: Universidad de la República, Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias, Departamento de Publicaciones, 1988); Emilio Ravignani, *La Participación de Artigas en la Génesis del Federalismo Rioplatense, 1813-1820* (Buenos Aires: Impresor, 1939).

<sup>11</sup> To José Carlos Chiaramonte, we can only talk about federalism in the Río de la Plata after the 1830s. Earlier versions of political alliances contemplated the permanence of individual sovereignties hailing from each State – towns or provinces – that kept control over the inhabitants of their jurisdiction, being thus considered a confederation. Chiaramonte, *Ciudades, Provincias, Estados*, 119-120, 157.

<sup>12</sup> We can grasp his ideals in the famous Instructions of the year XIII, which we will later explore.

<sup>13</sup> Washington Reyes Abadie, *Artigas y el federalismo en el Río de la Plata*, Segunda parte. (Montevideo: EBO, 2006), 62.

the initial installation of administrative institutions in the Spanish American colonies. His opposition to a more centralized version of authority demanded by Buenos Aires proved fitting for the Littoral's increasingly dire situation following the May Revolution. Contrary to what we saw with Belgrano in the previous chapter, it also appealed to popular groups.

*Al Otro Lado del Río: the Artiguist Ideals Cross the Uruguay River*

After the armistice of 1811, contrary to *porteño* expectations and showing that Artigas' suspicions were correct, the Portuguese remained in Spanish territory. Slowly, they advanced their "Observation Army" through the territories of Entre Ríos, the Banda Oriental, and especially Misiones. As they carried out their movements, the influence of Buenos Aires on the Mesopotamia declined, and a new political force represented by Artigas and his ideas of local autonomy and sovereignty emerged. With renewed authority, the First Triumvirate replaced Rocamora and appointed him as *Teniente Gobernador Justicia Mayor y Capitán de Guerra* of Yapeyú and its surrounding villages, counting on his large experience policing the frontier area. He was to receive the help of Elías Galván, who was assigned as Chief of the Operations and "Army Commander" against the Portuguese invaders. Artigas established himself at the Daymán River to orchestrate defense, reaching out to the many local commanders in the towns located in Corrientes and Misiones. It is during this moment of connecting with these local leaders that Artigas strengthened his influence in the Mesopotamia.

The open lines of communication to organize the defense provided an opportunity for the exchange of political opinions. There was extensive written exchange between Artigas and Galván starting in November of 1811, acknowledging how the Portuguese were trying to "use



the circumstance of the period, to take possession of the Uruguay [river]”.<sup>14</sup> At that point, even though Galván was aware of the conflicts between Artigas and Buenos Aires, they exchanged shared ideals to “accomplish [the creation of] our great system,” indicating that, at least on the surface, there was a notion of unity amongst Criollos.<sup>15</sup> However, as early as January of 1812, Artigas was mentioning “a league” to Galván, to share the “laurels [of victory] (...) to be distributed to the citizens [of Corrientes]”.<sup>16</sup> A league, his preferred format, able to maintain local sovereignties while working in unison against a common enemy. Soon after, Galván ordered the commanders of the various towns under Corrientes jurisdiction to gather volunteers. He also formed a Veteran Infantry Regiment to aid whenever needed. The forces of Corrientes were requested to rapidly march and defend the frontiers of Misiones.

Galván’s communications during the period serve as an example of the complex situation faced by local leaders during these moments of fragile state organization and malleable boundaries. While having been told by Buenos Aires to work under Artigas’ military leadership, he had to wait for Buenos Aires’ approval before marching. He was keen to help, but hesitant in leaving the city of Corrientes unprotected. That area was, he argued, a “point” that “secured all of the territories between the [Paraná and Uruguay] rivers and guarded the capital’s back.”<sup>17</sup> But the Portuguese kept advancing, invading towns throughout the Littoral, with a marked degree of violence. In April, Galván received Buenos Aires’ approval, transferred political authority of Corrientes to Joaquín Legal y Córdoba and left the city. Followed by a contingent of almost 500

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<sup>14</sup> José Artigas to Elías Galván, Gobernador de Corrientes, Cuartel General en Arroyo Negro, November 14, 1811, Correspondencia Oficial, t. 2, f. 120, AGPC.

<sup>15</sup> Elías Galván to José Gervasio Artigas. Corrientes, January 2, 1812, in Ramírez Braschi, *Patriotas y Sarracenos. La Lucha Revolucionaria en la provincia de Corrientes. 1810-1812* (Corrientes: Moglia, 2009), 53.

<sup>16</sup> Artigas to Galván, January 23, 1812, Correspondencia Oficial, t. 2, f. 173, AGPC.

<sup>17</sup> Galván to the Government of the United Provinces, January 3, 1812, in *AA* vol. 8, 1-3.

men between infantry, artillery and cavalry, he marched to Santo Tomé, in Misiones.<sup>18</sup> Throughout the course of the campaign, Buenos Aires constantly inquired him about Artigas' connections to the Paraguayan authorities, questioning his abilities to represent what they considered was the patriotic cause.<sup>19</sup> This dynamics evidences their desire to keep control over Artigas' movements and exemplifies the fear that he would strengthen his leadership over the territory. The letters also illustrate how the institutional instability confused local leaders that had to juggle conflicting directives, generated a sense of distrust in the political authorities, and affected military decisions about the territory's defense.

Besides Corrientes and the Banda Oriental, the peoples of Misiones also contributed to the campaign against the Portuguese, mostly with human resources, through the leadership of deputy governor Bernardo Pérez Planes. The towns of Apóstoles, Santo Tomé, and Yapeyú received constant visits and intrusions from their Lusitano neighbors. During the attacks, they targeted mostly cattle, but also sought to "seduce" the Indians towards to the Portuguese side.<sup>20</sup> Even the Paraguayans decided to help, by sending troops and successfully protecting the region around Candelaria. With this coalition, in a matter of a few months, they were able to push the Portuguese back to the other side of the frontier. Using British mediation, in May of 1812 Buenos Aires negotiated the Herrera-Rademaker treaty, halting the occupation of the Littoral by Portuguese troops, who relocated to the eastern side of the Uruguay River.<sup>21</sup> The First Triumvirate ordered Artigas, despite his refusal, to relinquish command of his troops to Manuel

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<sup>18</sup> Galván to the Government of the United Provinces, April 3, 1812, in *AA* vol. 8, 27.

<sup>19</sup> Artigas to Galván, Salto Chico, January 19, 1812, in *AA* vol. 8, 10.

<sup>20</sup> Celedonio Jose del Castillo to the Supreme Central government of the UPRP, Apóstoles, January 21, 1812, in *AA* vol. 8, 47; Fernando Otorgués to José Artigas, Santo Tomé, May 11, 1812, in *AA* vol. 8, 66.

<sup>21</sup> Alfredo Poenitz, Esteban Snihur, and Jorge Francisco Machón, *La herencia misionera: identidad cultural de una region Americana* (Posadas: El Territorio, 1999).

Sarratea. They also named Galván Lieutenant Governor of all the mission territory in a power move to alienate the Oriental's influence over the territory.

As the conflicts with Buenos Aires increased, Artigas' influence over the Littoral grew. In February of 1811, the Cry of Asencio, when the people of Montevideo finally challenged Spanish authority in the Banda Oriental, initiated a movement of people towards the expansion of their rights.<sup>22</sup> This movement gained strength with the Oriental Exodus that followed the rejection of the armistice with Spain and propelled Artigas' leadership beyond the Uruguay River. Massively supported by the well-established vecinos that marched alongside his troops, this leadership also collected support of smaller landowners, peons, and Indigenous groups along the way – markedly the Charrúas and Minuanes that inhabited the Banda Oriental.<sup>23</sup> On December of 1811, Artigas was telling Galván he had the “honor of directing” six thousand armed citizens.<sup>24</sup> The Portuguese occupation and the organization of resistance worked to bolster this influence even more deeply over the Littoral territory. Artigas was in close contact with the military commanders of Misiones, Corrientes, and Entre Ríos. Furthermore, he was in contact with the towns and villages that were established on the territory and were having to pay the high cost of war and had their economic expansion paused.

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<sup>22</sup> See the classic book of Pivel Devoto, *Raíces coloniales de la Revolución Oriental de 1811* (Montevideo: Monteverde, 1952).

<sup>23</sup> Cited in Ana Frega, “La virtud y poder: la soberanía particular de los pueblos en el proyecto artiguista” *Caudillismos Rioplatenses. Nuevas miradas a un viejo problema* ed. Noemí Goldan and Ricardo Salvatore (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1998). From *AA* vol. 6, 73-82.

<sup>24</sup> José Artigas to Elias Galván. Cuartel General de Daiman, December 7<sup>th</sup> 1811. Correspondencia Oficial, t. 2, f. 145, AGPC.

### **The Assembly of the Year 1813: Clashing Models of State Organization**

Despite the ongoing conflicts with the Spanish and the disorder that was seen in the territory, in the beginning of 1813 we see an attempt at state organization in the Río de la Plata. The Second Triumvirate convoked what became known as the Assembly of the Year XIII, which sought to institutionally define the government of the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata. Even though it did not succeed in fully declaring independence or establishing a definite government format, it brought significant changes to the territory, such as the recognition of a “sovereignty of pueblos,” the Law of Wombs that would progressively end slavery, freedom of press, the abolition of indigenous servitude, and the removal of references to the Spanish King from documents and money. Representatives from all over the territory were summoned to join. Buenos Aires worked to keep majority, and also declared the representatives as “national deputies”, instead of provincial ones, in a clear move to remove inclinations towards provincial interests or the division of sovereignty in the debates.

Upon hearing about the convocation, Artigas, who had crossed back to the Eastern side of the Uruguay River in the last months of 1812, called for a Congress to select the Banda Oriental representatives and direct them regarding which points they should defend. The document crafted by Artigas, known as the *Instrucciones del año XIII* (Instructions of 1813), lays out the core of his beliefs and contains key elements that defined *rioplatense* politics during the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Amongst his instructions were his insistence for a formal declaration of independence from Spain, the rejection of all monarchic rights and the declaration of a Republican format; the organization of a Confederation that unified, with a “reciprocal pact,” all of the Provinces, so that they would protect each other without surrendering their inviolable Sovereignty; the promotion of equality, freedom, and security to all Citizens and Pueblos –

including the former missions currently occupied by the Portuguese. The ideas contained in the instructions became the core of the project – the “System” – that he tried to inspire and apply through the whole Littoral. For the Banda Oriental specifically, Artigas also argued for the creation of an independent province, in which each little pueblo within it would combine their rights to compose a province of “free pueblos,” the *Provincia Oriental*.<sup>25</sup> His political understandings clashed, as it can be imagined, with the centralist rhetoric of Buenos Aires. In a duplicitous move, the Triumvirate then rejected the incorporation of Artigas’ emissaries in the congress, alleging their election had not followed the established protocol. We can fairly state their decision was influenced by political reasons, since other provinces that had not followed the same protocol still had their representatives accepted. Without the acceptance of most of the Banda Oriental representatives, the institutional stability that was the congress’ desired outcome died before being born. Only a year later, in March of 1814, the government of the United Provinces officially recognized the existence of the Oriental Province.

When Artigas crossed back to the Banda Oriental after the Treaty with the Portuguese, the Second Siege of Montevideo had already begun. He joined the siege in January 1813 following Manuel de Sarratea’s withdrawal after the Battle of Cerrito. There, he worked to solidify his understandings of what he called the “individual sovereignty of pueblos” in the campaña. Though united in their fight together against the Spanish barricaded in Montevideo, Buenos Aires refused to bring his ideas into the debate at the Assembly. In April, during the Congress to elect the Banda Oriental’s representatives, Artigas recognized the main issue dividing them: “It will be three years since our revolution, and we are still lacking the safeguard

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<sup>25</sup> Ana Frega, “La virtud y poder” in *Caudillismos*, 102. Complete documentation can be consulted in *AA* vol. 9.

to the popular right.”<sup>26</sup> At that moment, it became clear that two very opposite political alternatives would be clashing to establish their authority in the Río de la Plata. Buenos Aires was sending a clear message that Artigas’ authority over the territory would not be accepted. In the former capital’s perspective, he was a threat not only because of the ideas he proposed, but also because of his ability to bring them to fruition. As early as May of 1811 we find references to his leadership and capacity to make adversaries “shake”. His support basis was varied, including but not limited to *gauchos*, deserters, mixed-race (“*casta*”) soldiers, making him the “boss of the countryside” (*jefe de la campaña*) with an “extraordinary knowledge.”<sup>27</sup> Many of the descriptions of those who came in contact with him, either to work on his side or not, underscored his humble appearance and high eloquence, which served to connect with the people of the countryside as well as the elites.<sup>28</sup>

### **Collaboration Between Artigas and the Popular Groups in the Mesopotamia**

Artigas’ connection to popular groups especially raised concern from Buenos Aires’ authorities. Social upheaval was a feared consequence of the revolutionary process in the Río de la Plata and any alterations that exceeded that of giving Criollos political power were seen as a threat to the social order. We observe this caution in communications between the Government of Buenos Aires and the countryside. A missive from November of 1811 to the Cabildo of Corrientes mentioned the existence of “unrest of grave transcendence to the public peace [and] the general

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<sup>26</sup> Artigas to the Pueblo Oriental, Congreso de Tres Cruces, Montevideo, April 4, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 68.

<sup>27</sup> José María Salazar to the Navy’s Secretary of State. Montevideo, May 1, 1811 in *AA* vol. 3, 444.

<sup>28</sup> For example, J. P. and W. P. Robertson, *Letters on South America*; Dámaso Antonio Larrañaga, *Diario del viaje de Montevideo a Paysandú*.

cause” that should be contained.<sup>29</sup> Later, in April of 1812, a letter to the Cabildo of Santa Lucía indicated the need to “watch over very carefully that no people that could incite revolutions or ideas contrary to this government entered the Pueblos”, and that anyone caught doing so should be arrested and persecuted.<sup>30</sup> As the military movements and ideological discrepancies advanced, we see Artigas being accused of most of the complaints about social unrest and disturbances. According to General Hilarión de la Quintana, Artigas was “vulcanizing the campaña behind appearances of union, prestigiously tying friends with the same rope that he will then use to imprison them”.<sup>31</sup> His men, especially, were circulating the territory causing destruction, committing acts of violence, and generating instability in the military. According to military commander José Ambrosio Carranza, Fernando Otorgués was killing soldiers from the Buenos Aires army. Close to the region of Salto (nowadays Concordia, Entre Ríos), Domingo Manduré, Gregorio Escalante, and Felix Carrasco were agitating the troops to desert and join them.<sup>32</sup> Particularly concerning was Artigas’ alliance with the Indigenous groups, namely the Charrúas and Minuanes. The latter were considered “extremely prejudicial to the liberal ideals of [the] Supreme Government, because evil-intended minds [could] find support in them and never let the inhabitants in peace,” in a clear reference to Artigas’ mobilizing abilities.<sup>33</sup> Indeed some

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<sup>29</sup> The Supreme Government of Buenos Aires to the Cabildo of Corrientes. Buenos Aires, November 19, 1811 in *Correspondencia Oficial*, t. 2, f. 139, AGPC.

<sup>30</sup> The Supreme Government of Buenos Aires to the Cabildo of Santa Lucía. Buenos Aires, April 1, 1812 in *Correspondencia Oficial*, t. 2, f. 232, AGPC.

<sup>31</sup> Hilario de la Quintana to the Supreme Government of Buenos Aires, Villa de Concepción del Uruguay, April 14, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 314.

<sup>32</sup> Jose Ambrosio Carranza. Estancia de Acosta, October 21, 1812 in *AA* vol. 10, 226.

<sup>33</sup> Joaquin Nuñez Prates to Manuel de Sarratea. Paysandú, September 8, 1812 in *AA* vol. 10, 159.

Charrúas marched to join his forces, under the Caciquillo D. Manuel Artigas' command.<sup>34</sup> Likewise, Criollo leaders warned the Supreme Government about possible links between the Guaraní and Artigas, who was supposedly trying to getting them to “rebel.”<sup>35</sup> Throughout communications between Buenos Aires officials, we see a continuous concern regarding the strengthening of this collaboration and the risks that could come with giving some autonomy to marginalized groups.

While Artigas' connections to popular groups bolstered his influence over the region, part of the local elite became somewhat skeptical of his platform. If his propositions of a confederation were ideal for local aspirations of autonomy, altering the social order was not a desired effect anticipated by privileged groups. As the movements increased, the Artiguist groups motioned around the territory, killing cattle, commandeering armament, and pillaging villages. While this was a common way to sustain military actions back then, this connection between the presence of his supporters and unleashed chaos was strategic for his opponents who wanted to paint them as enemies of the order. Letters from vecinos complaining about the devastation of their estancias were commonly used to compose an image of savagery and barbarism associated with Artigas' followers, who should be annihilated for the good of the “Patria.”<sup>36</sup> This criticism was used as a tool to discredit the movement, and Artigas' ranks.

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<sup>34</sup> Jose Ambrosio Carranza. Estancia de Acosta, September 21, 1812 in *AA* vol. 10, 193. Manuel “Antonio” Artigas - the Caciquillo's origins are not yet determined or why he received the name Artigas. Some authors such as Carlos Maggi have indicated he was a Charrua leader whom Artigas called “son.” Not to be confused with Manuel Francisco Artigas, José Gervasio's brother. Carlos Maggi, *Artigas y su hijo el caciquillo* (Montevideo: Editorial Fin de Siglo, 1992).

<sup>35</sup> Bernardo Pérez Planes to the Supreme Government of the Río de la Plata. Yapeyú, September 30, 1812 in *AA* vol. 10, 205.

<sup>36</sup> Jose Ignacio Aguirre to Elías Galván, San Roque, February 24<sup>th</sup> 1812 in *Correspondencia Oficial*, t. 2, f. 210, AGPC.



We have already seen representatives of the lower classes engaging in the political conflicts of the period. Many of those who composed Belgrano's forces hailed from the marginalized shares of society, especially the Indigenous groups. Belgrano even counted with the support of Afro-Americans to help with mobilization – we know of his negotiation with Cerda, a “*mulatillo*” that, in spite of a background of crime, was of “much influence” in the region and could be “worth” having on their side.<sup>37</sup> Differently from Belgrano's experiences, though, in Artigas' project marginalized groups assumed prominent places, in the army as well as in shaping the rhetoric of his project, with the proposal of measures that sought to end the long subjugation to which many had been subject during the colonial period. We will now explore how this support came into fruition in the Mesopotamia between 1811 and 1813, in the context of the first Portuguese invasion and the offensive against the Spanish resistance. By strongly engaging in the military movements and political discussions of the period, these marginalized groups, especially Indigenous populations, helped define Artigas' project for the region, and also exposed the lack of political unity by deepening pre-existing fissures in a fragile central power.

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<sup>37</sup> Manuel Belgrano to Elías Galvan, Curuzuquatia, November 11, 1810. Correspondencia Oficial, Tomo 1, AGPC.

*The “Naturales” take the political stage in the Mesopotamia*

Nowhere else in the region can we see such an active engagement of Indigenous groups in the military conflicts and political discussions of the period than in Misiones. That area was the one mostly disturbed by the Portuguese advances. Even if not that enthusiastically, in early stages of the fight for independence we identify the participation of indigenous population in the army that carried on Buenos Aires' ideas, like we have seen for Belgrano. Slowly, though, we witness a transition in the vast majority of these groups towards supporting the Artiguist forces. Their participation and imprint to the project led to a deeper division within the revolutionary ranks. These moments of profound contact between various political actors enable us to look deeply into the reactions of the Indigenous inhabitants and inquiry about their motivations and inclinations to engage into politics and side with the different options available.

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The question of what exactly leads to political collective action is a central one for historians, political scientists, and anthropologists. The volume organized by Silvia Arrom and Servando Ortoll, *Riots in the Cities: Popular Politics and the Urban Poor in Latin America*, brings insightful points regarding the issue of spontaneity in popular collective action applied to Latin America.<sup>38</sup> Despite finding similarities between Hobsbawm's classical study of European rebellions and the Latin American movements, the authors criticize his characterization of urban

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<sup>38</sup> Arrom and Ortoll, *Riots in the Cities: Popular Politics and the Urban Poor in Latin America, 1765-1910*, ed. Silvia Arrom and Servando Ortoll (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources, 1996).

riots as “prepolitical,” or essentially driven by necessity.<sup>39</sup> Far from being driven solely by hunger, throughout the book the historians make the case that rioters had many motivations for their struggle, including a sense of justice, nationalism, religion, and the right to privacy. Furthermore, these groups that engaged in popular manifestations “held strong opinions about many political issues, (...) they acted on their convictions, and (...) their struggles had an impact (...) on who held power and what policies were implemented.”<sup>40</sup>

Even though the book looks at urban areas and riots, these understandings also apply to rural areas, particularly in this context of heightened popular political participation. Working with the notion of “contentious claims,” in the book’s conclusion Charles Tilly proposes that popular politics may range from “humble expressions of support for one part or another to revolutionary seizures of power.”<sup>41</sup> Refusing to take part, after multiples attempts at mobilization and engagement, as we previously saw in the case of Belgrano and the Indigenous groups of Misiones and Corrientes, could also be considered a statement to political activity, perhaps a sort of *static political participation*.

When we explore the association between Artigas and popular groups, we have not only “humble,” but marked expressions of support, or *active political participation* that made political fissures between elites even more explicit. What were the elements that were guiding some of these groups and could explain the variation in their support? Within the frame of possibilities presented by Tilly, we find the influence of daily relations, be it family, work, religion, friendships – the “social base;” or those shared ideas, understandings, values, traditions, and

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<sup>39</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels, Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, 2nd ed., (New York: Praeger, 1963).

<sup>40</sup> Arrom and Ortell, *Riots in the Cities*, 5.

<sup>41</sup> Tilly, Conclusion to *Riots in the Cities*, 228-229.

practices – their “culture;” or even a combination of favorable circumstances, the “opportunity structure,” that implies the existence of multiple sources of power in the political arena, the willingness of this arena to accept new players, the instability of existing regimes, and the presence of possible allies/ supporters.<sup>42</sup> Taken here as a lens to understand shifting positions, these elements, working in combination, approximate us to the motivations that led popular groups to engage in Artigas’ movement and participate in the definitions of state that permeated the Rio de la Plata region in the 1810s.<sup>43</sup> The remainder of the chapter will be dedicated to exploring those motivations in the context of the Portuguese invasion that began in 1811 and sparked movement in the Misiones frontier in the subsequent years.

### **Rising Political Engagement**

The first Portuguese invasion of the independent period started in July of 1811 and lasted until September of the following year. In communications between the military commanders guarding the frontier, we see an overall adhesion of the naturales to participate in the army and provide help to stop their entrance. In January of 1812, Celedonio José del Castillo, subdelegate from the territory of Misiones, told the Supreme Government of Buenos Aires that the “naturales had shown “enthusiasm” to collaborate, sending men and also food supplies to the troops, to the point of “destroying their *estancias* to sustain [them]” and send their children with corn in their hands to feed the soldiers.<sup>44</sup> When the Corrientes’ forces commanded by Galván arrived in Santo

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<sup>42</sup> Tilly, 228-230.

<sup>43</sup> Although opportunities do ignite political action, opportunity alone should not be considered enough of explain it.

<sup>44</sup> “Celedonio José del Castillo to the Gobierno Superior Provisional de las Provincias Unidas del Rio de la Plata.” Concepción, April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1812, in *AA* vol. 8, 57.

Tomé in April, Castillo talked about the goodwill with which they were received, wishing that “the divine providence would manifest its omnipotence with [them], who, *on their own*, chose to demonstrate their Patriotism in this Department.”<sup>45</sup> If we take Castillo’s word, then, we can see how the Indigenous groups of Misiones were choosing to participate in the defense of the frontier, and collaborate economically to the success of the military movements.

Similar to what Belgrano had attempted, the leadership appointed by Buenos Aires to combat the Portuguese displayed a rather intense campaign of popular mobilization. According to Castillo, proclamations in Guaraní were circulated in the region, using commercial routes. Talking about the benefits of abandoning the Portuguese forces and switching sides, this propaganda traveled throughout the frontier.<sup>46</sup> Part of their offer involved a monetary remuneration, in indications that perhaps men on the Portuguese side of the frontier were struggling economically. Artigas instructed del Castillo to pay up to 12 pesos to each soldier that chose to cross the border carrying their gun.<sup>47</sup> The campaign was seemingly effective, as Castillo noticed that the Portuguese, stationed on the other side of the river, were reticent in letting the Guaraní take possession of guns or come close to the border, afraid that they would accept the offer and “pass” to the other side.<sup>48</sup> This communication demonstrates how Guaraní participation in the Portuguese army was far from being definite, as “passing” was a very real threat to their forces. It also indicated that their support was conditioned to a repression apparatus to prevent

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<sup>45</sup> “Celedonio José del Castillo to the Gobierno Superior Provisional de las Provincias Unidas del Rio de la Plata.” Concepción, April 22, 1812 in *AA* vol. 8, 62. My Highlight.

<sup>46</sup> Celedonio José del Castillo al gobierno de Buenos Aires. Concepción, February 20, 1812 in *AA* vol. 8, 57.

<sup>47</sup> José Artigas to the Gobierno Superior de las Provincias Unidas del Río de la Plata. February 4, 1812 in *AA* vol. 8, 52.

<sup>48</sup> “Celedonio José del Castillo to the Gobierno de Buenos Aires.” Concepción, February 20, 1812 in *AA* vol. 8, 56.

the Guaraní from leaving. Previous communications show that violence was constantly used by the Portuguese officials, as Pedro Guaiporá told the Cabildo of Yapeyú when forwarding “two sticks” used by the Portuguese to punish “our poor sons”.<sup>49</sup>

When the Portuguese tried to force support to their army, crossing and operating on the other side of the border, they were confronted with a strong reaction from the Indigenous peoples. Attempting to establish communication, eleven soldiers, one captain and one lieutenant-colonel crossed the Uruguay River in a canoe and arrived at the town of Yapeyú, requesting to “talk” to the Cabildo and their commandant. The Portuguese inquired about quantity of troops, artillery, and ammunition, raising concerns from locals and causing a confrontation that resulted in most of the Portuguese being “cut into pieces”. In the commandant’s pocket was a proclamation advocating against the “insurgent Artigas,” requesting the Indigenous population of Yapeyú to “abandon [his] system”, or suffer the consequences.<sup>50</sup>

The consideration and reaction of these Indigenous groups in this episode demonstrate their understanding of the mechanisms of war and their constant assessment and evaluation of variables to seek out the most beneficial conditions for their participation. Once again, we see the possibility of “passing” as a way of asserting political support during these times. At that moment, though, the Indigenous peoples of Yapeyú made it clear that they were content where they were standing and not willing to switch sides.<sup>51</sup> And this went beyond a matter of just wanting to rebut change, as records indicate that, in similar moments earlier in the century, many

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<sup>49</sup> The letter was later forwarded to Elías Galván, who translated it and passed it on to Buenos Aires. Pedro Guiraporá to the Cabildo of Yapeyú, Capilla de San Francisco, November 10, 1811 in *Corrientes*, 3-5-6 (Entre Ríos), Sala X, AGNA.

<sup>50</sup> *Gazeta Ministerial del Gobierno de Buenos Ayres* n. 3. Buenos Aires, April 24, 1812 in *AA* vol. 8, 25.

<sup>51</sup> José Artigas to Elías Galván. Cuartel General de Salto Chico, March 28, 1812 in *AA* vol. 8, 24.

Indigenous individuals actually preferred to accept Portuguese offers as had happened in 1801.<sup>52</sup> The episode shows very early on the influence of Artigas in the political conflicts of the region. Even though he was still fighting under the leadership of Buenos Aires, his name was the one popping up in the Portuguese intelligence sources as someone whose influence should be blocked. As the Indigenous groups increased their participation in and awareness of Criollo and European struggles over power, they became essential role players in these disputes. As the conflicts became more acute, so did their understanding of what was at stake and the reasons for their predisposition.

In March of 1813, Indigenous populations once again took a political stand in the town of Yapeyú, this time around within the “revolutionary” side. Fourteen men “surprised” Bernardo Pérez Planes, the new governor of Misiones. They wanted to talk to the Cabildo and “seduce” their representatives against his authority, he claimed. Pérez Planes, who was left in charge of the government of Misiones after both Artigas and Galván marched to battle in the first siege of Montevideo, was able to capture two of these men, “dragoon deserters of the Patria,” natives of the town. When Pérez Planes interrogated them, inquiring about the nature of the movement, they refused to talk, claiming they did not “recognize any [authority] other than that of General Artigas.”<sup>53</sup> This episode marks one of the first open attempts at establishing a clear opposition to the Buenos Aires authority orchestrated by Artiguist leaders.

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<sup>52</sup> The frontier disputes that prompted Indigenous groups to switch sides will be further explored in chapter 6. Barbara Caletti Garciadiego, “Milicias y Guaraníes en Yapeyú. La defensa de la “Frontera del Uruguay” en los albores del siglo XIX,” *Prohistoria* 23 (June 2015): 62.

<sup>53</sup> “Bernardo Pérez Planes to the Supremo Gobierno Ejecutivo de las Provincias Unidas del Rio de la Plata.” Campo de Santa Ana y costa del arroyo de Guirapitá-Mini, April 29, 1813, in *AA* vol. 11, 322.

### Political Opportunity Within Reach

In the beginning of 1813, the differences between Artigas and the Buenos Aires government were becoming more evident, as well as Artigas' discrepancies with Manuel de Sarratea. Around that time, we see many groups leaning towards one side or the other. Accusations of alliances with Montevideo or the Portuguese – from both sides – took over the territory. As unity or the possibility of a central authority seemed still a far reality, residents and even the army became subject to various sources of authority. A common practice when reprimanded for any actions was to seek opposition leaders and receive their support, in order to gain authority.<sup>54</sup> The agitation in the *campaña* was increasingly noticeable, with *vecinos* constantly complaining about “*vagos y desertores*” (vagrants and deserters) that stole cattle and ransacked towns.<sup>55</sup> As previously mentioned, many of these disturbances were attributed to Artigas' followers, whose significant portion was composed of Indigenous groups.

We briefly saw how, when faced with the possibility of abandoning his ranks, some Guarani groups actively chose to stay and defend Artigas' authority. This support would significantly increase over time. Even those considered “infidel Indians,” traditionally outsiders in the Spanish colonial world, were joining his lines and bolstering his troops. References abound showing support from Charrúas and Minuanes. Judging by their increasing participation, it seems that Artigas' understanding of the revolution and its desired outcome spoke to their people, who were “abandoning their *tolderías* (tent camps) inundating the *campaña* (...) to

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<sup>54</sup> José Ignacio Aguirre tells Elías Galván about soldiers that were stealing in the *campaña* and when questioned, replied they would seek Artigas in order not to be punished. Jose Ignacio Aguirre to Elias Galván, San Roque, February 24, 1812 in Correspondencia Oficial, t. 2, f. 210, AGPC.

<sup>55</sup> Cabildo of San Roque, January 12, 1812 in Correspondencia Oficial, t. 2, f. 179, AGPC.



cooperate to the consolidation of our great system.”<sup>56</sup> We should remember that, when Belgrano was assembling support, Indigenous groups who had not been submitted to Spanish authority refused to side with him. At that point, even if there was a division between representatives of a Spaniard/ Criollo colonial authority, the difference between them was not very clear, as a centralized format was still the preferred and proposed one. At this new opportunity for political engagement, when conversations had mostly moved away from the Criollo and Spaniard dichotomy, and towards defining new political systems, these groups’ support of more local means of autonomy became a key factor for defining military strength.

Even before the episode in Yapeyú, much earlier than when Artigas and Buenos Aires officially parted ways, Pérez Planes was writing to the Executive government suggesting that they should take measures against his leadership. Otherwise, “this province will be (...) lost,” he argued, in an indication he was no longer seeing in Artigas an ally, and that his influence was fast spreading.<sup>57</sup> Pérez Planes had developed a good relationship with the Indigenous peoples, he believed. He sensed they “love[d]” him and hoped they would keep their support. He recognized, though, that their “concept could perhaps vary,” meaning he could lose their support. In that case, because his troops were all composed of Guaranís, he would be left without any fighting power.<sup>58</sup> When Artigas’ men came to “seduce” the people of Yapeyú, his move was to execute the movement’s leaders and reform the Cabildo. Pérez Planes acted quickly, in order to remove potential enemies. His situation illustrates how, at that moment, the strength of Artigas and his

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<sup>56</sup> Letter to Elías Galván from José Artigas, Arroyo Negro, November 14, 1811 in *Correspondencia Oficial*, t. 2, f. 120, AGPC. Mention of others’ participation include, but not limited to *AA* vol. 10, 194; *AA* vol. 11, 303.

<sup>57</sup> “Bernardo Pérez Planes to the Gobierno Supremo de las Provincias Unidas.” Pueblo de Yapeyú, February 23, 1813, in *AA* vol. 10, 360-362.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

ability to influence the Indigenous groups had become very evident. We will now explore the reasons for this early and marked support.

### *Conversations of Freedom and Sovereignty*

“Forgiveness for what? Which offenses have these *free* People committed against the Government? (...) They are our brothers, and have come to seek our protection. (...) we do not do anything other than defend [our Rights].”<sup>59</sup> In these words, Vicente de la Fuente, an envoy of Artigas, expressed his anger at the way Pérez Planes had been treating the people of Yapeyú, when demanding their submission. In his understanding, Pérez Planes was working against their interests because of a grudge he held against Artigas. Besides this grudge, likely a product of Artigas having tried to remove Pérez Planes from the government in 1811, their differing preferences for political models stood out in their correspondence. As Indigenous groups engaged into these conversations and demonstrated their support, the political conflicts in the region became even more acute. I will use a combination of letters exchanged between military leaders, inside the revolutionary ranks as well as on the other side of border on the Portuguese front, to uncover these various factors that defined support in that particular moment. For example, in Vicente de la Fuente’s letter, we see that the idea that Pérez Planes was letting his personal interests get in the way of what they understood as the common good was circulating in the area. In a similar way, we can use Portuguese man Francisco Soares da Costa Leiria’s writings about the events that took place in April of 1813 to find clues to comprehend broader

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<sup>59</sup> Vicente de la Fuente to Pérez Planes. Campamento del Arapey, June 2, 1813, in *AA* vol. 11, 329-330.

claims that were at stake. Criminal cases from movements later that year also allow for grasping some of these key elements that were at the forefront of their concerns.

From the writings, we can infer that at least partially, the attempt at agitating the town of Yapeyú and changing its authorities had to do with the treatment offered to the Indigenous peoples by Pérez Planes and the town's priest. It turns out, Leiria wrote, that the movement's leaders wanted to kill the parish priest and all of the Spaniards who resided in the region, because of rumors that the priest had "sold" the Indigenous men to the Portuguese army. Pérez Planes and Leiria were also in danger, he added, as the latter had bought the natives and the former collaborated in the transaction. These reasons reveal to us some of the first elements that the Indigenous peoples who had revolted in Yapeyú prioritized: maintaining their freedom to decide where their loyalty laid, as they rejected being under Portuguese control or being forced to fight under their army.

The vocabulary used by these leaders when referring to Indigenous peoples also offers insights into their understanding of and relationship with them, helping us to reconstruct the social terrain on which they interacted. Celedonio José del Castillo and Bernardo Pérez Planes' rhetoric regarding the Indigenous peoples is one of sympathy for their years of "unhappiness." It is, though, very much imbedded in a paternalistic tone. When talking about their aptitude for protecting the frontier, del Castillo highlighted how their "vices and excesses" had consigned the Indians to a miserable and despicable state. Unable to see the challenges they had to face up until then, he was confident that, if "directed by men who understand and are able to manage them, dedicated to the public good", they would be able to achieve "favorable advantages".<sup>60</sup> Clearly,

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<sup>60</sup> Celedonio José del Castillo to the Buenos Aires government. Concepción, February 20, 1812 in *AA* vol. 8, 57.

he believed these groups could not make, on their own, what he believed were positive or fruitful decisions. If del Castillo did not believe these Indigenous men and women could make decisions on their own, much less so did Pérez Planes. He strongly advocated for a central government. When justifying his execution of the two dragoons for carrying Artigas' papers, he highlighted how they were infringing upon "our national political body."<sup>61</sup> He did not clarify what that "nation" encompassed, but he was convinced that it should be "ruled by only *one government*," whose perfect metaphor, in his view, was that of a body with one head – and soul.<sup>62</sup> Sovereignty was, to him, clearly indivisible, and could not be held at the local level, by each pueblo, as Artigas was suggesting, and, to these two representatives of Buenos Aires, much less in indigenous hands. When punishing the two dragoons in the name of "the State, Religion, and [his own] honor," Pérez Planes made it clear that he would not tolerate opinions that differed from his own. In his view, pushing for a cause that defended the "individual sovereignty of the pueblos" went against the institution of State itself. Besides receiving a share of this sovereignty, imagining that Indigenous peoples would want to actually exert some sort of authority was to him personally offensive, as they were challenging *his* authority.

Further information in Leiria's letter about the movement in Yapeyú offers yet another clue regarding the priorities of these Indigenous groups and their reasons for support. When seeking authority over the Cabildo, they had in mind the plan of living to "the form and manner

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<sup>61</sup> José Rondeau to the Executive government of the United provinces of the Río de la Plata. Arroyo Seco, June 12, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 337-338.

<sup>62</sup> This author's emphasis. Vicente de la Fuente to Bernardo Pérez Planes, Campamento del Arapey, June 2, 1813, in *AA* vol. 11, 329-330; Bernardo Pérez Planes to Vicente de la Fuente. Campamento General, June 3, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 331. The metaphor of the human body to explain the political system (body politic) was present in the Spanish political tradition since medieval times, especially to understand how the power of the King sprinkled down to his/ her subjects. José Carlos Chiaramonte, "La cuestión de la soberanía en la génesis y constitución del Estado argentino," *Historia Constitucional* 2 (2001): 115.

of the Minuane,” one of the variants of the Charrua groups of the region that had long resisted colonial authority and adopted a semi-nomadic lifestyle.<sup>63</sup> To that end, locals had even named a king.<sup>64</sup> Unfortunately, we do not have more details on this plan, nor can we attest whether Leiria had the right information, but that a proposal like that had reached Portuguese ears is an indication that it was a plausible development. And if real, it is one of the expressions that advocated for self-government, rooted, it would seem, on shared cultural practices that privileged a lifeway attached to an understanding of land much different than the one the Spanish and Criollos had, and that had been a constant source of conflicts.

### **Political Mobility and Culture**

As the revolutionary process spread, we begin to see more and more the Indigenous groups’ push for a wider respect of their lifestyle, which, of course, varied according to the different ethnicities. For the Charrúas and the Guaycuru, in different levels, it was their semi-nomadic ways, rarely respected by Spaniards and Criollos.<sup>65</sup> All-around we find vecinos complaining about the “Indios” who were provoking chaos in the campaña by making “robbery and ransacking to both Europeans and the Patriciate permissible”.<sup>66</sup> Criollo elites understood that roaming the territory seeking resources was ingrained in their lifestyle – “incursions” were “the

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<sup>63</sup> “Francisco Soares da Costa Leiria to Diego de Souza.” Paso de Yapeyú, April 26, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 320-322.

<sup>64</sup> If the suggestion that Domingo Manduré was of Minuane ancestry is valid, then we can suggest that perhaps Leiria was referring to him when talking about a Minuane “King” that had been named by the rebellious Indigenous peoples.

<sup>65</sup> About the Minuane, see Oscar Padrón Favre, *Los Charrúas-Minuanes en su etapa final* (Durazno, Uruguay: Tierradentro Ediciones, 2004).

<sup>66</sup> Jose Ignacio Aguirre to Elías Galván, San Roque, February 24, 1812 in *Correspondencia Oficial*, t. 2, f. 210, AGPC.

result of the inveterate custom in which they have lived.”<sup>67</sup> What they failed to recognize were the different cosmogonic views regarding land use and property by the Indigenous communities, who, in the words of José Vicente García, only considered “their subsistence while disregarding the sacrifices of others’ patrimony.” To the groups that engaged in an itinerant lifestyle, the land was to afford subsistence, and should not belong to anyone specifically. They resisted a formal insertion into the colonial system as much as they could. For this reason, when the Charrúas decided to ally with Artigas, very much in the beginning of his ascension to power, it was a strong sign of political support. And this support was crafted through the respect of their itinerant ways by Artigas, who allowed them to camp in faraway areas and come and go as they pleased.<sup>68</sup>

The Guaraní that were descendants of those in the Jesuit Missions, on the other hand, had developed a much stronger connection to the land, which eventually manifested in their culture and identity. We have seen how attempts at reallocation sparked their ire and even resulted in wars in the previous century. It had not always been this way. First records about Guaraní culture indicate the constant movement because of economic needs as well as religious beliefs.<sup>69</sup> The arrival of Spaniards and the subsequent exploitation suffered by them prompted several Guaraní groups to seek self-preservation and join the missions when the Jesuits started their work.<sup>70</sup> Although Guaraní flight was frequent during the missional period, it indeed promoted a significant attachment to the land. Scholar Robert H. Jackson sees in the Guaraní War an indication that, by then, “a strong sense of identity” had developed and united these

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<sup>67</sup> Jose Vicente Garcia to Elías Galván, Estancia del río Corriente. February 25, 1812 in Correspondencia Oficial, t. 2, f. 212, AGPC.

<sup>68</sup> Eduardo F. Acosta y Lara. *La Guerra de los Charrúas en la banda oriental* (Montevideo: Librería Linardi y Risso, 1989).

<sup>69</sup> Sarreal, *The Guaraní and Their Missions*, 18.

<sup>70</sup> Sarreal, 34-35.

communities.<sup>71</sup> We can infer, therefore, that location became a factor of importance for these groups. In fact, Pérez Planes was accused of “harassing the towns of Misiones,” transferring the entire town of San Gregorio to the eastern shore of the Uruguay River, so that it would be shielded from the influence of Artiguists.<sup>72</sup> De la Fuente argued that, rather than “leaving [the] pueblos calm so that agriculture improves, [he] has placed them in motion of alert, (...) making them abandon their homes, exposing most of them to perish,” which angered residents. Removing these Indigenous people from their land was far from desirable in their end.

Even more so than the land, Guaranis particularly disliked being removed from their communities. And this dislike was so intense that was used by Artiguist men to mobilize them and gather their support. When seducing Pérez Planes’ troops in Mandisoví in July of 1813, Lieutenant Mariano Sandobal’s argument was grounded on the proposition that

“Don Bernardo Pérez Planes was trying to deceive them with vain promises, that their goal was none other than taking the people to Perú, forcing them to *abandon their houses, women, and children*; and that ultimately, they would be given to the tyrants of Buenos Aires and reduced to their former state of slavery by the despotism with which they operated.”<sup>73</sup>

Sandobal’s argument resonated with the troops, who “proceeded to adhere to his ideals as a whole.” They walked with him to the Paso del Belén and were then told to “go freely to their pueblos so that they could carry this news, as to seduce the other men from the countryside as

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<sup>71</sup> Jackson, *Missions and the Frontiers*, 263.

<sup>72</sup> Vicente de la Fuente to Bernardo Pérez Planes, Campamento del Arapey, de las fuerzas inferiores, June 2, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 329-330.

<sup>73</sup> My highlight. Serapio Antonio Méndez, “Declaración de un vecino deste Pueblo sobre lo acaecido el día dos de julio a la noche.” Mandisoví, August 27, 1813 in Fondo Mantilla, t. 36, AGPC.

well as the pueblos.” Pérez Planes himself confirmed that the seduction of naturales, based on arguments that they would be taken away from their families, had been successful.<sup>74</sup>

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Earlier that year, Elías Galván himself had experienced the difficulties of separating the naturales from their communities. It was the early hours of February 2<sup>nd</sup> when bugle calls were heard throughout the military camp base of Arroyo de la China. In a few minutes, the “majority” of the correntino troops were running to the plaza and opening fire against whoever crossed their way. Lieutenant Miguel Escobar ordered his men to fight back and stop the rebels, but instead of observing his orders, they switched sides and joined the rioters. They entered the park grabbing ammunition, artillery, and horses, and marched away to Arroyo del Molino. Little was there to be made in order to control them, since the officials were significantly outnumbered. Only later that day, after delicate negotiations, what was left of the troops calmed down and Cap. Genaro Perugorría convinced them to come back. Out of 163 soldiers, fifty-two deserted, along with two corporals. No mention is made of any attempt by Galván to prevent or stop the situation. Word on the campaña was that, upon hearing the first shots, he had run away in his underwear, coming back when the situation had been controlled.<sup>75</sup> About two weeks later, a new movement took place. This time, seventy-five people deserted, among them two sergeants, three drum-players, 5 corporals, and 65 soldiers. Comparing the troop size when they first arrived at Arroyo de la

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<sup>74</sup> Bernardo Pérez Planes to the Government of the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata. Mandisoví, August 26, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 360-361.

<sup>75</sup> Francisco das Chagas Santos to Diego de Souza, Sao Borja, March 30, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 300.



China to the number of forces remaining after the two mutinies, we see that almost 80% of the soldiers and 70% of the whole regiment had escaped.<sup>76</sup>

Besides being mentioned in letters, we know of the movement in the Corrientes Infantry regiment because Buenos Aires opened a judicial case against Galván and his officials, with great suspicions that he had been a poor commandant when the situation stroke.<sup>77</sup> Although Buenos Aires' focus was on his actions, through the case we get to hear about the event from the perspective of participants in all ranks. Motivations vary. Smaller reasons, like the troops being unhappy about Francisco Sanforiano Quevedo's nomination as mayor of the plaza, are mixed with larger intentions. From what we can recombine, it all started after ensign Jose del Rosario Álvarez returned from an incomplete assignment. Having to carry letters to the Montevideo, which was under its second siege, he was unable to reach the destination because of the presence of Artigas' troops, stationed along the way blocking his passage. Upon hearing of their presence and fearing Artigas' men would approach and coopt the troops, Galván ordered officials to recollect and keep arms and ammunition in a safe place. They successfully disarmed the grenadiers, but when they reached the fusiliers, the troops resisted and started the mutiny. If the rebellion was curbed then, on February 18<sup>th</sup> conflict broke out again. This time, the troops were to be taken to practice at what they considered was an excessively distant place. This raised suspicions about the real intention of officials, who, they thought, were making time and space for enemy troops to occupy the territory. Which intentions would Galván and his officials have

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<sup>76</sup> "Antecedentes sobre sublevación de las tropas de Galván", AGNA, Sumarios Militares, X-29-11-5, exp. 389.

<sup>77</sup> The military summary is not exploring the deserters' reasons because they had already been pardoned. In this context of constant war, Buenos Aires was quick to realize that those who had come back could perhaps be persuaded to remain in the army if adequately paid and clothed. The offer stood as long as they reported to service when needed.

for letting an enemy troop in, or whether there was any truth to it, it is unclear. What we do know is that, when the conflict started, this time a much broader claim surfaced from those participating in it. “Speaking in their Guarani language, these delinquents” started to protest that they wanted to go back to their land, because they had nothing to wear, had not being paid for the last six months, and were living in miserable conditions. It could be argued then, that these men were rebelling because of their dire state. Unexpectedly, Galván gave back their ammunition, a free pass and even horses to those who wanted to go back to Corrientes – a decision for which he would have a summary open against him later.

Considering the economic and social benefits promised to those joining the army in the early moments of independence, a lack of basic conditions for the soldiers’ survival could explain their revolt and desire to abandon the army lines, a reason that would fall into the “prepolitical” category coined by Silvia Arrom when discussing Hobsbawm’s classical study of European rebellions.<sup>78</sup> Negotiations after the first mutiny included paying their due salary and providing clothes. As some of the troops came back to the camp under these terms, we can imagine that the reason for the rebellion is only partially connected to this reality. If we contemplate the Guarani’s strong connection to their land and community, though, we can find further reasons, that go beyond matters of an “empty stomach,” to explain their cry to go abandon the ranks.

In a letter to the Supreme Executive Power of the United Provinces, then lieutenant-governor of Corrientes José León Domínguez argued it was impossible to mobilize the 300 men Buenos Aires had asked, because “nothing is more repugnant to these Indigenous men than the

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<sup>78</sup> Silvia Arrom and Servando Ortoll, *Riots in the Cities*.

task of serving outside of their territory.”<sup>79</sup> Considering this, we infer that, during the movement, a good portion of men acted out of their desire to return to what they understood as home. A significant part of the troops actually did go back to Corrientes – the Cabildo registered the return of 56 soldiers, men who did not identify enough with the cause to stay in the army. These men were received with varied reactions, but even people who reported them to the Central Government stated it was “painful to see (...) more than 40 soldiers with only pieces of uniform over their flash, and rests of iron to cover their intimate parts.” Even if a considerable number, when we account for those who did *not* go back, we realize more than half of the deserters were missing. What had happened to them?

We learn through Pérez Planes a few weeks later that “all of the correntinos that have revolted against Don Elías Galván’s rule have gathered (...) in Salto Chico.”<sup>80</sup> Concentrated there were Alboroz and Escalante with their people, the deserted correntinos, and two other troops under the command of Domingo Manduré, one of Artigas’ men. Indeed, according to Francisco das Chagas Santos, “not only the correntinos of his regiment [rebelled against Galván], but also the Indians,” who knew Artigas as their only leader.<sup>81</sup> The “seeds” planted by the Oriental during his Yapeyú tenure were giving its fruits, Pérez Planes wrote. And he was direct when saying that Buenos Aires was actually to blame for misjudging his potential to gather

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<sup>79</sup> José León Domínguez to the Supremo Poder Ejecutivo de las Provincias Unidas del Río de la Plata. Corrientes, November 30, 1813 in Fondo Mantilla, t. 36, AGPC.

<sup>80</sup> Bernardo Perez Planes to the Government of the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata. Yapeyú, February 23, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 292.

<sup>81</sup> Even though the *correntinos* were also *naturales*, the word Indians here is probably being attributed to those considered “infidel” Indians, who marched with the other commanders. Francisco das Chagas Santos to Diego de Souza, Sao Borja, March 30, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 300.

followers.<sup>82</sup> The danger of losing more people was so critical that he advised the remaining troops not to get any closer to Salto Chico, fearing a mass sedition and consequent movements seeking to control the entire territories of Corrientes and Entre Ríos would take place.<sup>83</sup> Thus, even if many of the troops of Corrientes had had the chance of going back to their communities and have their daily needs slightly better met, a considerable number of these men decided to stay and join the Confederate side. At this point, we can ponder that something much more significant was at stake and occupying the minds of these Indigenous troops of Corrientes. As we read further, we can find a pattern that connects this rebellion to the movement occurred in Yapeyú.

Prior to the rebellions, corporal Roque Fernández and soldier Juan Torancio, appointed as the heads of the movement, were going around the camp “animating soldiers and inviting them to mutiny” in “vulgar” conversations. One of the rumors going around, and possibly one used in their argument, was that the officials were negotiating selling the naturales to Montevideo. If we recall, a similar argument was used to justify the insurgence in Yapeyú, that is, the fear of being treated as merchandise and be at someone else’s will. One of Mariano Sandobal’ mobilization tactics too was to suggest that the “despots” of Buenos Aires would reduce Indigenous men to slavery. We can suspect that the Indigenous peoples from the region had a very vivid memory of being considered a product for the benefit of the colonial system, and would have nothing to do with whatever situation reminded them of that.<sup>84</sup> In these circumstances, it is possible to see a

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<sup>82</sup> “Bernardo Pérez Planes to the Gobierno Supremo de las Provincias Unidas.” Pueblo de Yapeyú, February 23, 1813 in *AA* vol. 10, 360-362.

<sup>83</sup> “Bernardo Pérez Planes to the Gobierno de las Provincias Unidas del Río de la Plata.” Yapeyú, March 5, 1813, in *AA* vol. 11, 294-295.

<sup>84</sup> Tilly, Conclusion to *Riots in the Cities*, 233.

shared identity, crucial for political mobilization, starting to emerge. One of the reasons given to their dislike of Quevedo was actually that he was an “European,” making it difficult for them to picture a shared sense of purpose or common cause. Here, then, when offered with an alternative center of power, one that seemingly was offering a reality that was different from that of colonial times, these men chose to collectively act to defend their freedom.

The loyalty of many of the Indigenous men who were involved in the military activities resided with those who sought to tamp down on the most degrading aspects of the former colonial system, and offered them the possibility to expand their autonomy. A main motor for mobilization and political support was born every time this freedom was threatened. Can we, then, talk of a clear ethnic divide to explain support? Exploring the increasing number of conflicts that involved Indigenous groups, the answer that emerges is negative. What we find in the region of Misiones was that support was far from homogeneous. Investigation of two noteworthy interactions between Indigenous actors following the mutiny in the army indicate a complex political calculation that went beyond ethnicity or a shared past of colonial exploitation. At these moments, we see divisions within Indigenous sectors as well, that very much put into play several layers of the social fabric and call our attention to the plurality that constituted relations within the popular groups of the region.<sup>85</sup> And this plurality was manifested through a heavy display of the political concepts, such as sovereignty and freedom, used to defend state models.

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<sup>85</sup> Gabriel Di Meglio has called the attention about the impossibility of using absolute categories to understand popular political participation in the Río de la Plata. “La participación popular en las revoluciones hispanoamericanas, 1808-1816. Un ensayo sobre sus rasgos y causas,” in *Almanack* 5, (1° semestre de 2013), 112.

*The Many Voices of Indigenous Politics*

One of the main goals of those who assembled in Salto Chico right after the mutiny in March to later attack Mandisoví, was to kill Pablo Areguatí, an official from the militia.<sup>86</sup> Interestingly, Areguatí was a Guaraní from the town of San Miguel. The first episode we will analyze is Areguatí's participation in this political context. In December of 1812, just two months prior to the mutiny, Areguatí was in Salto Chico. He was there, he told the Chief General of Entre Ríos, to “pacify the naturales and make them useful to the *Patria*, dissuading them from the prejudicial suggestions of the Oriental deserters [Artigas' supporters] and malevolent people that abound in this jurisdiction.”<sup>87</sup> When pinpointing the leaders of those “malevolent” men, he named two indigenous officers: Lieutenant Caraipí and Captain Paracatú. According to Areguatí, they were “perverse and seductive”, and demanded caution. We have already heard about these two men: they were the same dragoons that Pérez Planes would later execute after the movement in Yapeyú. So here we have Areguatí, a Guaraní man, who was providing arguments against other Guaraní men, Caraipí and Paracatú. What can explain his obedience to the leadership in Buenos Aires?

Areaguatí had risen to prominence after viceroy Avilés appointed him as captain of the urban militias in 1799. Prior to that, the same Avilés had granted him a scholarship to study in the *Real Colegio de San Carlos* in Buenos Aires, which introduced him to Criollo customs. In 1810, possibly because of his studies and connections, Belgrano made him the alcalde of the newly founded village of Mandisoví. He also joined Belgrano in the expedition to Paraguay,

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<sup>86</sup> Francisco das Chagas Santos to Diego de Souza, São Borja, March 30, 1813, in *AA* vol. 11, 300.

<sup>87</sup> Pablo Areguatí to the Chief General of Entre Ríos. Salto Chico, December 9, 1812 in *AA* vol. 10, 297.

taking part in the first military movements that occurred in the region after the May revolution. He then became acquaintances with Pérez Planes, with whom he would later share a solid friendship. Areguatí was, in a sense, a product of this wave of militarization that swept the territory. Because of his unconventional Indigenous background, he was given an opportunity to study and later join the army, and eventually suitably positioned himself in this new context. When Pérez Planes openly rejected the emergence of a new source of authority, to the point of “punishing the residents (...) for showing adherence to Col. Artigas,” Areguatí was ready to work by his side, tracking down potential supporters.<sup>88</sup> And he did so even at the cost of his relationship with fellow Guaraní men, who became hostile towards him and cornered him in Mandisoví.<sup>89</sup> This situation demonstrates how support was not homogeneous within the indigenous side, nor can it be understood with a focus solely on ethnicity. When considering costs and benefits, Areguatí’s bet was to stay by Pérez Planes’ side and use the privilege of the relationship knitted in the army. But we can actually go beyond that, and suggest that his loyalty was with Buenos Aires, since this was the destiny he preferred to escape to after the episode of Mandisoví. More than a loyalty to this political center, though, his attitude could indicate an agreement with the centralist model, underscoring interpretations of power and authority that diverged from those who chose to follow Artigas. For that latter point, unfortunately, we do not have firm documentation to declare whether those were his beliefs. We do know that Areguatí was appointed by Posadas as Militia Captain of Santa Fe and Entre Ríos in 1814, and later, in 1824, went on to become the first “Argentine” commander of the Malvinas islands. As a

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<sup>88</sup> José Rondeau to the Executive government of the United provinces of the Río de la Plata. Arroyo Seco, June 12<sup>th</sup> 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 337-338.

<sup>89</sup> When the reunion in Salto Chico took place, Caraipí and Paracatú had not yet been executed, so we should not try to understand the hunt for Areguatí as just revenge either.

representative of Buenos Aires' ideals and as a defender of their government model, he was then able to successfully position himself in this new political configuration, cashing in on his continued support. While we do not have clear indications of Areguatí's personal interpretations regarding power and authority, we can see how, at least in his case, individual gains and private relationships outweighed a sense of collective allegiance during political mobilization.

### **Bringing Freedom Back to Indigenous Sovereignty**

“Your defense (...) has a different foundation [than ours],” said Domingo Manduré to the Indigenous men that governed the Cabildo of Yapeyú in September of 1813.<sup>90</sup> Manduré was referring to the defense that the Cabildo had made of their allegiance to Bernardo Pérez Planes, which included, in Manduré's understanding, a different reading of “natural rights” and the “right to freedom,” in a strong indication of diverging political views within Indigenous groups. As military conflicts and division within the revolutionary ranks heightened, individuals like Manduré and the Corregidor, Cabildo, and mayordomo of Yapeyú took sides, and came into open confrontation. These confrontations were accompanied by written exchanges that provide a window into the discourses utilized by these men to place themselves within the political debates of the period. Both Manduré and the members of the Cabildo were of indigenous ancestry. While Manduré had become one of Artigas' key figures in the area, the Cabildo members, on the other hand, were loyal to Pérez Planes, and had taken office after he dissolved the institution following the movement in April of that year. Being from the same area, it was probable that they knew each other and most likely had familial ties. Yet, when it came to defining support, they chose

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<sup>90</sup> Domingo Manduré to the Corregidor, Cabildo and Mayordomo of Yapeyú. Campamiento de Arapey, September 8, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 392.



separate sides. The letters crafted show that not only social connections and cultural ties mattered to Indigenous groups. Their strategies of participation went beyond just taking up arms, as they consistently handled and assessed multiple interpretations of political concepts of the period to defend their positions. In this context of state organization, the concepts that acquired most importance were those regarding freedom and sovereignty.

The exchange we will examine took place following the cornering of Areguati – and Pérez Planes, who came to his help – in Mandisoví, in late August. Essentially, the whole region, east and west of the Uruguay River, was now under the leadership of Manduré and Criollo leaders Gregorio Escalante and Felix Carrasco. Pérez Planes held the fort in Mandisoví but was only able to resist because Hilarión de la Quintana, Commander of Entre Ríos, came to his help. After the skirmish, which left the area very much destroyed, Manduré sought to explain himself to the Cabildo, in a demonstration that their understanding and support were of value to him. He had actually told Pérez Planes before, that his intention with his movements was to “reconcile with our brothers.”<sup>91</sup> He also established his area of influence, which did not intend to go beyond the limits of the Department of Yapeyú.<sup>92</sup> The Cabildo crafted a strong response. These writings are a primary account of Indigenous political views, and if read through the lens of the political and social context of the period, offer understandings regarding the origins of Indigenous notions of sovereignty and freedom in the 1810s. Now, even though we will attempt to perceive these understandings and compare them to political debates had by Criollos, first and foremost we

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<sup>91</sup> Manduré to Pérez Planes. Mandisoví, August 29, 1813 in Fondo Mantilla, t. 36, AGPC.

<sup>92</sup> In those days, the department of Yapeyú included the towns of Yapeyú, as its political center (*cabecera*), and La Cruz, Santo Tomé, and Belén (this last one on the other side of the Uruguay River).

should perceive their invocation as strategies to be seen and heard as legitimate interlocutors during this process of state organization.<sup>93</sup>

Sure enough, both Manduré and the Cabildo attempted to demonstrate knowledge regarding philosophical definitions that permeated the offered political models. Early on in his letter Manduré justified his presence in the area, his military actions, and political desires using the “Rights of Natural Law” (*derecho natural*).<sup>94</sup> In a previous letter, he used this same “Natural Law” as a driving force to go around and “make it known to the public the right that all of the peoples have of being free.”<sup>95</sup> He believed that God had created men with “freedom and, (...) before Him, we are all equal; the same before the Law.”<sup>96</sup> He departed, then, from clear ideas of equality, that had their origin since the beginning of the history of mankind. With this understanding, Manduré argued that he had come to remove the Indigenous groups of Yapeyú from “captivity,” because it had already been “too many years” since they were being “governed by others,” in an insinuation that, together with other Indigenous men, they formed a group with shared experiences that differed from other social groups in the area. Though he affirmed the need to have leaders (not superiors), he identified in the current authorities of Misiones the driving force of personal “interests”, rather than their common good – even “amongst ourselves.”

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<sup>93</sup> Lauren Benton has made a claim in defense of “ignorance,” suggesting that it was not necessary to fully understand laws in order to capitalize from them. Rather, displaying a knowledge about their existence in itself granted actors a more comfortable place in debates. Lauren Benton, “In defense of ignorance: frameworks for legal politics in the Atlantic world,” in *Justice in a new world: negotiating legal intelligibility in British, Iberian, and indigenous America*, ed. Brian P. Owensby and Richard J. Ross (New York: New York University Press, 2018), chap. 9, Kindle.

<sup>94</sup> Domingo Manduré to Joaquín José Mendan, Alcalde de 1er voto in Yapeyú. Campamento de Arapey, September 8, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 391.

<sup>95</sup> Manduré to Pérez Planes. Mandisoví, August 29, 1813 in Fondo Mantilla, t. 36, AGPC.

<sup>96</sup> Domingo Manduré to the Corregidor, Cabildo and Mayordomo of Yapeyú. Campamento de Arapey, September 8, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 392. Fragments on the next page come from the same letter.

Not only that, but these men, “*mandones*” (tyrants), had “deceived” them, and turned them into a group of “miserable” people (*infelices*). Seeking to highlight their state of submission, Manduré argued that current leaders were stripping them – himself included – of their freedom by not allowing them to govern themselves. If, as Natural Law stated, they had the “right to be free,” he suggested that they also had the “right to defend [their] freedom.” He was here justifying his military actions, but also calling these men to action, as he proposed they should “unite their thinking towards an authentic defense”. By invoking Natural Law, Manduré was then equating their very own existence as full legal personas with their political needs. If equal before God, and therefore free, they should be able to defend themselves, but also make their own decisions, choose governments, as well as govern themselves. That is, assume their “sovereignty”, using a traditional interpretation that understood it in a plural way, in which power and authority hailed from the pueblos and communities that associated in a determined territory.<sup>97</sup> With that understanding in mind, Manduré closed the letter urging the Cabildo to “deliberate whatever is most convenient to you.”

The members of the Cabildo of Yapeyú chose a very different understanding of their relationship with authorities. Rather than an equal one, as Manduré suggested, they framed their association in a vertical, and somewhat monarchical, way that was logical to them: “If we were all superiors, there would not be *subjects*; the superior leads and gives orders, and the subject follows them.”<sup>98</sup> In this order, they argued that everyone had a job to do for the success of society. The very organization of the state and its officials, described by them in a pyramidal

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<sup>97</sup> Geneviève Verdo, “¿Soberanía del pueblo o de los pueblos? La doble cara de la soberanía durante la Revolución de la Independencia (1810-1820).” *Andes* 13 (2002): 153.

<sup>98</sup> My highlight. “The cabildo de Yapeyú to Domingo Manduré,” Fondo Mantilla, t. 36, AGPC.

fashion, stressed this monistic verticality. Orders (or laws), they argued, were communicated by the supreme government to their senior officials (*oficiales mayores*), who in turn transmitted them to junior officials (*oficiales menores*). These junior officials “published” them to the “subjects,” completing the scheme and making sure “nobody [could] ignore them.” This structure of power that sprinkled down authority was very much in correlation to the one proposed by Pérez Planes that we saw earlier in the chapter, and nested on the modern notion of sovereignty, indivisible and centralized.<sup>99</sup>

Following that same fashion, rather than understanding their community – “our brothers” – as just the Indigenous peoples of the Yapeyú, as Manduré did, the Cabildantes argued for an association that discarded ethnicity, and was rather determined by people’s Patriotism, “be them White or Black.” It did have religious limitations, though, as they criticized Manduré for having associated with the “Infidel” Charrúas. Having established that their community was composed of those who “follow the banner of the *Patria*,” the Cabildo of Yapeyú was happy to accept this vertical model of sovereignty and legal authority, and therefore their link to Buenos Aires. Not only that, they were content with the advantages that Pérez Planes had given them. They were “very thankful” to him for having “honored [them] by making them militaries.”<sup>100</sup> And, especially, as a leader (*jefe*), he was the one who had allowed them to “recognize sovereignty,” they strongly claimed. If his authority was questioned, they wrote, they would be “disobeying” that very same sovereignty in itself.

Now, it is a possibility that Pérez Planes himself may have guided these men to write the letter. Much of his understandings were expressed in their lines: their lack of desire to fully

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<sup>99</sup> Verdo, “¿Soberanía del pueblo o de los pueblos?,” 146.

<sup>100</sup> The Cabildo de Yapeyú to Domingo Manduré, in Fondo Mantilla, t. 36, AGPC.

participate in the political model, that is, their need to always have someone to lead them, because of their “scanty literacy,” or the verticality of government. It is also likely that they had a special bond with him precisely because he had given them an unforeseen political position and a place in the army, as mentioned above. But the context, in which most of the area was already taken over by forces that supported Artigas, allows us to suggest these men from Yapeyú, as many before them had done, could have easily switched sides if they understood Manduré and his band had something better to offer. Yet, they chose to remain loyal to Pérez Planes and Buenos Aires. They chose, too, to defend their model, and understanding of sovereignty.

Besides confronting views regarding sovereignty, these men also sought to display knowledge about other key political terms, such as “freedom” and “equality.” The Cabildantes plainly accused Manduré of not understanding them, arguing he had “interpreters” who had provided him with a limited view. Perhaps hinting at Artigas and in an attempt to weaken Manduré as a leader, they suggested these interpreters had fooled him by considering free “only those who follow their same Flag.” They also underscored how they were being forced into supporting a strange cause in order to be considered as “brothers,” or otherwise be met with violence. The cause, then, did not resonate with the Cabildantes, who favored their connections with Pérez Planes. To be forced to do otherwise was not “freedom,” they argued.

If we remember Manduré’s argument, he claimed that his military movements against Pérez Planes were a “right” towards the defense of their freedom. He even called these men to unite with him against the representative of Buenos Aires. But, as the Cabildantes felt that their views were being disregarded, or, in fact, that their position about the political moment was not being respected, Manduré was, to them, taking arms against the “Indigenous sovereignty” (*soberanía Indiana*). In open confrontation, to these men, as he wanted to separate them from the

“Grace of Our Supreme Government,” he now lacked “honor” and should be “charged with deformed offenses.” And that confrontation was happening precisely because of their diverging interpretation of Natural Law, or so they made it seem. To the Cabildantes in Yapeyú, “the white handkerchief of freedom” that had been handed on to Manduré by his interpreters “[was] blinding his eyes.” It was promoting violence to the point of transforming him into a “Commander of pirates,” they proclaimed. And Artigas, into the “traitor to the Sovereignty of Our America.”

“Freedom” and “sovereignty” were being used to set them apart. For Manduré, his men, and Artigas, freedom would only come the moment they were able to decide for themselves on the political future of the territory. For the Yapeyuans that sided with Pérez Planes, being free meant choosing to delegate decision-making power to someone they considered better prepared, and whose power had already proven to give them benefits. These groups were then combining understandings regarding Natural Law with other variables when defining political support. And by doing so, they actively sought to display their knowledge and be placed as legitimate interlocutors. Both definitions of freedom, despite their differences, expressed that desire: to have their ideas heard, and their decisions respected.

### **“It is Time That You Voice Your Freedom”**

After the hunt for Areguatí, mobilization in the area continued. It had started strongly in February, following clear instructions from Artigas, to whom the moment had arrived for these

men to “voice [their] freedom, and break away from the slavery in which [they were].”<sup>101</sup> As the months passed, mobilization only intensified, to the point that Pérez Planes suggested that Galván should settle in a location further away, since his troops were all joining Manduré.<sup>102</sup> The same happened to Sarraatea’s army forces, and the majority of Yapeyú ones.<sup>103</sup> Manduré’s leadership was also well known on the Portuguese side.<sup>104</sup> By the time the conflict in Mandisoví took place in August, the Charrúas and Minuanes had joined in, similarly to the people from Capilla de la Merced and San Gregorio.<sup>105</sup> After about two months, the Artiguist groups had been able to congregate more than 400 Indigenous men coming from various towns, who, as customary, travelled with their families. From then on, records abound of soldiers deserting and joining Artigas or his various leaders spread throughout the territory. To Manduré, they joined him because they were “witnesses to the ruin” caused by “a system that the government of Buenos Aires so ominously protects, while keeping us blindfolded and overshadowing true freedom.”<sup>106</sup>

At this point, the influence of Artigas, who Manduré referred to “the true defender of [that] freedom,” was undeniable. The people mentioned above left their communities, and actively engaged in the military conflicts of the time. As we saw, this political engagement was a product of much more than just necessity. Those who “could and wanted to [join] by their own

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<sup>101</sup> Pérez Planes transcribed a letter that Artigas had sent to Manduré. Pueblo de Yapeyú, February 23, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 292. The original reads “ya llegó el tiempo que canten libertad y que salgan de la esclavitud en que están.” See also *AA* vol. 10, 327; Fondo Mantilla, t. 36, AGPC.

<sup>102</sup> Pérez Planes to the Supreme Government. Yapeyú, March 6, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 294.

<sup>103</sup> Francisco das Chagas Santos to Diego de Souza. Cuartel de San Borja, June 24, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 341.

<sup>104</sup> Francisco das Chagas Santos to Diego de Souza. São Borja, March 30, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 300.

<sup>105</sup> Bernardo Pérez Planes to the Executive Government. Concepción del Uruguay, August 3, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 356.

<sup>106</sup> Domingo Manduré to Pérez Planes, March 5, 1813 in Fondo Mantilla, t. 36, AGPC.

will” did, according to Manduré, in a clear expression of freedom and liberty.<sup>107</sup> And Artigas, they seemed to believe, was providing them that. His discourse and actions actually resonated with these groups, and offered renewed kinds of associations with multiple possibilities. That was clear even to some of Buenos Aires’ supporters, who identified in their relationship a “reciprocal alliance,” in which local sovereignties could converse and converge.<sup>108</sup>

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When Belgrano traveled to Paraguay wishing to convince folks along the way of their shared “American” identity, he failed to understand the multiple social and cultural relations on the ground. He was astonished by the successful “*mandones*” instilling meaning in the Paraguayan soldiers so that they would bravely defend Asunción against *porteño* offensives. He nagged at Corrientes for not being more enthusiastic to the Patriotic cause. He was unable to see that to them it made much more sense to align with those who had always been close, just on the other side of the river. First, Misioneros and Correntinos’ cultural and social connections with Paraguayans were much stronger than with those coming from the southern portions of the territory – an aspect that becomes even more relevant when considering the Guaraní and their strong familial ties. Second, when seeking to fulfill his dream of unity, rather than actively hearing their interests, Belgrano believed he could anticipate Indigenous peoples’ desires. The result, as we already know, was a military – and mobilizational – defeat.

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<sup>107</sup> Statement of León Pelayo, Sargeant in the militia of Mandisoví, quoting a letter written by Manduré. August 26, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 359.

<sup>108</sup> Hilarión de la Quintana to the Executive Power of the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata. September, 1813, in *AA* vol. 11, 372. This “reciprocal alliance” will be further explored in chapter 4.



Then came Artigas, another Criollo military leader, but one with a very different proposition. Rather than pseudo unity in a moment in which popular groups were seeking to proclaim their own views of freedom he offered them respect for their lifestyle, community, and social ties. Even though these ties occasionally made some of these groups gravitate towards Buenos Aires or their representatives, the aspiration for autonomy was becoming more and more apparent. The authority of leaders that completely discredited their ability to organize politically, or “inflict respect,” was no longer acceptable.<sup>109</sup> The constant need to have to prove they had a voice, that “nobody had forced in [them any] ideas,” had reached a limit.<sup>110</sup> And the same was true of the interpretation of sovereignty promoted by Buenos Aires. As popular groups in the region were actively seeking to exert autonomy at the local level, they openly confronted that interpretation, and saw in Artigas and his talks of union an opportunity to fulfil that desire. It was a challenge to the authority that had long been imposed on them. By doing so, they demonstrated their voice and showed how they were ready to “intonate the anthems of our freedom.”<sup>111</sup> The louder they sang, the more they intensified conflicts over power in the Río de la Plata.

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<sup>109</sup> “Expediente formado a iniciativa de Elias Galván...” in *AA* vol. 8, 7.

<sup>110</sup> Soldier Nazario Ledesma. “Antecedentes sobre sublevación de las tropas de Galván,” in *Sumarios Militares*, exp. 389, 29-11-5, Sala X, AGNA.

<sup>111</sup> Manduré to Pérez Planes. Mandisoví, August 29, 1813 in *Fondo Mantilla*, f. 36, AGPC.

## Chapter 4. Crafting a reciprocal alliance.

### Artigas and the Pueblos of the Rioplatense Mesopotamia (1814-1815)

On a rainy night in the month of March 1814, Juan Bautista Méndez, the commander of Pickets – a small urban militia of Corrientes – attacked the home of Buenos Aires-appointed Governor José León Domínguez by surprise. At 11 p.m., Méndez and 40 of his soldiers, who had so far been respectful of Domínguez’s orders, pointed a cannon towards his house and prepared to fire. It was Méndez’s way of pressuring the governor to return the arms, ammunition, and pieces of artillery that he had confiscated from the city of Corrientes. Second on their list was vecino Ángel Fernández Blanco, who had confiscated the weaponry from the militia company. There was not much resistance from either of these officials, as they were drastically outnumbered, and the arms were easily seized. The night ended with a final confrontation with Lieutenant Ramón López, who had just recently arrived in Corrientes to seek shelter after being defeated by Artigas’ troops in Entre Ríos. His 20 men were no match for the Pickets either. As these hostilities were unfolding, Governor Domínguez hid in the convent of Santo Domingo with his secretary Ambrosio Reyna, and then fled the next morning on a boat to return to Buenos Aires.<sup>1</sup> The day after, drums called the pueblo to the public plaza. There, Méndez recounted and explained the events of the previous night. Rumor had it that Domínguez was planning to leave the city, embarking with some vecinos, all of the armaments, and the State treasury. The action had been necessary, he argued, to prevent the city from being left defenseless. Méndez then

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<sup>1</sup> Acta del Cabildo de Corrientes. March 11, 1814 in *Actas Capitulares*, t. 45, ff. 233-234, AGPC; Letter from the *Ciudadanos* [the Cabildo of Corrientes] to the General in Chief of the auxiliary army of Entre Ríos [José Artigas]. Corrientes, March 20, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 8; José Leon Domínguez to the Supreme Director of the United Provinces. Santa Fe, March 24, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 169.

turned over the “arms, ammunition, and artillery,” in addition to surrendering governing power (*Tenencia de Gobierno*) to the Cabildo, so that the representatives could deliberate on what to do next. But the “Pueblo” who occupied the plaza and had listened to him had already made their decision: they “proclaimed” Méndez the new Lieutenant Governor. The Cabildo members, seeing this “appointment made by the People” made it official later that day. Méndez accepted, taking an oath to protect the “sacred American cause, to not secede from the Catholic dogmas, and to tend towards everything that [would] bring peace to the Pueblo, happiness to its inhabitants, and to support the dispositions of this city council to whatever is considered to be the most convenient to the Patria.” Juan Bautista Méndez would go on to be the longest supporter of Artigas amongst the governors of the Mesopotamia.<sup>2</sup> After the rain stopped, the Cabildo published an edict and notified the military commanders in the countryside [*comandantes* or *jefes militares de campaña*], so that they could recognize the shift in power. Curiously absent from both of the Cabildo’s narratives of the event, was the group that José León Domínguez made sure to point out: “the inferior part of the *vecindario*,” in an obvious reference to the popular groups of the city.<sup>3</sup> Had they not been there, Domínguez believed, the inhabitants of Corrientes would never have “dared” to support Artigas’ ideas.

This episode narrates the moment in which sympathizers of the ideals propagated by Artigas officially took control over the government of Corrientes. In it, we can see many of the political actors of the period, as well as some of the challenges and opportunities that surfaced when antagonizing interests were brought together. Méndez, a Criollo born in the town of Caá

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<sup>2</sup> Even after the governors of Entre Ríos, Santa Fe, and Misiones withdrew their support in 1820, Méndez still renewed the alliance between Artigas and the people of Corrientes in the Pact of Avalos, in April of that same year.

<sup>3</sup> “La parte más inferior del vecindario.” Domínguez in *AA* vol. 14, 169.

Catí, was a typical man from the correntino countryside that had seized an opportunity in the urban militias and whose sufficient education granted him the rank of Lieutenant and commander of the Picket lines. Ángel Fernández Blanco was a landowner and prosperous merchant born in the city of Corrientes – therefore, the standard Cabildo representative with an active political and military life. We can also see the figures of the *comandantes de campaña* making a quick appearance – they were the ones who held authority over the small villages and towns under Corrientes’ jurisdiction, some more and some less affluent, and whose approval the Cabildo considered important. Finally, we have the popular groups, about whom we only know they were the people at the plaza. Hovering above them all was the idea of the “Pueblo.” These men, and the socio-economic groups they represented intentionally or not, all came together to defend one same interest: the “Pueblo” against the ill-intentioned Domínguez and his Buenos Aires men. But, who was included in this “Pueblo” they claimed to defend? What were some of this “Pueblo’s” concrete interests? How was it possible to see the “Pueblo” as such an agglutinating entity, able to reconcile these diverse backgrounds? Finally, to what extent did this defense of the Pueblo’s interest impact political life in the period?

This chapter seeks to apply these questions to understand the consolidation of the Artiguist movement in the Río de la Plata’s Mesopotamia. Rather than writing the history of a political concept, though, I briefly examine the word “Pueblo” as a representation of the diversity of interests that existed during the period. Long present in the vocabulary of the colonial world with a plurality of meanings, it epitomizes the transformations in political thinking.<sup>4</sup> As seen in

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<sup>4</sup> For a study on the different meanings carried by the word *pueblo*, see the homonymous article written by Gabriel di Meglio and Noemí Goldman in *Lenguaje y revolución*, ed. Goldman. Also, chapter 1 of Hilda Sabato’s *Republics of the New World: The Revolutionary Political Experiment in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

the episode that took place in Corrientes, the ideas of Pueblo pervaded the discourse of leaders associated with various political models. The widespread use of such an abstract concept could often generate confusion and conflict. But exactly because it was abstract – and broad enough – it could also serve, at particular moments, as an instrument for sewing together unexpected alliances. And this is precisely what we see on display in this episode of Corrientes. Behind the coming-together of militia members, military leaders, merchants, landowners, Cabildo representatives, and popular groups, was a model that allowed for greater political autonomy and that sought to accommodate various claims deriving from this Pueblo. Its main proponent, as previously seen, was the leader from the Banda Oriental José Artigas. In forming what he envisioned as the *Liga de los Pueblos Libres* (The League of Free Peoples), a confederation that at one point united the provinces of Corrientes, Misiones, Santa Fe, Cordoba, Entre Ríos, and the Banda Oriental, Artigas was able to craft an alliance that in itself sought to recognize and preserve “individual sovereignties,” in the name of the Pueblos, the towns that conformed the territory, along with the Pueblo, their residents.<sup>5</sup> In looking at the Pueblos present in Corrientes and their interests, we can glimpse some of the elements that were at the center of this alliance, that he constantly referred to as the “system of the pueblos,” or simply “system” (*sistema*).<sup>6</sup> Artigas based his system on ancient and new political traditions. He offered the recognition of individual sovereignties, with an understanding that contemplated towns as political entities and residents as sovereign agents, and placed himself as a mediator between them. In practical terms, his innovative alliance connected various social groups and territories, and his presence served as

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<sup>5</sup> José Artigas, “Bases para la misión de Tomás García de Zuñiga,” Paso de la Arena, February 1813, *AA* vol. 9, 249. “La soberanía particular de los pueblos será precisamente declarada y ostentada, como objeto único de nuestra revolución”.

<sup>6</sup> José Artigas to Manuel de Sarratea, Costa de Yí, December 25, 1812 in *AA* vol. 9, 173.

a point of reference for pueblos and their claims in this world in transition, ultimately allowing him to become a source of authority throughout the Mesopotamia.

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The establishment of Artiguism in the Littoral has received some attention from historians of the Río de la Plata. Provincial historians have taken an interest in his alliance with local authorities from the provinces that joined his League. Views on the matter are contentious: they are either negative, stating that the support of Corrientes' vecinos was dependent on the use of violence by Artiguist forces, or somewhat idealized, underscoring how Artigas' ideals raised the flag of autonomy and valued provincial politics and needs.<sup>7</sup> Writing in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Manuel Florencio Mantilla was the first intellectual to attempt a complete historical account of the province of Corrientes. His interpretation of the political developments that took place in the decade following the May Revolution is heavily influenced by the testimonial of Fermín Felix Pampín, his father-in-law, and reinforced by the accounts of the Robertson brothers, British merchants traveling through South America around that period. Speaking to his own political time, permeated by disputes between autonomists and liberals, Mantilla compared the works of the former group to that of Artigas and his allies in a negative tone that underscored the violence of the province's early days.<sup>8</sup> Drawing the line between Artiguist leaders - the "caudillejos" who

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<sup>7</sup> Bartolomé Mitre, *Historia de Belgrano y de la Independencia Argentina* (1859); Vicente Fidel Lopez, *Historia de la República Argentina*, 10v. (1883-1893); Manuel Florencio Mantilla, *Crónica histórica de la Provincia de Corrientes* v. 1 (Buenos Aires, Espiasse y Cia., 1972).

<sup>8</sup> María Silvia Leoni and María Gabriela Quiñónez, "De gaucho anarquista a caudillo federal. Itinerario de la imagen de Artigas en la historiografía correntina," in *Segundas Jornadas de Historia Regional Comparada* (Porto Alegre, 2005), 4.

were keen on barbaric practices, and the heroes who fought against them, Mantilla understood Corrientes' support of Artiguism as an "anomaly", only restored in 1821, after the removal of what he considered external influencers. This support, he explained, was the result of Buenos Aires' egocentric policies and decisions that impoverished Corrientes. Instead of reinforcing their autonomy, however, the correntinos had their institutions usurped by Artigas' men.<sup>9</sup> This view is very much connected to that of a liberal historiography from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, represented by figures such as Vicente Fidel López and Bartolomé Mitre, who dismissed Artigas as "the Attila of the *Caudillaje*", and that plucked his figure from the foundational myth of the Argentine nation that was, according to him, born with the May Revolution.<sup>10</sup> This interpretation of Artigas had ramifications well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an example being the work of Ángel Acuña, published by the Argentine Academy of History in 1946.

Despite the consolidation of this liberal view that made its way into historical textbooks for several decades, new understandings of Artiguism emerged, reclaiming his role in the Argentine and Uruguayan national histories and historiographies.<sup>11</sup> Writing in the 1880s, the historian of Entre Ríos Benigno Tejeiro Martínez rescued Artigas' revolutionary spirit and strict defense of the territory against Iberian interests. The so-called *Nueva Escuela Histórica* stood on a similar position, with figures such as Emilio Ravignani highlighting his independentist and

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<sup>9</sup> Leoni and Quiñónez, "De gaucho anarquista...", 12.

<sup>10</sup> Bartolomé Mitre, *Obras Completas* (Buenos Aires, 1942) in *Debate sobre caudillismo en la Historiografía Argentina*, ed. Clara Cardinal, Martín Cuesta, Verónica Martínez Tami, Mauro Pasqualini. Cátedra Historia Argentina I, Jorge Gelman (Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Buenos Aires. 2001), 33.

<sup>11</sup> Benigno T. Martínez, *Historia de la Provincia de Entre Ríos* (Bs. As., Biedma e hijos., 1902). Some of the names of this new generation are Emilio Ravignani, Eduardo Acevedo, Lucía Sala de Touron and Juan Pivel Devoto.

constitutional aspirations.<sup>12</sup> In Corrientes, for the first time, Hernán Felix Gómez proposed an integrationist view of the period, explaining Artigas' success in the 1810s in the context of a regional articulation, connecting the Banda Oriental, Corrientes, Entre Ríos and Santa Fe through economic interests.<sup>13</sup> By then, in Uruguay, the analysis of Artigas' influence had moved from the negative "black legend" that occupied the 19<sup>th</sup> century historiography, to the "Artiguist cult" that emerged in the writings of Eduardo Acevedo.<sup>14</sup> This view was cemented by institutions that recognized his place as defender of the "mass of the people," a "defender of the poor," and even, the purveyor of a radical revolution that amalgamated "small and medium *hacendados*" with "the poor of the countryside, Blacks, and Indians."<sup>15</sup> His figure was of such importance to the Uruguayan nation that it deserved the compilation of every document related to his life, by a commission that lives on to present times, and resulted in the publication of thirty-eight volumes thus far. Embarking on a similar view and continuing the work of Ravignani and Gómez, Wenceslao Domínguez published a series of books about Corrientes' disposition towards federalism, rooted in the defense of autonomy and based on solid popular support.<sup>16</sup> The popular component of Artiguism was also present in the works of Juan Pivel Devoto and Lucía Sala, Julio Rodríguez and Nelson de la Torre in Uruguay and later on Jorge Abelardo Ramos, in Argentina, who proposed that Artigas should be looked at as a representative of the wishes of

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<sup>12</sup> Emilio Ravignani, *Historia Constitucional de la República Argentina, 1926-1930*, 67, in Cardinal, Cuesta and Pasqualini, *Debate sobre caudillismo...*

<sup>13</sup> Hernán Félix Gómez, *Historia de la provincia de Corrientes* (Corrientes: Imp. del Estado, 1928); Leoni and Quiñónez, "De gaucho anarquista...", 16.

<sup>14</sup> Eduardo Acevedo, *José Artigas, su obra cívica, alegato histórico* (Montevideo, 1950), as quoted in Ana Frega, *Pueblos y soberanía en la revolución artiguista*, 260. See also Leticia Soler, *La historiografía uruguaya contemporánea, aproximación a su estudio* (Montevideo: Banda Oriental, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> Lucía Sala, Julio Rodríguez, Nelson De la Torre, *La revolución agraria artiguista*, (Montevideo, EPU, 1969).

<sup>16</sup> Wenceslao Domínguez, *Corrientes en las luchas por la democracia. El artiguismo en Corrientes* (Buenos Aires, Imp. La Gráfica, 1973), as quoted in Leoni and Quiñónez, "De gaucho anarquista...", 20.



gauchos and peons that resisted the foreign invasions and the commercial bourgeoisie of Montevideo and Buenos Aires.<sup>17</sup> Going a step further, José Pedro Barrán shifted the focus, giving prominence to the role of the people as agents, rather than followers of a “hero” who led them.<sup>18</sup> A couple decades later, Ricardo Salvatore used a social lens to comprehend the period that he characterized as “an almost total erosion of authority and social hierarchy.”<sup>19</sup> Looking through the eyes of rural workers, he proposed that Artiguism picked up among them because it enabled the emergence of systems of “cooperation” and “direct appropriation,” anchored in a “gaucho cultural tradition” that valued autonomy.

Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, scholars mostly from Uruguay and Argentina proposed dialogs among the social, political and economic aspects that provided the context of the period. Utilizing traditional and novel methods of analysis that combined quantitative and qualitative sources, they wanted to explain the struggles that took place following the fall of the Spanish colonial power. The compilation of studies coordinated by Noemí Goldman and Salvatore in 1998 sought to reinstall the debate about the nature of *caudillos* and their relationships. The studies propose a critical perspective of traditional narratives that tended to frame these political leaders within the realm of barbarism, product of a lack of institutional organization that enabled the manipulation of masses.<sup>20</sup> Artigas, seen as the first great *rioplatense* caudillo, was considered as part of this complex political system that learned to use

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<sup>17</sup> Juan E. Pivel Devoto, *Raíces coloniales de la revolución Oriental de 1811* (Montevideo, Monteverde, 1952).

<sup>18</sup> José Pedro Barrán y Benjamín Nahum, *Bases económicas de la revolución artiguista* (Montevideo, EBO, 1964).

<sup>19</sup> Ricardo Salvatore, “The Breakdown of Social Discipline in the Banda Oriental and the Littoral, 1790-1820,” in *Revolution and Restoration: The Rearrangement of Power in Argentina, 1776-1860*, ed. Mark D. Szuchman and Jonathan C. Brown (University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 74.

<sup>20</sup> Noemí Goldman, Ricardo Salvatore, (eds.), *Caudillismos rioplatenses. Nuevas miradas a un viejo problema*. (Buenos Aires, Eudeba, 1998).

old traditions and structures to transform relationships within the new social and political configuration post-May of 1810.

Uruguayan historian Ana Frega is one of the main voices of this new generation of intellectuals, participating in *Caudillismos* with an article that looked at the difficulties Artigas faced to implement his rather radical view of “*soberanía particular de los pueblos*” in the Banda Oriental. His success resided, she proposed, in the League’s ability to satisfy the needs of diverse groups. For urban elites, it “imposed order” and “guaranteed autonomy from Buenos Aires.” For the pueblos, it created spaces to express their “localisms” in a safe way. And for the militias, it fostered a personal relationship with a level of “tolerance” towards petty crime.<sup>21</sup> Frega also proposed to look at Artiguism detached from modern-day frontiers, framing his movement within the new perspective of *rioplatense* regional history, prior to the formation of nation-states. In 2007, her dissertation led to a seminal work, *Pueblos y soberanía en la revolución artiguista*, which focuses on the region of Santo Domingo Soriano, a former *pueblo de indios* chaná later occupied by Criollo settlers and located on the fringes of the Spanish Empire (present-day Uruguay). She uses it as a case study to explore the constitution of networks of economic and human contact, in which shared experiences gave way to new identities and political understandings during the revolutionary period.<sup>22</sup>

New studies propose understanding Artiguism from multiple perspectives in the social sciences.<sup>23</sup> M. Blanca Paris de Odone highlighted Artigas’ distinctive political discourse, which

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<sup>21</sup> Frega, *Caudillismos*, 132.

<sup>22</sup> Ana Frega, *Pueblos y soberanía...*

<sup>23</sup> Frega and Islas, *Nuevas Miradas en torno al artiguismo*.

combined concepts of much appeal to diverse groups, such as *federación* and *libertad*.<sup>24</sup> Lucía Sala called attention to the necessity of expanding the study of this political discourse to include the popular sectors, and explore what their place in the frame of popular sovereignty was.<sup>25</sup> Frega cleverly introduced the topic in an article about those who Artigas called “*infelices*,” the miserable who had been the most affected by the colonial rule and now deserved the most care.<sup>26</sup> In it, she mentions that keys to exploring the topic are the radicalization of the Artiguist project with his agrarian reform, the inclusion of freed slaves into their ranks, and the recognition of indigenous rights.<sup>27</sup> In the past decade, new studies have connected militarization with political engagement in the urban setting of Montevideo.<sup>28</sup>

We can see, then, a renewed interest in topics that bring together political, economic, cultural, and intellectual aspects to explain the interactions of various social groups that experienced Artiguism. These studies have greatly contributed to our understandings of the period, with a special focus on the relationship between Artigas and his followers. Despite looking at it from a regional perspective, ignoring modern boundaries, they are mostly anchored in the Banda Oriental. In this chapter, I would like to refer back to a specific characterization,

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<sup>24</sup> M. Blanca Paris de Odonne, “Presencia de Artigas en la Revolución del Río de la Plata (1810-1820),” in *Nuevas Miradas en torno al artiguismo*, ed. Frega and Islas, 73.

<sup>25</sup> Lucía Sala, “Democracia durante las guerras por la independencia en Hispanoamérica,” in *Nuevas Miradas en torno al artiguismo*, ed. Frega and Islas, 91.

<sup>26</sup> Ana Frega, “Los ‘infelices’ y el carácter popular de la revolución artiguista,” in Raúl O. Fradkin, (ed.), *¿Y el pueblo dónde está? Contribuciones para una historia popular de la revolución de independencia en el Río de la Plata*, (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2008), 151-175.

<sup>27</sup> Frega also explored the participation of African descendants in the army in ““La patria me hizo libre.” Aproximación a la condición de los esclavos durante las guerras de independencia en la Banda Oriental,” in *Negros de la Patria*, ed. Mallo and Telesca, 171-186.

<sup>28</sup> Pablo Ferreira, “Ciudadanos en armas. La experiencia de la milicia cívica en Montevideo, 1815-1817,” in *Claves. Revista de Historia n. 2* (2016): 9-45; M. Bruno, S. Delgado, D. Fessler, Ana Frega, (eds.), *Los orientales en armas. Estudios sobre la experiencia militar en la revolución artiguista* (Montevideo: Ediciones universitarias, 2015); Inés Cuadro Cawen and Ana Frega, ed., *La vida política en Montevideo: elites y sectores populares en tiempos de revolución* (Montevideo: CSIC de la Universidad de la República, 2018).

proposed by Ana Frega, who sees Artigas as a “mediator” between the interests of diverse social groups.<sup>29</sup> I would like to apply that concept of “mediation” to explore the establishment of Artiguism in the Mesopotamia. As evident in the episode presented earlier, in the Mesopotamia, too, Artigas was able to mediate and bring closer together heterogeneous social groups, at different levels and for different periods of time. I will analyze unpublished information present in Cabildo records, communications labeled as “*Correspondencia oficial*” by administrators, judicial cases, as well as various official and private letters published in the Archivo Artigas, in combination with information from the censuses of Corrientes from 1813 and 1814. These documents are penned by Cabildo representatives, political and military leaders of various factions, and regular people defending private matters. I will also draw information from the available bibliography. A close reading of this material, placed against the regional political, economic, and cultural context, allows for comparing and contrasting, and piecing together information to reconstruct experiences and strategies. What this material reveals is that, besides mediating between social groups, Artigas was also mediating between old and new political traditions and practices. The “ideological syncretism” behind his system enabled various groups to feel identified and heard.<sup>30</sup> In a moment of transition, he was able to piece together changes and continuities. His understandings of the political moment impacted and influenced the relationships among the elites and also between elites and popular groups. They also permitted the latter to play an active role in the transformations taking place.

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<sup>29</sup> Frega, *Caudillismos*, 132.

<sup>30</sup> Lucía Sala, “Democracia durante las guerras por la independencia en Hispanoamérica,” in *Nuevas Miradas en torno al artiguismo*, ed. Frega and Islas, 92.

The following sections will provide a brief narrative about how Artiguist leaders officially took control over the Mesopotamia. Subsequently, I will analyze the social and economic factors present in Corrientes that granted Artiguism its known success, even if for a very brief period, with the establishment of his proposed “system.” Economic reform and the installation of alternative mechanisms of authority both for the elites and popular groups compose the core of changes. As components of a reciprocal alliance, besides favoring local needs, Artigas proposed a model that recognized ties beyond provincial boundaries and reinforced a regional connection.

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### *The Consolidation of Artiguism in the Mesopotamia*

After the refusal of Buenos Aires to accept most of the Banda Oriental deputies sent to the Assembly of 1813, Artigas decided to abandon the siege that was pressuring the royalist forces in Montevideo in January of 1814. This moment represented a clear break between his forces and those of Buenos Aires. It also prompted the latter to dissolve the Second Triumvirate and concentrate power in the hands of the newly instituted “Supreme Director,” Gervasio Antonio Posadas. Artigas’ troops retired to Belén, on the margins of the Uruguay river, and Posadas declared him a “traitor of the *Patria*.” This declaration would be a definite break in their cooperation. On May 17, the Spanish forces under Gaspar de Vigodet’s command were finally beaten in Montevideo. At this point, civil resistance coming from the Spaniards throughout the Littoral had also almost completely receded, as Buenos Aires ordered massive deportations of the

so-called *sarracenos*.<sup>31</sup> Lacking a common enemy, a period of open confrontation started between Artigas and the Directory.

Following the rupture, Artigas directed his efforts at developing and strengthening ties with the peoples and leaders of the Littoral, expanding his influence and seeking to convince Cabildos and commanders of cities and towns to defend his political model. As mentioned in previous chapters, Artigas had had the chance to explore the territory west of the Uruguay River in colonial times – during his service as a blandengue, during the exodus of 1811, and also throughout his period as the commander against the first Portuguese invasion. He was familiar with the dynamics that guided frontier life and had established solid alliances that allowed for the circulation of his ideas.

The different governments of Buenos Aires had constantly worked to grow roots in the political life of the countryside. Using local connections or people from the region, they strategically named governors/commanders who were favorable to their policies. Such had been the case of Elías Galván, named Lieutenant-Governor of Corrientes. Galván was a correntino who had long lived in Buenos Aires. He had a good relationship with the elites of Corrientes but had not been chosen by the people there. In times of political uncertainty, these men were usually accepted by local Cabildos. After some time, the provinces started to question these appointees. It denoted a constant interference in local politics and an attempt to control political decisions in areas that had not yet signed off on this central authority. And so, provincial leaders and the people living there became open to political alternatives.

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<sup>31</sup> Edict by José Leon Domínguez. Corrientes, September 25, 1813 in Corrientes, Gobierno 1812-14, sala X: 5-7-1, AGNA.

### **Establishing the *Liga de los Pueblos Libres***

It is only a matter of time before the “territory of Entre Ríos succumb (...) to the suggestions of the *Orientales*,” wrote Hilarión de la Quintana.<sup>32</sup> Buenos Aires had designated him as the new General Commander and dispatched his forces to the region to increase defense. Since 1813, they had been concerned about the spread of Artiguism in the area, closely connected geographically and socially to the Banda Oriental. The Triumvirate had elevated the pueblo of Paraná to the category of villa, providing it with more autonomy and resources, in order to gather support from the vicinity. But when Quintana made it to Entre Ríos, he confided the only support he received was that of his own mounted Grenadiers. It was most important to broaden his base, since Buenos Aires had instructed him, Pérez Planes, and the Baron of Holmberg, to join forces and capture Artigas “in any way and at any cost.”<sup>33</sup> Holmberg too, though, had problems finding support. According to him, in the Villa de Paraná and the town of Nogoyá only women and children remained.<sup>34</sup> Francisco Antonio de la Torre told Santa Fe’s governor Luciano Montes de Oca that the men had voluntarily followed Eusebio Hereñú, the commander of the Villa de Paraná. Hereñú had recognized Artigas as *Protector de los Pueblos Libres* and broke away from Santa Fe’s authority, governing now Entre Ríos as a *de facto* province.<sup>35</sup> The situation was similar in the area closer to the Uruguay River, where Ramón López indicated that all of the

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<sup>32</sup> Hilarión de la Quintana to the Supreme Executive Power of the United Provinces. Uruguay, January 27, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 19.

<sup>33</sup> The Government of the United Provinces to the Commander General of Entre Ríos, Hilarión de la Quintana. Buenos Aires, February 5, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 46; Draft of a letter from the Supreme Director to general Holmberg. Buenos Aires, February 5-6, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 45.

<sup>34</sup> Eduardo Holmberg to the Supreme Director. Puenta del Obispo..., February 15, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 79.

<sup>35</sup> Francisco Antonio de la Torre to Luciano Montes de Oca. Santa Fe, February 22, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 91. The Village of Paraná had up until now been under Santa Fe’s jurisdiction, and for this reason Santa Fe had control over its political and military leaders.

naturales that he had wanted to enlist had migrated or joined Manduré's forces.<sup>36</sup> In the military too, the support for Artigas was visible. Major Manuel Pinto Carneiro, from the forces that were loyal to Buenos Aires, observed, "in pain," as the "entire militia" was "passing and preparing to open fire against [him] alongside those of the opposite party."<sup>37</sup> Holmberg as well narrated how most of his troops deserted and defected to the other side, led by local commanders who were eager to let them go or aid them in switching sides.<sup>38</sup> As we see, people from various backgrounds here too - Indigenous, Criollo authorities, vecinos, the military – all over Entre Ríos, decided to show their support for the Artiguist model. Even "perverse women," said vecino Juan Pedro de Aguirre, offered their houses for meetings to "wage war" against the Directory's forces.<sup>39</sup> By February of 1814, local accounts stated that all of the *Oriental* territory and the Entre Ríos were "intercepted," product of an "almost general insurgency of all its inhabitants," allied with "hatred towards the Capital."<sup>40</sup> Buenos Aires tried to recover influence over the territory by declaring the official creation of Entre Ríos as a province and naming new governors.<sup>41</sup> Still, local leaders like Hereñú, José Ignacio Vera, José Francisco Rodríguez, and Francisco Ramírez managed to maintain the influence of federalist ideals until at least 1820.

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<sup>36</sup> Ramón López to the Supreme Executive Power of the United Provinces. Uruguay, January 31, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 33.

<sup>37</sup> Manuel Pinto Carneiro to Colonel and Commander of Arms in Santa Fe. Costa de Nogoyá, February 15, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 84.

<sup>38</sup> "Parte elevado por el coronel Holmberg al Director Supremo sobre la acción del 22 de febrero en las orillas del arroyo El Espinillo." Bajada del Paraná, May 17, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 259-267; Ariel Viola, "Politización Miliciana en las compañías De Pardos y Morenos De Santa Fe: Centralismo porteño, autonomía Provincial y Federalismo Artiguista. 1810-1815," *Claves. Revista De Historia* 5 (9), (2019): 63-88. <https://doi.org/10.25032/crh.v5i9.4>.

<sup>39</sup> Blas Jose Pico to Javier de Viana. Concepcion del Uruguay, October 24, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 280.

<sup>40</sup> Juan Pedro de Aguirre to Juan J. Anchorena. Santa Fe, February 21, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 89.

<sup>41</sup> Up to that point the towns of Entre Ríos had been under the jurisdiction of Santa Fe, a decision made by the Primera Junta.



Towards the north, the region of Misiones had already been experiencing constant conflicts deriving from the animosity between Artigas and Pérez Planes. We saw in the previous chapter how the Guaraní people increasingly took stands to defend their own political views. After the movements registered in Mandisoví and Yapeyú in 1813, a good portion of the territory remained under Artigas' influence, while Pérez Planes tried to resist with hesitant support from his group of Guaraní allies. In 1814, another indigenous figure, Blas Basualdo, started to occupy a prominent place in the political scene, as one of Artigas' lieutenants. His place of birth is not clear, nor is his precise ethnicity. The most circulated version was that he was a Chaná from the Banda Oriental, who joined Artigas in the Battle of Las Piedras.<sup>42</sup> Basualdo was fundamental for the establishment of Artiguism in both Misiones and Corrientes. After the subdelegate of Candelaria Vicente Antonio Matiauda deposed Celedonio José del Castillo in one of the rare occasions that Paraguayan forces supported Artiguism, he joined Basualdo in Paso de la Cruz to combat Pérez Planes. On March 19, after seven days of combat, Pérez Planes was captured and sent to Artigas, who later executed him. Basualdo became the Lieutenant-Governor of Misiones and kept marching towards Corrientes to consolidate the Artiguist ideals.

Up until the Artiguist forces took control over the government of Corrientes, it had been governed by José León Domínguez, a *porteño* sent by Buenos Aires in September of 1813. Classic chronicler Florencio Mantilla classified Domínguez as an “intruder” in the eyes of local elites.<sup>43</sup> In fact, the Cabildo had refused to give him the political control over the province, handing him power over only military decisions.<sup>44</sup> With the imminent arrival of Artiguism in

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<sup>42</sup> Enrique Patiño, *Los tenientes de Artigas* (Montevideo: A. Monteverde & Cia, 1936), 76.

<sup>43</sup> Mantilla, *Cronica histórica...*, 183.

<sup>44</sup> Dardo Ramírez Braschi, “La provincia de Corrientes en los prolegómenos del Congreso de Oriente,” in *El Derecho. Diario de doctrina y Jurisprudencia Constitucional*, n. 13. 672 (2015): 12-14.

1814, Domínguez decided to use that power to allocate some of the Corrientes troops and stop their march. He had been making plans and calculations and inquiring to commanders about the countryside's loyalty since the beginning of February. Domínguez estimated that, between the Pickets and the Company of Grenadiers of Corrientes, he would be able to gather a force of about 600 men to combat Artigas. The Cabildo opposed the removal of such a vast number of men. Still, despite knowing that he would leave the city of Corrientes "inert" and vulnerable to the attacks of "Pirates" sailing the Paraná, he chose to move forward with the convocation.<sup>45</sup> To his surprise, only eleven grenadiers showed up from the troops located in the capital. He then tried to get the support of the people from the interior, despite seeing them as "undisciplined, unarmed, and taken by fear, (...) prejudicial rather than helpful." Nonetheless, the local commander Juan José Nicolas de Lafuente told the governor that in Saladas "everyone has already been following the system contrary to our cause" and would not volunteer to join.<sup>46</sup> As a last resort, he tried to communicate with Pérez Planes in Misiones and Hilarión de la Quintana in Entre Ríos.<sup>47</sup> The open opposition to his interests was so strong, though, that he could not even manage to get his letters through the territory.<sup>48</sup> Eventually, Domínguez realized that "with the exception of very few people, everyone else from inside and outside the city [was] decided for D.

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<sup>45</sup> José León Domínguez to Supremo Director de las Provincias Unidas. Corrientes, February 25, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 106.

<sup>46</sup> Juan José Nicolas de la Fuente to Jose León Domínguez, Saladas, March 10, 1814 in *Correspondencia Oficial* t. 5, f. 13v, in AGPC. De La Fuente later clarified to Méndez that his statement lacked accuracy and sought to prevent Domínguez "from taking out people and exposing them to an imminent danger." Juan Jose Nicolas de la Fuente to Juan Bautista Méndez, Saladas, March 19, 1814 in *Correspondencia Oficial* t. 5, f. 26, in AGPC.

<sup>47</sup> José León Domínguez to the Supreme Director of the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata. Corrientes, February 25, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 111.

<sup>48</sup> José León Domínguez to the Supreme Director of the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata. Corrientes, March 5, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 125.

José Artigas.”<sup>49</sup> Knowing it was only a matter of time before the Artiguist men knocked on his door, he planned his escape, which included those “few people” and carrying the arms of Corrientes. As previously stated, Méndez and the Picket managed to remove the arms from his possession. Domínguez did eventually leave, but those few supporters stayed behind.

In a matter of a few months, Artigas’ envoys had officially taken military and political command over most of the Mesopotamia (see figure 6). In this context of political divide, the people there felt attracted by Artigas’ more localized interpretations of authority, amplifying the political divide even further. Speaking still in 1813, José León Domínguez could see that the region was missing the “axis of union,” since “in this country reigns not only division about the system but also in regards to interests and civil relationships.”<sup>50</sup> His reading of the moment was an accurate one, but it did not necessarily have the negative connotation that Domínguez was trying to imply.

What particularly attracted the People of these provinces to Artiguism was that its proposed political framework, its “system,” was, at first sight, respectful of those multiple interests. Besides the classical divide between the defense of provincial autonomy and the centralization aspired to by Buenos Aires, I would like to focus on the groups that occupied the Mesopotamia, the Pueblo, to explore their political and economic interests, as well as relationships. As is to be imagined, this Pueblo assumed many forms and these interests were wide and varied.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> José León Domínguez to the Supremo Poder Ejecutivo de las Provincias Unidas del Río de la Plata. Corrientes, November 30, 1813 in Fondo Mantilla, t. 36, AGPC.

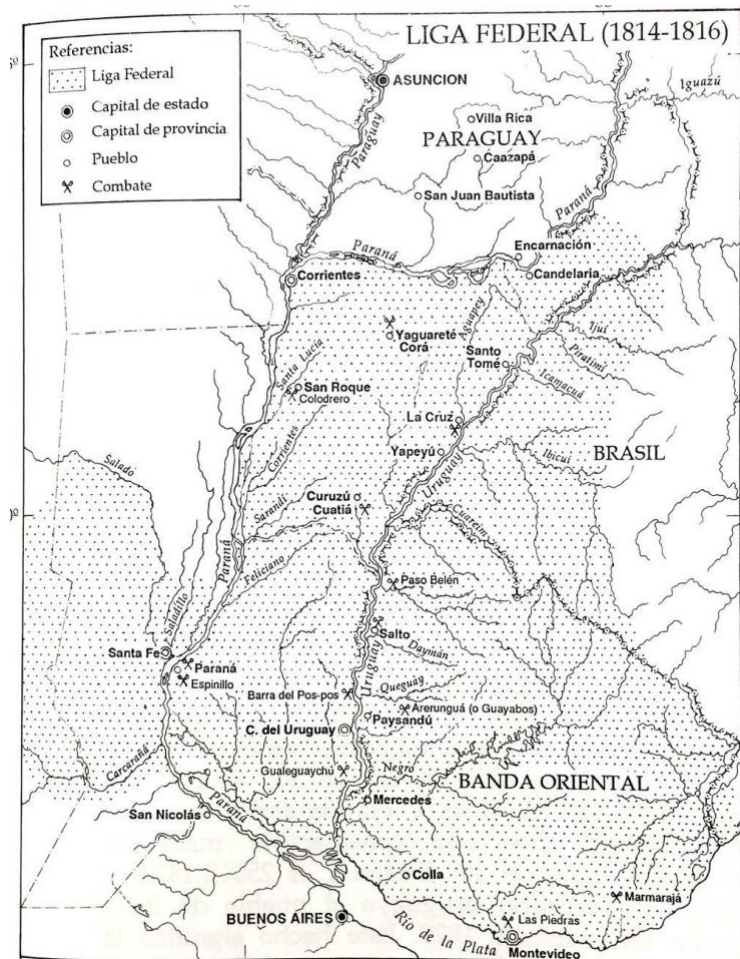


Figure 6. The League of Free Peoples, 1814-1816<sup>51</sup>

### Corrientes: The Peoples of the City and the Countryside

When Méndez was proclaimed the new governor of Corrientes by the Pueblo, he knew how important it was for the Cabildo to endorse it. Despite the presence of Governors, the Cabildo officials were the ones who pushed forward policies and interests of locals and took care of overall administration. After the May Revolution, many times the *cabildantes* had filled the political void left after the Paraguayan invasions and the displacement of Buenos Aires

<sup>51</sup> Source: Ernesto J. A. Maeder and Ramón Gutierrez. *Atlas Histórico del Nordeste argentino* (Resistencia: IIGHI, 1995), 103.

appointed governors. It is fair to say that they held a solid political power. The Cabildo was composed of two *alcaldes*, judges of 1<sup>st</sup> instance who mainly executed judicial functions, and various regidores, who had incorporated various aspects of administration and law enforcement. In a study that looks at the period between 1810 and 1815, we find that out of 33 *cabildantes* surveyed, at least 23 (70%) were cattlemen, five (15%) were dedicated to agricultural production, and only 2 (6%) directly engaged in commercial activities with Buenos Aires.<sup>52</sup> One of these two was Ángel Fernández Blanco, who apparently was included in Domínguez's plans to retreat from Corrientes carrying its armament.

The composition of the Cabildo is a snapshot of the main economic activities of Corrientes. The province had been experiencing a growth in revenue since the passage of the *comercio libre* law in 1778, which opened commerce between American and European ports and increased movement of goods on the rivers. Corrientes witnessed a high demand for some of its products, such as tobacco, timber, hides, and yerba mate.<sup>53</sup> This new reality attracted foreign merchants and created a "bustling community."<sup>54</sup> It also benefited locals engaged in the production of these goods. Cattle ranching in particular became a profitable activity, attracting many long-established landowners like the ones in the Cabildo, who mainly resided in the city. This slow but steady integration into the export market was dependent upon one key-player, though. Buenos Aires controlled the transit down the Paraná River and could decide whether or

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<sup>52</sup> It is likely that some of them had mixed activities, like Juan José Fernández Blanco, whose information indicates he was a cattle rancher and also had agricultural production. Data is missing for some of the *cabildantes*, so these numbers could be higher. Fernando Ariel Pozzaglio, "El Cabildo de Corrientes En Tiempos de La Revolución Emancipadora Del Río de La Plata (1810-1815)" (BA thesis, Resistencia, Chaco, Universidad Nacional del Nordeste, 2009), 66.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Whigham, *The politics of river trade: tradition and development in the Upper Plata, 1780-1870* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 16.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Whigham, "Trade and Conflict on the Rivers: Corrientes, 1780-1840," in Szuchman and Brown, eds., *Revolution and Restoration*, 154-155.

not goods could keep flowing. This situation generated what Thomas Whigham called an “unfavorable relation” that marked much of the experience of those involved in this trade and extended into the independent period.<sup>55</sup> For instance, soon after the May Revolution, Buenos Aires’ retaliation policies towards Royalist Paraguay meant the restriction on navigation and a loss of revenue that deeply affected the economy of Corrientes. Precisely because of that dependence on Buenos Aires to keep its economy afloat, part of the historiography of Corrientes has seen the admittance of Artiguism in the province as a product of coercion. In this perspective, the Cabildo did everything possible to avoid their separation from the Directory, as losing them as a commercial partner meant risking their economic standing.<sup>56</sup> However, looking at the composition of the Cabildo and the economic nuances of the territory, it is possible to challenge that assumption, and even suggest that alternative alliances that enhanced economic autonomy had room to be positively received.

Firstly, it is important to differentiate the city of Corrientes, where old colonial elites were established, from its countryside, which, according to Halperín Donghi, had a “life of its own.”<sup>57</sup> In the 1810s, the jurisdiction of Corrientes was divided into eleven military commands (*comandancias militares*) or departments, each with its respective commander who sought to impose control over the territory’s life.<sup>58</sup> The northeastern areas had strong cultural and economic ties with Misiones and Paraguay. After the Jesuit expulsion, it had experienced an

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<sup>55</sup> Whigham. Preface to *The politics of river trade*, xvii.

<sup>56</sup> Fernando Ariel Pozzaglio, “El impacto de la Revolución de Mayo en la ciudad de Corrientes visto desde su Cabildo,” en *Revista Junta de Estudios Históricos del Chaco n. 5* (2011): 103-119 oai:ri.conicet.gov.ar:11336/8490; Gómez, *Historia de la Provincia...*, 60; Carlos Segreti, *La Aurora de la independencia. 1810-1815*. t. 2 (Buenos Aires: Astrea, 1980), 60.

<sup>57</sup> Halperín Donghi, *Revolución y Guerra*, 38.

<sup>58</sup> Ernesto J. A. Maeder and Ramón Gutierrez. *Atlas Histórico del Nordeste argentino* (Resistencia: IIGHI, 1995), 116.

influx of Guaraní people from the former missions, who worked at the *yerbales*. The southeast had a landscape that was ideal for cattle ranching and was therefore increasingly connected to the export trade.<sup>59</sup> Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it relied on *vaquerías*, the hunting of wild cattle, but by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the system had been replaced by ranching. Curuzú Cuatiá, the town close to Entre Ríos which had been officially founded by Manuel Belgrano in 1810, became the political center of this area.<sup>60</sup> For their legal trade, these areas required licenses granted by the Cabildo of Corrientes capital, which in itself established a sort of dependence to the political wishes (and private interests) of its members, as identified by historian Ariel Pozzaglio.<sup>61</sup> However, both in the north and the south, trade through improvised ports was a common sight, in the hands of foremen and rural workers. A characteristic very much of the frontier, these informal but long-established commercial ties with adjacent territories offered opportunity for contact with political and economic alternatives.<sup>62</sup> The further the frontier of Corrientes expanded, the more difficult it was for the colonial center – and the above mentioned merchant elites – to exert control over these far away areas.<sup>63</sup> In this power vacuum, the military commanders occupied a central place, organizing the territory's defense, economy, and labor force. Halperín goes as far as saying that

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<sup>59</sup> Ernesto J. A. Maeder, "La evolución de la Ganadería de Corrientes (1810-1854)," in *Cuadernos de Estudios Regionales* 4 (1983): 9. As cited in Pozzaglio, "El impacto de la Revolución de Mayo," 69-70.

<sup>60</sup> Pablo Buchbinder, *Caudillos de pluma y hombres de acción: estado y política en Corrientes en tiempos de la organización nacional* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2004), 32.

<sup>61</sup> Pozzaglio cites the case of A Pedro de Obregón, who is granted a license to export cattle to Paraguay and Misiones, in June of 1810. Pozzaglio, "El impacto de la Revolución de Mayo, 69-70.

<sup>62</sup> Fabrício Pereira Prado, *Edge of Empire: Atlantic Networks and Revolution in Bourbon Río de La Plata* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1525/california/9780520285156.001.0001>, 4. Prado identifies this phenomenon for Montevideo elites, who were able to develop networks with imperial Brazil and grow independently of Buenos Aires. To a smaller extent, connections in the frontier of Corrientes opened avenues of negotiation with various economic groups outside of the capital's control.

<sup>63</sup> Buchbinder, *Caudillos de Pluma*, 29.

“rupture with law” had been normalized.<sup>64</sup> In this sense, the weak connection to the capital, and the adversities that came with its attempts to control commerce, opened space for the rise of new alliances.

Secondly, if we bring the analysis back to the city, we will find a Cabildo that was very much interested in keeping commerce flowing, since the majority of its representatives were involved in raising cattle. Only a few of the Cabildo members actually carried out merchant activities. The main merchant, we have already mentioned, was Ángel Fernández Blanco, who in fact posed the strongest opposition to the insertion of Artiguist rule. He was by far the most well-off citizen of Corrientes and had solid commercial ties with the Buenos Aires merchants. Breaking off the political connection with the Directory would certainly mean a disruption in his business. In this situation, a defense of *porteño* interests made sense. If we consider the “unfavorable relationship” previously laid out, though, perhaps for those who just wanted to sell their products, remaining under Buenos Aires’ rule could very well mean prolonging that dependence. Buenos Aires had demonstrated no interest in bettering this relationship. In 1809, the Cabildo of Corrientes expressed their discontent because it had to rely exclusively on local funds to finance everyday administrative needs. The poor relationship continued after the May Revolution. When Buenos Aires named Eusebio Valdenegro the new Governor of Corrientes in 1812, he denounced the “abandonment” that the province had long suffered, and that had led to its “decadence.”<sup>65</sup> He called for a better “consideration” of the situation by the Supreme Government, given that in his understanding the military conflicts had only made it worse. It is

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<sup>64</sup> Halperín Donghi, *Revolución y Guerra*, 38.

<sup>65</sup> Eusebio Valdenegro to the Supreme Government of the United Provinces. Corrientes, September 3, 1812 in Corrientes, Gobierno 1812-14, Sala X, 5-7-1, AGNA.



quite possible to imagine that, then, when Artigas presented himself with proposals of autonomy, the Cabildo was divided and at least some members considered taking up his offer, in a demonstration that to them, sovereignty was connected to the ability of freely doing commerce. In fact, a year later, when it had become increasingly difficult to show any resistance to the League, Fernández Blanco actually migrated from the city with his family and belongings, but a good portion of the representatives remained in office.

It should also be noted that Corrientes sat on a very critical frontier whose vigilance demanded constant resources. Not receiving funds from Buenos Aires meant that the city had to rely on its own residents to provide defense. A close reading of the communications between the Cabildo and Dominguez prior to his ousting, indicates that this was actually one of the fundamental aspects of their discontent with his rule. A month before the mobilization of Pickets, the Cabildo heard about the possibility that Domínguez might march with Corrientes' forces to Curuzu Cuatiá.<sup>66</sup> In a letter, they explained that if he so proceeded, he would leave the city defenseless against the attacks of Spanish warships that were wandering the Paraná waters.<sup>67</sup> The Cabildo was very clear in arguing that he was violating "citizen's Rights and individual security," in a demonstration that for them sovereignty also resided in being able to protect the territory, even if it meant going against the authority of Buenos Aires.

Dominguez had justified his march as answering a call from Artigas to help in the defense against the Spanish. In an indication that the Cabildo was in close contact with the leader

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<sup>66</sup> In fact, the Supreme Director instructed Domínguez to "leave town with all the forces under [his] command [and] go to the city of Santa Fe," prior to hearing about Méndez's movements. Gervasio Antonio Posadas to the Lieut. Governor of Corrientes, José León Domínguez. Buenos Aires, March 15, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 138.

<sup>67</sup> The Cabildo of Corrientes to Governor D. José Leon Domínguez, Corrientes, February 23 1814, in *Correspondencia Oficial* t. 5, f. 3, AGPC.

from the Banda Oriental, they informed Domínguez that they were aware this was a false premise. Indeed, there was a military movement happening in Curuzú Cuatiá, but it was the reunion that the Directory had ordered to eliminate the Artiguist influence in the area, and that Dominguez wanted to join. The Cabildo considered Dominguez' expedition "not convenient," and, to leave no doubt, stated that they trusted in Artigas' "ideals and projects", and saw no need to expose the city.<sup>68</sup> We can conclude then, that even before Méndez took over, the influence of Artigas was already present in the Cabildo, as they looked to him for making decisions.

In the construction of this new alliance, the military commanders of the countryside occupied a central place. In March of 1814 we find Blas Basualdo, one of Artigas' lieutenants, stationed in Curuzú Cuatiá, in close relationship with José Gabriel Casco, the military commander for that *comandancia*. Basualdo's forces were the ones that had actually been causing concern to Buenos Aires and Dominguez. Even before the governor's removal, Basualdo had reached out to the Cabildo of Corrientes, to divulge his intentions of "establishing the good regimen, liberal order, and public tranquility" in the territory.<sup>69</sup> According to him, the "general will of the pueblos" was to support these ideals, in a demonstration of what became a common feature of the period – the overwhelming defense of Artiguism in the campaña. Dominguez' words corroborate his supposition, as one day after Basualdo's communication, he declared he "[could] never count on the countryside people to do anything against this Tyrant of our system and Freedom," in a clear reference to the leader of the Banda Oriental.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> The Cabildo of Corrientes to Governor D. José Leon Domínguez, Corrientes, February 23, 1814 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 5, f. 3, AGPC.

<sup>69</sup> Blas Basualdo to the Cabildo of Corrientes. February 24, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 100.

<sup>70</sup> José León Domínguez to the Supreme Director of the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata. Corrientes, February 25, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 111.

Among the elements offered by Basualdo, one that seemed to stand out was that of “public tranquility.” Contributing to our understanding that the Cabildo saw concrete advantages in siding with Artigas, they expounded how they “blessed the moment that they found themselves free of the new costs and works that, added to the immense sacrifice that this war has induced, would have consumed the rest of [the inhabitants’] small patrimonies.”<sup>71</sup> Both the urban and rural areas had been under intense stress providing for the war against the Spanish since the May revolution. The Cabildo recognized that Artigas’ military decisions were, at that precise moment, protecting the area, by guarding them from draining the little resources they had left, in a clear contrast to Domínguez, who, despite knowing how close the Spanish enemies were on the Paraná River, still decided to leave the city unprotected.

As previously mentioned, the disconnect between the interests of the city and the countryside had long been a point of concern for those administering the territory. The several attacks on private property that became a common during these unstable times added to that concern. One of the aspects that brought most joy to the Cabildo was the fact that, unlike Domínguez, Artigas had actually recommended the countryside inhabitants “not leave the quiet and repose of their own homes.”<sup>72</sup> Military commanders in correspondence with the Cabildo had already documented his influence over the countryside residents. The same military commanders, too, were already addressing him as the “Protector of the Cause,” in an indication of recognition of his authority.<sup>73</sup> The Cabildo saw in Artigas’ influence a tool to preserve the

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<sup>71</sup> Sala capitular de Corrientes to Blas Basualdo. March 8, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 130. Original in Correspondencia Oficial t. 5, f. 4-5, AGPC.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Jose Francisco Vedoya to Juan Bautista Méndez. March 2, 1814 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 5, f. 8, AGPC.

security of the *campaña*. Furthermore, they recognized in him the ability needed to foment a more prosperous environment. In doing so, they too, were accepting his authority.

Gathering the evidence thus far, what transpires is a Cabildo that was certainly divided, that did not want to explicitly challenge any of the aspiring ruling parties, but that officially expressed their exhaustion after four years of conflict and damage to resources. They desired better protection and stability, so that their economy could recover and prosper once again, especially independent of Buenos Aires. As we read further, it is possible to find confirmation that they saw in Artigas' system the opportunity to work towards achieving that.

### **Alliance Between Artigas and the City of Corrientes**

The Cabildo laid out their terms: from the alliance with Artigas, the Corrientes government expected “real or individual security,” as well as “the conservation of public order.”<sup>74</sup> With “all freedom,” they consented to his rule and “the noble and generous offer [of] forces, to protect [the] cause and [its] interests.”<sup>75</sup> Although it is not clear whether they were referring to theirs or Artigas' cause, they seemed to agree that both were carrying out analogous projects, since they believed “the interest of this Pueblo is not, nor can it be, other than the one offered by [Artigas'] Victorious Arms.” The Cabildo argued, then, that Corrientes' and Artigas' cause were one and the same.

Following the statement that now made their support explicit, the Cabildo promised that “this Pueblo [of Corrientes] and its jurisdiction will remain quiet without exposing themselves to

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<sup>74</sup> From the Cabildo of Corrientes to the General in Chief of the Auxiliary armies of Entre Ríos. Corrientes, March 20, 1814 in *Correspondencia Oficial* t. 5, f. 27-28, AGPC. Also in *AA* vol. 19, 8-10.

<sup>75</sup> “Habiéndose colocado el Cabildo en actitud de aceptar con toda libertad el noble y generoso ofrecimiento que V. S. le hace de sus fuerzas, para proteger su causa y sus intereses.”

the results of any imprudent movements,” once again showing they were very much interested in not further engaging into military disputes. Artigas received the letter “filled with satisfaction,” and was relieved that Domínguez’ imprudence, although cutting close, had not precipitated “the people’s rise and (...) a bitter crisis.”<sup>76</sup> While saying that, he also underscored the critical moment and willingness of the pueblo to mobilize if needed. He promised to dedicate all his care “to correspond to the hopes of this dignified people in its new reform, protecting their interests with all of the resources of the league.” Artigas assured Corrientes, then, that the so longed need for defense was finally within reach.

The Cabildo had initially been trapped between two alternatives. The first one entailed preserving the alliance with the Directory by going against the desire of its own inhabitants and exposing Corrientes to further military actions. The second one meant improving Corrientes’ defense lines by breaking away from the influence of Buenos Aires with a possible economic loss. Of course, opting for the first also implied being exposed to the susceptibilities of the pueblos and their novel notions of participation in political life. Artigas knew and told the Cabildo that the pueblo was with him. At that moment, Artigas and his men emerged as potential intermediates on many fronts. Between the Cabildo and the Pueblo, between the city and the countryside, and between the desire for autonomy and economic development. In a combination of circumstance because of Domínguez’s move, but especially because of Artigas’ ability to craft alliances that benefited various sides, the League and its system could find a space among those correntinos who had something to lose.

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<sup>76</sup> José Artigas to the Cabildo of Corrientes. Cuartel General, March 29, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 12.

### Artigas and “The Vulgarians Who Have Nothing to Lose”

The Artiguist ideals had arrived earlier in the *campana* of Corrientes. In areas like Curuzú Cuatiá, Basualdo narrated being received “with pleasure and joy by those inhabitants, to the extreme that they themselves handed in the Military commander as a prisoner.”<sup>77</sup> Domínguez had already warned about the majority of its residents being in “collusion with the ideas [of Artigas].”<sup>78</sup> In areas that were more reluctant, the popular groups played an active role in consolidating support. I will trace one of these moments, the installation of Artiguism in the pueblo of San Roque, to the south of the city of Corrientes.

In 1811, Elías Galván had praised the partido of San Roque as the largest in the jurisdiction of Corrientes.<sup>79</sup> Its inhabitants were “all rural people, of miserable knowledge.” Yet, it was the most “interesting” because the considerable population could provide a sizeable military force.<sup>80</sup> Its men already had some military experience, as they had participated in the defense against the British invasion of 1806, so it was Galván’s place of choice to install his headquarters. At the time Artiguism was fast spreading, the census indicated that 1,090 people inhabited just the town – 23% of them were in the group of “naturales,” “pardos y negros.”<sup>81</sup> As the typical pueblo, it had its illustrious families, its intrigues, and also its contradictions.

On March 28, José Gabriel Casco entered San Roque to find the gathered pueblo shouting. They were claiming that D. José Ignacio Aguirre, the Sergeant Major, be deposed.

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<sup>77</sup> Blas Basualdo to the Cabildo de Corrientes, February 24, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 100.

<sup>78</sup> José León Domínguez to the Supreme Director of the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata. Corrientes, February 25, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 111.

<sup>79</sup> “Partido” was a regional division within the colonial administration, similar to a municipality.

<sup>80</sup> Elías Galván to the Exmo gobierno ejecutivo de las Provincias del Rio de la Plata, November 2, 1811 in Corrientes, 3-5-6 (Entre Ríos), Sala X, AGNA.

<sup>81</sup> July 1814. Censo, Tomo 1, ff. 9-30, Sala 1, AGPC.

Casco did the best he could to control the town, but they only calmed down after Aguirre was removed from command. Afterwards, the pueblo felt free and was enthusiastic.<sup>82</sup> On March 29, José Francisco Vedoya entered San Roque to find the pueblo shaken. They were complaining about the events behind the deposition of D. José Ignacio Aguirre, the Sergeant Major. They talked about the destruction of private property and of feeling disrespected. Vedoya did the best he could to control the town, reimburse damages, and reinstate their honor. Afterwards, the pueblo was quiet.<sup>83</sup>

Both of these openings would be a fair way to start telling the story of how the “flag of Artigas” was raised in San Roque. In the story, the pueblo occupies a central place. The pueblo is the character demanding attention, and also the character whose desires these commanders were trying to satisfy. However, they claimed for different things, guided by different interests. On one side, political change. On the other, protection of their property. In the end, both pueblos were pleased. There is a subtle difference between them, though. In the first version, the pueblo was acting, fighting to promote change. In the second one, the pueblo was reacting to events and seeking to preserve their economic status. In combination, the stories could very much be a portrayal of how Artiguism worked in the countryside of Corrientes – as an avenue for political engagement, as well as for subtle social control.

As is mostly the case with the history of popular political participation, this story is available only in fragments. Unfortunately, the documentation does not afford for a survey of interests at stake during that precise situation. However, if we use context as mortar, we can

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<sup>82</sup> Jose Gabriel Casco to Governor of Corrientes Juan Bautista Mendez, Plaza de San Roque, March 29, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 176.

<sup>83</sup> José Francisco Vedoya to Juan Bautista Méndez. Plaza de San Roque, April 8, 1814 in *Correspondencia Oficial* t. 5, f. 46, AGPC.

create a mosaic to piece it together and speculate ambitions. The first fragment we will use tells the story of the military troops in this Plaza. When Casco marched them to San Roque, the pueblo asked them, and him as their commander, to depose Aguirre, under suspicion that he opposed the League. As we already know, Casco proceeded with the request. In the second fragment, we learn that it was not enough for the pueblo to just see Aguirre deposed.<sup>84</sup> Really, what they wanted was a new commander. So, the “few officials” elected D. Sebastian de Almirón. However, once again the pueblo protested, indicating that it could not be any commander. The soldiers, “unanimously,” asked for D. Juan Antonio Rajoy. Even though Casco agreed with the official’s indication, to curb the tumult that was about to upset the majority of the pueblo, he said, he approved of Rajoy. More fragments express how to him this had been a “popular turmoil,” but that, in the end, everyone was content.<sup>85</sup> Gorgonio Aguiar confirmed that impression, and expressed to Méndez that in the pueblo, “almost everyone is a patriot.”<sup>86</sup>

In the second version of the story, told from the perspective of Urbano Aguiar, a regular vecino, the reason why Aguirre had been deposed was personal revenge, friction between old time enemies.<sup>87</sup> We don’t know the details behind this animosity, but even in this version, the popular groups, the “damned scoundrel Plebs,” make an appearance, trying to take advantage of the situation. The impression is that, had it not been their presence in the movement, Aguirre would still be in power. In that action, soldiers, as representatives of the military, and the plebs,

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<sup>84</sup> Jose Gabriel Casco to Juan Bautista Mendez, San Roque, March 30, 1814 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 5, f. 37, AGPC.

<sup>85</sup> José Gabriel Casco a Juan Bautista Méndez. Plaza de San Roque, April 3, 1814 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 5, f. 38; 40a, AGPC.

<sup>86</sup> Gorgonio Aguiar to Juan Bautista Mendez, San Roque, April 15, 1814 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 5, f. 53, AGPC.

<sup>87</sup> Original: “maldita Canalla, la Plebe.” Letter by Urbano Araújo to his son Francisco de Paula Araújo. Batel, April 19, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 39.



an amorphous category, but potentially the poor people that resided in San Roque, changed the political landscape of the region by engaging politically and following the Artiguist cause.<sup>88</sup> The piece missing now in our mosaic would be that of their motivation for doing so.

To Domínguez, it was only obvious that, given the consistent damage to property, and the tolerance to looting showed by Artigas and his men, “the vulgarians (*vulgares*) who have nothing to lose” would be “the first ones in all conspirations, and the first to help those who persecute us.”<sup>89</sup> In that sense, he was indicating that monetary gain could be one of the driving forces behind joining the movement at this time. Still, when Eusebio Valdenegro offered Basualdo and his men “amnesty” that included a cash payment and the promise to promote him to lieutenant colonel if he switched sides, he still chose to stay by Artigas’ side, defending his ideals.<sup>90</sup> We know that banditry became a quite frequent element accompanying the military troops that traveled in the region. Looting was common also as a means of supporting them.<sup>91</sup> Casco’s forces were said to attract whatever “malevolents and loafers” they found in the *partido*.<sup>92</sup> In an indication that, indeed, it was a common occurrence to appropriate resources upon moving the troops, he forwarded to the Cabildo of Corrientes a note from Gorgonio Aguiar, one of Artigas’ main leaders, which stated that “soldiers cannot be punished when there is a lack of resources.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> The census of 1814 actually lists that 116 people, 10.6% of those living in San Roque, as “indigentes” in Censo, t. 1, ff. 9-30, Sala 1, AGPC.

<sup>89</sup> José León Domínguez al Supremo Director de las Provincias Unidas. Corrientes, February 25, 1814 in *AA* vol. 14, 109.

<sup>90</sup> “Formar un regimiento de que se le encargaría el mando, con el empleo y sueldo de Teniente Coronel. (...) 1000 pesos para él y 100 para cada uno de sus oficiales, 40 para cada soldado.” Eusebio Valdenegro to the Supreme Director, Concepción del Uruguay, December 17, 1814 in *AA* vol. 20, 48-49.

<sup>91</sup> Raúl Osvaldo Fradkin y Silvia Ratto, “El botín y las culturas de la guerra en el espacio litoral rioplatense,” *Amnis* 10 (2011): consultado el 10 julio 2020. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/amnis/1277> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/amnis.1277>

<sup>92</sup> Letter by Urbano Araújo to his son Francisco de Paula Araújo. Batel, April 19, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 40.

<sup>93</sup> José Gabriel Casco to the Cabildo of Corrientes. Cuartel, May 12, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 74.

The note from Aguiar is just one piece of evidence that illustrates the common practices among the forces of feeding off of what they found.

Artigas, however, had a different message to the commanders, evidencing that this kind of reward would not be considered acceptable if the alliance was to work for everyone involved. He made it explicit how important it was to “observe a most strict order in the troops, strongly punishing any individual whose behavior could come to generate vexation even to the most insignificant of Citizens.”<sup>94</sup> At this stage, Artigas’ role as a mediator between diverse interests and social groups in potential conflict became apparent. While “proletarians” – in the words of Domínguez – had expectations for improving economic conditions and a more solid political participation, vecinos felt, at least for now, that their property was safe. With Méndez now installed in the government, the Cabildo somewhat settled with Artigas’ promises of harmony, the countryside pleased with a figure who proposed their autonomy, and the popular groups content with prospects of improvement, the Liga de los Pueblos Libres and Artiguism entered a new phase in Corrientes and the Mesopotamia. Artigas’ first instruction to the Cabildo was to call for a Congress with representatives from all pueblos that should select a government model and elect its officials. For reasons that will be explored in chapter 5, these instructions were never entirely fulfilled, and for some time, Artigas continued finding his authority and solidifying his alliance through that role as mediator. We will now explore how that alliance materialized in the first years of Corrientes’ presence in the League.

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<sup>94</sup> José Artigas to José Francisco Vedoya. Cuartel General, April 17, 1814, in *AA* vol. 19, 36-37 (original in *Correspondencia Oficial* t. 5, f. 52a, AGPC).

*The Artiguist “System” in the Mesopotamia: Altering Social and Political Dynamics*

After successfully spreading his ideals in the Mesopotamia, it was time for Artigas to start applying the “system” proposed in the League. After an important victory against the Directory forces in Guayabos in 1815, he convoked representatives from Corrientes, Entre Ríos, Santa Fe, Cordoba, the Provincia Oriental, and the pueblos of Misiones west of the Uruguay river, to appear in Arroyo de la China (modern day Concepción del Uruguay) for a congress, that should take place in June of that year. The meeting, which became known as the *Congreso Oriental*, marked the moment when the regional alliance was at its strongest point, after failed attempts by Buenos Aires to establish a peace agreement with the Provincia Oriental leader.<sup>95</sup> No records survived, only speculations about a declaration of independence by Artigas and the representatives, which, if real, would have come before the famous one promoted by Buenos Aires in 1816. In practical terms, the League started to operate autonomously, and soon after Artigas published several *Reglamentos Provisorios*, which sought to organize the economy and unify policies and practices in the Littoral area. Artigas sought to create a more organized trading system, that proposed an integration and benefits to those cities and ports that became part of the League, and a direct connection to outside markets. When doing so, he was displacing Buenos Aires from the center, and taking away its control – and source of revenue – of the region’s economy. He also occupied the place of mediator, which became evident in the widespread web of communication between him and people at various levels of power, such as commanders, the Cabildo, and also regular people that felt the need to approach their “Protector,” as he was called.

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<sup>95</sup> Maria Luisa Aguerre, “Confederación. Una idea clave del “sistema” artiguista” in *Revista de la Facultad de Derecho*, No. 38 (Jan-Jun. 2015): 31.

As long as the absence of military conflicts with Buenos Aires and the Portuguese allowed, this system found its roots in a political discourse that combined old views of authority, based on local autonomies and legal practices, with new political understandings that proposed more inclusive political models.<sup>96</sup> In that way, Artiguism not only mediated between social groups and their interests, but also between traditional and novel legal and political practices and discourses.

### **Installing the “System” in Corrientes**

Blas Basualdo, Artigas’ main ally for the implementation of the ideals of Artiguism in Corrientes right after its establishment, was in constant communication with José de Silva, the new governor, and the Cabildo, to organize the new regime.<sup>97</sup> Following a proclamation, about 80 families – “illustrious and of the principal descendances” – did so, moving to Pilar, in Paraguay.<sup>98</sup> Basualdo also instructed the Cabildo that the population should bequeath their arms, suggested that Silva gathered all the available men to consolidate the defense, and that those who were the most loyal to the system should be made officials in the army, regardless of their class.<sup>99</sup> Throughout his orders, it is possible to see a bit of tension with the Cabildo. He undid the decision of replacing Juan Ponze de Leon, a man of his trust, as alcalde of San Roque, as it went against the pueblos’ wishes.<sup>100</sup> Finally, he reorganized the division of the *comandancias*, to stop

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<sup>96</sup> His proposal of political change is explored in chapter 5.

<sup>97</sup> Silva was in power between December of 1814 and September of 1815.

<sup>98</sup> Nomina de los emigrados de las “ilustres y principales descendencias de la Ciudad de Corrientes e igualmente de los esclavos y sirvientes de dichas... en Pilar,” January 11, 1815 in *AA* vol. 20, 101-104.

<sup>99</sup> Blas Basualdo, Concepción del Uruguay, March 14, 1815 in *AA* vol. 20, 242; Basualdo to José Silva, Curuzú-Cuatiá, February 3, 1815 in *Correspondencia Oficial* t. 6, f. 143, AGPC.

<sup>100</sup> Blas Basualdo to José de Silva, Mandisoví, February 13, 1815 in *Correspondencia Oficial* t. 6, f. 158v, AGPC.

the “disorder” caused by the “rivalry” between them.<sup>101</sup> These measures were necessary, he stated, because there was no new “code of law.” Meanwhile, provisional regulations should be used to establish order.

Basualdo died prematurely, in June of 1815, but before that, he was able to extend proclamations to the Pueblos informing them of Artigas’ ideals. Working to strengthen support in the countryside, he made sure the pueblos knew that Artigas’ intentions were to “protect the rights of these provinces,” which had been “subjugated by the illegal government of Buenos Aires.”<sup>102</sup> In a demonstration of his beliefs as an Indigenous leader, Basualdo proposed that the current “chains” inflicted by Buenos Aires were even “heavier than the past ones.” In conversations with Valdenegro, he analyzed the situation of the region, and questioned any suggested advantages received by the Littoral under the rule of Buenos Aires. Ever since the revolution, he argued, they had just created “ruin,” “misery,” were “cruel” and “bloodthirsty” against “our brothers.”<sup>103</sup> With Artigas, on the other hand, the pueblos were “singing hymns of joy when seeing their rights recovered.” Interestingly, Valdenegro’s response shows an accurate, but reproaching, understanding of the differentiated character of Artigas’ system, stating that it was “impossible to please and content all of the passions of every individual,” and that “some government is necessary.”<sup>104</sup> Soon after, Basualdo retreated to Montevideo, where he passed away. Artigas increased communications with the Cabildo of Corrientes and its governor and

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<sup>101</sup> Blas Basualdo to the Cabildo of Corrientes, Concepción del Uruguay, March 31, 1815 in *AA* vol. 20, 283.

<sup>102</sup> Proclamation by Blas Basualdo. Corrientes, January 1815 in *AA* vol. 20, 85.

<sup>103</sup> Blas Basualdo to Eusebio Valdenegro, Yerma, February 15, 1815 in *AA* vol. 20, 188.

<sup>104</sup> Eusebio Valdenegro to Blas Basualdo, Uruguay, February 18, 1815 in *AA* vol. 20, 189.

made several suggestions that highlighted what he understood as the proper means of administering the province.

Artigas' teachings included financial administration, and the need to keep track of expenses, so that governing men could be held accountable.<sup>105</sup> He also suggested value of salaries and the administration of church funds.<sup>106</sup> He instructed the Cabildo on the importance of and provided the means for vaccination, demonstrating care for the public health.<sup>107</sup> He offered writing paper, and sent several books, so that people could practice literacy and learn about the history of North America, as a way of strengthening the federal principles.<sup>108</sup> Artigas defended the need to subject to magistrates, but also made a plea for Corrientes to consider that "every man is equal before law," a proposition that we saw in Domingo Manduré's understandings in chapter three, and that was now being applied to Corrientes.<sup>109</sup> Artigas also took economic measures that were to operate in the entire area under the League's influence. Some of these measures conform the most radical version of the revolution.

### **Radicalization of Artiguism**

In 1815, Artigas' ideas and political decisions became increasingly radical. His tolerance for his enemies declined, and he ordered that whoever did not side with the "system" was free to leave

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<sup>105</sup> José Artigas to the Cabildo of Corrientes, December 14, 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 117.

<sup>106</sup> *AA* vol. 29, 172; *AA* vol. 29, 138.

<sup>107</sup> *AA* vol. 26, 455; *AA* vol. 21, 220.

<sup>108</sup> *AA* vol. 26, 456-57; *AA* vol. 29, 183.

<sup>109</sup> José Artigas to José Silva, Paraná, April 9, 1815 in *AA* vol. 20, 314.

the territory.<sup>110</sup> Pushing this decision to radicalize and exert power were the constant attacks coming from the Directory during Carlos María de Alvear's rule. In April of 1815, though, Ignacio Álvarez Thomas, a previous ally, rebelled against Alvear in the mutiny of Fontezuelas and took his place as Director, forcing him into exile in Brazil. The change in government meant a slight improvement in the relationship between Buenos Aires and the confederate provinces, allowing for some stability in the region and the implementation of some of Artigas' more inclusive ideas in the littoral. At that moment, the "Protector" sought to actively extend rights to Criollos of all classes, Indigenous peoples and free Blacks, in an expression of what Ana Frega has called a "social revolution."<sup>111</sup> To José de Silva, he recommended that "we should forget the wretched custom that proposes greatness comes from the cradle," in a clear opposition to social and racial prejudice connected to place of birth, family, or skin color.<sup>112</sup> For the Fatherland [Patria] to prosper, it was necessary to make "sacrifices," and in that spirit, Artigas planned changes that sought to deeply alter the social and economic configuration of the region, proposing a land reform to the Banda Oriental, and the reorganization of trade to those provinces that joined the League.

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<sup>110</sup> It should be added, though, that Perugarria was one of the few people Artigas decided to execute – his treason was of the utmost abhorrence in that context, Artigas felt. He did release many other "illustrious" *correntinos*, among them Miguel Escobar, Francisco de Paula Araujo, José Simón García de Cossio, and even Angel Fernández Blanco, one of the key leaders of the movement carried out by Perugarria. José Artigas to José De Silva, Cuartel General, January 26, 1815 in *AA* vol. 20, 147.

<sup>111</sup> Frega and Islas, *Nuevas miradas*, 137.

<sup>112</sup> Original: "Olvidemos esa maldita costumbre que los engrandecimientos nacen de la cuna." José Artigas to José Silva, Paraná, April 9, 1815 in *AA* vol. 20, 314.

## Economic Regulations

The promulgation of provisional regulations in September of 1815 was a first attempt at reorganizing the region economically, while also promoting regional integration. In April of 1815, Artigas instructed that all of the ports of the “federation” should open, to revitalize commerce so that all “Pueblos can benefit.”<sup>113</sup> In September, he published a thorough Trade and Customs regulation, which created a shared tax system that abolished charges to the provinces belonging to the League, while fostering their local economy by stimulating exports of local goods.<sup>114</sup> This system was a clear alternative to the centralist politics and expensive taxes imposed by Buenos Aires, and was received as a respite amidst the chaos of previous years, at least in these initial moments. As the political situation heated up again, in April of 1816 Artigas imposed a 25% tax surcharge on incoming goods, as well as extra fees on exports to Buenos Aires and Paraguay, making the use of those trading connections far from profitable.<sup>115</sup> Commerce with the Portuguese was cut off as well, and licenses to the other side of the frontier were totally forbidden.<sup>116</sup> Artigas’ rationale was that these areas acted with iniquity, constantly making war at them.<sup>117</sup> It was, obviously, a very effective way of weakening Buenos Aires while strengthening Montevideo’s trading elite. Even though these decisions came with economic costs

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<sup>113</sup> “Orden y reglamento de libre tráfico de todos los pueblos de la federación que regirá hasta el arreglo general de las provincias,” April 10, 1815, in *AA* vol. 20, 318-319. See more details about port regulations in *AA* vol. 29, 75, 173, 174, 179, 184.

<sup>114</sup> *AA* vol. 29, 75-77.

<sup>115</sup> *Reglamento para la recaudación de derechos en los puertos habilitados*. José Artigas to the Cabildo of Corrientes, Purificación, April 25, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 174.

<sup>116</sup> Ana Frega, “Pertenencias e identidades en una zona de frontera. La región de Maldonado entre la revolución y la invasión lusitana (1816-1820),” Mimeo, presentado en las *Primeiras Jornadas de História Regional Comparada* (Porto Alegre, 23, 24 y 25 de 2000).

<sup>117</sup> M. A. Duarte, “Artigas y el comercio en el Río Paraná hasta la Reunión del Congreso de Tucumán.” *Trabajos y Comunicaciones* 15 (1966): 266. [http://www.memoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/art\\_revistas/pr.1028/pr.1028.pdf](http://www.memoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/art_revistas/pr.1028/pr.1028.pdf)



for some of the provinces up the Paraná River, Artigas considered that, for political reasons, it was not adequate to carry out business with them.

To soften the recent prohibitions, but to the disapproval of the traditional landowning elites, Artigas legalized commerce with the British, applying a low 4% tax.<sup>118</sup> He expanded the trading network of the Banda Oriental and the whole League, seeking commercial partners in the Atlantic market.<sup>119</sup> It became common to see foreign privateers carrying Artigas' licenses, which in itself worked to establish the Provincia Oriental as a sovereign entity.<sup>120</sup> The man in charge of organizing these connections in the territory of Corrientes was Peter Campbell, an Irish naval officer who settled in Goya and became one of Artigas' strategic associates. Famous merchants such as the Scottish Robertson brothers were attracted to Corrientes during this period, and the economy began to flourish once again.<sup>121</sup> The result of that, according to historian Thomas Whigham, was the establishment of a "small commercial empire," built on hides and deals with local ranchers.<sup>122</sup> William Parish Robertson recalls his stay in Corrientes as one of the happiest

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<sup>118</sup> It has been argued that the opening of commerce to the British happened after a meeting between Artigas and the Robertson brothers. Artigas saw it as a means to recover commerce rates, and the Robertson brother offered to pay transactions in gold. William H. Kstra, *José Artigas and the Federal League in Uruguay's War of Independence (1810-1820)* (Madison: Lanham, Maryland: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; Roman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc, 2017), 65.

<sup>119</sup> Lauren Benton tracks licenses of his ships (corsarios) in various ports of the United States, such as Baltimore, Savannah, Charleston. Benton, "Strange Sovereignty: The Provincia Oriental in the Atlantic World," in *20/10: El Mundo Atlántico y la Modernidad Iberoamericana* 1 (2012): 89-107.

<sup>120</sup> Tyson Reeder, "'Sovereign Lords' and 'Dependent Administrators': Artigan Privateers, Atlantic Borderwaters, and State Building in the Early Nineteenth Century," in *The Journal of American History* 103(2) (2016): 323-346 DOI:10.1093/jahist/jaw180; Agustín Beraza, *Los Corsarios de Artigas* (Montevideo: Centro de Estudios Históricos Marítimos y Navales, 1978).

<sup>121</sup> M. A. Duarte, "Artigas y el comercio en el Río Paraná hasta la Reunión del Congreso de Tucumán." *Trabajos y Comunicaciones* 15 (1966): 248-269. [http://www.memoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/art\\_revistas/pr.1028/pr.1028.pdf](http://www.memoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/art_revistas/pr.1028/pr.1028.pdf)

<sup>122</sup> Whigham, *The Politics of River Trade*, 31.

times in his life, likely owing to his large profits.<sup>123</sup> The Cabildo members – mostly “engaged in mercantile pursuits,” however, disliked this “foreign trade,” he felt.<sup>124</sup> At various moments, producers and merchants of Corrientes disobeyed Artigas’ instructions, arguing that their sacrifice was disproportionate, which often led to harsh exchanges between them.<sup>125</sup> At one point, to make the Cabildo see his side, Artigas appealed to the poor conditions of his army, which, for more than five years, “has been accompanied by misery,” and yet, his men still fought with honor.<sup>126</sup> The fact was that the province was witnessing a change in its economic structure, with the advancement of the cattle frontier towards the south. New economic centers, like Curuzú Cuatiá, were developing economically and becoming political hubs. Even the capital’s port lost significance, since new ports in Goya and Esquina, illegal until 1802 and 1803 respectively, were integrated into the export trade. Between 1816 and 1820, Goya actually surpassed Corrientes in exports.<sup>127</sup> Still, the capital was a key stop in the trade between Buenos Aires and Paraguay, particularly after being declared a mandatory port.<sup>128</sup> The high taxes on products from ships outside the League guaranteed a steady revenue. By 1817, W. P. Robertson reported on the “extraordinary prosperity of Corrientes” and the “rapid improvement in the public finances,” to the point that governor Méndez did not know what to do with the monetary

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<sup>123</sup> “W. P. R. to General Miller,” London, 1842, in J. P. and W. P. Robertson, *Letters on South America, comprising travels on the banks of the Paraná and Rio de la Plata*. v. 3 (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1843), 63.

<sup>124</sup> W. P. R. To General Miller, London, 1842, in *Letters on South America*, v. 3, 79.

<sup>125</sup> Ktra, *Artigas and the emergence of the federal league*, 95.

<sup>126</sup> Artigas to the Cabildo of Corrientes, February 4, 1815, in *AA* vol. 20, 165.

<sup>127</sup> Goya was responsible for 49.2% of registered exports, Corrientes 48.6%, and Esquina 2.2. Enrique Schaller, “Los puertos de la provincia de Corrientes. Organización, equipamiento y actividad comercial (1816-1855),” in *Folia histórica del nordeste* N. 24 (IIGHI, 2015): 77.

<sup>128</sup> “Puerto Seguro.”

resources.<sup>129</sup> In the end, he bought armament that was sent to help Artigas, showing that, despite the dislike of a part of the Cabildo, support was still solid.

### **Land Reform**

The regulation that is seen as the most radical one, and definitely the one to cause the greatest controversy, concerned property laws, specifically in the Banda Oriental. Outside of that territory, however, it was taken as a concrete example of Artigas' understanding of current social conditions and his intentions for the whole region looking forward. Since colonial times, the organization of an agrarian economy had been a challenge for those wishing to develop the Banda Oriental. Land distribution based on gifts from colonial officials created a small group of large landowners. Even if the frontier was very much open with areas available for use, these *hacendados* occupied the most profitable portions, that attracted interest from everyone outside of these prime zones, and occasional squatters, since many landowners resided far away from their properties. This scenario generated instability regarding property and production, aggravated, in the eyes of Criollos, by erratic Indigenous groups that inhabited the area and refused to become property owners following the Spanish model of private property. This all prevented the region from maximizing land use and establishing a solid agrarian economy in European terms.<sup>130</sup> The situation deteriorated with the conflicts that took place on the territory following the May Revolution. Ransacking and confiscation became weapons against political opponents. In this context, and through an acute reading of the local context, after Artigas' forces

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<sup>129</sup> W. P. R. To General Miller, London, 1842, in *Letters on South America*, v. 3, 70.

<sup>130</sup> José Pedro Barrán and Benjamin Nahum, *Bases económicas de la revolución artiguista* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 1964), 69.

successfully controlled Montevideo, he set forth a plan to organize and develop the campaña, an activity he had already been involved with during colonial times.<sup>131</sup>

The “regulation to foster the Provincia Oriental’s rural economy and the security of its landowners”, brought about what many have understood as an agrarian reform and exposed Artigas’s most radical side.<sup>132</sup> It blatantly proposed that land belonging to those who had migrated to other areas, as well as that of “bad Europeans” and “worse Americans” who failed to support the revolutionary cause, should be redistributed amongst “freed blacks, *zambos* [black-indigenous mixed race] of the lower class, Indians, and poor Criollos.”<sup>133</sup> He asserted, then, that “those with the least means (...) [would be the ones] benefiting the most,” a very revolutionary statement – and certainly one of Artigas’ most remarkable quotes to this day.<sup>134</sup> These groups, along with “poor widows” – but only those with sons who could work the land –, were to be given “their own farms if, by their labor and good conduct, they promote[d] the well-being of the province.” Artigas believed in their disposition to settle down, produce goods, and place into motion the region’s economy, advancing the countryside. By enabling people to work the land and produce the means necessary to their survival, he would be guaranteeing its possession to the jurisdiction, as well as preventing the frequent raids generated by the miserable conditions in which many families found themselves.

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<sup>131</sup> Artigas participated in the expeditions led by Félix de Azara that the Crown ordered to map and reorganize the countryside. Barrán and Nahum, *Bases*, 96. About Azara’s expedition, see Karen Stolley, *Domesticating Empire: Enlightenment in Spanish America* (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 2013).

<sup>132</sup> “Reglamento Provisorio de la Provincia Oriental para el Fomento de la Campaña y Seguridad de sus hacendados.” José Pedro Barrán and Benjamín Nahum summarized the land reform’s main propositions. Nelson de la Torre, Julio C Rodríguez, and Lucía Sala de Touron, *La revolución agraria artiguista (1815-1816)* (Montevideo: Ediciones Pueblos Unidos, 1969) studied it more deeply.

<sup>133</sup> José Artigas, “Reglamento Provisorio de la Provincia Oriental para el Fomento de la Campaña y Seguridad de sus hacendados,” Cuartel General, September 10, 1815 in *AA* vol. 21, 93-98.

<sup>134</sup> “Los más infelices serán los más privilegiados.” Reglamento, in *AA* vol. 21, 95.

The *reglamento* had a mixed reception by people of the Banda Oriental. Some of the *reglamento*'s clauses pointed towards benefiting landowners – such as the need to carry around a document to prove employment status, as a way of guaranteeing a steady labor force for the estancias.<sup>135</sup> Overall, there was an understanding of Artigas' efforts towards developing the region. Still, there was criticism, which came predominantly from the elites residing in Montevideo, mostly connected to people who were in danger of losing their land, or even out of fear of a marked social change. During its application, that lasted just short of one year, several land requests were processed.<sup>136</sup> Authorities indeed confiscated estancias, as well as made donations of land belonging to the state.<sup>137</sup> As the land distribution became a reality, the Cabildo of Montevideo worked to “passively obstruct” its implementation.<sup>138</sup>

Even though the regulation applied only to the Banda Oriental, the whole region felt the repercussion of these new ideals. In Corrientes, changes arrived as Artigas developed as an alternative source of authority to which the popular groups could appeal should they disagree with government decisions. In matters of land ownership, for instance, we find Artigas reverting a resolution from the Cabildo to evict some residents who had settled in a land that Vedoya claimed as his. To Artigas, before any decision of the sort, “it [was] necessary to deeply know

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<sup>135</sup> This decision that has been interpreted by Barrán and Nahum as an attempt to force gauchos to settle down and “civilize,” in a similar way to what he proposed to some of the infidel Indigenous groups of el Chaco. Barrán and Nahum, *Bases*, 105-106.

<sup>136</sup> Discussions exist about the volume of these requests. Besides the Cabildo's manipulations to put a stop at its implementation, it has been suggested that the nature of the rural masses, unaccustomed to disciplined work, prevented more massive land requests. Barrán and Nahum, *Bases*, 100. de la Torre, Rodríguez, and Sala de Touron, *La revolución...*, 136.

<sup>137</sup> Barrán and Nahum, *Bases*, 108.

<sup>138</sup> Sala, Rodríguez, De la Torre, *La Revolución Agraria...*, 163.

the circumstances” surrounding the occupation.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, denoting his view of how those in need should be treated, he professed that it was not “acceptable that, being these individuals donating their services, their families be looked at with so little consideration, and condemned to abandon their homes and resort to begging.” A few days later, the Cabildo promised to comply with his decision.<sup>140</sup> Vedoya, a traditional vecino of Corrientes, was starting to feel the consequences of Artigas’ benevolent policies towards the popular groups.

Another notable case is the one that involves the vecinos from Esquina, who in July of 1816 wrote to Juan Bautista Méndez asking proprietorship over Crown territory (*montes realengos*) that had been occupied illegally by D. Sebastian Ruky, of European ancestry.<sup>141</sup> To defend their claim, the vecinos argued that their estates had always been located within these limits, but when Ruky arrived and occupied the land, during colonial times, “things were disrupted (*ha estado la cosa trastornada*),” and the “poor vecinos could not defend their right.” Now, that the Patria “has revived, and that our General D. José de Artigas wishes for the residents’ happiness,” they believed their rights could be restored. The vecinos also asked for permission to raise cattle, so that they could help support the cause, in a demonstration of political assertion. They closed off the appeal “reminding” him that “the time for subjugation has ended.”<sup>142</sup> Even though in this situation Artigas was not directly involved in requests or decisions, and we do not know the results of these requests, his presence in itself meant a shift in

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<sup>139</sup> José Artigas to the Cabildo Gobernador de Corrientes. Potrero de Arapey, December 9, 1816 in *AA* vol. 31, 421

<sup>140</sup> Cabildo Gobernador de Corrientes to José Artigas, Corrientes, December 20, 1816 in *AA* vol. 31, 424.

<sup>141</sup> Los vecinos del partido de la Esquina a Juan Bautista Méndez, June 28, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 190.

<sup>142</sup> Expedientes Administrativos, t. 2, f. 26, AGPC.

the mentality of the residents from the campaña, who saw in him someone who wanted to respect their sovereignty, as the right to own and utilize land.

One of Artigas' requests to the province of Corrientes that indeed caused a strong negative reaction, was his invitation to the Gaycurú and Abipon people of Chaco to cross the Paraná River and install themselves on eastern shore.<sup>143</sup> Artigas believed in their ability to settle, work the land, and retribute those who helped them, in a clear reference that they could serve as support.<sup>144</sup> To this end, in January of 1816, he directly informed the Cabildo of Corrientes that he was in conversation with cacique D. Juan Benavides, who would be bringing in all the Abipon families from the other side, about 300 people.<sup>145</sup> Corrientes' way of helping would be by providing a place for them to settle and produce their needs. A few days later, the cacique himself seemed to have told Artigas of the poor reception they witnessed – there was no help, no transportation, only “insolent looks” from the people of Corrientes.<sup>146</sup> Captain Aranda, from Goya, had refused to help.<sup>147</sup> Trying to teach the people of Corrientes about the ample and inclusive notion of sovereignty that he defended, Artigas advised them “to treat the Indians with more consideration; it is not laudable when we are sustaining our rights to exclude those who deserve them the most.”<sup>148</sup> Once again, he was reinforcing the idea that those who had suffered under the colonial structure should be favored in this system. Or, he asked, “did [the correntino

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<sup>143</sup> Guaicurú refers to the entire linguistic family, and includes Indigenous groups such as the Abipones, Mocoví, and Toba Qom.

<sup>144</sup> Artigas to the Cabildo. January 9, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 133.

<sup>145</sup> José Artigas to the Cabildo of Corrientes. Purificación, January 2, 1816, in in *AA* vol. 29, 124.

<sup>146</sup> Artigas to Cabildo de Corrientes. January 31, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 152.

<sup>147</sup> Artigas to Cabildo de Corrientes. January 2, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 126.

<sup>148</sup> Artigas to Cabildo de Corrientes. January 31, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 152.

people] ignore who caused their [disgrace]?” The only way of being deserving of the word “Patriot,” he proclaimed, was by not perpetuating the Indigenous peoples’ harsh condition.

The delicate relationship between the Chaco Indigenous groups and the Criollo settlements had been a constant during colonial times. Having resisted full colonization, these groups had not been evangelized, and were referred to as “infidels.” For this reason and their customs, they were seen as uncivilized, even by Artigas. To the leader of the League, however, this was “not a reproachable crime.”<sup>149</sup> Rather, Artigas suggested to the Cabildo that the law of Corrientes should be applied just as with any other person, “not with meanness but with a possible order in which they grow to be comfortable, as does the province, with their arms, cultivation, and promotion.”<sup>150</sup> His intentions were that the Cabildo – and the population – accepted their presence, trusted that they would portray good intentions, and if that turned out not to be the case and crimes were committed, then they should be punished to the same extent and with the same conditions as any other resident of Corrientes. In this sense, his proposal of citizenship was accompanied by the right to a fair judicial treatment – the same one granted to Criollos and Europeans.

The mixed orders and variation in authority seemed to have caused a problem that directly impacted in this transition. As some of the Abipon families crossed the river, they were accused of having taken cattle from Criollo estancias.<sup>151</sup> When asked about this, Benavides replied that the “estancias” (farms) had been given to them by Antoñazo, Vicente Ojeda, and Atanacio Fernández, commanders allied with Artigas, and that no cattle would be returned.

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> “José Artigas to the Cabildo Gobernador de Corrientes sobre política con el indígena,” October 28, 1815, in Sala de Touron, *Artigas*, 74.

<sup>151</sup> April 29, 1816 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 8, f. 13.



Indeed, a communication between Juan Antonio Rajoy and Méndez from February confirmed that it had been Ojeda who had granted them the right over the estancias.<sup>152</sup> Still, the Criollo residents and leaders in the area were angry and essentially refused to cooperate with the newly arrived population, in an indication that this is where the people of Goya would draw the line in this collaboration with Artigas and the federal cause.

Without the acceptance of the Corrientes government, Artigas redirected the Abipons to his campsite in Purificación. Not being required to provide land and live side-by-side with these Indigenous men, in this new attempt at bringing them to the federal cause, the commanders of Corrientes were more tolerant, and used provincial funds to subsidize their journey.<sup>153</sup> In June, Artigas reported to the Cabildo of Montevideo that a group of about 400 men, including 4 *cacicazgos* (extended families) and Benavides himself, arrived.<sup>154</sup> His idea was to use them to populate the unoccupied territory of the Banda Oriental, and for such, he asked that the Cabildo sent the necessary tools so that they could get started with working the land. It was a means of inserting them into this society that, although condescending, in his logic would still be providing these Indigenous people with rights and means to prosper using his land reforms. At the same time, having them established in the Banda Oriental would help guarantee proper possession of the territory and its resources. Since the Treaty of Madrid, the principle behind demarcation of borders was that of *uti possidetis*, in which “effective occupation” was

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<sup>152</sup> Juan Antonio Rajoy to Juan Bautista Méndez. San Roque, February 19, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 156.

<sup>153</sup> The assistance was ongoing throughout the years. Juan Francisco Brest to Juan Bautista Mendez. Puerto de Goya, May 31, 1816 in *Correspondencia Oficial* v. 8, f. 43, AGPC; José Artigas to the Cabildo Gobernador de Corrientes, Purificación, March 3, 1715, in *AA* vol. 34, 70.

<sup>154</sup> Artigas to the Montevideo Cabildo. June 22, 1816, in *AA* vol. 21, 394.

necessary.<sup>155</sup> The installation of the Abipons could be strategic in that sense, so Artigas kept encouraging their move. Besides the 400 people who had already relocated, another 600 had crossed the Paraná River and were allegedly on their way, indicating a significant adherence to what Artigas had offered them.<sup>156</sup> Still, many stayed in the areas closer to Corrientes, with the commander of Goya reporting about 1,000 Abipons and 80 deserters in the vicinities that same month.<sup>157</sup>

Even though criollos felt threatened by Abipon presence and sometimes disapproved of incentives given to the popular groups, Artigas' relationship with elites owed much to his ability to dialogue with them and placate extremisms that emerged. For instance, when Ramona Larramendi from Santa Fe wrote to him complaining about the Guaycurú's damage to her estate, Artigas promised to send a small troop and convince them to go back to their pueblos.<sup>158</sup> This character of his as a mediator was very much explored by the population, not only between different social groups, but also between diverging interests, as an alternative source of authority.

### *Establishing authority through reciprocity*

As soon as Artigas established himself as one of the political leaders of the Mesopotamia, the pueblos started writing to him to express their voice and appeal to his influence. As early as

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<sup>155</sup> Lucía Rodríguez Arrillaga, "La invención del territorio en espacios transimperiales: la región platina a fines del siglo XVIII," in *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos. Nouveaux mondes mondes nouveaux - Novo Mundo Mundos Novos - New world New worlds* (2019) <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.75278>.

<sup>156</sup> June 22, 1816 in *AA* vol. 21, 236.

<sup>157</sup> Don José Enrique Arevalo (signed as "Patricio), Corrientes, June 23, 1815 in Fondo Rio Branco 197, Archivo Nacional de Asunción, Paraguay.

<sup>158</sup> Jose Artigas to Ramona Larramendi. Purificación, August 31, 1817 in *AA* vol. 34, 109.

April of 1812, the “citizens of the village of Gualeguaychú” asked that he interceded against a decision made by Buenos Aires that placed Don Vicente Chilavert as the new commander of the pueblo.<sup>159</sup> Because according to the new “system, the pueblos have the right to elect who to command them,” the village had “acclaimed” Don Josef Gutiérrez as their “chief,” but were surprised when Buenos Aires had a different interpretation of their rights, much more limited than anticipated.

In this moment of ideological transition, various understandings regarding authority existed in the region. One interpretation, anchored in the neoscholastic doctrine and the *pactum subjectionis*, saw in the pueblos the right to elect their commanders, and had been the foundation of Hapsburg rule.<sup>160</sup> According to this model, sovereignty pertained to various corporate bodies whose local had been delegated by the king. In the absence of the King, this interpretation was used by the juntista movements to justify their “resumption” of sovereignty. Contrary to that fragmented version, Bourbon rule had initiated a transition towards absolutist interpretations of power, that condensed all aspects of administration in the figure of the king. As these two views were disputing territory in the minds of Americans, a third one, based on the theory of natural rights and that envisioned sovereignty as belonging to society, proposed that only through association and consent (a pact) could there be legitimacy. This last interpretation was the fundament of popular sovereignty and inspired the principal political movements of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as the American, French, and Haitian revolutions.

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<sup>159</sup> The citizens of the village of San José de Gualeguaychú to the General Artigas. Gualeguaychú, April, 1812 in *AA* vol. 8, 63-64.

<sup>160</sup> Hilda Sabato, *Republics of the New World: The Revolutionary Political Experiment in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 27-28.

In chapter three we observed how Domingo Manduré and the indigenous Cabildo of Yapeyú utilized these notions as part of their rhetoric of defense or rejection of Artiguism, in an indication that popular groups – as well as elites – had access to these debates, fed from them, and utilized them as tools to improve their life and engage in politics. As Artigas sought to place himself as a protector of the pueblos’ rights, he too made use of these various interpretations, proposing views that promised to respect their freedom, and then used a positive reception of his message to legitimate his rule and authority. He offered an understanding of sovereignty that resembled early *pactista* notions – reasserting the several pueblos’ authority, and constantly stressing the need that the pueblos should be the ones deciding their destiny.<sup>161</sup> Therefore, he conceived of multiple, layered sovereignties, embodied by the pueblos, which, should they decide, could come together in association.<sup>162</sup> He had a clear offer, crafted in the Instructions of the Year XIII and constantly repeated in his communications: independence, federalism, a republican inclusive model. After joining the League, this association would come to life in a reciprocal alliance.<sup>163</sup> Artigas would make sure these multiple sovereignties were being preserved, he guaranteed, while the pueblos could count on him for their defense. The offer also included, of course, economic benefits as well as military support coming both ways. We saw earlier that for Corrientes, these terms seemed to be convincing.

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<sup>161</sup> His message regarding political autonomy of the pueblos will be explored in chapter five.

<sup>162</sup> The concept of layered sovereignties has been identified as a characteristic of empires. See Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 31.

<sup>163</sup> This reciprocity is akin to the one found in Medieval understandings of the relationship between monarchs and society and brought to the Americas during the early moments of conquest. According to Marcela Echeverri, this “Spanish political community in the Americas” was “made up of autonomous corporate bodies that received protection and rights from the crown in exchange for their loyalty.” Echeverri, *Indian and Slave Royalists in the Age of Revolution*, 14.

Part of Artigas' understandings of sovereignty also included a conception of "pueblo" that was connected to the rights of Natural Law.<sup>164</sup> In this scenario, legitimacy could only be achieved through ample participation of residents. In a context that lacked stable institutions to channel consent, Artigas took to direct communication with the Mesopotamian society. In his headquarters in Purificación, he received a vast number of letters and petitions that served to consolidate his place as Protector of the Free Pueblos in the region, and that mirrored practices from colonial times. The "freedom to write" was a recourse very much used by the Hapsburgs to establish their authority from the other side of the ocean, as it generated a sense of connection between subjects and the ruler.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, it allowed for complaints against what subjects felt was unjust, as well as vigilance of institutions. In the exchanges between Artigas and his pueblo, we can find many of these elements.

First, those who wrote to him were seeking to have their voice heard and made pleas to benefit from that interaction. Artigas was open to that and generally, it seems, made attempts to hear more about each case. Second, by writing to him, people from various social groups, far and wide, were keeping him informed about conditions in the whole territory of the League. Written using their free will, these letters indicated that these people considered Artigas as an arbiter of their concerns and were granting him the right to make decisions on their behalf, as well as demonstrating their willingness to abide by his rule.

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<sup>164</sup> Luis Valenzuela-Vermehren, "Creating Justice in an Emerging World: the Natural Law Basis of Francisco de Vitoria's Political and International Thought," *Ideas y Valores* 66, no. 163 (April 2017): 39–64, <https://doi.org/10.15446/ideasyvalores.v66n163.49770>. See also Chiaramonte, *Ciudades, provincias, estados*, 116–117.

<sup>165</sup>Arndt Brendecke, *The Empirical Empire: Spanish Colonial Rule and the Politics of Knowledge* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2016), 117.

Many cases concerned the violation of private property. For example, Maria Ignacia Cabral wrote to Artigas in May of 1815 to complain that, after her husband passed away, her father-in-law was trying to get control over her property.<sup>166</sup> In another case, Maria Isabel Bargas appealed to Artigas regarding the possession of an enslaved woman, Laureana, and her three children.<sup>167</sup> Bargas had been taking care of Laureana since her early years, and had helped raise her three children. Now, D. Miguel Merlo, the legal owner, wanted her back, along with the infants. Bargas' case had already been decided by the Governor of Corrientes, who decided that she was to keep one of the children but give the other two and Laureana back. Not being content with the result, Bargas wrote to Artigas, asking him to intercede in her favor. She was, then, looking at him to improve her chances of a better ruling. We only know of this letter because Artigas, in fact, wrote to the Governor of Corrientes wanting to know more about the case before making any final decisions.

We can imagine that most of these letters have been lost. However, just indications of their existence already enable us to draw some conclusions as to their instrumentality for both parties. For example, we have a judicial case in which Maria Úrsula de Casajús denounced José Gabriel Casco, the commander of Curuzú Cuatiá, for taking possession of her *estancia* in El Tigre.<sup>168</sup> From her defense, we can infer that Casco had done so based on accusations that she was opposed to Artigas' rule. Her testimony reveals some noteworthy facts, like the use of her gender (la calidad de mi sexo) as a justification of her inability to engage in politics. After

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<sup>166</sup> Representación dirigida al General Artigas por María Ignacio Cabral. Mocoretá, May 28, 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 55.

<sup>167</sup> Expediente relativo a la reclamación de María Isabel Bargas contra Miguel Merlo por la posesión de una esclava y sus hijos. August/September 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 69.

<sup>168</sup> Maria del Carmen Benitez signs for her. March 4, 1815. Judiciales, t. 212, f. 1, AGPC.

extending herself to explain her case to the Governor of Corrientes, as to convince him to rule in her favor, she closed the testimony with a threat: in case she was ignored she would appeal to Artigas. The possibility of writing to him was not only an alternative course of action that could be more favorable, but a tool to pressure the government and be heard.

Artigas used the letters to his benefit. Many of them employed a precise rhetoric that, although likely trying to appeal to him, were a convenient portrayal of himself as a leader to other authorities. María Ignacio Cabral expected “justice from his kindness.” María Úrsula de Casajús saw him as a “protector” who was kind (*humano*), upright (*íntegro*), and a “pacifier.” She was the one who had made the threat to the Governor and went on to fulfil it. More than a year later, Artigas forwarded him the letter, which she had prefaced with an expressive message, a recognition of Artigas’ abilities to educate “even those with the roughest knowledge,” perhaps in a reference to the popular groups. Casajús stated that Artigas’ system, “lethal to the enemies of the natural law,” and with such “moderation, justice (and) reason,” would go down in history,” a very powerful message to be received by the Governor of Corrientes if the intention was to demonstrate the level of respect Artigas received from residents.<sup>169</sup> For María Úrsula de Casajús too, it was a positive quality to be able to display political concepts within this patriarchal society. She clearly recognized this system of communication with Artigas as a means for the expansion of her rights as a woman in that society, as did María Ignacio Cabral and Maria Isabel Bargas.

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<sup>169</sup> June 28, 1816 in Judiciales, t. 212, f. 114, AGPC. The Cabildo believed someone was influencing her, which could be true, but just reinforces how an ample public saw Artigas as an authority, and how she saw writing to him as a tool.

This tool of communication was also useful to place Artigas as a mediator of conflicts between the *campaña* and the Cabildo of Corrientes. Nicolas de la Rosa Córdoba, the new commander of Saladas, informed to the Cabildo how he had sought approval from Artigas in a matter regarding the command's tenancy of arms and gunpowder. The Cabildo had previously requested the arms that Córdoba kept in Saladas. While we can see in the letter that the Cabildo was insistent on holding authority over the countryside pueblos, we also identify in these pueblos, and their commanders, a discourse that manifests their new feeling of autonomy. Besides ignoring the Cabildo's request and appealing to Artigas, Córdoba replied to the authorities in the city that the arms did not belong to the State, but rather to vecinos in the area. They should, then, remain there to "conserve the life and interests of these same vecinos."<sup>170</sup> While Artigas tried to remain neutral in this one particular situation, because of the letter he now knew that the Cabildo had been requesting the arms. It prompted him to write and clarify: should the Cabildo feel the need to amplify protection, they could request the help of forces from the Commanders in the campaña, that is, the men, with their arms, but "demanding only the arms was reprehensible."<sup>171</sup>

### **Contrasting the Cabildo of Corrientes' Authority**

The volume of letters sent to Artigas was, of course, of concern to the Government of Corrientes. Many times, he would just forward the letters received. More than once, he expressed that he would not make any decisions without consulting the city government first and gathering more information. Still, on one occasion, the governor of Corrientes attached a note. He felt that the

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<sup>170</sup> Nicolas de la Rosa Córdoba to the Cabildo of Corrientes. Saladas, November 29, 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 106.

<sup>171</sup> Nicolas de la Rosa Córdoba to the Cabildo of Corrientes. Saladas, December 4, 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 110.



judicial system, already fragile, was threatened.<sup>172</sup> First, the letters indicated that residents did not fully understand the legal steps for filing a case. Second, the very authority of that Government was being questioned. “News” about Artigas’ benevolence were afloat, and “one after the other,” people were taking the route of personal appeal. Because he listened to them, people used him as a sort of court of last resort or, what was worse, wrote straight to Artigas “without giving notice” to the Government. The official legal system in place was disregarded. The only solution to the problem, he suggested, was if Artigas himself made it known to the People the “terms that correspond to legal recourse,” and reorganized their practices. The understanding was general, then, to the people as well as to the Government, that authority resided in him, and changes would only be effective if he was the one conducting them.

The effectiveness of this strategy of communication to grant legitimacy and amplify Artigas’ authority was undeniable. At one point, people in Curuzú Cuatiá decided not to contribute their derechos (taxes) to the military commander José Ignacio Ledesma by claiming that Artigas had “abolished” them.<sup>173</sup> In the district of Palmar, residents crafted a note to the Governor asking for commander D. Juan Vicente Soto Mayor, a “known adversary to the Just Cause,” to be removed.<sup>174</sup> Because it was their “right,” and using the “powerful and just sentiments of our Supreme General and Protector Citizen José de Artigas,” they “demanded that [Soto Mayor] be deposed” to stop “the oppression with which he annihilates our morale daily,” by acting in favor of Buenos Aires and ordering military actions against the “heroes of liberty.” Instead of listening to the people of Palmar, José de Silva dismissed the request, alleging that

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<sup>172</sup> Expediente relativo a la reclamación de María Isabel Bargas contra Miguel Merlo por la posesión de una esclava y sus hijos. August/September 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 69.

<sup>173</sup> José Ignacio Ledesma to José de Silva. Curuzú Cuatiá, March 13, 1815 in *AA* vol. 20, 236.

<sup>174</sup> February 25, 1815 in *Correspondencia Oficial* t. 6, f. 177.

Soto Mayor had acted following orders. A year later, in 1816, Méndez, once again governor, was notified that Soto Mayor had been killed, in front of all the magistrates, officials, and residents, by the town's priest, who was carrying the *estandarte de la patria*.<sup>175</sup> The presence of Artigas in the minds of the residents of the Mesopotamia was evident.

At one point, Artigas protested that the volume of letters was so intense that it distracted him from military matters. Still, he kept reading them and encouraging people to write. To Ramona Larramendi, he said that she had “done well exposing her right,” and that she could “vent whatever complaint [she] wanted, as long as it [was] just.”<sup>176</sup> As it is to be imagined, most of these letters were from well-off citizens, who could either write for themselves, or find someone else to do it for them. Still, Artigas had become a point of authority for the “*infelices*” as well, who were walking “large distances” to be in contact with him.<sup>177</sup> This prompted Artigas to warn Silva that the “poor should not be excluded from justice.”<sup>178</sup> It was needed, he stated, to “erase the barbarian practice that respects grandeur more than justice,” so that these men did not need to go to great lengths to be heard.<sup>179</sup> He was well aware, also, that by keeping these *infelices*, and the various social groups in his alliance at close proximity, he would be in a position to constantly reassert his authority, and also receive their prompt support when necessary.

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<sup>175</sup> Correspondencia Oficial t. 8, f. 61, AGPC.

<sup>176</sup> José Artigas to Ramona Larramendi. Purificación, November 7, 1817 in *AA* vol. 34, 122.

<sup>177</sup> The *infelices*, those who Artigas had established in his Reglamento Provisorio of 1815 as the “free Black, the free mixed race (*zambos*), the Indians and poor *Criollos*.”

<sup>178</sup> José Artigas to José De Silva. Paysandú, June 9, 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 61.

<sup>179</sup> “Borremos esa mania o barbara costumbre de respetar la grandeza más que a la justicia.”

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In a world in transition, Artigas occupied an institutional and political void. As rights were expanding, so were the challenges to envision a society that granted those rights while including diverse interests. His system, designed to accommodate the needs of the Pueblos, also included methods that resonated with past political traditions, providing a sense of familiarity. As Artiguism made its way into the Mesopotamia, people started seeing him as a figure that could guarantee their rights and sovereignties amidst the ambiguities that came with the wars of independence. They benefited from his presence as a “Protector” of the territory, and he benefited from their support. From this place of mediation between pueblos and multiple sovereignties, his authority could irradiate into many directions, and his power received legitimacy. With this object in mind, he worked closely with Indigenous groups as they adjusted to this new reality that was being imagined.

## Chapter 5. The *pueblo de Indios* of Santa Lucía: Claims of Sovereignty and Citizenship

May 16, 1814 was a busy day for the Pueblo of Santa Lucía de los Astos. The town's Cabildo, Corregidor and administrator summoned "all of the individuals of this Pueblo to the public plaza."<sup>1</sup> After residents gathered they heard, in the Guarani language, that lieutenant governor Juan Bautista Méndez, in the name of the Cabildo of Corrientes, had instructed them to choose a deputy (*diputado*), a "citizen from their country" (*ciudadano de su propio país*) to represent their needs in the upcoming provincial congress that was to happen the following month. The ideal candidate would be someone of "science, conscience, and experience" who would march to Corrientes carrying a list of recommendations to "expose, ask and execute everything that is convenient to us."<sup>2</sup> The residents finished hearing the instructions, and, one by one, voted on the person they considered fit for the task. Finally, they elected Mercedarian Friar José Pezoa, who, despite not being from the town, was likely thought to be capable of following the congress' procedures. The election record was signed by *corregidor* Estevan Pereira, *administrador de temporalidades* Jose Domingo Montaña, and *procurador* Lino Custiriano. A "committee" was formed to represent those who could not sign – it included Luis Caravallo, Leon Xara, Tomas Rodas, Gregorio Rodas, Francisco Solano Alemis, Jose Francisco Alemis, Josef Mariano Lopez and Melchor Bargas.

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<sup>1</sup> "Acta de la elección de diputado al congreso provincial por el Pueblo de Santa Lucía de los Astos." May 16, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 87-88.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

The call to the congress contained many significant political elements and had been one of the first instructions that José Artigas gave to the Government of Corrientes as soon as they joined the League. In its conception, it was meant to bring to life the ideals of “individual sovereignty of the pueblos” that Artigas had been fearlessly expressing since 1811, by allowing the city of Corrientes as well as every other town to use their sovereignty to decide on the political future of the territory. Following this logic, it had the goal of bringing people together to declare the province’s “independence and freedom.” A second purpose was to “install a full-bodied government,” imprinting on it the pueblos’ wishes. Finally, if appropriate, the congress should “formalize its alliance with the *remaining pueblos* of the territory and with the Banda Oriental.”<sup>3</sup> It was the opportunity to, once again, willingly enter into a political pact, give it legitimacy. Alongside this view of sovereignty connected to consent to an association, delegative instances prior to the congress allowed not just towns, but “*individuals belonging to whatever social group*,” that is, every resident in town, to participate in the process, in a marked extension of citizenship to previously disenfranchised groups.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, it introduced the concept of a “rural citizen,” to emphasize the role that towns, pueblos of the countryside, also had in collaborating to the design of this new political entity.<sup>5</sup> The process represented a thorough exercise in popular sovereignty, likely the first one of its kind in Corrientes. The event was especially remarkable as the outcome, the representative’s inclusion in the provincial congress, was meant to have political ramifications beyond local interests.

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<sup>3</sup> José Artigas to Juan Bautista Méndez. Cuartel General, March 29, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 15 (original in *Correspondencia Oficial* t. 5. f. 36, AGPC).

<sup>4</sup> Original in Spanish reads: “los individuos de ese Partido del caracter que sean á una reunion, para que entre todos voten.” Circular [signed by J. B. Méndez] to all of the towns of the Province of Corrientes. May 4, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 61.

<sup>5</sup> José Artigas to the Cabildo of Corrientes. Cuartel general, April 28, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 55.

Because the congress represented the implementation of renewed political concepts, it generated a set of challenges for the correntino society, particularly connected to the collision of sovereignties.<sup>6</sup> The intention of this chapter is to bring to the forefront the collaborations and frictions that emerged while these pueblos – towns and peoples who came from different social and ethnic backgrounds and represented diverse interests –, combined old and new elements of political culture. As they pursued the organization of the province, they were also situating themselves as political agents, and extending their repertoires of action. Within this context, claims for the exercise of sovereignty emerged not just within the realm of law.<sup>7</sup> Popular groups engaged in practices to position themselves as self-determining parties. As we explore formal instances of political organization, it is essential to also track “how, when, and in the name of what, sovereignty [was] being claimed,” to determine these groups’ urgencies and aspirations.<sup>8</sup>

The experience of Santa Lucía de los Astos, one of the *Pueblos de Indios* of Corrientes, is illustrative of these several layers of sovereignty that coexisted during the moment of political transformation. As such, it can serve as a guide to our understanding of this process, which initiated even before the call to the congress. We will focus on the political experimentations carried out by the town since immediately after the May Revolution and including the first Congress of Corrientes in 1814, the installation of new governments in 1815, and ending with the novel social conflicts born out of these rapid political changes seen in the Río de la Plata around 1816. While the primary case study is Santa Lucía, other pueblos with similar or diverse

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<sup>6</sup> Antonio Annino has described this historical moment as one of “soberanías en lucha” – colliding sovereignties. Annino, “Soberanías en lucha,” in *Inventando la Nación*.

<sup>7</sup> Finn Stepputat has coined the concept “Formations of Sovereignty” to explore this matter. Stepputat, “Formations of Sovereignty.”

<sup>8</sup> Stepputat, “Formations of Sovereignty,” 132.

experiences will serve as points of comparison to investigate strategies for creating consensus or managing conflicts. The main aspect shared by these towns in Corrientes was their desire to better accommodate themselves in a context of transition that brought much uncertainty. It is our intention to uncover their means and motifs when doing so.

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The history of citizenship and reinterpretation of sovereignties following the crisis of the Spanish rule has received good attention from the historiography in the last decades. Particularly, the role of the Pueblos has been reinterpreted. Initial attention was given to the identification of enduring notions that recognized its importance in the political composition of young Republics.<sup>9</sup> Subsequently, debates highlighted the conflictive interactions between sovereignties at different levels, such as former capitals and provinces, and cities and rural areas within their jurisdiction.<sup>10</sup> This latter examination is usually connected to emerging notions of citizenship and representation.<sup>11</sup> Interpretations vary for the different regions of Spanish America, and are

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<sup>9</sup> Annino and Guerra, eds., *Inventando la Nación*; Chiaramonte, *Ciudades, provincias, estados*.

<sup>10</sup> Monica Quijada, "Los límites del "pueblo soberano": territorio, nación y el tratamiento de la diversidad. Argentina siglo XIX," in *Historia y política: Ideas, procesos y movimientos sociales*, N° 13 (2005): 143-174; Marta Irurozqui (ed.), *El tribunal de la soberanía. El poder legislativo en la conformación de los Estados: América Latina, siglo XIX*, (Marcial Pons, Ediciones Jurídicas y Sociales, 2020); Marta Irurozqui, "Las metamorfosis del pueblo. Sujetos políticos y soberanías en Charcas a través de la acción social, 1808-1810," in *Les indépendances hispano-américaines, un objet d'histoire*, edited by Genevieve Verdo and Veronique Hebrard (Madrid: Collection de la Casa de Velázquez, 2013): 213-228.

<sup>11</sup> Antonio Annino, ed., *Historia de las elecciones en Iberoamérica, siglo XIX. De la formación del espacio político nacional* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1995); Hilda Sabato, ed., *Ciudadanía política y formación de las naciones. Perspectivas históricas de América Latina* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999); Annino and Guerra, eds., *Inventando la Nación*; Marta Irurozqui, "El espejismo de la exclusión. Reflexiones conceptuales acerca de la ciudadanía y el sufragio censitario a partir del caso boliviano" in *Ayer* 70/2 (2008): 57-92.

partially connected to the degree of influence posed by the Cádiz Constitution of 1812.<sup>12</sup> Recent studies have highlighted the need to further explore the topic, as it very much impacted the construction of new states and had enduring social consequences.<sup>13</sup>

### *Junctures of Political Transition: The Pueblos de Indios of Corrientes*

In 1810, Santa Lucía de los Astos was accompanied by three other *Pueblos de Indios* in the jurisdiction of Corrientes, all of them Franciscan reductions (see figure 7). Santa Ana de Guacarás – named after the original occupants of the land – was founded in 1771 to accommodate reduced Guaycurú people. Las Garzas, established two years later, was to serve as the new location for Abipon peoples coming from the reductions of San Fernando del Río Negro and San Jerónimo further south, in attempts made by gov. Juan García de Cossio to protect the access to the Paraná River. Itatí, located on the shore of the Paraná River that faces Paraguay, was founded by Hernandarias much earlier, in 1615, and was meant to house Guaraní peoples. Santa Lucía, located on the western shore of the Santa Lucía river - about 200 km south of Corrientes capital – shared its foundation date with Itatí. Rather than Guaraní, though, its

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<sup>12</sup> María del Carmen Salinas Sandoval, Diana Birrichaga Gardida and Antonio Escobar Ohmstede, eds., *Poder y gobierno local en México, 1808-1857* (Zamora: Colegio de Michoacán, 2011); Silvia Escanilla Huerta, “‘They Will Live without Law or Religion’: Cádiz, Indigenous People, and Political Change in the Viceroyalty of Peru, 1812–1820,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 101:2 (2021) doi 10.1215/00182168-8897464

<sup>13</sup> Raúl Fradkin, “La revolución, los comandantes y el gobierno de los pueblos rurales. Buenos Aires, 1810-1822,” in *Historia Crítica* 53 (2014): 35-59; Geneviève Verdo, “Organizing Sovereign Provinces in Independent America. The Republic of Córdoba, 1776-1827,” in *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 69/2 (2014): 349-381. URL: <https://www.cairn.info/journal-Annales-2014-2-page-349.htm>



population was composed of several Guaycurú ethnicities (allegedly Astos, Calastabaylones, Colechas, y Casotas).<sup>14</sup>

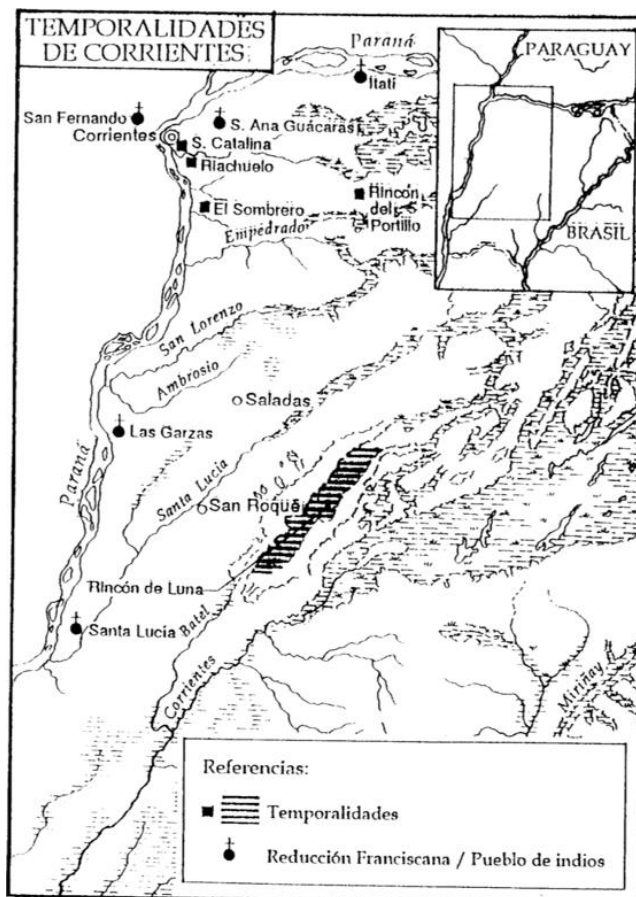


Figure 7. *Pueblos de Indios of Corrientes*<sup>15</sup>

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Santa Lucía shared a mixed format of reduction and encomienda.<sup>16</sup> It was directed by a parish priest - a Franciscan friar, a Spanish *administrador*, a Corregidor de Indios and the Cabildo. María Laura Salinas considers the *comunidad* was under a

<sup>14</sup> María Laura Salinas, “Élites, encomenderos y encomiendas en el Nordeste argentino. La ciudad de Corrientes a mediados del siglo XVII,” in *Bibliographica Americana* vol. 6 (2010): 19.

<sup>15</sup> Source: Ernesto J. A. Maeder, 2000, 87.

<sup>16</sup> María Laura Salinas, “Trabajo, tributo, encomiendas y pueblos de indios en el nordeste argentino. Siglos XVI-XIX” in *Iberoamericana*, IX, 34 (2009): 21-42.

“double submission,” since it had to follow the precepts of the Franciscan community and doctrine, as well as comply with the requirements of the *mita* work, which in the region comprised of agriculture, cattle farming, public works, and personal service.<sup>17</sup> With the exception of the cacique and his direct relatives, who organized and supervised the labor extraction in the absence of Spanish officials, all of the inhabitants were subjected to the *mita*.<sup>18</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and following the Bourbon Reforms that spanned across the continent, Spanish officials were placed in charge of labor extraction, benefiting from indigenous work. Spanish settlers occupied land close to the pueblo, introducing notions of private property to the area. Due to its vicinity to Chaco lands, Santa Lucía’s Indigenous men had to be constantly guarding the frontier, and were often attacked by “infidel” Indians, who destroyed their fields and disrupted community life. Their economic situation eventually became so dire that, towards the closing of the century, they were exempt from tribute to be able to survive.<sup>19</sup> However, that did not prevent the city of Corrientes’ public servants from frequently requesting their help in various tasks.<sup>20</sup>

Precisely because of the problematic economic situation faced by the pueblo, in 1810 we find evidence of active political participation by the pueblo of Santa Lucía. As soon as the new *Governing Junta* of Corrientes was instituted, the Cabildo of Santa Lucía penned a letter that had as a clear goal the improvement of their socio-economic conditions. This letter would not be the

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<sup>17</sup> Although Salinas refers to the system as a whole as *encomienda*, because Indians paid tribute to “*encomenderos*,” the *mita* was the system used to organize labor. Salinas, “Trabajo, tributo,” 26.

<sup>18</sup> Salinas, “Trabajo, tributo,” 32.

<sup>19</sup> Salinas, “Trabajo, tributo,” 36

<sup>20</sup> Salinas, 38.

only one of its kind, and as such, illustrates the igniting mechanisms that permeated political experiments in these early stages of the revolution.

### **Political Changes in Santa Lucía de los Astos**

During these moments of institutional change, the observation of claims made by *Pueblos de Indios* reveals a world in which devices of action resembled long-standing colonial practices of resistance, but that carried in them recent institutional changes and political desires.<sup>21</sup> In these instances, we notice the population seeking for the authority of new institutions through traditional tools to reach out and express their needs. Shortly after the May Revolution, in September of 1810, the Cabildo of Santa Lucía, which had “always been obedient and submissive,” wrote to the new Junta of Corrientes to complain about their *Corregidor*. Pedro José Alemis, the Cabildo wrote, had used his position to appropriate from the assets of the community, making deals for the extraction of hides and other goods.<sup>22</sup> Initially, they could not believe that Alemis had been capable of such “bastardy.” In their opinion, he was supposed to be an example to other subjects because of his many titles. However, there was strong evidence implicating him in improper business, that extended for months on a row. The Cabildo had tried to intervene using the legal mechanisms available then. They asked the Spanish *administrador* to inform the former colonial governor, Pedro Fondevila, but received no response. As a means to

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<sup>21</sup> Marcela Echeverri solidly demonstrates this world of “political experimentation” that took place in the northern Andes during the crisis of Spanish monarchy and transition to the independent era. In the reconstruction of politics carried out by Indigenous people as well as enslaved Africans and their descendants, it became evident their strong awareness of colonial legislation, their assessment of advantages to the condition of vassalage, that resulted in a marked defense of Royalism. Echeverri’s work is remarkable in the sense that it does not establish a fixed set of interests connected to ethnicity or social position, but rather contextualizes political affiliations as a product of carefully selected benefits.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from the Cabildo of Santa Lucía to the Junta Provisional y Gubernativa de la capital (Corrientes). Santa Lucía, September 4, 1810 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 1. f. 76, AGPC.

keep pushing for a solution, they were now engaging with the new Criollo administration. There is no indication that the new governor, Elías Galván, acted differently, as in November the Cabildo of Santa Lucía once again informed Corrientes of problems with Alemis.<sup>23</sup> This time, during their yearly election of officials, the *Corregidor* tried to push for the installation of his brother, D. José Francisco Alemis, as the Pueblo's new secretary. As the Cabildo had voted for Mariano López for the position and saw no credentials other than José Francisco being Pedro José's brother, they believed he was trying to use his influence for his own benefit. They asked for Galván to weigh in on the matter, as well as approve the other elected officials. In March of 1811, the Cabildo yet again wrote to Corrientes. This time, however, they asked for the direct removal of another official, their Administrador, who was a "useless," "corrupt" man, who "lack[ed] intelligence to administer [their] estancias."<sup>24</sup> These two men, rather than complying with their duty of "advancing the development" of the pueblo, were actually draining its resources. The administrator especially, since his salary was considerably high, they argued.

Itatí as well seemed to have been facing problems with those who should be looking out for the pueblo's wellbeing and had expressed concerns. In 1812, their problem was not the Corregidor nor the administrator, but the priest. Manuel Antonio Garay was lazy to the point of "not leaving his ranch even to administer the rituals of Holy Week."<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the few masses he managed to celebrate were in Spanish, since he was "ignorant" of their language,

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<sup>23</sup> Letter from the Cabildo of Santa Lucía to Governor Elías Galván. Santa Lucía, November 1, 1810 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 1. f. 108, AGPC.

<sup>24</sup> The Cabildo of Santa Lucia to the Cabildo of Corrientes. Santa Lucia de los Astos, March 5, 1811 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 1. f. 222, AGPC.

<sup>25</sup> Itatí, February 26, 1812 in Corrientes Gobierno (1812-1814), 5-7-1, Sala X, AGNA.

Guaraní. This lack of good practices justified their reasoning to argue that Garay had too high of a salary for a pueblo that was essentially “abandon[ed] of religious practices.”<sup>26</sup>

These three communications from *pueblos de indios* are indicative of a set of patterns. We can notice that the tools in place for their demands are clearly a continuation of colonial practices.<sup>27</sup> These petitions were strategically crafted to accommodate the colonial system, not once questioning its existence. In another connection to colonial times, even if sovereignty had in theory returned to the pueblos after the arrest of the King, in these initial instances, the indigenous towns were still looking up to Criollo administration to express their needs and expect improvement. However, while still attached to these administrations, these pueblos were consistently seeking for ways that this could change. This is where we start to see some change – in the attack of positions that were the very representation of colonialism. When complaining against the Corregidor, they asked that the Government remove Alemis. At the same time, they reinforced their place of authority, by reminding Galván that, “by law,” they should be the ones electing a new person for the role.<sup>28</sup> The following year, when condemning the administrator, Santa Lucía did not ask for replacements, but rather suggested the extinction of the position, which was too expensive and could very well be performed by others – not being able to eliminate the Corregidor, they actually requested that he incorporate the role of administrator as well. As for Itatí, although hardly cogitating not having a priest, they clearly stated that the one

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> For the use of law by Indigenous groups, apart from Steve Stern’s Peru’s Indian peoples and the challenge of Spanish conquest, see also Sergio Serulnikov, *Subverting Colonial Authority: Challenges to Spanish Rule in Eighteenth-Century Southern Andes* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> Letter from the Cabildo of Santa Lucía to Governor Elías Galván. Santa Lucía, November 1, 1810 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 1. f. 108, AGPC.

they had was not worth of their money. We can point, then, to an environment in which questioning the presence of official authorities had become a possibility, even if using old methods. Furthermore, it occupied an important place in their journey towards accessing sovereignty.

### **From “There is no King” to “Viva la Patria”**

Soon enough clearer versions of opposition to authority were identified. José Ignacio Añasco, commander of Ensenada, reported to Galván that some residents of Itatí, amongst them Benigno Segovia, were threatening the authority of Captain Belasco.<sup>29</sup> According to Añasco, a “very old” “Paraguay” – a Paraguayan man – that was in the coast of the Riachuelo creek (north of Corrientes) had openly stated that there was no king. His son had been requested to guard el Paso del Rey, an internal road. He agreed to comply, but only because he “wished to do so,” in a clear act of defiance. When asked again, he confirmed that everyone “[was] saying there is no King,” to whom they should serve, and that he was only helping because they were fellow “Christians.” These were not formal complaints, still, they work as an indication that conversations regarding authority and the source of sovereignty were widespread in the region in 1811. The reading of that old man was clear, and very much imbedded in the latest interpretations of sovereignty: in the absence of the king, authority was no longer clearly defined.

Even with a lack of precision in this aspect, the pueblo of Santa Lucía was an active participant in the militarization that spread across the region. Most of its men joined the expedition to Paraguay that Belgrano commanded and acquired military experience. In January

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<sup>29</sup> Jose Ignacio Añasco to Elías Galván. Ensenada, February 12, 1811 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 1. f. 192, AGPC.

of 1812, authorities celebrated the creation of the *Compañía de Naturales Libertadores* in the pueblo, with 25 men ready to combat with their arms.<sup>30</sup> In early September, a development that was only partially relevant to their daily lives agitated the town. Buenos Aires had been able to uncover and stop a conspiracy against the ideal of the revolution. The community organized three days of festivities, with a mass, *Te Deum*, music and games in the plaza.<sup>31</sup> According to administrator José Domingo Montaña – still there – the whole pueblo was singing “patriotic rhymes,” and “Viva la Patria” was a constant expression coming out of the “Naturales’ mouth.” Authentically or not, the demonstrations of support to the revolutionary cause were visible. More than the significance of the news, though, the pueblo seemed to be celebrating something else. In the end of the letter, Montaña could not help but to point out how “content” the community was, because Eusebio Valdenegro, the temporary new governor of Corrientes, had been the “first superior to take this Pueblo into consideration,” and engage them in the festivities. At least according to Montaña’s telling, the Indigenous peoples of Santa Lucía were feeling included and accounted for in this image of Patria that was being irradiated.

The episodes narrated here reveal a moment of fast change that transformed political practices as well as interpretation of authority. We should avoid seeing them teleologically, as a progression. Rather, we should take them as different elements of a same reality and experience, that traversed their daily life and meanings of the world. Coexisting were traditional power schemes and administrative structures, the absence of the King and the legal uncertainty that

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<sup>30</sup> Josef Ignacio Aguirre, January 29, 1812 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 2. f. 177, AGPC.

<sup>31</sup> Jose Domingo Montaña to Lieut. Governor D Eusebio Baldenegro. Santa Lucia, Sept 9, 1812 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 3. f. 77, AGPC. It is possible that they were referring to the Conspiracy of Álzaga.

came with it, and the emergence of novel interpretations that could see these pueblos as holders of sovereignty, or at a least an important part of it.

### **Becoming *Pueblos Libres***

In October of 1811, Elías Galván made a proposal to improve the life of the Naturales. Using Belgrano's *Reglamento* for the Pueblos of Misiones mentioned in chapter 2 as model, Galván sought to "remove the miserable people (*infelices*) that inhabit the [Pueblos de Indios] from their humiliating situation."<sup>32</sup> This situation of "misery" was stopping them from being useful to the *Patria*, since it was accompanied by "languor." The plan included a transformation of the Pueblos, by laying out streets and plazas, and distributing spaces "without distinction to Indians and Spanish Americans."<sup>33</sup> Following the same logic of Belgrano, by opening the pueblos to non-Indigenous peoples, Galván believed he was integrating the Naturales into the new American society. His plan did not stop at the creation of a new town's design, though. The greater goal, he stated, was to "annihilate and destruct in all of them the melancholic ideas caused by oppression."<sup>34</sup> He identified the regimen of community, in which collective land ownership trumped private interests, as a negative aspect of the previous colonial administration. The only solution, Galván proposed, was to "declare the absolute liberty" of those who resided in

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<sup>32</sup> Elías Galván to the Supreme Junta. Caaguazú, October 3, 1811 in Corrientes (Entre Ríos), 3-5-6, Sala X, AGNA. In *Reform and Reaction in the Platine Provinces*, David Bushnell mentions how the abolition of Indigenous tribute was such a common follow-up of revolutionary movements throughout Latin America that it did not "deserve special notice" in Buenos Aires – the author seems to use Buenos Aires to refer to the measures taken in the name of the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata. What we find in Corrientes shows us that, even though the law was indeed there, we should not take its application for granted, and that the status of Indigenous peoples would not suddenly be transformed. David Bushnell, *Reform and Reaction in the Platine Provinces, 1810-1852* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1983), 14.

<sup>33</sup> Elías Galván to the Supreme Junta. Caaguazú, October 3, 1811 in Corrientes (Entre Ríos), 3-5-6, Sala X, AGNA.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*



the Pueblos of Itatí, Garzas, and Santa Lucía. That liberty should afford for their “enlightenment” and “other knowledge” needed for them to be able to “opt for all of the jobs and positions” that Spanish Americans could take. By participating in the official administration, in the eyes of Galván, their integration into the society would be complete.

To Galván, being useful to the Patria meant being able to serve the government. In a context of constant discrimination and prejudice, his ideas for the *pueblos de indios* could be considered progressive, along the same lines that Belgrano’s once were. Once again, the vision of a society that followed a liberal model, based on private property, was being presented to the Indigenous peoples as a means for them to participate in this society. In doing so, Galván believed he was converting them into shareholders in the sovereignty that was now available. We have no indication that his plan was ever put into practice.<sup>35</sup> If we fast forward to 1814 and move on to the context of the first provincial Congress of Corrientes, though, we can grasp what the Cabildo of Santa Lucía thought about some of these ideas. Before we dive into the aspirations of the Indigenous peoples of Santa Lucía, we will use the next stop to lay out the conflicts that surrounded the definition of new political entities in Corrientes, in an effort to determine the scope of the multiple sovereignties at play, and their impact on peoples’ lives.

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<sup>35</sup> In *Cronica Histórica de Corrientes*, Florencio Mantilla registers the liberation of pueblos de Indios in 1812, but provides no sources for such. Mantilla, *Cronica Histórica*, 179.

*The Congress of Corrientes: Negotiating Sovereignty and Citizenship*

By March of 1814, the territories of the Mesopotamia were all run by governments that supported the *Liga de los Pueblos Libres*. On March 29, Artigas communicated the news to the cabildo of Corrientes, defining what the league meant and indicating next steps:

“All of the towns throughout the Uruguay and Paraná rivers are now under one same ideal of reformation, and have saluted the restoration of general harmony, prosperity, life in peace, and freedom. (...) After it has been defined how to secure [the alliance] in the territory, it shall proceed to general organization, consulting with each one of the provinces about their particular advantages, so that they can remain in perfect union with each other; not the petty union that forces each pueblo to give away part of their trust in exchange for a servile obedience, but rather a union that is born out of desire, without any damage to the rights of the pueblo, and out of its free and complete exercise.”<sup>36</sup>

The reference to Buenos Aires’ proposal was obvious, as well as Artigas’ intent of highlighting the key differences it had with his project. While other unions required obedience of the pueblos, this one was a product of their desire. Artigas’ role in it, as “an eternal worshiper of the sovereignty of the pueblos,” he declared, was just to “order them to be free,” so that they could fully consent to an association, a “league.”<sup>37</sup> For this reason, a congress that sealed their participation in this union was essential, as to grant it long-lasting legitimacy. In Corrientes, such Congress was to take place in late May.

The mobilization for the Congress brought an opportunity for political experimentation in Corrientes. Along with this opportunity, came also the need to confront challenges regarding power and authority that had been flowering since 1810. If the Government were to call for a congress, who should participate in it? Should participants be chosen through a representative

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<sup>36</sup> José Artigas to the Cabildo of Corrientes. Cuartel General, March 29, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 13.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

system? Who should be able to elect these representatives? Should their representation include all the Pueblos? Indigenous Pueblos too? Would the city of Corrientes count like any other Pueblo? What would be the role of its Cabildo? These were all questions that involved many interests and had no easy answer.

In considering these challenges, providing solutions, and pushing for their acceptance in this political moment, the Pueblos of Corrientes fought to exert the sovereignty that – according to some precepts – they had recently recovered. However, if under Artigas’ understanding of the “individual sovereignty of the pueblos” all pueblos were equal, not every pueblo agreed that they all had the same level of power. The preparations for the congress reveal the difficulties of bringing together new political participants and traditional models of authority. It also demonstrates that interpretations regarding sovereignty could constantly fluctuate. This section is dedicated to summarizing the main interpretations about sovereignty available in the period. Following that, we will see how those came into play when defining the scope of the Congress, followed by alternative strategies to achieving and applying it.

### **Multiplying Sovereignty: Challenges and Opportunities**

If the Age of Revolution presented Spanish America with puzzling ideas such as that of “popular sovereignty,” much of the difficulty faced by contenders when seeking to imagine political models for recently independent territories actually hailed from the first moments of Spanish colonization. One particular notion that remained widely visible in the territory was that of the Hapsburg mixed state, in which sovereignty was shared between multiple corporate bodies (or pueblos) and the Crown. This model, sometimes pointed as a cause of weakness of the Spanish Crown, allowed, when necessary, for the adaptation to local necessities. In this sense, Indigenous

groups were able to, sometimes, apply their imprint in colonial practices, creating what Antonio Annino has called a “mixed Indian-colonial State.”<sup>38</sup> It was in itself a “fragmented authority.”<sup>39</sup>

Bourbon rule sought to reform the colonial administration and change understandings regarding authority in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. From an association between “federated kingdoms and monarchy [that] permitted some degree of autonomy,” it became a much more centralized enterprise, that gave a wider preponderance to the figure of the King and his bureaucracy.<sup>40</sup> Its existence and application throughout Spanish America did not mean, though, that the old Castillian model would be erased. It was, in fact, very much used to justify the resumption of sovereignty upon the arrest of the King by the French forces in 1808.

This recovered sovereignty, that could now be used to establish new and legitimate forms of government while building States, was added to that of “popular sovereignty,” based on liberal ideas that were in circulation during the Enlightenment. Borrowing from Christian Wolff, Emer de Vattel’s *The Law of Nations* (1758) proposed that the “pueblos” were each seen as a sovereign *moral person*, whose association to any form of State or alliance should be given through *consent*, being free to seek their own *interest* when doing so.<sup>41</sup> Mariano Moreno adapted the concept of popular sovereignty for the Río de la Plata, claiming that the sovereignty of the Pueblos preceded the connection with the King, and for this reason, local juntas in America had as many rights as the ones in Spain to decide on their future. Moreno also sided with authors

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<sup>38</sup> Annino and Guerra, ed., *Inventando la nación*, 155.

<sup>39</sup> Chiaramonte, *Ciudades, provincias, estados*, 90.

<sup>40</sup> Karen Stolley, *Domesticating Empire*, 149.

<sup>41</sup> José Carlos Chiaramonte, *Nation and State in Latin America: Political Language during Independence* (Routledge, 2017), 85; 184.

such as Hobbes, Locke, and even Rousseau, who believed that to divide sovereignty was to open the door to anarchy. He was, then, opposed to a view that allowed for divided sovereignties.<sup>42</sup>

The debate that followed the break from the Spanish rule and contemplated the need to organize a new State and institution ran around these two conceptions. Capital cities such as Buenos Aires tended to embody “the dogma of indivisibility of sovereignty” and defended a centralized State, one in which their political dependencies would have to give up some of their rights in the name of this greater power. To Buenos Aires, the “federation was no other thing than the reunion of various independent states that recognize a Sovereign authority to which everyone is subject.”<sup>43</sup> Other cities, those that would be in a sense losing their rights, labeled that proposition as “despotism.”<sup>44</sup> An alternative, they argued, was to unite all of these different sovereignties using a confederal model, capable of preserving their *moral person, consent, and interests*. Through the writings of Artigas, we infer that he was very much a proposer of this last option, offering to the provinces that joined the League a “perfect union” through the organization of a congress to consult with each and every town.

When the time came to apply the concept of multiple sovereignties to establish the new power configuration, it was not just Buenos Aires that felt disadvantages. Cities that were capital of provinces, *ciudades cabecera*, accustomed to making decisions to their entire jurisdiction, realized that they too would have to let go of this privilege. This reality added yet another layer

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<sup>42</sup> Bodin would be the main defender of this indivisibility of sovereignty, essential for the stability and success of a State; on the opposite pole, Althusius believed that it was possible for different sovereign powers to coexist within the same political association. Chiaramonte, *Nation and State*, 225.

<sup>43</sup> in *AA* vol. 14, 238.

<sup>44</sup> Chiaramonte, *Nation and State*, 92.

to the conflicting sovereignties – that of disputes between cities and the countryside.<sup>45</sup> Through a series of strategies, the Cabildo in the city of Corrientes tried to constantly reaffirm its long-standing authority over the territory. The countryside pueblos, however, fiercely activated their engagement, and acted to guarantee that their sovereignty would be respected and their voices heard. The moments that preceded the Congress evidence the presence of overlapping claims to sovereignty in which versions of authority simultaneously sought to condition and expand citizenship for the residents of Corrientes. We shall now look at them in detail, to in the end consider their effect in peoples' lives.

### **Layers of sovereignty: The Cabildo of Corrientes and the Countryside**

When trying to increase its control over local administrations, one of the changes implemented by the Bourbon reforms was the creation of a system of intendancies to better supervise matters related to the economy and military defense. In the Río de la Plata, this change was formalized in 1783, with the creation of eight intendancies. Within the superintendancy of Buenos Aires, Corrientes became a “subdelegación,” with appointed lieutenant governors that oversaw those questions. One particularity of this reform in the Río de la Plata was that, despite this redesign in administration, the provincial Cabildos maintained their jurisdiction over the countryside.<sup>46</sup> In practical terms, this meant maintaining judges and commanders in rural areas, and keeping the influence of the city over the interior, in a small-scale centralism. Despite several small changes, this situation persisted into the independence period. This long tradition of meddling can

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<sup>45</sup> Raúl O. Fradkin, “La revolución en los pueblos del litoral rioplatense,” in *Estudios Ibero-Americanos*, v. 36, n. 2 (PUCRS, Jul./Dic. 2010): 244.

<sup>46</sup> Annino, “Soberanías en lucha,” 157.

partially help us understand why it was so difficult for the Cabildo of Corrientes to extend authority to the rural Pueblos when it came to the organization of the Congress.<sup>47</sup> It was not that they considered it useless: To them, actually, a “provincial congress that constituted and provided laws to Corrientes was definitely the first step (...) to secure its outset from the dangers [of a] a shapeless State.”<sup>48</sup> But, instead of waiting for the assembly to formalize the entrance in the League and the declaration of Corrientes’ independence, the Cabildo considered that it was for them, using the city’s sovereignty and long-established authority, to decide.

First, the Cabildo alone decided to officialize the province’s entrance in the League. On April 14, city officials gathered to ponder what their options were. In justifying their decision to formally join the League, we can see elements that expressed the complexities of the period, and a combination of old traditions and revolutionary ideas. According to José Carlos Chiaramonte, it was common for small sovereign entities, “sensing the risks involved in independent survival in view of their economic and cultural weakness, (...) to distance themselves from aspirations of absolute independence [and] form associations with pueblos they were closer to, without giving up their *moral persons*, and the protection of the principle of *consent* for their open entry into some new form of political association.”<sup>49</sup> In fact, the main considerations the Cabildo made were related to their lack of defense, funds, and resources in general, while Artigas had a “respectable force” that could serve to protect them.<sup>50</sup> In that sense, the Cabildo was giving the consent in a sort of pactist means like the one proposed by Emer de Vattel. But they added that

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<sup>47</sup> Annino suggests that the conflicts that emerged after independence were actually connected to the unresolved ambivalences regarding colonial sovereignty, that extended into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Annino, “Soberanías,” 156.

<sup>48</sup> Cabildo de Corrientes to José Artigas. Corrientes, April 14, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 32-33.

<sup>49</sup> Chiaramonte, *Nation and State*, 120.

<sup>50</sup> Acta from the Cabildo of Corrientes. Corrientes, April 14, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 30-31.

their decision was not solely based on the need for protection. Rather, to them, Artigas' "liberal ideas (...) neither opposed the essential American system, nor [were] different than the one adopted in the *first moments* of the installation of the provisory government by the capital of Buenos Aires."<sup>51</sup> Part of their justification, therefore, came from a seeming commitment to the American cause, imbedded in liberal views, that had mobilized the region in the early days of the revolution, and that Artigas still defended, but Buenos Aires not, in their view.

The second demonstration of authority by the city is illustrated by the province's declaration of independence. On April 19, Sergeant Major D. José Ignacio Aguirre, who we saw being deposed from the commandancy of San Roque in chapter 4, came to the city of Corrientes after being released by Artigas, in a seeming demonstration by the Oriental that he had no desire in interfering with Corrientes' internal affairs. Aguirre brought a letter from Artigas, clearing him of charges and recommending his knowledge of the countryside should be used for the cause. Along with the letter, Aguirre claimed Artigas had given him "verbal instructions."<sup>52</sup> Among those was an emergency of a declaration of independence. According to what is registered in the Actas, the Cabildo "reflected," and as representative of the Pueblo, decided to declare "Independence under the federative system." They also established that Artigas, with all of the resources of the League, was now their "Protector." Interestingly, their justification for that was that Artigas promoted the "sacred cause of the Pueblos," and was giving back to them their "first rights." The Cabildo, however, was in a sense stripping away those same rights by making these decisions, since they had not gone through any sort of electoral process to be considered the Pueblos' representative.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid. My highlight.

<sup>52</sup> Acta from the Cabildo of Corrientes. April 20, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 30-31.



Artigas' instruction about the need to include the pueblos in these decisions had been quite clear. The Cabildo even expressed their knowledge about the congress being the means to curb the "passions, interests, opinions" that normally take over after "every convulsion" such as the one they were experiencing.<sup>53</sup> However, they were not willing to let go of their power over the countryside. The new context of war actually made the countryside's human and financial resources more valuable than ever.

This declaration of independence was communicated to all of the Pueblos through military commanders, and sparked reaction across the province.<sup>54</sup> To José Gabriel Casco, the Cabildo explained that their decision was based on "enough proof this was the general will of the residents of the whole jurisdiction."<sup>55</sup> Still, their representatives had not been present to formally express that themselves. Artigas considered the action completely "illegitimate," a usurpation of the pueblos' rights and an "opprobrium to the dogma of the revolution."<sup>56</sup> At that point, it became clear that there was a discrepancy in their understandings regarding the allocation of rights. Even though the Cabildo recorded its support of Artigas, a considerable portion of its members was not really convinced of the interpretation of sovereignty offered by him. This was becoming evident in their actions which were carefully calculated not to clash with Artigas' leadership while at the same time designed to rescue local authority.

Another "verbal instruction" of Artigas generated a third, even more relevant, point of conflict. Aguirre claimed to have received instructions from Artigas to delay the congress,

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> The Cabildo of Corrientes to Juan Bautista Méndez. Corrientes, April 26, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 52.

<sup>55</sup> The Cabildo of Corrientes to the Commander José Gabriel Casco. Corrientes, April 29, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 58.

<sup>56</sup> Jose Artigas to the cabildo of Corrientes. Cuartel general, April 28, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 54.

because of the tumultuous conditions in the countryside.<sup>57</sup> The Cabildo, which had already declared Corrientes' independence and alliance with the League, now did not even need to hold the congress. Even if they agreed about its importance, they certainly did not see the proper environment for one at that time – at least not one that would fulfill their view of provincial politics. The news was received with joy, according to the minutes. At that moment, the conflict of sovereignties achieved a new level, with a clear division between the Cabildo of Corrientes and the Pueblos of the countryside.

Even before that episode, some vecinos had started sending complaints to governor Méndez, expressing their discontent with the government's failure to pushforward the congress. From Saladas, Juan José Nicolás de La Fuente and Antonio Luis Aguilar denounced the “silence” of the city of Corrientes regarding any existing “plans to clarify and establish our ideas [so that we can] electrify the inhabitants towards the ideal system.”<sup>58</sup> Casco, stationed in San Roque, and José Francisco Vedoya, writing from Caa Catí, also complained.<sup>59</sup> The latter actually advised the Cabildo members to, at least for a moment, “set aside private interests (*negocios privados*),” and focus on the public interests.<sup>60</sup> It was the only way that, in the long run, they could walk together, he believed. It was somewhat clear to those involved in the process that there were discrepancies, born out of some individuals and their economic interests. Besides Artigas and some of the commanders, vecinos also came together to complain. These complaints reveal some of the

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<sup>57</sup> Acta from the Cabildo of Corrientes. April 20, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 30-31.

<sup>58</sup> Juan José Nicolás de Lafuente and Antonio Luis Aguilar to Juan Bautista Méndez. Saladas, April 19, 1814, in *AA* vol. 19, 41-43 (original in Correspondencia Oficial t. 5, f. 56, AGPC).

<sup>59</sup> José Gabriel Casco to the Cabildo of Corrientes. San Roque, April 26, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 51.

<sup>60</sup> José Francisco Vedoya to the Cabildo of Corrientes. Caa Catí, April 25, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 50.

mechanisms by which the Cabildo of Corrientes tried to stop Artigas' influence in the territory. They also inform us about how the Pueblos were reacting to stop this interference.

The presence of Vedoya, who was passing by Caa Catí as an Artigas delegate, “surprised” residents, who had not thus far heard about the negotiations for a congress. In their view, the Cabildo of Corrientes should have conveyed these intentions to them, so that they could get on with preparations.<sup>61</sup> The fact that they did not circulate the news about the congress, to them, was an attack against “national politics” and the “adequate order of a State.”<sup>62</sup> Doing so could have “dismal” consequences and threaten the “security of subalterns.” We should clarify here that their notion of national politics did not have any relation to the national-state formation that appeared in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. “Nation” had received different meanings during colonial times. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, considering shared ethnic and cultural roots, it was used to describe “the collection of inhabitants of a same province.”<sup>63</sup> Following the May Revolution, it acquired a political sense in the definition of “an *entity* produced by the aggregation of pueblos that had restored their [original] sovereignty.”<sup>64</sup> The context that accompanied that expression of the vecinos of Caa Catí indicates that they were thinking of the latter when crafting their document. They recognized the existence of multiple “ideas” that should dovetail (*concordar*) in a common purpose, so that the “State” was preserved. To talk about national politics in that context meant that they were looking at the process at stake – the Congress – as something that went beyond their own locality, that included the people of Corrientes coming together to create a future

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<sup>61</sup> “Vecinos del partido de Caa Catí al Teniente Gobernador y Presidente del Cabildo de Corrientes.” Caa Catí, April 25, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 50-51 (original in Correspondencia Oficial t. 5, f. 64, AGPC).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Nora Souto and Fabio Wasserman, “Nación” in Noemi Goldman, (ed.), *Lenguaje y revolución: conceptos políticos clave en el Río de la Plata* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2008), 84.

<sup>64</sup> Souto, “Nación,” 86.

political entity with shared authority and laws. And, because they were “free to act,” in case the Cabildo of Corrientes did not take immediate measures to inform the Pueblos, they would make sure to inform Artigas, as was becoming the tradition whenever discrepancies appeared. In Saladas, the vecinos decided to take matters into their own hands and convoked the political and military magistrates to the plaza so that they could broadcast Artigas’ instructions to the Pueblo.<sup>65</sup> Artigas defended their right to gather and demand the congress, expressing that “everyone has equal rights to push its activation.”<sup>66</sup> He also sent back their Picket, in case it was necessary to act more firmly. Eventually, the situation deteriorated.

On May 3, a convoy of Artigas-allied leaders made its way to Corrientes to inquiry about the realization of the congress. José Gabriel Casco and Antonio Sosa, from Curuzú Cuatiá; José Francisco Vedoya, commander of San Roque, and Gorgonio Aguiar, Lieutenant of *Blandengues*, walked into the city escorted by 26 armed men. Outside, another 200 waited in case they were needed. When the Cabildo asked why they had come armed, the men claimed they wanted to “assist in suffocating any party in the Pueblo [that was] against the celebration of the Congress.”<sup>67</sup> It was an obvious indication that they would not leave without seeing their desires fulfilled. The Cabildo, which had stated on April 14 they were in no condition to carry out any forms of resistance - “not even one violent action of fire,” finally set a date to install the Congress – May 25, 1814.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Juan José Nicolás de Lafuente and Antonio Luis Aguilar to Juan Bautista Méndez. Saladas, April 19, 1814, in *AA* vol. 19, 42 (original in Correspondencia Oficial t. 5, f. 56, AGPC).

<sup>66</sup> José Artigas to Genaro Perugorría, Cuartel General, April 14, 1814. Quoted by Juan José Nicolás de Lafuente and Antonio Luis Aguilar in a letter to Juan Bautista Méndez. Saladas, April 19, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 41-43.

<sup>67</sup> Acta del Cabildo de Corrientes, May 5, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 63.

<sup>68</sup> Acta from the Cabildo of Corrientes. Corrientes, April 14, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 30-31.

Casco, Vedoya, Sosa, and Aguiar are all listed in the Cabildo's minutes as "Don," indicating that they belonged to the upper social groups on the region. Census records demonstrate Casco and Vedoya were well-established residents of the jurisdiction.<sup>69</sup> Casco's house was one of the finest in Curuzu Cuatiá. Vedoya was actually a vecino of the city of Corrientes, who at that moment roamed around the territory as Artigas' deputy to the pueblos.<sup>70</sup> In coming together, they demonstrated that the support to the League went beyond popular groups, or a city vs countryside dichotomy. As Casco pointed out, "partialities and heterogeneous influences" existed.<sup>71</sup> But the reaction seen from various areas indicate that, even though the Pueblos defended the idea of compartmented sovereignties, there existed a sense of belonging and the desire to form a larger political entity that unified them.

### **Transforming Citizenship**

It was clear that the Cabildo of Corrientes was working to prevent the Congress from taking place. They had not convoked the Pueblos, like Artigas had instructed, and took the first opportunity they had to call it off. If they had agreed with Artigas on the necessity of organizing it, so that the State could be organized and have clear laws, why were they slowing it down, then? Their initial arguments revolved around the idea that the situation was too unstable for such an enterprise, and that individual interests had taken over the territory.<sup>72</sup> Further investigation into the matter exposes that it actually had much to do with a question that had

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<sup>69</sup> "Curuzu Cuatiá, 1820," Censo Provincial t. 6, f. 150, AGPC; Censo Provincial t. 3, f.108v-19, AGPC.

<sup>70</sup> In 1818, Vedoya would work to depose Méndez from the government.

<sup>71</sup> José Gabriel Casco to Juan Bautista Mendez, San Roque, April 8, 1814 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 5, f. 45, AGPC.

<sup>72</sup> Acta from the Cabildo of Corrientes. April 20, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 44.

become far too common in the context of changing political notions and practices – that of the definition of citizenship. The Congress that was to be held in Corrientes signified the first time in which rural areas were convoked to participate in electoral processes in the Río de la Plata. It is, therefore, a fertile ground for the examination of the challenges and opportunities that came with this expansion on representation, and that responded to various social and political interests. We will explore the process followed to elect representatives, the arguments to establish their legitimacy and the extent of their rights, to demonstrate how changing affiliations of territorial, social, and cultural kind resulted in diverging understandings of citizenship.

The delay in convoking the rural areas to participate in the Congress indicates a marked preference by the sectors that dominated the Cabildo of Corrientes for the continuation of earlier notions of limited citizenship. If almost every proclamation was made in the name of the Pueblo, the understandings regarding its meaning were very diverse among the political participants. Even if adhering to a federalist alliance, in its communications the Cabildo seemed to have a somewhat modern view that referred to the Pueblo as the “sum of individuals,” which, in its breadth, was also conveniently abstract.<sup>73</sup> Artigas, on the other hand, constantly talked about the Pueblos, those “organic, ‘natural,’ corporate bodies” that in Spanish America had been the idealized communities of cities and towns.<sup>74</sup> He extended this definition to cities and villages - indigenous or not, with or without Cabildo institutions.<sup>75</sup> The voice of the pueblos, he believed,

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<sup>73</sup> Hilda Sabato, *Republics of the New World: The Revolutionary Political Experiment in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 34. Establishing what the Cabildo understood as Pueblo is rather tricky, since from the start, we have observed a clear division between a group that wanted to increase the autonomy of the territory, and a parcel that desired to remain subservient to Buenos Aires. As we read the documentation, it becomes evident that this last parcel was usually the one responsible for crafting proclamations and negotiating with Artigas. Even if in the politest of tones and accepting his leadership for the lack of a viable alternative, they were constantly questioning his authority.

<sup>74</sup> Sabato, *Republics of the New World*, 34.

<sup>75</sup> Frega, in *Caudillismos rioplatenses*, 127.

was the only valid expressions of authority, and their inclusion in a representative system would “reestablish their dignity and grandness,” through “the full enjoyment of their rights.”<sup>76</sup>

This diverging understanding in itself could already be problematic, as Artigas’ interpretation would mean a very inclusive call for participation. If the Cabildo of Corrientes accepted Artigas’ conception of “pueblo,” it would mean having to negotiate with a variety of – sometimes diverging – opinions and interests. That would cause discomfort, because it meant opening political participation and letting go of power in a Cabildo composed of a traditional Criollo elite accustomed to exerting authority. Still, as we have already seen, having no means to stop it from happening, the Cabildo agreed with Méndez to initiate arrangements.

When these discussions circulated in the *partidos*, the definition of citizenship proved more elastic. Following strict orders of Artigas, Méndez communicated that *individuals belonging to whatever social group* should gather and vote.<sup>77</sup> This was a radical change in comparison to previous notions. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, “citizens” were those who could elect and be *elected*.<sup>78</sup> They had to essentially be Spaniards or their descendants, of “tradition and prestige.” This also happened to be the definition of *vecino*, indicating how the two terms were associated during colonial times. Right after the May Revolution, when subjects gave way to citizens, the definition was refined and came to mean an “urban *vecino*,” any man who was free, with established residence in the city and enrolled in the militias. As previously said, the first indications of a status of citizenship that was connected to notions of sovereignty and suffrage were registered in 1815, with the publication of the Provisional Statute by the Directory. In 1814,

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<sup>76</sup> José Artigas to the Cabildo of Corrientes. Cuartel General, March 29, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 13.

<sup>77</sup> Circular [signed by J. B. Méndez] to all of the towns of the Province of Corrientes. May 4, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 61.

<sup>78</sup> Oreste Carlos Cansanello. “Ciudadano/Vecino”, in *Lenguaje y revolución*, 26.

however, the expression “rural citizens” was already part of the vocabulary used by Artigas to refer to the inhabitants of the countryside in communications with Méndez, and became more and more common as the voting process advanced.<sup>79</sup>

José Ignacio Añasco, commander of Ensenada, painted a picture of how these rural inhabitants were like:

“This partido is composed of pure farm laborers, who, as tends to be the case everywhere, are the poorest and most needy, while also the most vital part of the Republic and from whom depends the abundance and opulence of our towns (Pueblos). The ones under my command not only maintain the Pueblo with their sweat and work, but also have defended it with their arms, being the first ones in all of the occurrences to have gone, defended and guarded other partidos, abandoning their families in orphanage.”<sup>80</sup>

If everyone could vote, those who could be voted should be “citizen[s] of consciousness, knowledge, and experience, from the land.”<sup>81</sup> These representatives, called *diputados*, would hold all of the “Free Rights of the Peoples,” and carry instructions that would guarantee the “suffrage of every vecino.”<sup>82</sup> In the *pueblos de indios* like Itatí and Santa Lucía, the directive was that the convocation should be translated into the appropriate indigenous language, so that people had full knowledge of the process and what was at stake.<sup>83</sup> In order to avoid the creation of a

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<sup>79</sup> “José Artigas to the cabildo of Corrientes. Cuartel general, April 28, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 55.

<sup>80</sup> “José Ignacio de Añasco al Congreso Provincial constituyente de Corrientes,” Ensenada, August 3, 1814 in *Correspondencia Oficial* t. 5 f. 205, AGPC.

<sup>81</sup> Circular to the departments of Corrientes. May 4, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 61.

<sup>82</sup> Bando de Perugorria, Corrientes, June 2, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 105. The electoral system resembles that of Castilla and León used since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, in which a “council” elected “deputies” to participate in the Cortes. They carried special powers that were valid as long as the Cortes were in session, and whose points had been previously discussed in the council. Chiaramonte, *Ciudades, provincias, estados*, 76.

<sup>83</sup> Itatí in *AA* vol. 19, 91, 104; Santa Lucía in *Correspondencia Oficial* t. 5, f. 116, AGPC.



“horrible monster” filled with contradictions, there should be only one representative for “each city, village, or pueblo.”<sup>84</sup>

Accordingly, the electoral process began, and the *partidos* gathered to choose their *diputados*. Yaguareté-Corá, for example, elected “citizen” D. Manuel Ignacio Peres as their “suffragan” in the upcoming congress.<sup>85</sup> Registers indicate a thorough participation of the rural areas in the elections. Some incidents were recorded, such as the one that took place in Esquina, where the town’s judge refused to recognize and sign on the election of Francisco Javier Lagraña, for unknown reasons.<sup>86</sup> The Pueblo not only chased him for having “opposed to the voice of a whole *vecindario*,” but also requested that he be suspended from his post. Yet and again, it was necessary to use of mobilization in order to guarantee the fulfillment of the Pueblos’ sovereignty.

Throughout the process, the city of Corrientes was relatively quiet. When it was their time to take part in it, though, they decided to apply their own understandings about citizenship. Only “the better part” of the city should be responsible for electing the city’s representatives, they instructed.<sup>87</sup> The participants in the voting process should be defined by the four *alcaldes* de barrio – six for each *alcalde*, totaling twenty-four *vecinos*, who should gather in the Cabildo and decide on the nomination of the “worthiest subject who should represent the Rights of this Pueblo in the upcoming congress.”<sup>88</sup> It was clearly a restriction compared to Artigas’ idea of

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Los vecinos del Pueblo de Yaguareté-Corá to the Cabildo of Corrientes. Yaguareté-Corá, May 12, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 76.

<sup>86</sup> José Vicente Garcia de Cossio, Esquina, May 14, 1814 in *Correspondencia Oficial* t. 5, f. 102, AGPC.

<sup>87</sup> The Cabildo of Corrientes to the Commander of the Corrientes Regiment, Corrientes, May 4, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 62. “La parte más sana.”

<sup>88</sup> The Cabildo of Corrientes to the Commander of the Regiment of Corrientes and representative of the General. Corrientes, May 4, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 62.

citizenship. Furthermore, the cabildo decided to elect “a scandalous multiplicity of deputies,” diverging from the formal instruction that one representative should be elected by each sovereign entity, regardless of its size.<sup>89</sup> After a reprimand, the vecinos designated José Simón García de Cossio, an experienced politician and lawyer, to voice their concerns in the congress.<sup>90</sup> It seemed that, at least on what corresponded to them, the Cabildo of Corrientes had decided to restrict the definition of citizenship.

### **The impertinence of the Pueblos**

When the *diputados* started to arrive at the city of Corrientes, the city’s Cabildo, which should host the Congress, began questioning the legitimacy of those elected by the countryside pueblos. In the view of the Cabildo, their election process was “stripped of the corresponding formality and the needed substance,” in an indication that perhaps they did not meet the capital’s expectations to participate in the province’s organization process.<sup>91</sup> More significantly, though, they complained about several “impertinent clauses” in the instructions the representatives were carrying. Previously, the Cabildo had stated their concern about a seeming interest on the side of the *partidos* to declare their independence. If that were to happen, they argued, it would “take away the common center of relationships, and the dependency towards this center that must unite [them]” so that they could actually be called a Province.<sup>92</sup> Interestingly, in expressing this view, the Cabildo was letting transpire an understanding of sovereignty that was vertical, and very

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<sup>89</sup> Genaro Perugorria to the Cabildo of Corrientes. Corrientes, June 3, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 107.

<sup>90</sup> Actas capitulares del Cabildo, June 4, 1814, t. 46, f. 74, in AGPC.

<sup>91</sup> Acta del Cabildo de Corrientes, June 11, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 120; Gorgonio Aguiar, in *AA* vol. 19, 97. “Impropiedades en los poderes de algunos de los diputados.”

<sup>92</sup> El Cabildo de Corrientes a José Artigas. Corrientes, Sala Capitular, April 23, 1814 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 5, f. 61, AGPC.

much akin to that of Buenos Aires. In this game of sovereignties brought about by the liberation from Spain, whoever had occupied a place of dominance during colonial times, was hardly willing to let it go.

However, their justification for not accepting their presence went beyond this concern. In referring to the people that inhabited the countryside, it was obvious that the Cabildo did not see them as qualified people to participate in this process of constitutional organization. These *campestres* (country folk), they argued, were possessed with a “derangement of reason.”<sup>93</sup> In talking specifically about some of the rural leaders, the Cabildo qualified them as “miserable men, without resources, ideas, or Enlightenment.”<sup>94</sup> In not being able to think for themselves, nor make “any calculations,” they were susceptible to any ideas. That was the only reason they followed Artigas, they suggested, and this “weakness” applied to the whole province.

Artigas offered a chance to be a part of the electoral process to previously disqualified groups and to decide who should represent them. This meant defining the terms that should be defended by these representatives. The Cabildo reacted by demonstrating constant resistance to forfeiting any part of their sovereignty or expanding the notion of citizenship. Their maneuvering became so constant that, by the end of May, many of the representatives that were waiting in the capital were told to return to their pueblos, leaving the installation of the Congress in a distant reality.<sup>95</sup>

However, the arrival of Genaro Perugorría, envoy of Artigas to the Congress, expedited things. Finally, on June 9, Méndez opened the Congress, praising the “virtuous Citizens” that

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> El Cabildo de Corrientes al gobernador [de Entre Ríos entre 10/9 y 4/11] Blas Jose Pico. Corrientes, November 11, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 313.

<sup>95</sup> The Cabildo of Corrientes to Gorgonio Aguiar, Corrientes, May 26, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 97.

were there to install a “wise, fair, and prudent government,” that would seek to “consult [the peoples’] common rights and public happiness,” as well as “care for their individual safety and particular interests.”<sup>96</sup> The final goal, Méndez claimed, was to “establish a fixed and liberal order” to make available the League’s resources and cement the relationship between Corrientes and the confederate pueblos of the “Great Oriental Province.”<sup>97</sup> We should note, then, their interest in establishing connections to the “nascent provinces,” east and west of the Uruguay River, consolidating their regional alliance.

### *Liberty, Autonomy, and Land: Santa Lucía and The Sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples*

Now that the congress was a reality, fourteen representatives gathered to initiate discussions.<sup>98</sup> According to Artigas’ directives, these men were the holders of their pueblos’ rights and aspirations, and these rights and aspirations should guide the debates. But, what exactly did each pueblo want, need, or consider vital in the creation of this future State, and that should be guaranteed in order for them to willingly participate in it? Unfortunately, we have no records of those debates. During the time of the congress, that lasted approximately three months, the Corrientes Cabildo stopped meeting and recording minutes. We only know, second-hand, that the

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<sup>96</sup> Bando del teniente gobernador interino de Corrientes, Juan Bautista Mendez. Corrientes, June 12, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 124.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Genaro Perrugoría, Angel Fernandez Blanco, Juan José Fernandez Blanco al Supremo Director de las provincias Unidas. September 5, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, appendix 351. For Curuzu Cuatiá: Jose Cayetano Martinez, Saladas: Juan Francisco Cabral, Yaguareté Cora: Manuel Ignacio Perez, Goya: Juan Vicente Gomez Botello, Esquina: Francisco Javier Lagraña, Empedrado (y San Lorenzo): Jose Antonio Paz, Santa Lucía de los Astos: Padre Maestro Fr. Jose Pezoa, Itatí: Bernardo Garay, Riachuelo: Reverendo Padre Jubilado y Comisario de Los Santos Lugares Fray Manuel Garamendi, Ensenada: D. N. (illegible), Corrientes: José García de Cossio, San Roque: Juan Antonio Rajoy, Caá Catí: Baltasar Acosta, Ensenadas: Juan B. Fernández.

congressmen legislated on economic, social, and political questions, and proposed changes that should be applied across the territory.<sup>99</sup>

The representative nature of this electoral system, however, allows us to take a peek into the expectations that were guiding these pueblos, since some of the deputies traveled with written instructions on matters to be discussed and ideas to be followed.<sup>100</sup> Most of these instructions are lost, but one survived and was stored along with other documentation pertaining to the congress: the instructions from Santa Lucía de los Astos, the *Pueblo de Indios* that we had been following. When news of the Congress started to circulate in 1814, Santa Lucía was composed of 62 nuclear families, including 62 men and women with 202 children. There were 93 “single” (*sueltos*) men and women in the town, who apparently had not yet formed families of their own. The overall population was comprised of 419 inhabitants.<sup>101</sup> By examining these instructions, we can attempt to grasp how this pueblo understood their participation in this process of state organization, their desires, aspirations for this rising political unity, as well as the extent of their envisioned sovereignty.

Despite the care to follow procedures on the election, laid out step by step in the Acta, the Corrientes Cabildo questioned the validity of Santa Lucía’s election, noting below the document

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<sup>99</sup> These included the organization of ecclesiastical contributions, the liberation of tobacco and yerba mate trade, the promotion of cotton farming and clothing, the restructuration of the militia, rezoning of some Partidos, bureaucratic reorganization, persecution of those who were jobless, decrees for registration and gathering of census records, among others. In *AA* vol. 19, 148; Correspondencia Oficial t. 5, f. 216, AGPC.

<sup>100</sup> San José de Saladas sent “Seven instructions” along with their representative, Juan Francisco Cabral. San José de Saladas, May 12, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 75. The vecinos of Goya followed the same procedure with Juan Vicente Gómez Botello. May 13, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 78.

<sup>101</sup> The available census separates nuclear families and people who were at the age to, but had not yet formed families, even though they might be connected by blood, since they shared last names. Censo provincial 1814, t. 2. ff. 111-115v., Sala II, AGPC.

that it “lacked the necessary [form] in the matter.”<sup>102</sup> Yet, they accepted the commission because there was “no time to replace it.” Pezoa, along with the other deputies, joined the discussions, carrying with him the instructions of the pueblo – seven articles that laid out the priorities of its inhabitants.<sup>103</sup> Santa Lucía, we should recall, was mainly composed of Indigenous peoples who had very much suffered in the exploitative colonial system. They had been politically and socially marginalized, while being requested to put their interests and economic development aside when Criollo elites saw necessary. As we saw earlier in the chapter, the members of the Santa Lucía Cabildo had been acting to demand the improvement in the town’s economic situation. The Congress was the latest opportunity to express their voices, reaching out to more encompassing interpretations of sovereignty that legitimized them as a pueblo with full rights. According to Di Meglio, “popular classes occupied a possible place within the [category] pueblo, and that was not a minor detail when this pueblo became a central piece of these new times, as it was recognized as a sovereign subject in the absence of the King. Being able to aspire to become pueblo, popular classes could implicitly discuss the order.”<sup>104</sup> We will use Santa Lucía as an example to understand how popular groups – in this case these specific Indigenous people - actively sought to participate in novel models of political representation that were made available following the May Revolution.

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<sup>102</sup> “Acta de la elección de diputado al congreso provincial por el Pueblo de Santa Lucía de los Astos.” May 16, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 88. “Carece de lo necesario en la materia.”

<sup>103</sup> Instructions to the deputy of Santa Lucía de los Astos, Santa Lucía, May 16, 1814. Correspondencia Oficial, t. 5, f. 106-106v, AGPC.

<sup>104</sup> Gabriel Di Meglio, “La participación Popular en las revoluciones hispanoamericanas, 1808-1816. Un ensayo sobre sus rasgos y causas,” in Santilli, Gelman, Fradkin, *Rebeldes con causa*, 32.

### **Santa Lucía's Instructions**

The instructions, that actually alternate between requests and pledges, were made in the name of the “Naturales” of the Pueblo. They concern mostly local needs, and contain snippets indicating where their sovereignty resided. The most important aspect for them was to have freedom, and therefore, they requested their “Liberty.” We have seen how Galván had suggested this change, but the fact that three years later they still needed to demand it indicates that his plans had not moved forward – at least not in a way that was sufficient to them. As it was made evident by communications between the Cabildos of Santa Lucía and Corrientes, little had changed in their relationship. At least on two occasions we see indications that Corrientes’ authorities requested “naturales” from their Pueblo, who rotated working on construction for the city hall (*casas consistoriales*).<sup>105</sup> We find no evidence of these kinds of requests being made to other pueblos. Being exclusively demanded from Indigenous groups, it resembled the “mandamientos” of colonial times that, although illegal, were a widely accepted and constant practice that separated the men from their places of origin.<sup>106</sup> Mandatory tribute had been abolished by the Junta Grande in 1811, and the Assembly of the Year XIII suppressed indigenous personal services like the *mita*, *yanaconazgo*, and *encomienda*.<sup>107</sup> Still, in Corrientes, the indigenous towns were being obliged to comply with these obsolete requirements.

The second point was a declaration of intent. In what could be seen as an attempt to assert their religious faith and therefore their place in this society, the people of Santa Lucía promised

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<sup>105</sup> Correspondencia Oficial t. 8, f. 64v., AGPC; Bernardo Garay to Juan Bautista Méndez. Itatí, August 2, 1816 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 8, f. 91, AGPC; Actas del Cabildo de Corrientes, t. 50, f. 12v, AGPC.

<sup>106</sup> Salinas, “Trabajo, tributo,” 32.

<sup>107</sup> These forms of labor had a particularly extended lifespan in Corrientes, surviving through the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Salinas, “Trabajo, tributo,” 41.

to maintain the pueblo's priest and provide him with an annual income of 400 "pesos de plata." They promised to establish a fund for that specific need, allocating 2,000 head of livestock within their communal ranches for that purpose. If, for whatever reason, these were lost, they committed to using their individual properties to cover the salary. This article is revealing in the sense that it ensured the long-term maintenance of the priest, but especially because it signaled Santa Lucía's desire to keep at least some portion of their land under the communal system. We can now guess that the changes in the town's property structure suggested by Galván would not have been entirely accepted by the residents.

The third request from Santa Lucía was straightforward yet loaded with meaning. It established the kind of government they considered the most appropriate: it should be composed of three people, and one of them, superior to the other two, of Indigenous ancestry. This way, we can imagine, they would no longer have to pay salaries to administrators they considered incompetent, or have to kindly ask permission to the provincial government to make changes when they found irregularities.

The remaining requests focus on intersections with the Criollo world. The disputes over land surrounding Santa Lucía had been a constant source of complaint to the Cabildo, because it involved high-profile vecinos of Corrientes. José Vicente Garcia de Cossio accused them of entering his fields, because of their "long-standing custom" of subsisting through "third-party assets."<sup>108</sup> The instructions to the Congress sought to solve the matter. The Cabildo of Santa Lucía had documents that established the exact lands that had been granted to them "by grace of Superiors," and named specific vecinos who had wrongfully occupied them. They recognized

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<sup>108</sup> José Vicente Garcia [Cossio] to Elias Galvan, Estancia del río Corrientes, February 25, 1812 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 2, f. 212, AGPC.



that some of their crops were in García de Cossio's land and asked permission to access it, but also requested that he refrained from occupying parcels that were theirs. In these actions, they were literally reassuming sovereignty over their territory.

In the end, the residents stated that, after everything was in order and organized, they wanted every animal, each parcel of land, and all goods remaining be distributed amongst the Naturales. It is not clear whether this indicates a desired transition to more liberal understandings of property. In chapter 2 we saw that, when offered the chance during the colonial period, Santa Lucía strongly opposed. Now that a new political context and interpretations of citizenship were available, perhaps their opinion had changed. Artigas' proposal and the possibility of the Congress made it conceivable for the residents of Santa Lucía to imagine a State in which they enjoyed their sovereignty and full political and economic rights. To them, being sovereign meant being free, able to decide what to do with their properties without interference, having a government made up with their own people and their territory respected, all the while maintaining their understandings of society and community.

### **The Children in Limbo**

On July 18, Ángel Fernández Blanco told his friend and Montevideo politician Nicolas de Herrera that the Congress had been meeting regularly but had thus far been unable to come to any agreements. Those like him who opposed Artiguism still existed, because of their money, but were like "children in limbo."<sup>109</sup> García de Cossio, the deputy for the city of Corrientes, was the person in charge of running the Congress, but could not do anything because of the "hatred"

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<sup>109</sup> Angel Fernández Blanco to Nicolas de Herrera. Corrientes, July 18, 1814 in Fondo Mantilla, t. 36.

that was visible in the city and the countryside. He worked alongside Perugorría, but the Congress did not advance. As mentioned, we have no concrete way of knowing if something was ever decided. Particularly because, after four months of sessions, Perugorría, who had served as Lieutenant in the patriotic militia of Corrientes and had prior connections to the territory, decided to switch his support and dissolve it.<sup>110</sup> He then organized an expedition to try and put a halt to Artiguism in the countryside. After being met with strong resistance and without the arrival of reinforcement promised by the Cabildo and Buenos Aires, Perugorría was defeated, captured, and sent to Artigas, who submitted him to a trial that later decided on his execution. The Cabildo provisionally assumed the Government, but in late December Artiguism once again recovered the position, under the leadership of José de Silva.

### **Reaching Out for Autonomy**

In this next stop, we observe the context that followed the dissolution of the Congress, with a repeated lack of order in the Government but that brought renewed opportunities. To express their needs, the Pueblos resorted once again to personal figures. We saw in chapter 4 how Artigas established a direct line of contact with well-off residents, commanders, as well as the “*infelices*.” Similar strategies were used by residents of the *Pueblos de Indios*. Santa Lucía, which saw their requests for improvement frustrated in 1810, 1811, and 1814, now tried directly with the Oriental leader.

Alongside Itatí and Garzas, the *Pueblos de Indios* accused their administrators of embezzlement (*malversación*). Unlike previous attempts, this time they received an answer.

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<sup>110</sup> Genaro Perrugorría, Angel Fernandez Blanco, Juan José Fernandez Blanco al Supremo Director de las provincias Unidas. September 5, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, appendix 351.

Artigas penned specific instructions to the new Governor of Corrientes that aimed to profoundly change the conditions the Indigenous peoples in the territory. The Cabildo was finally told by Artigas that the “Indians in their Pueblos [should] govern themselves so that they can watch for their own interests in the same way that we watch for ours.”<sup>111</sup> The negative “conduct” towards them that had persisted until now should be changed so that they could experiment “practical happiness” and be able to leave the “state of annihilation” to which they had been “disgracefully subjected.”<sup>112</sup> After much pressure from Artigas, they were finally hearing of change. The *Pueblos de Indios*, constantly in need and yet asked of by the Cabildo, rather than serving, should be making their own decisions, working for their own betterment, and above all occupying places of authority within their pueblos.

Even more notable was Artigas’ understanding of Indigenous peoples’ place in this project that they were constructing, the “Patria.”<sup>113</sup> According to him, they were to occupy the “main place,” have “the principal right” in this project. If kept in this “shameful exclusion that they have suffered just for being Indians,” it would be a “shameful degradation” for criollos.<sup>114</sup> In practical terms, he oriented Silva to “watch and care for the miserable *pueblos de indios*” and decide on the faith of the administrator of Itatí, D. Francisco Ignacio Ramos, one of those accused of embezzlement. The major change, in comparison to what had been the reality for centuries, was not only that the Pueblos should be the ones deciding their faith, but that,

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<sup>111</sup> José Artigas to José de Silva.” Paraná, May 9, 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 57-58.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> The word *Patria*, usually connected to the territory, be it as the place of birth at the local or continental level, after the May Revolution acquires a political connotation that starts to refer to the “collective cause” agglutinating those who were defending the May Revolution precepts. See Gabriel Di Meglio, “Patria” in Javier Fernández Sebastián, (ed.). *Diccionario político y social del mundo iberoamericano. Conceptos políticos fundamentales, 1770-1870* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2014) tomo 2, vol 8.

<sup>114</sup> José Artigas to José de Silva.” Paraná, May 9, 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 57-58.

according to Artigas' indication, the new administrator should be one "of their own."<sup>115</sup> It was "what dictates reason and justice," he stated. We learn later that Ramos had been deposed, but by October he had yet to turn over the pueblo's documentation [*papeles*] and whatever funds were left, taking with "insolence what had been observed by the Supreme Chief of the Orientales and Protector of the Free Peoples," in a clear reference to Artigas.<sup>116</sup> The Cabildo of Itatí went to court to demand it, since they needed the resources to "remediate the extreme indigency in which the Naturales were left." After orders from the Cabildo of Corrientes, Ramos finally handed in the papers - not the funds - in January of 1816. To Santa Lucía, Silva acknowledged their petition to Artigas, reassuring them he had their best interest in mind, and orienting them to each work well in their jobs, so that the "community could prosper and the Naturales achieve the quietness and peace [that it was] desired."<sup>117</sup> In regards to Garzas, only in October they were informed of Artigas' orders, and promptly convoked all of the pueblo, who received the news "filled with contentment and happiness."<sup>118</sup>

Political autonomy and fair judicial treatment were not the only benefits offered by Artigas. In 1815, in the context of elections to the Congreso Oriental, the town of Itatí crafted a document with instructions to be carried by their representative, Citizen Juan Bautista Fernández. It had very few requests, the main one being to ask Artigas to reestablish the town's ownership over the Apipé islands, on the Paraná River. According to the instructions, the island belonged to their community, but the town's administrator had donated it to viceroy Santiago de Liniers

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Antonio Francisco Rivero, c/ Francisco Ignacio Ramos, sobre entrega de lavatorio y demas documentos del Pueblo de Itatí. October 1815. Judiciales 211, ff. 167-170, AGPC.

<sup>117</sup> Letter from José de Silva to the Cabildo de Santa Lucía. May 1815 in *Temporalidades* t. 6, ff. 147, AGPC.

<sup>118</sup> "El cabildo de Garzas al cabildo gobernador de la provincia de Corrientes." Garzas, October 13, 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 81.

without the residents' acquiescence.<sup>119</sup> The instance highlights their view on Artigas' ability to fulfil their territorial claims. Other economic benefits transpire in the available documentation. For example, Artigas instructed Corrientes to provide Garzas with funds so that they could afford the needs of the church.<sup>120</sup> When the situation became dire during the Portuguese attacks of 1817, he recommended that the Cabildo of Corrientes stopped collecting funds, most specifically from those belonging to popular groups. "It is not opportune to force contributions, particularly from the "miserable ones" (infelices), he argued.<sup>121</sup> Besides these circumstantial favors, Artigas also wanted to incorporate Indigenous groups in trading practices. When needing resources in February of 1817, he asked Méndez to contact the town of San Geronimo, composed of Abipon people, to exchange yerba and tobacco for arms.<sup>122</sup> The entrance of Indigenous groups into Criollo towns for commercial purposes ("negocio de hierba") was also registered, in a demonstration of integration of their production to the commercial circuit.<sup>123</sup>

There was an obvious relationship of reciprocity being established, that enabled these Indigenous groups to improve their conditions, by actively seeking and being granted political rights, access to the province's funds, and the acceptance of their circulation as commercial partners on the territory. On the other end, indigenous towns offered whatever little they could to the Artiguist cause, particularly men and horses. Military commander Juan Antonio Rajoy, who was stationed in Itatí, narrated how soldiers were "applying themselves" to learn how to handle

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<sup>119</sup> "Acta de la reunión celebrada en el pueblo de Nuestra Señora de Itatí. Instrucciones al diputado ante el Congreso De Arroyo de la China, Juan Bautista Fernández." Itatí, June 9, 1815 in *AA* vol. 28, 221.

<sup>120</sup> José Artigas to the Cabildo de Corrientes. Purificación, July 22, 1816 in *AA* vol. 31, 394. "Dispone se auxilie con fondos de la Tesorería a la Iglesia de Garzas."

<sup>121</sup> January 21, 1817 in *AA* vol. 34, 22.

<sup>122</sup> Juan Bautista Méndez al Cabildo Gobernador de Corrientes. February 17, 1817 in *AA* vol. 34, 56.

<sup>123</sup> Mariano Esquivel to Juan Bautista Mendes, San Luis del Palmar, May 18, 1816 in *Correspondencia Oficial* t. 8, f. 26, AGPC.

arms.<sup>124</sup> On one instance of relative peace in January of 1816, several officials and soldiers approached him to suggest that it was “convenient to the State not to stop the practice of arms,” and that, in fact, “they wanted to increase the [numbers of men in the] company (...), and that the master shoemaker offered himself to work.” A year later, it was now the Cabildo that got together to define how they could “put into practice what [they] had been verbally expressing,” their support to “our Protector,” in his “restlessness and fatigue.”<sup>125</sup> Given that the town itself was also struggling with the constant disruption caused by war, they informed Artigas that they could contribute with “the only branch of industry that is left, and [send] 100 horses, that we will place, (...) with peons from the town, in whatever location you ask.” In return, they wanted nothing more than to know that they had “contributed somehow to completely achieving our freedom.”<sup>126</sup> We see, then, that when lacking formal means to assert their sovereignty, the *pueblos de indios*, their Cabildos and Caciques, sought novel ways to act. While they had participated in several instances of political expression that indicated an amplification of rights, none of the newly installed channels had been formalized through the proper establishment of a state structure, as the congresses in Corrientes were continually dismissed. Therefore, they kept pushing for the establishment of their autonomy, by supporting the political leaders that were inclusive of them as agents. If in the short-term there was not significant monetary gain, betting for a system that continuously expressed these people’s right to participate as citizens could

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<sup>124</sup> “Juan Antonio Rajoy al ilustre cabildo.” Itatí, January 2, 1816 in Actas Capitulares t. 48, f. 19, AGPC.

<sup>125</sup> Juan Antonio Guerin, Francisco Antonio Mbero, and the cabildo of Itatí to José Artigas, Itatí, January 27, 1817 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 8, f. 131, AGPC. “En sus desvelos y fatiga.”

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. “El único ramo de industria que nos ha quedado, y es el de caballos, que los pondremos, si necesita V. E., con Peones de este Pueblo, en el punto que nos pidan y recibiremos obsequio si contribuimos algun tanto al completo de nuestra libertad.”

mean that, in the long run, more economic benefits could come their way, as their guaranteed their “freedom.”

### **Contending and Insisting Subalternity**

One last stopover in this exploration of amplification of rights has to do with the contradictions that emerge during the exercise of sovereignty. Having to now deal with internally establishing authority, the *Pueblos de Indios* were faced with conflicts that were in a sense similar to those of Criollos, and demonstrated the difficulty of articulating interests in those complex times. Santa Lucía, once again, provides a window for us to peek through and investigate these difficulties. In it, we identify some of the political complexities already laid out, and also see some uncertainties that came with radical alterations of their society and economy, a process that had started before independence but was expanded as the liberal ideas in vogue in the period were consolidated.

Leon Xara, one of the Cabildo members of Santa Lucía, maintained constant communication with governor Méndez. In one opportunity, he denounced what he thought were prejudicial influences to the pueblo. Xara, of indigenous ancestry, had shared military experiences with Méndez, and therefore build a respectable relationship with him. After returning from one of these military expeditions in June of 1816, Xara was frustrated when he entered the pueblo, and wrote to Méndez to describe how he encountered everyone behaving “just like Indians” (*tal cual indios*).<sup>127</sup> Xara believed that the Custidiano brothers, Pasqual and

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<sup>127</sup> “Subalterno Leon Xara to Juan Bautista Méndez.” Santa Lucia, June 20, 1816 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 8, f. 52, AGPC.

Lino, had been inciting the population to leave town and go join Artigas.<sup>128</sup> He was worried for the pueblo. If too many people left, he argued, it would be challenging to care for the pueblo's needs. He believed that the only reason for the Custidiano brothers to act in such a manner, was because they were not "naturales" from there, but rather "agregados." Therefore, it would not make a difference to them if the pueblo was hurt by its labor force's prolonged absence.

We can see that the distinction between "naturales/ de comunidad" and "agregados" that was present in the rhetoric of Spanish/Criollo pueblos to refer to those of indigenous ancestry, was current in the minds of the Indigenous community as well. It is not clear what the terminology meant precisely for Corrientes, but in other areas it indicated a sort of relationship of dependency between those of community and individuals who were given permission to settle in specific plots of land in exchange for labor or produce.<sup>129</sup> Besides the economic aspect, familial connections oftentimes developed into relationships of clientelism. While these agregados were dependent on those of community, the conditions that had led them to such a place could indicate a sort of superiority within the colonial scheme. One such case was those families with had been benefited by the liberal reforms that Viceroy Avilés promoted between 1799 and 1801, and which became known as "libertados." They tended to be a few "suitable" Indigenous people, who had been released from the tribute system and received land in a private regime, in aims of

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<sup>128</sup> The spelling of their family name appears in documents in various ways, but the main variation is between Custidiano and Custiriano. We chose to go with the former since it is the one that appears the most, especially in official documentation.

<sup>129</sup> Judith Farberman, "Las márgenes de los pueblos de indios. Agregados, arrendatarios y soldados en el Tucumán colonial. Siglos XVIII y XIX.," *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos. Nouveaux mondes mondes nouveaux - Novo Mundo Mundos Novos - New world New worlds* (2009), <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.57474>. The author indicates that in some areas, like Upper Perú and parts of Tucumán, "agregado" could be synonym with the colonial category of "forastero." For the Pueblos de Indios, though, it appears as a category of its own. This seems to be the case for Corrientes as well, although more research is required.



being inserted into the Spanish world through liberal ideas.<sup>130</sup> The reforms were applied mainly to the former Jesuit missions, but a year later about 67 people from the Corrientes reductions were also “liberated.”<sup>131</sup> We have little information on the selection criteria followed for the Corrientes territory, but for the missions, for one to be “liberated,” it was necessary to have proven knowledge of agricultural practices, trade, the Spanish language and culture.<sup>132</sup> In practice, it benefited a traditional indigenous elite that was connected to the church and Cabildos, and held administrative positions.

In the case of the Custidiano family, there is evidence of them in the pueblo since at least 1811.<sup>133</sup> They were also present in the 1814 census, where we learn that Lino Custidiano was married to a natural of the pueblo, Fermina López. This condition generally provided these “agregados” an improved status.<sup>134</sup> Curiously, in a document from 1811, a list ordered by Belgrano of “naturales” from the pueblo that were between sixteen and fifty years-old, instead of being called “agregados,” the Custidianos were listed as “libertados.” It could have been then that they had been “liberated” from the communal regime during the reforms. In this case, it might have meant that they were originally from a different pueblo – and thus “agregados” in Santa Lucía – but that they were connected to an indigenous elite and possessed a background

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<sup>130</sup> For a summarized version of main changes and their impact, see Lía Quarleri, “El “beneficio de la libertad”. Objetivos y límites de las políticas reformistas en los pueblos guaraníes (1784-1801)” in *Folia Histórica del Nordeste* n. 21 (Resistencia, IIGHI, IH - CONICET, UNNE, 2013).

<sup>131</sup> María Laura Salinas, “Encomienda, trabajo y servidumbre indígena en Corrientes. Siglos XVII-XVIII,” M.A. thesis (Universidad Internacional de Andalucía, 2008), 133.

<sup>132</sup> Lía Quarleri, “New forms of colonialism on the frontiers of Hispanic America: Assimilationist Projects and economic disputes (Río de la Plata, late 18th century),” in Tricoire D. (eds) *Enlightened Colonialism. Civilization Narratives and Imperial Politics in the Age of Reason* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 103.

<sup>133</sup> “Relación de naturales libertados y de comunidad de Sta Lucia de los Astos. Administrador Montaña.” In *Correspondencia Oficial* t. 2, f. 31, AGPC.

<sup>134</sup> “Estado que manifiesta el número de familias de esta comunidad de Santa Lucía, año de 1814”. In *Censos* t. 2, ff. 111-115v., Sala 1, AGPC.

holding positions of power in their place of origin.<sup>135</sup> Xara himself, their plaintiff, was also listed as a “liberado” in the same list in 1811. However, he was a “natural” of Santa Lucía. For whatever reason, having had the opportunity to leave, he chose to stay. And now, more than a decade later, he was faced with other representatives of the indigenous elite that were seeking places of power, and, we later learn, questioning his authority, which drove him to generate a complaint to Méndez.

From the exchanges between Xara and Méndez, we can infer that Xara was in charge of organizing indigenous labor in Santa Lucía. The governor had asked him to send “naturales” to do work in the city hall building – the longstanding “mandamientos” in the mold of colonial times.<sup>136</sup> In July, Xara replied letting Méndez know that he was unable to fulfill the request because the naturales who were “legitimate children of the pueblo,” traditionally “quiet, obedient individuals,” no longer wanted to “obey what [he] told them.”<sup>137</sup> Once again, Pasqual and Lino Custidiano were interfering. In this new missive, he indicated that both, Captain and Lieutenant of the militia, respectively, had been battling alongside Artigas. When required to fulfill the labor expectations imposed on the people of Itatí, they conferenced with the leader of the Banda Oriental regarding these *mandamientos*, and when back in the pueblo, enforced his instructions that “only those who wanted to voluntarily serve needed to go work in the city hall building

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<sup>135</sup> It could also have been that they were in Santa Lucía for quite some time and had been “liberated” while there. It would still mean that to Spanish officials, they were still considered part of this Indigenous elite, despite being from somewhere else.

<sup>136</sup> León Xara to Juan Bautista Méndez. Santa Lucía, June/July 1816 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 8, f. 64v., AGPC.

<sup>137</sup> León Xara to D. Juan Vicente Amarilla. Santa Lucía, July 8<sup>th</sup> 1816 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 8, f. 71, AGPC.

construction.”<sup>138</sup> After that, no one wanted to go, Xara wrote. Since the Custidians were the ones “who ha[d] the force, us nothing,” there was nothing Xara could do. We do not know what was Xara’s reward for organizing the mandamientos, or if he had a monetary gain. It is clear, though, that at least in what accounted for his authority, it was being questioned. Pasqual and Lino, having established themselves in the pueblo, were actively engaging in the political life and disputing power with him. This account also reveals the penetration and impact of novel notions of freedom that clashed with old colonial structures and those individuals holding on to them for personal benefit.

Before this moment, Xara and the Custidians had been allies, as we saw in the signed instructions of the Congress. Now, he was operating to have them removed from office. He told Méndez both were throwing the pueblo against the governor, with threats of violence.<sup>139</sup> He also wrote to Artigas openly asking for a change in command, to which Artigas replied no modification should take place until further notice. By that point, Xara even had a name ready to take on the leadership of the pueblo – that of Alemis. We became familiar with Alemis in the beginning of the chapter. He was the Corregidor deemed “useless” and “corrupt” by the Cabildo in 1810. Nonetheless, six years later, according to Xara, “everyone, the ayuntamiento, the Cabildo” agreed to have him back.<sup>140</sup> Having now had his authority challenged by these new

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<sup>138</sup> León Xara to Juan Bautista Méndez. Santa Lucía, June/July 1816 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 8, f. 64v., AGPC.

<sup>139</sup> Subalterno Leon Xara to Juan Bautista Méndez. Santa Lucia, June 20, 1816 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 8, f. 52, AGPC. “Echaron voz de que VS los querían agarrarlos, Y matarlos: y por cuya causa se habían huido y a los demás Indios VS los iban a matar con azotes, están, me dicen, por las costas del Río Corrientes aguardando al capitán y teniente volviere del ejército. Que vuestra señoría los obligaban a mandar a los de este pueblo al ejército.”

<sup>140</sup> León Xara to D. Juan Vicente Amarilla. Santa Lucía, July 8, 1816 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 8, f. 71, AGPC.

political actors, Xara preferred to resort back to perhaps not so respectable, but at least familiar names, from whom he knew what to expect.

What we might be witnessing here is an internal conflict that highlights the contradictions brought on by a moment of transition in the indigenous world, certainly affected by the May Revolution and its aftermath, but that had started much earlier, as a result of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century liberal reforms promoted by the Bourbon administration. When the revolution struck, some *pueblos the indios* were certainly having their own dilemmas, perhaps dated from before the crisis of the Spanish monarchy. To Xara, a “legitimate” *natural* who prized himself in being a “subaltern” of Méndez, who always used a subservient tone in his communication, and sought his advice because he believed the Indigenous were of “short comprehension,” it must have been quite amusing to witness all of the transformations taking place, first with the opening of the Spanish world to those selected few “libertados;” then, with some of these libertados moving freely around the territory and establishing themselves in positions of authority elsewhere, going against long established notions of “community” that drove indigenous relationships and society for a prolonged time. Traditions seemed to hold a place of importance to him. When defending the permanence of the post office (*estafeta*) in Santa Lucía after a decision to move it to Goya, his argument was constructed around the history of the pueblo. The *estafeta* had been there since its foundation, and the residents had worked for its care without any gain, therefore it was “fair” that it stayed there.<sup>141</sup> He instructed the “new province of Corrientes” to listen to them, and their “previous and present merits,” before making any decisions.<sup>142</sup> In this fast-changing society, in

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<sup>141</sup> León Xara and Francisco Solano Alemis to the Unity of the Banda Oriental. Santa Lucía, January 8, 1817 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 8, f. 126, AGPC.

<sup>142</sup> Highlight by the author. “Santa Lucia. 1817.” Carpetas de Pueblos, t. 51, Sala 7, AGPC.

which Xara felt “even the women do not want to give obedience and submission,” he was holding on to tradition and to the world he had safely navigated until then.<sup>143</sup> In this context, his voice shows that reception of changes in society and politics was not uniform, even among those who supported the system promoted by Artigas but had to deal with own internal conflicts.

The revolutionary period, with the special help of Artigas, brought on even more layers to this already intricate new indigenous world being formed. The more the Custidiano brothers engaged with the conflicts of the period, the more military – and political – power they gained. It was their way of adjusting to this new world and reality. When opportunities presented themselves, and aligned with their interests, they actively participated. The *pueblos de indios* in Corrientes, despite internal skirmishes, strongly adhered to Artigas’ authority and guidance, and when the conflicts intensified, some of them moved from verbal support to action in order to contribute to gaining their Freedom, as the people of Itatí had expressed. It was within their right, as they now could decide on their own, despite being a *pueblo de indios*, what to do with their local resources. Furthermore, they could decide which cause seemed more likely to guarantee their autonomy in the long-run, and as such was deserving of their support. Artigas, similarly, saw in these *pueblos* an avenue to achieve steady support, even in challenging economic situations. By assembling the *pueblos de indios*, as well as the people of the countryside Criollo towns, with a very tailored rhetoric, he knew he was consolidating his system in the Mesopotamia, while ensuring needed resources to continue waging war against Buenos Aires, or defending the territory against the Portuguese.

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<sup>143</sup> León Xara to D. Juan Vicente Amarilla. Santa Lucía, July 8, 1816 in Correspondencia Oficial t. 8, f. 71, AGPC.

The history of this period can be defined as one of constant change, adaptation, and resistance. Political notions like pueblo, citizenship, and sovereignty were changing and adapting to fit new contexts. The groups living this moment – at large – were protagonists of this process. Throughout the chapter, we saw how these men were innovating in their definitions, as well as seeking to apply those definitions to claim, themselves, novel levels of sovereignty or resist to these claims. But in the tradition, in the resistance, there was also novelty, as fragments of old understandings were combined to generate new meanings. Beyond understandings, everyday practices also changed, adapted, and resisted. Within this constant fluctuation, the pueblos de indios in Corrientes found ways to exercise their sovereignty. Some resisted, but they mostly changed and adapted claims as the situation oscillated. In the following years, the radicalization of Artiguism would allow Indigenous groups to expand on that sovereignty even further, with indigenous figures occupying newer positions of leadership and working to create state structures to represent their ideals and beliefs for the territory. That same radicalization, however, would bring about violent reaction from sectors of society opposed to such profound levels of change, and put in danger the accomplishments garnered so far by the Artiguist cause.

## Chapter 6. Crossing Frontiers: Andresito Artigas and the establishment of Indigenous Authority in the Mesopotamia

On August 21, 1818, Cavalry and Infantry troops carrying a white, green, and red flag entered the city of Corrientes.<sup>1</sup> Leading these men that came to restore the Artiguist government was the Guaraní leader Andrés Guacurarí y Artigas, a *misionero*, that is, a resident of the former Jesuit missions' area, who had been adopted by José Artigas and in 1815 was named General Commander of Misiones.<sup>2</sup> According to the account of Férmin Felix Pampín, a vecino from the city of Corrientes who witnessed the occasion, Andresito, as he was known because of his short stature, entered the city on foot and with empty hands, accompanied by about 200 “freed” Indian boys, as the city folk watched in awe.<sup>3</sup> They had been anxiously waiting for this moment, in preparation for about a week now. After being quickly greeted by the cabildo members at the entrance to the city, Andresito’s first destination was a chapel that housed the Holy Cross of Miracles, a symbol of the city’s foundation from 1588. In this space, he found a short respite

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<sup>1</sup> The episode was narrated in detail, with a very critical tone, by Férmin Felix Pampín, a Spaniard who had come to Corrientes in the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and occupied several positions of authority, including “Administrador de la Real Renta de Correos” in Santa Lucía de los Astos. When Andresito entered Corrientes in 1818, Pampín was 40 years-old. His memoirs, housed in the Archivo General de Corrientes, were published in 2004 by one of his descendants, Diego Mantilla. Diego Mantilla, *Memorias Fermín Felix Pampín* (Corrientes: Moglia, 2004). A much more amenable account of Andresito’s residency in Corrientes is narrated by the Postlethwaite sisters, who were from England and were living in Corrientes with their family at that moment. “W. P. R. to General Miller,” in J. P. and W. P. Robertson, *Letters on South America, comprising travels on the banks of the Paraná and Rio de la Plata*. v. I (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1842), 163-164.

<sup>2</sup> Andresito, as we will call him from now on to differentiate him from his adoptive father, José, was named “Comandante de los 15 pueblos de las Misiones entre el Paraná y el Uruguay.” Jorge Francisco Machón and Oscar Daniel Cantero, *Andrés Guacurarí y Artigas* (Misiones: the authors, 2006), 76

<sup>3</sup> The troops that arrived with him were estimated at about 900 to 1,000 men. Manuel Florencio Mantilla, *Crónica Histórica de la Provincia de Corrientes* (Buenos Aires: Espiase y cía, 1972), 213; Andrés Artigas to José Artigas. Campo General Volante en San Antonio de Saladas, July 29, 1818 *AA* vol. 37, 255.

amidst religious canticles, “music, salutes, and chimes.”<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, Andresito was received by the Pueblo and the Vicar in the Mother Church with all due protocol, including a symbolic *Te Deum*. Only after these two visits did Andresito go to the plaza mayor and circled around it a couple times, as tradition ordered for a proper possession of the city.<sup>5</sup> He then established his residency in José Francisco Vedoya’s house, while his troops occupied adjacent residences of traditional families who had fled town prior to his arrival. Before the day’s end, one final order secured the new rule: all of the arms of the civic militia were collected and brought to Andresito’s custody, and the garrisons were occupied by his army. It was the beginning of a seven-month rule by the Guaraní troops over Corrientes, a period that was described by members of the Criollo elite as a “degrading humiliation,” and represented the altering of a social order, rigidly defined under racial and class lines that had been in place for centuries in the region.<sup>6</sup>

Andresito’s entrance into the city, necessary after the forced removal of Juan Bautista Méndez, the governor, from his position, was marked by much symbolism. The most evident symbol – the presence of a person of indigenous ancestry in the highest place of authority – signaled how under Artiguism, people traditionally marginalized would have a political place that went beyond military service or deciding about their own fate, as we have previously seen. He made it clear that their days of oppression should end not only by walking through town with authority, but also by freeing Guaraní children from servitude as he travelled through the province. If we look deeper at every decision made by Andresito, we find evidence of his ability to grasp the broader variables that determined social relationships and hierarchies, the

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<sup>4</sup> D. Mantilla, *Memorias Pampín*, 87. “Músicas, salvas y repiques.”

<sup>5</sup> “Posesionado de la ciudad por la costumbre de dar la vuelta a la plaza mayor.” D. Mantilla, *Memorias Pampín*, 87.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.



recognition of that historical moment, and the means he used to assert himself not only as a military leader, but also as a full member of that society and culture. For example, his decision to dismount his horse and put away his saber before entering town as a sign of peace, demonstrates an anticipation of the fear that the novelty of his presence could cause. Rumors were actually going around that his arrival would bring about much violence. The choice of his first two destinations, the chapel and the church, highlight his interest in exhibiting a shared religious culture. There he was blessed by the representatives of the Catholic church and followed rituals such as the *Te Deum*, a traditional service which had been associated with patriotic events to express gratitude over military victories or to legitimize political change.<sup>7</sup> Andresito's wish to monopolize violence by commandeering firearms and seizing the garrisons, combined with the occupation of the residence of Vedoya - the person who had orchestrated the rebellion against Méndez -, and his respect for the tradition of circling the plaza mayor, all demonstrate his understanding that successful leaders were not only supported by force, but also needed legitimacy in order to govern.

Andresito had been trying to build this legitimacy for more than three years now. Ever since he was appointed *Comandante General de las Misiones*. He worked to implement a view of the territory that was not narrowly Guaraní or *Misionero*, but one that combined elements of the Indigenous and Criollo worlds, a vision based on his upbringing and by the social reality of this frontier. It is the goal of this chapter to analyze how political views and cultural aspects were fused in this experience, seeking to solidify the regional alliance proposed by José Artigas to the

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<sup>7</sup> Pablo Ortemberg, "El tedeum en el ritual político: usos y sentidos de un dispositivo de pactos en la América española y en la revolución de Mayo" en *Anuario del Instituto de Historia Argentina* 10 (2010). [http://www.fuentesmemoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/art\\_revistas/pr.4704/p r.4704.pdf](http://www.fuentesmemoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/art_revistas/pr.4704/p r.4704.pdf)

Littoral. We will follow Andresito's trajectory as he crafted his leadership, worked to set the foundations for a hybrid state in Misiones, and sought to assert his authority over the Mesopotamia.<sup>8</sup> When possible, I will present how his message was received and processed by different political stakeholders. During the course of his actions, we find the figure of Artigas as an ally and mentor. Although the spotlight will be placed on Andresito and his experience as someone who constantly adapted to and appropriated elements of the world that surrounded him as *Comandante General de las Misiones*, it is helpful to refer back to the political objectives that he shared with Artigas, the defense of the sovereignty of individual pueblos and the federal model exemplified by the *Liga de los Pueblos Libres* alliance. As we explore the connections and interactions between Andresito and other provincial leaders, we can locate the Indigenous peoples of the region at the center stage of disputes for the political organization of the territory after the May Revolution. Additionally, as we see him as the main representative of the major political inclusion proposed and implemented by Artigas, we can inquire about the limits of political expansion during the period. Artigas' model proposed a significant extension of political rights. Thinking of their own benefits, an elite that craved economic profits and the preservation of local autonomies was initially tolerant of this inclusion. When popular groups participated not just as followers but also as leaders beyond their social and ethnic group, though, this elite felt their place of privilege threatened. As massive social change was under way, they

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<sup>8</sup> García Canclini understands hybridization as "socio-cultural processes in which discrete structures or practices, previously existing in separate form, are combined to generate new structures, objects, and practices." Néstor García Canclini, preface to *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. (Minneapolis: Univ. Of Minnesota Press, 2008), xxv. For tracking actions towards state formation, we will use Charles Tilly's framework that suggests a state's essential activities are "statemaking," "warmaking," "protection," and "extraction." These can be expanded through "adjudication," "distribution," and "production." We have elements to identify all of these actions in the experience of Misiones under Guaraní rule, even if a very ephemeral one. Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States (990-1992)* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1990), 97.

started to question the extent of benefits collected through this regional alliance. After so many years of military conflicts, the cost of war too was weighing heavily. By 1819, the deterioration of the League of Free Peoples became a possibility, and with it, the erosion of this project for the amplification of rights.

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As we delve into Andresito's experience, I apply the concept of frontier to analyze his political strategies and practices. While, as we will later learn, Andresito's actions were very much marked by the need to contest and negotiate, he himself and his identity were a result of the hybrid world of the frontier.<sup>9</sup> He was the product of his birthplace, a territory claimed by both the Portuguese and the Spanish governments. His upbringing, education, religious experience, and military participation in the defense of the porous imperial boundary all framed his political understandings as did his contact with Artigas and the Criollo world. Nevertheless, he preserved a strong identification with and connection to the Guaraní community from Misiones. As his biography makes clear, his life was one of constant crossing of frontiers of geography, class, and culture. To explore Andresito's experience, it is helpful to consider the "tension between imposition, adaptation, and appropriation" in the formation of identities, applied by Guillermo Wilde to the mission experience.<sup>10</sup> I would also like to also add the idea of a *fluid frontier*, rooted

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<sup>9</sup> See discussion on introduction.

<sup>10</sup> Guillermo Wilde, "Frontier Missions in South America: Impositions, Adaptations, and Appropriations," in *The [Oxford] Handbook of Borderlands of the Iberian World*, eds. Danna A. Levin Rojo and Cynthia Radding, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2019), 548. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199341771.013.20

in changing ideas of authority and sovereignty.<sup>11</sup> As we will see, Andresito fused these experiences to develop fluctuating strategies of leadership, foster the foundation of a hybrid state for Misiones, and also expand his authority at a regional level. By doing so, he sought to amplify tangible and intangible boundaries in this fluid world.

This chapter is divided into three sections that discuss three different moments in Andresito's trajectory as the *Comandante General de Misiones*, spreading and defending Artiguist ideals. We will first look at the context of Andresito's arrival to power, his first campaigns on the Misiones area located west of the Uruguay river in 1815, and the strategies of leadership he put into place to demonstrate legitimacy and assert control over a territory that had already been under the influence of Artiguist ideals for some years. We will explore how, under the guidance of Artigas, Andresito established relationships with political leaders of the various mission towns to advance notions about sovereignty and citizenship, as well as economic progress, all the while working on growing and teaching his Guaraní army, as he labeled his forces. Using what we identify as a second moment in Andresito's trajectory as *Comandante*, the campaign that started in 1816 to "rescue" the so-called *pueblos orientales de las Misiones* then under Portuguese occupation, we will see how Andresito adapted his rhetoric to mobilize support, by fostering a strong sense of identity anchored on a shared past of oppression. As he envisioned an expansion of the territory under his control, he managed to curb tensions between traditional and emerging Guaraní elites, which united under ideals of freedom and possibilities of economic prosperity. Along with looking at the ways in which Andresito constructed his

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<sup>11</sup> The concept of hybridity holds space for the fusion of "traditions that have not yet gone and a modernity that has not yet arrived," according to Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

leadership, we will observe that, as he was doing so, he was also envisioning, and laying the groundwork, for the consolidation of Misiones as an independent province. As we will see, he tried to pursue those two objectives simultaneously. The third and final section looks at Andresito's incursions outside the mission world, particularly in the province of Corrientes. As he sought to amplify his leadership, he built the most radical version of the Artiguist project, with strong notions of social justice. At this point, both his authority and the regional alliance were put to the test. Given rapidly changing conditions, the colonial foundations of the project proved limiting to those who aspired to new spaces of power. These contradictions drove the conflict into a so-called "social war."<sup>12</sup>

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Precisely because Andresito was the first person of indigenous ancestry to occupy such a high administrative position in the territory - his assignment exceeded that of Lieutenant Governor, since he combined political, economic, and military attributes -, he has been treated as a figure of contention. National and local historiographies treated Andresito along the same lines they understood Artigas and his federal project. Liberals like Bartolomé Mitre on the national level and Manuel Florencio Mantilla and Hernán Gomez on the local level, saw him in a negative way, intensified by his indigenous background that identified him as a "barbaric savage."<sup>13</sup> Towards the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, amongst campaigns to constitute Misiones into an official province, the *Junta de Estudios Históricos de Misiones* revisited the figure of Andresito, whose attempts at integrating the mission territories under one government were seen

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<sup>12</sup> M. F. Mantilla, *Crónica Histórica*, 215.

<sup>13</sup> M. F. Mantilla, *Crónica Histórica*; Hernán Gómez, *Historia de la provincia de Corrientes. Desde la Revolución de Mayo al Tratado del Cuadrilátero* (Corrientes: Imprenta del Estado, 1929).

as a symbol and precedent for the existence of this desired province.<sup>14</sup> Later interpretations, like that of Salvador Cabral, include him in the narrative of the Latin American struggle for emancipation.<sup>15</sup> More recently, historian Jorge Francisco Machón did an extensive work of collecting documentation in archives in various countries, to paint a more thorough picture of the Guaraní leader, his ideals and origins. In his later years, alongside Oscar Daniel Cantero, these two *misionero* historians published several works, including two books, that make much of this documentation available.<sup>16</sup> In this new vein that sought to recognize the participation of Misiones in the conflicts that followed the May Revolution, Pablo Camogli published a biography about Andresito that considered the struggle of the Guaraní people at that time.<sup>17</sup> Even if more on the narrative side, these works greatly contribute to current understandings about Andresito as a figure of historical significance. Our goal is to add to that by analyzing how, as someone of indigenous ancestry, he strategically combined elements of frontier culture to develop a leadership style that promoted engagement and impacted understandings about sovereignty and state organization, on the local and regional levels.

### ***Becoming Andrés Guacurarí y Artigas, Comandante General de las Misiones***

As discussed previously, Andresito's experiences were shaped by the context of the frontier. The area of the missions, where he was born, had been suffering constant change since the 18<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Even though Misiones gained the status of an autonomous territory in 1881, it was not before 1953 that the province was finally recognized as such.

<sup>15</sup> Salvador Cabral, *Andresito Artigas en la emancipación Americana* (Buenos Aires: Castañeda, 1980).

<sup>16</sup> Machón and Cantero, *Andrés Guacurarí y Artigas*; Jorge Francisco Machón y Oscar Daniel Cantero, *1815-1821. Misiones Provincia Federal* (Posadas: Editorial Universitaria de Misiones: 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Pablo Camogli, *Andresito: Historia de Un Pueblo En Armas* (Buenos Aires: Aguilar, 2015).

century. As we mentioned in previous chapters, the two events that most affected the lives of those residing in the Jesuit mission in the 18<sup>th</sup> century were the Treaty of Madrid of 1750 that sought to realign the imperial limits between Spanish and Portuguese possessions, and the Jesuit expulsion in 1767. The Treaty meant the displacement and redistribution of a population that occupied seven missions east of the Uruguay river, known as *Misiones Orientales*, a territory that was originally claimed by Spain but was later ceded to Portugal. If that dislocation alone prompted a significant resistance by the Guaraní in a very destructive war, the removal of Jesuits who had for more than a century been intermediaries between the Spanish and the Guaraní world left the reduced Indigenous groups with the task of reimagining themselves within the mission towns and the Criollo society as a whole.<sup>18</sup> Dislocation and relocation were accompanied by economic instability, a demographic crisis, and the need for a gradual restructuring of the territory occupied by the former missions. While the missions remained populated, many Indigenous peoples decided to try their luck elsewhere. As Guaraní families forcibly conformed to new living arrangements, they still managed to adapt those spaces within the colonial structure to negotiate better living conditions, and create hybrid identities. It should also be noted that the demographic composition of the missions themselves was not homogeneous, as other Indigenous groups intermittently used them as shelter.<sup>19</sup> This provided a chance of cultural hybridity even within the missions themselves.

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<sup>18</sup> For a brief account of strategies used in the Río de la Plata for the replacement of Jesuits, see Guillermo Wilde, “Entre las tipologías políticas y los procesos sociales: Elementos para el análisis de liderazgos indígenas en una frontera colonial,” *Revista Anos 90*, no. 19 (34): 19–54.

<sup>19</sup> Branislava Susnik, *Los aborígenes del Paraguay. Etnohistoria de los guaraníes. Época colonial* (Asunción: Museo Etnográfico Andrés Barbero, 1979- 1980), as quoted in Norberto Levinton, “Las estancias de Nuestra Señora de los Reyes de Yapeyú: tenencia de la tierra por uso cotidiano, acuerdo interétnico y derecho natural (Misiones jesuíticas del Paraguay),” in *Revista Complutense de Historia de América* vol. 31 (2005): 68. Susnik argues that the mission of Yapeyú, for example, was composed of Guaraní, Yaro and Charrúa Indigenous people.

Andrés Guacurará was born in this context, most likely on November 30, 1783, presumably in São Borja, a mission located exactly on the frontier, founded by the Jesuits in a territory of constant dispute between the Spanish and the Portuguese empires.<sup>20</sup> We have very few details about his childhood. For example, we can imagine that he learned his first letters through the local parish priest. Because of the marks in his skin, we can infer that he had had smallpox. We know he had a brother, Lorenzo, who later participated in the military conflicts of the territory.<sup>21</sup> We also know that Andresito Guacurará's ancestors were not caciques.<sup>22</sup> When Andresito was about 18 years-old, the region suffered the effects of imperial competition. The area where the eastern missions were located, which had been returned to Spain following the First Treaty of San Ildefonso in 1777, was once again occupied by the Portuguese Crown, during the War of the Oranges in 1801. Even if the Treaty of Badajoz soon reinstated Spanish dominion over the area, the Portuguese refused to leave, and worked to gain the loyalty of the Indigenous peoples who stayed.

The constant altering of power prompted the inhabitants of the former missions to seek ways to better accommodate themselves in this changing environment. Some stayed in the mission towns, some decided to relocate to the woods (*montes*), and others chose to cross these new borders to join the Portuguese occupation. Accounts indicate that Andresito himself may have abandoned his town to move further south when he was about 14 years-old and explore the

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<sup>20</sup> Andresito's precise date and place of birth, as well as the spelling of his name, are not a consensus in the existing historiography. I have chosen to use the alternatives offered by Machón y Cantero, proposed after tracking census from the town of São Borja during the colonial period. Machón and Cantero, *Andrés Guacurará y Artigas*, 29.

<sup>21</sup> Lorenzo Guacurará participated in campaigns to defend the federal cause in Misiones, and also other areas like Santa Fe. He is believed to have passed away in a battle in Quebrada de Belarmino, in January of 1821.

<sup>22</sup> His family was under the cacicazgo of Ibaminbí. Machón and Cantero, *Andrés Guacurará y Artigas*, 31.



possibilities of the area surrounding the Ibicuí river, where the administrators of Yapeyú had installed estancias for cattle ranching. It could have been in this blurry frontier that he came in contact with José Artigas, who would eventually adopt him as his own son and turn Andresito into a superlative figure of his federalist ideal. It is unclear when that contact happened, but Machón and Cantero suggest that it took place during Artigas' days as a *blandengue*, guarding that exact frontier with Portugal.<sup>23</sup> Artigas had biological children, some even participated in the military expeditions of the League, like Manuel, his first son.<sup>24</sup> Still, he took on the responsibility of furthering Andresito's education by teaching him about his ideals. Eventually, Andrés Guacurará, whose name combined that of a Catholic saint with his ethnic Guaraní lineage, added 'Artigas' as part of his last name. This new name represented his acceptance in the Criollo world. Andrés Guacurará y Artigas now had the chance to advance beyond his social and ethnic circle and become a fundamental component of Artigas' project, starting with his army.<sup>25</sup> Andresito participated in the armed conflicts that followed the migration from the Banda Oriental in 1811, and as a sergeant, acquired military experience. Around 1815, he had already been made Captain.

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<sup>23</sup> Machón and Cantero, *Andrés Guacurará y Artigas*, 35

<sup>24</sup> Actual numbers are not clear, but about thirteen children from different women are mentioned as possible offspring. Fernando Klein, "Las Mujeres de Artigas," accessed November 18, 2021, [http://letras-uruguay.espaciolatino.com/klein\\_fernando/las\\_mujeres\\_de\\_artigas.htm](http://letras-uruguay.espaciolatino.com/klein_fernando/las_mujeres_de_artigas.htm).

<sup>25</sup> Machón and Cantero, *Andrés Guacurará y Artigas*, 33.

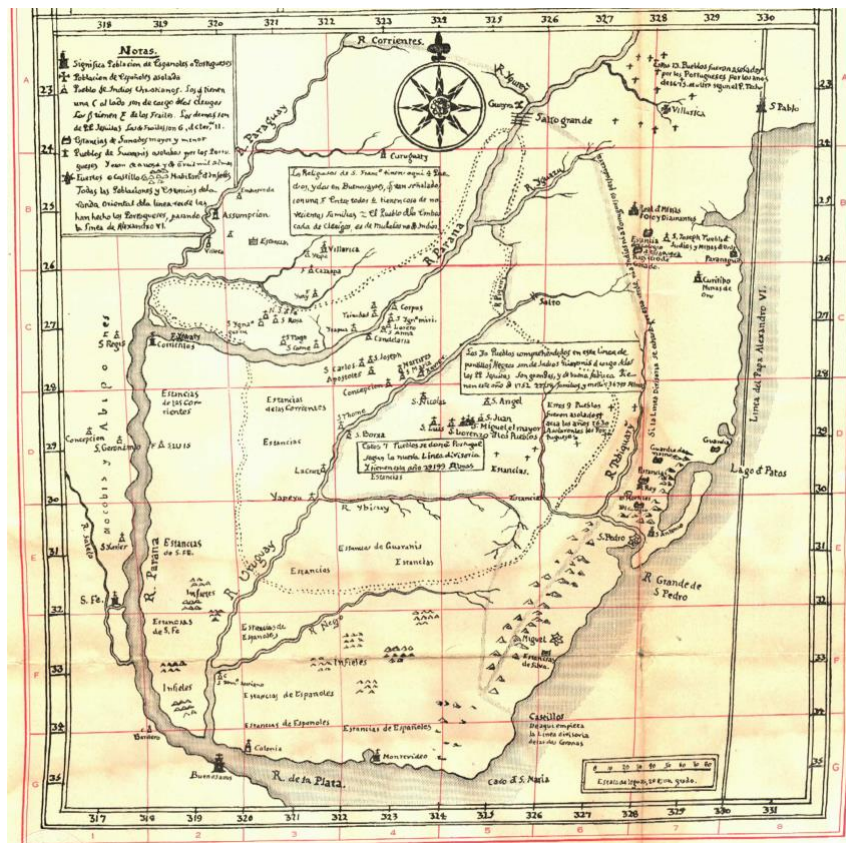


Figure 8. “Mapa de la Gobernación de Paraguay y de la de Buenos Aires,” 1752<sup>26</sup>

The context that surrounds the rise of Andresito to power included renewed military conflicts on the frontier, especially with the Portuguese, a significant victory against the Directory in the Battle of Guayabos in January of 1815, and an attempt to formalize the *Liga de los Pueblos Libres* in a congress to be held in June of that same year. The call to the Congress was one of the first communications in which Andresito appeared in a formal role as “Comandante General de las Misiones.”<sup>27</sup> This appointment, which replaced the administrative system adopted by Buenos Aires for the region based on subordination to other provinces,

<sup>26</sup> Source: in Jose Torre Revello, *Mapas y Planos referentes al Virreinato del Plata, conservadas en el Archivo General de Simancas* (Taleses Jacobo Peuser, 1938, número VI), 12-13.

<sup>27</sup> José Gervasio Artigas to the comandante de Misiones, Andrés Artigas”, March 13, 1815 in *AA* vol. 20, 240.

granted him authority over political, military, and economic decisions, and also extended his zone of influence to the area that went from the Paraná to the Uruguay rivers.<sup>28</sup> Under his control were the departments of Yapeyú, Concepción, and Candelaria located south of the Paraná river. Interestingly, Artigas' appointment also established that Andresito could intervene in the adjacent areas – Corrientes and Santa Fe included – whenever necessary.<sup>29</sup> In Artigas' first communication with Andresito in an official role, besides the very cordial – and tutorial – tone, we can see his concern with military movements that were shaping up. We have already alluded to the fact that the Littoral region, particularly the Mesopotamia, was involved in constant conflict among multiple powers. Colonization had been a product of many authorities competing and coexisting: the Spanish Crown, the incipient local administrations, the religious orders that ruled the Missions, and the Portuguese who constantly raided the area with *bandeirantes*, explorers seeking to enslave the Indigenous populations. Through the revolution and the rise of Artigas' leadership, sources of authority and understandings of sovereignty were further fragmented. Now, Buenos Aires (the Directory), the Provincia Oriental army, and each province, with its several towns, joined the dispute, amplifying the possibility of conflict. While the Portuguese ambitions of expansion were still a threat to the area, there were also rumors of an expedition from Spain to reconquer the Río de la Plata. The various fronts of conflict, particularly the movement of the Portuguese on the frontier, demanded from Andresito a careful evaluation of challenges and opportunities, helping him to sharpen his strategies for leadership.

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<sup>28</sup> Following Corrientes' declaration of independence in 1814, Buenos Aires Director Gervasio Antonio de Posadas disposed its legal creation as a means of recovering influence in the region. Among the territory granted to the jurisdiction of Corrientes, were all the pueblos of Misiones. When Andresito became comandante, several conflicts emerged regarding these limits, particularly surrounding the towns of Curuzú Cuatiá and Mandisoví, that also included claims of Entre Ríos' vecinos.

<sup>29</sup> Machón and Cantero, *Andrés Guacurari y Artigas*, 80.

Very much like his adoptive father, Andresito contacted possible allies, first and foremost the Guaraní people from various indigenous towns. We shall now explore Andresito's first steps after being assigned as a *comandante*, and trace how he worked to establish himself as a leader of the Misiones area, reaching out to different stakeholders, of various backgrounds. We will also see how, as war progressed, it generated needs that allowed for new institutions to flourish.

### **Early Strategies of Political Mobilization**

Accompanied by a force of about 80 Guaraní soldiers, following his appointment as *Comandante General de Misiones*, Andresito installed his headquarters in Santo Tomé, adjacent to the Brazilian town of São Borja where he had been born and where brigadier Francisco das Chagas Santos positioned Portuguese forces. The intention was to ensure control over the territory of Misiones located west of the Uruguay River. This first moment in Andresito's experience as *Comandante* was defined by an intense relationship with Artigas. In looking at their exchanges, we witness an association that was based on an affectionate and democratic mutual respect that allowed for collective action without surrendering individual autonomy. In a way, it was an intensification of the relationship that was underlined between Artigas, authorities in the various towns and provinces of the league, and their residents. Artigas was open, conscientious when listening to their specific needs, but in the end, he was their point of reference, and their "protector," which guaranteed his authority.

Due to the nature of the relationship between Artigas and Andresito, we have a wealth of information with which to track Andresito's first movements, as the leader of the Banda Oriental

continuously wrote to him, instructing him on next steps and actions.<sup>30</sup> In most of these letters, we find an Artigas concerned with the advancement of the Portuguese forces and the defense of the ideals of the League, revealing his goal of strengthening a regional alliance. In these matters, the participation of Misiones was fundamental, to safeguard the integrity of their territory, and also to mobilize people in the name of the sovereignty of the pueblos, something achievable under the right leadership. We also start to see the emergence of Misiones as an entity broader than each of the mission pueblos.

Besides sending military recommendations, Artigas actively took the time to teach Andresito about how to be a leader and promote varied means by which the pueblos would feel his presence and the betterment of their lives, also guaranteeing their continued support. In these exchanges, we confirm some of Artigas' ideals and also learn about how Andresito viewed and applied them. We can also discern the priorities that drove both of them, beyond the need to defend against the Portuguese. First on the agenda was to secure control over the territory of Misiones that had been under the influence of Paraguay since 1811. As Andresito prepared to move his forces to Concepción, with the people of Santo Tomé "content" with his presence, Artigas instructed him on how to establish his leadership among the Indigenous people in the area, in a way that avoided coercion, emphasized kindness and affection, and evinced a sincere preoccupation with the people's economic situation.<sup>31</sup> To Artigas, the correct way of being a good leader was to treat the "Naturales with much love, and provide them with the means (...) so

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<sup>30</sup> Most of these communications are published in the Archivo Artigas, volumes 19, 20, 28, 29, 30, 31, 34, 36, 37.

<sup>31</sup> José Artigas to Andrés Artigas. Paraná, March 13, 1815 in *AA* vol. 20, 240.

that they can work and be happy.”<sup>32</sup> These first instructions set the tone for the government that Andresito imagined for the Misiones area, which was concerned, surely, with military mobilization, but also, with insuring that the Indigenous pueblos had a proper understanding of their rights and access to economic development, along with “peace and harmony.” Artigas had a deep knowledge of the territory and of indigenous experiences, having participated in various expeditions of military defense during colonial times, as well as established relationships with Guaraní, Minuane, Charrua groups. A rhetoric that appealed to the disregard with which these groups had been treated up until then could help gather support and legitimacy to the Artiguist cause.

In these initial conflicts, Artigas worked as a mediator between other Criollo commanders and Andresito, most likely imagining that indigenous military leadership would face resistance. It also served as an opportunity to teach Andresito to be a mediator himself in the future. To this end, Artigas wrote to the Paraguayan Commander of Candelaria, Francisco Antonio González, who also controlled Concepción, and explained the reasons for their movements. If he had defeated Buenos Aires, it was only natural that the territory under their jurisdiction, Concepción included, passed on to his control, especially because “the limits of the republic [of Paraguay] were well delimited when they were instituted.”<sup>33</sup> Here, we can see Artigas using an earlier treaty defining territorial limits to justify possession over Concepción. He also criticized the Commander for “feeding off” of the town without giving anything in return – not even a proper defense. Here, the idea of reciprocity that we explored in chapter 4 once

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<sup>32</sup> José Artigas to Andrés Artigas. Paraná, March 13, 1815, in *AA* vol. 20, 240.

<sup>33</sup> Correspondence between José Artigas and Andrés Artigas. April 1815. Museo Mitre, *Contribución documental para la historia del Río de la Plata tomo 4*, (Buenos Aires: Coni Hermanos, 1913), 29-30.

again emerges as an element that was fundamental for the relationship that Artigas wanted to establish with the Pueblos, and a strong part of his rhetoric.

A different approach was used to contact the Corregidor of Concepción. Artigas wrote the communication, but asked Andresito to send it as his own.<sup>34</sup> As both he and the Corregidor were of Guaraní ancestry, it is likely Artigas understood that the message had the potential of being better received when coming from someone who could relate to the experience of living in the missions. And indeed, it was, as he told Artigas that the people had answered his claims with “liberalidad,” meaning that they decided to join the cause expecting nothing in return, something that brought much joy to the Provincia Oriental leader.<sup>35</sup> The Commander of Candelaria abandoned Concepción, facilitating the entrance of Andresito’s troops in April of 1815. In what would become a common occurrence when passing by mission towns, many Guaraní leaders, including the Corregidor himself, Manuel Cayré, and Ignacio Mbaibé, a cacique with a substantial military trajectory, joined the *Comandante* along the way.<sup>36</sup> These initial interactions formed the basis of the army that would accompany Andresito to the end, and are an early demonstration of his ability to consolidate a strong support base composed of an indigenous leadership, which in turn could eventually serve as governance for a possible provincial state of Misiones.

In the next maneuver, Artigas decided to loosen his understanding of “limits,” as he instructed Andresito to conquer part of the department of Candelaria up to the Paraná river,

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<sup>34</sup> Correspondence between José Artigas and Andrés Artigas. April 1815 in Museo Mitre, *Contribución documental*, t. 4, 25-26.

<sup>35</sup> José Artigas to Andrés Artigas. Paysandú, June 15 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 4.

<sup>36</sup> At that moment, the troops included the 80 men who had accompanied Andresito to Santo Tomé, the forces of Manuel Miño from Mandisoví, remnants of Blas Basualdo’s forces, who had passed away, and men from Candelaria, under the leadership of Ignacio Mbaibé and Manuel Cayré. Machón and Cantero, *Andresito Artigas*, 94.

including the towns of Santa Ana, Loreto, San Ignacio Miní, and Corpus, whose political and administrative control had been assigned to the Intendancy of Paraguay by Viceroy Avilés in 1783, and endorsed by Belgrano in the treaty in 1811. Artigas' justification relied on the fact that the "Naturales" themselves were "looking for [their] protection," in a clear indication that their message was effectively reaching the intended recipients.<sup>37</sup> It was also part of his rhetoric for legitimacy anchored in the respect of their Natural Rights. Artigas tried to negotiate with commander González, but their disregard about guarding the frontier against "the new tyrants," in a reference to Portugal, and the rapprochement between Paraguay's Dictator José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia and the Buenos Aires Directory, prompted him to instruct that Andresito take on an aggressive approach.<sup>38</sup> First, though, he made sure that the Guaraní circulated a letter in which Francia was negotiating to send Paraguayan men to fight for the troops of Buenos Aires in exchange for weapons. In his perception, the Paraguayans were selling them "as slaves," and Artigas hoped that their knowledge of such would bolster support when the moment of conflict arrived.<sup>39</sup> In fact, in chapter 3 we saw a similar argument used in a successful way to promote desertion in Galvan's army in 1813.

The combat took place on September 12, and was led by Captain Manuel Miño and Andresito's secretary, Franciscan Friar José Acevedo, since Andresito himself was sick.<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, Andresito instructed Acevedo that, before the troops advanced, he should consult

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<sup>37</sup> Artigas a Andresito, August 31, 1815, in *AA* vol. 29, 8.

<sup>38</sup> Correspondence between José Artigas and Andrés Artigas, April 1815 in Museo Mitre, *Contribución documental*, t. 4, 29-30.

<sup>39</sup> Artigas a Andresito, August 27, 1815, in *AA* vol. 29, 7.

<sup>40</sup> As Yapeyú's priest, Acevedo had joined the military movements following Manduré's conversations with the Cabildo described in chapter 3. Raúl O. Fradkin, "La revolución en los pueblos del litoral rioplatense," in *Estudios Ibero-Americanos*, v. 36, n. 2 (PUCRS, Jul./Dic. 2010): 253.



with the officials if that was their desire, since they were the ones who would be “exposing their lives.”<sup>41</sup> They decided to move forward, and after about three hours of confrontations, the Paraguayan troops crossed to the other side of the Paraná river, abandoning the town of Candelaria and opening the way for the installation of the Guaraní army. After combat was over, the officers allowed the Paraguayan prisoners to cross the river, as to “avoid more bloodshed.” In a subsequent communication to José Isasi, the new Paraguayan commander of the area north of the Paraná river, Andresito established his authority over the territory as a “protector of the innocence of those who were defenseless,” the “pueblos,” which, “knowing their rights,” had “voiced their complaints” to Artigas.<sup>42</sup> And that was reason enough to cross the border limits that had been previously accepted.

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<sup>41</sup> Andrés Artigas to José Artigas, Candelaria, September 14, 1815 in Museo Mitre, *Contribución documental*, t. 4, 48.

<sup>42</sup> Andrés Artigas to José Isasi. San Carlos, September 17, 1815, in *AA* vol. 29, 10.

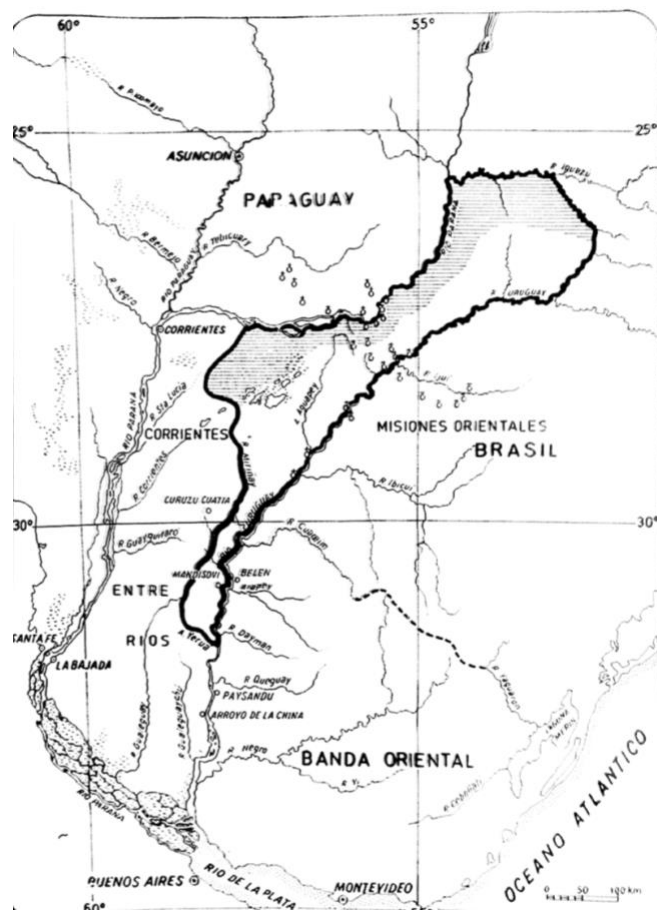


Figure 9. The province of Misiones between 1815-1817 <sup>43</sup>

In these two initial instances of confrontation, as Andresito became acquainted with his post as *Comandante* and asserted his newly-granted authority, we see a constant reinforcement of the ideals promoted by Artigas and the Federal cause. First and foremost, was the respect of the “pueblos” as their resumed their sovereignty, as illustrated by the decision to wait for them to come and seek Artigas and Andresito’s protection. As those values became intrinsic to Andresito, he took them to a new level inside his army, by having officials participate in the

<sup>43</sup> The territory recovered by Andresito is highlighted. Map by Machón and Cantero, *Andresito Artigas*, 97.

decisions regarding attacks. We see, once again, the presence of that multilayered understanding of sovereignty that we had witnessed being formed in chapter 5. From the eighty men that Andresito initially commanded, his army had now increased to more than five hundred, between Infantry and Cavalry, in an indication that this understanding appealed to the people of Misiones as well.<sup>44</sup> Still, to be sure, Andresito requested that Artigas write a few words of encouragement to them, in which he reassured them that now the well-being of their towns and communities was dependent solely upon themselves and the maintenance of their rights.<sup>45</sup> One other element that stands out, and that reminds us of the broader reach of the Artiguist cause, was Artigas' mention of their association with the "Orientales," in a reference to the people who lived in the Provincia Oriental, from where Artigas was coming. Beyond a local, town-related, or even "provincial" perspective, now the "fate" of the pueblo of Misiones was "united" with that of the Orientales. As they were following their lead on the pursuit of their rights, they should also be inspired by their "bravery."<sup>46</sup>

***On their Way to Happiness: Envisioning a Provincial State for Misiones***

After these initial moments of confrontation came a period of political organization in the region. As it was the first time Andresito was occupying a role that extended beyond military operations, Artigas once again took the time to orient him: "What matters is that you behave like an honest

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<sup>44</sup> Andrés Artigas to José Artigas, Candelaria, September 14 1815, in Museo Mitre, *Contribución documental*, t. 4, 49.

<sup>45</sup> Proclamation of General Artigas to his troops in Misiones. Cuartel General, September 23, 1815, in *AA* vol. 29,

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

man, that you punish those who are delinquents and reward those with virtues. That you conduct Justice in a rightful way, without succumbing to bargains or passions; that you care for the miserable and treat them with love, so that in this way you may also make yourself respected and loved.”<sup>47</sup> This letter expresses what Artigas believed should be the priorities of his government and the basis of his leadership and legitimacy. The context in which it was written implied Andresito’s authority over an envisioned political body that united all of the pueblos of Misiones. As the letter shows, Domingo Manduré, the Indigenous leader who we saw in chapter 3 defeating Bernardo Pérez Planes, had entered the town of San Gregorio and arrested its alcalde, “el indio Pintos,” provoking a conflict between him and Andresito. Artigas was firm, stating that Manduré had trespassed into Andresito’s jurisdiction -- his “Pueblo” of Salto Chico -- and the arrest was to be annulled. Moreover, in any future matters of the sort, Artigas insisted that Manduré should always consult with Andresito before any such movements. In this sense, even if each Pueblo had the authority to decide about its own local needs, Artigas was suggesting the existence of a higher authority, Andresito, who was to arbitrate any possible conflicts between them. So far, the mobilization based on the need to protect the territory and the pueblos’ rights was providing a sort of connection between the Pueblos, but Artigas expected more of Andresito. He was to establish his authority in a way that facilitated his power to adjudicate, produce, and distribute by punishing, rewarding, and caring for those in need, thereby laying the foundation

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<sup>47</sup> José Artigas to Andrés Artigas, Cuartel General, August 27, 1815 in *AA* v. 29, 6. “Lo que interesa es que V. se porte como hombre de bien que castigue a los delinquentes y premie a los virtuosos. Que lleve la Justicia rectamente sin atender a empeños, ni paciones; que mire por los miserables, que los trate con amor, para que se ese modo se haga obedecer y amar.”

for a provincial state.<sup>48</sup> In a way, it was a similar strategy to the one Artigas himself was using to establish himself as an interlocutor in Corrientes. And for that Andresito needed legitimacy.

### **Granting Legitimacy through the Exercise of Citizenship**

One of the elements of that legitimacy was to promote the guarantee to the exercise of sovereignty by the Pueblos. In chapter 5, we discussed how the implementation of inclusive definitions of citizenship took place in Corrientes. There, all of the towns (*pueblos*) participated in the election of representatives to a provincial congress, but were oftentimes met with resistance from the capital city, which still resisted Artigas' definition of sovereignty. In Misiones, the establishment of voting practices and the exercise of citizenship faced less opposition, but still required changes in the administrative structure of the province, changes that were very telling regarding the firm beliefs held by both Artigas and Andresito regarding their desired political model. As soon as Andresito initiated his mandate, we can see exercises in citizenship taking place. As we mentioned earlier in the chapter, Artigas was preparing the *Congreso Oriental*, a meeting with representatives of all of the provinces to formalize the structure of the *Liga de los Pueblos Libres*. From his point of view, Misiones, of course, should participate. Once Andresito became *Comandante* in March, Artigas asked him to inform all towns about their gathering in Arroyo de la China. Each town was to send a representative, who could be anyone as long as they had "some ability" to deliberate and were chosen by the residents.<sup>49</sup> The incorporation of Concepción in April was followed by the same instructions. As soon as control was established, Artigas extended an invitation for them to join the other

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<sup>48</sup> Tilly, *Coercion, Capital...*, 53.

<sup>49</sup> José Gervasio Artigas to the comandante de Misiones, Andrés Artigas", March 13, 1815 in *AA* vol. 20, 240.

representatives of the *Liga de los Pueblos Libres*. Even though Concepción was organized as a department, Andresito was to contact every town, which should hold an “electoral assembly” and nominate those “citizens [who received] the majority of the votes.”<sup>50</sup> Along with the invitation, he sent a “regulation” that instructed every town on how to properly hold elections, and he extended the regulation to the other provinces as well. Concepción, Santa María la Mayor, San Javier, Santos Mártires, San José, San Carlos, and Apóstoles – essentially all towns in the department of Concepción – replied expressing their desire to fulfill the instructions and take part in the process. We know that the representatives were elected and, according to Artigas, received in Arroyo de la China “with all the affection they deserve.”<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, as we already mentioned, there are no records of the Congress or their deliberations. Still, we are left with an exercise on sovereignty and citizenship that was very encompassing and inclusive of popular groups.

The sovereignty of every town was a priority to Artigas, and an important means of granting legitimacy, as we have seen in numerous examples. For Misiones, this had a special significance. At the time of the Jesuits and inspired by Guaraní communal notions such as the *teii* and *tekoa*, the reductions were highly autonomous political and economic entities.<sup>52</sup> The connection with Artigas’ proposed sovereignty of the Pueblos was obvious. In a most interesting amalgamation of his world and that of Artigas, Andresito changed the administrative structure of

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<sup>50</sup> Artigas to the Cabildo of Concepción. April 29, 1815 in Museo Mitre, *Contribución documental*, t. 4, 32.

<sup>51</sup> Artigas took the opportunity to clothe them, and also send back with them to Misiones some pistols and supplies for their weapons, a practice that would become common in his relationship with the territory of Misiones. As for the representatives’ participation in the Congress, unfortunately we have no evidence, other than the rumor that they seem to have arrived only on the last day. José Artigas to Andrés Artigas. Cuartel general, August 16, 1815 in Museo Mitre, *Contribución documental*, t. 4, 42.

<sup>52</sup> Macarena Perusset, “Guaraníes y españoles. Primeros momentos del encuentro en las tierras del antiguo Paraguay,” in *Anuario del Centro de Estudios Históricos “Prof. Carlos S. A. Segreti”* 8 (2008): 26; Wilde, “Entre las tipologías políticas,” 19–54.

the province, strictly eliminating the “departments” that had been established after the Jesuit expulsion, and whose *jefes* were part of the Spanish administration.<sup>53</sup> He wanted to communicate directly with the Cabildo and Corregidor of each town, officials who should now be elected. Cabildo elections were a reality already in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but those did not include the position of Corregidor or the totality of the population, and were highly controlled by Spanish administrators.<sup>54</sup> In this renewed experience, the town authorities should follow the electoral procedures established by Artigas, which recommended that all people should be included. Furthermore, all Europeans were ordered to leave the territory.<sup>55</sup> It was a sort of return to the political and administrative structure of the missionary period, coupled with new practices of enlightened politics, in a clear example of a hybrid administration that combined past and present elements of this frontier world. It should be mentioned that there was never talk of an electoral process to legitimize Andresito’s position, but at least “the Naturales [could] govern themselves in their towns” once again, freeing themselves from Spanish (and Criollo) authorities and their impositions.<sup>56</sup> By being free, Artigas believed, these Naturales would now find their way to happiness, and he would guarantee a solid support to his cause against Buenos Aires, and consolidate his authority.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Machón and Cantero, *Andrés Guacurari y Artigas*, 80.

<sup>54</sup> Wilde, *Religión y poder*, 215.

<sup>55</sup> José Artigas to Andrés Artigas. Cuartel general, August 27, 1815 in Museo Mitre, *Contribución documental*, t. 4, 42.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> “Seamos libres y seremos felices.” Artigas to Andresito, August 27, 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 7.

### **Economic Development Through Liberal Views**

Besides the exercise of citizenship, another element in Artigas' instructions to Andresito as a matter of attention and means of establishing leadership was the economic advancement of Misiones. To gather support, he highlighted how the Paraguayans applied predatory practices in the territory, taking everything that was "precious in their churches, houses, and farms."<sup>58</sup> For the maintenance of their newly acquired freedom and rights, the residents of Misiones should be able to, by themselves, develop a solid economy. This was to be achieved in various ways: by producing and selling goods within the area of influence of the League, by learning craftsmanship, and also by installing small manufactures using the region's resources.

Artigas was willing to provide the means so that the people of Misiones could get started with recovering their fields and advancing cattle ranching. Knowing that the conflict with Portugal was imminent, he wanted to prepare the area. Besides constantly sending weaponry, he wanted to make sure that both his troops and the inhabitants would have the means to feed themselves when the time came. In numerous occasions, he asked Andresito to get some "man of trust" to come to Purificación, and collect about 3,000 heads of cattle, destined for the great pastures of Yapeyú.<sup>59</sup> This livestock, he warned, was not for immediate consumption, but should rather be transported as soon as possible to allow for breeding and the establishment of a sustainable source of food. As a counterexample, he mentioned the case of D. Gorgonio Raytei, who had been commissioned with transporting cattle more than a year before and had yet to

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<sup>58</sup> José Artigas to Andrés Artigas, Cuartel General, October 6, 1815, in *AA* vol. 29 14

<sup>59</sup> One of those communications occurred on January 18, 1816, in *AA* vol. 29, 26.



arrive at his destination, “consuming” the meat on the way, while people back in his town were “miserable” and without the means to “advance.”<sup>60</sup>

While Artigas was happy to “provide remedy” to the needs of the pueblos, often fulfilling their requests for help, he firmly believed in their own abilities for sustained economic development. While during Jesuit times the reductions were actively involved in production and export of yerba, cotton linen, hides, and to a lesser extent tobacco and sugar, with Yapeyú amounting to about 10% of hides export to Europe in the 1750s, trade was mostly conducted by religious administrators.<sup>61</sup> After their expulsion, the entire mission area had undergone a marked economic decline. During this time of renewed organization, Artigas believed it was important that this spirit of production was recovered, and that trade became, once again, an active part of the economy of Misiones. As we read his recommendations, we see Artigas interested in instilling these economic values in the Indigenous peoples of Misiones. The challenge was that, in the post-Jesuit period, the communities had suffered increasing exploitation by royal administrators and corregidores, shattering their notions of reciprocity.<sup>62</sup> From the insistence registered in the letters, we can infer that the Guaraní were still skeptical about the benefits of extended levels of economic production. In this matter, Andresito became instrumental, as he occupied the role of mediator, demonstrating that the Indigenous groups could once again find reciprocity as they established alliances under this new leadership. And some of that reciprocity could be found through trade, again, in a combination of past and present ideals.

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<sup>60</sup> José Artigas to Andrés Artigas, April 29, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 40.

<sup>61</sup> Juan Carlos Garavaglia, *Economía, Sociedad y regiones* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 1987), 164-165.

<sup>62</sup> Juan Carlos Garavaglia, *Mercado interno y economía colonial. Tres siglos de la yerba mate* (México: Grijalbo, 1983); Wilde, *Religión y poder*, 278.

Artigas expected Andresito, as someone who was familiar with the Criollo world, to be able to “enlighten the Naturales,” teaching them about the benefits of production and trade.<sup>63</sup> Demonstrating a solid knowledge of their economy, Artigas recommended that they “cut wood,” “plant tobacco and cotton,” and “benefit from the yerba.”<sup>64</sup> They were also to make “their *carretas*” (carts), and develop any other “fruits” (products) that they could. Whatever they produced should be transported down the Uruguay River and sent his way, as Artigas expanded the volume of international trade through connections with U.S. and British merchants. In return, they would “get everything that they needed.”<sup>65</sup> These goods, Artigas said, were like having “cash” that could be used to buy other products, and help with their necessities.<sup>66</sup> This way, they would “open commerce,” see the “value of their work,” and learn the “love of labor.”<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, the Indigenous inhabitants would see their towns “revive in abundance and happiness,” “fomenting advancement in Misiones”, “like what happens with us.”<sup>68</sup> It was very much a liberal logic of economic development: to produce, trade, invest, and achieve “advancement.” Unfortunately, at this point we do not have records of how production worked in the towns during the Artiguist period, but it would be interesting to see how the vestiges of communal land were treated, to determine the extent of this Criollo model for which Andresito advocated.

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<sup>63</sup> Artigas to Andresito, Cuartel General, August 31, 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 8.

<sup>64</sup> José Artigas to Andrés Artigas. June 20, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 42.

<sup>65</sup> March 23, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 31.

<sup>66</sup> José Artigas to Andrés Artigas. June 20, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 42.

<sup>67</sup> Artigas to Andresito. Cuartel General, August 31, 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 8; Purificación, January 18, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 26; José Artigas to Andrés Artigas. June 20, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 42.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* *AA* vol. 29, 42.

In these instances of economic development, we can identify opportunities for regional integration, as goods traveled the territory. As it can be seen above, whatever was produced in the territory should be used to the provinces' development, especially if considering the tax cuts that applied to those participating in the League.<sup>69</sup> For example, when preparing for the upcoming conflicts, some of the supplies that Artigas sent to Misiones were spears and sabers produced in Montevideo, evidencing how the Guaraní were benefiting from manufactures from the Orientales to defend their territory.<sup>70</sup> In addition, the cattle – and people – traveling from Purificación to Yapeyú reinforced the relationship between both shores of the Uruguay river. The commerce required of Misiones, likewise, would navigate up and down the same river, collecting production from various towns. While these movements promoted a connection at the local level, they also strengthened the regional character and association of the League, as well as the connection to outside markets. Some of the other enterprises suggested by Artigas also had a regional aspect to them, as they directly connected with the military needs of the entire region. For example, after receiving the visit of Nicolás Arayani, a master blacksmith from the town of San Carlos, it occurred to Artigas that this skill could be very “useful” for all towns and, of course, to recompose the arms necessary for the upcoming combats.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, Artigas instructed Andresito to select a few young boys and use the master's knowledge to teach them. In that same spirit of foreseeing military needs, Artigas wished to install a gunpowder factory in Misiones. Once again recovering a tradition from Jesuit times, he saw the possibility of using the

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<sup>69</sup> Details in chapter 4.

<sup>70</sup> February 23, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 28.

<sup>71</sup> José Artigas to Andrés Artigas. February 12 1816, in *AA* vol. 29, 27.

sulfur available in the area and the skills of the “great art of gunpowder” to the “benefit” of Misiones and the “common good.”<sup>72</sup>

As it has been presented, in the initial moments of Andresito’s leadership, Artigas took on an active role in teaching him leadership skills, seeking to amplify support as well as establish his authority in Misiones through processes that favored an active exercise of sovereignty and economic development. One final element that Artigas recommended for Andresito was, precisely, that of education, as if he were now passing the baton to the Guaraní to continue mobilization in the area. Records indicate that he sent at least some books as supplies. A technical one, which was meant to teach how to administer vaccines, and two more ideological ones.<sup>73</sup> The first commented on the May Revolution celebrations that took place in Montevideo, and the second one told the story of the revolution in North America.<sup>74</sup> The latter should serve to “instruct” those with a more “inquisitive” mind, argued Artigas. In it, he wrote, “you can see how much [the people] worked and sacrificed to accomplish the system that we defend.” As the rumors about the movements of the Portuguese troops towards the frontier increased, it was also important to keep in mind what was it that they were fighting for. From this point on, we can see Andresito more actively taking the lead to expand mobilization in the territory. As he advanced towards establishing leadership, he made use of a variety of strategies, that alternated between placing him as a “teacher”, or tutor, as we will see with his relationship with the Guaraní army,

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<sup>72</sup> Regulation at the Jesuit missions instructed that every reduction needed to have its own gunpowder reserve and an armory to manufacture it. Martín M. Morales, “Violencia y misión en la antigua provincia del Paraguay,” in Adam Wolanin, *Compagnie de Jésus au service de la mission évangélisatrice de l’Église* 60 (2011): 248. For Artigas instructions, see José Artigas to Andrés Artigas, June 20, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 42.

<sup>73</sup> José Artigas to Andrés Artigas. April 29, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 41.

<sup>74</sup> José Artigas to Andrés Artigas. June 20, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 43.

as well as an “equal,” as he sought to attract the support of Indigenous leaders in the various pueblos, while fostering an idea of Misiones as a unified political entity.

### **Between Coercion and Persuasion: Andresito and his “Children” of the Guaraní Army**

On April 12<sup>th</sup> 1816, Artigas told Andresito that the people of Mandisoví, one of the towns officially founded by Belgrano, were “trying [his] patience.” They would not stop complaining about “Naturales” that were causing disturbances in the region.<sup>75</sup> A similar complaint had arrived from the governor of Corrientes, following up on a notification from Curuzú Cuatiá, in the same area. Artigas wanted to know whether those were men from the Guaraní army behaving in a manner contrary to the cause. Andresito profusely rejected the accusation being made. The matter prompted a long exchange, that went on for a few weeks and revealed understandings about frontiers and the limitations of the regional alliance, themes that will be further explored in the last section of this chapter. For right now, we would like to focus on Andresito’s defense of the men in the Guaraní army, as a way of uncovering elements of their relationship. During the defense, he demonstrated a fine understanding of their idiosyncrasy, and laid out his strategies to address what the Criollo world considered some of their most reprehensible customs. Andresito wrote:

I am not denying that the Naturales are capable of mischief (*picardías*) in the form of larceny (*ladrocinio [sic]*), but not uprisings. I am quite aware how much my *paisanos* apply themselves to theft (*hurto*), but when I catch them, (...) I order that they be punished with more than 500 beatings, and in this way, I keep them subjected (*sujetos*). I am continuously telling them, that I will rather lose my life over being too strict, than being a traitor.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> “Moliendo la paciencia” in *AA* vol. 29, 35-40.

<sup>76</sup> Andrés Artigas to José Artigas. April 26, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 38.

In this fragment, Andresito provides an opportunity for us to peek into his relationship with his subordinates in the Guaraní army. It is possible that the behavior he identified was associated with a comportment that anthropologist Guillermo Wilde explained through the “paradigm of mobility.”<sup>77</sup> In a combination of liberation from the regime of community, flight from decaying missions, and attempts of integration into the Spanish world, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century some Indigenous people from the missions dispersed throughout the territory, which led to fragmentation of communities. This mobility was accompanied by patterns of consumption that often clashed with Criollo models of development. Itinerant groups saw cattle and produce as something that was at their disposal in moments of need. This practice led to constant complaints of “looting,” and invasion of private property from vecinos in Spanish towns. It also led to rising animosity between Criollos and Indigenous groups, that continued into the independence period. In Corrientes, this was actually one of the main sources of complaints received by the Cabildo against Indigenous groups.

We do not have records to establish a clear social composition of the Guaraní army, but it is fair to imagine that many of the men who participated in the troops came from these “mobile” or wandering Guaraní groups, particularly judging from the behavior that Andresito himself described. So Andresito tried to “accommodate” them into acting appropriately for the Criollo world with the use of harsh physical punishment, a strong element of coercion.<sup>78</sup> But he also learned to incorporate some of these behaviors towards constructing loyalty.<sup>79</sup> The division of

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<sup>77</sup> Wilde, *Religión y Poder*, 269.

<sup>78</sup> Charles Tilly defines coercion as a means to maintain domination in the following terms: “coercion includes all concentrated application, threatened or actual, of action that commonly causes loss or damage to the persons or possessions of individuals or groups who are aware of both the action and the potential damage.” Tilly, *Coercion, Capital*, 19.

<sup>79</sup> Fradkin y Ratto, “El botín y las culturas de la Guerra.”

spoils of war after a win was not a novelty, but it did acquire new levels in the Littoral, and Misiones especially, working to prevent dispersion in a territory where the construction of leadership was strongly connected to notions of reciprocity, as we have already mentioned. While there was a constant concern with preventing dispersion, Andresito also saw the high levels of mobility among the Guaraní as a possible benefit that his army had, and was quick at integrating this familiarity with movement into their style of combat. The Portuguese officers reported it as “*escaramuças*”, small groups that alternated between making quick attacks and scattering, a tactic that could go on for hours.<sup>80</sup> Initially described as “indiscipline” in the enemy army, they were in awe of their ability to quickly reorganize and come back to attack.<sup>81</sup> In fact, it proved to be a very effective method to promote disruption and damage, slowly weakening armies that were superior in numbers and arms - the genesis of the famous *montoneras*.

Andresito also came to understand that, in this relationship between leader and followers, beyond coercion, what guaranteed long term support was a proper understanding of the common goal that they shared. In these circumstances, he insinuated himself as a source of wisdom: knowing the region’s history, he identified a latent need for instruction and worked tirelessly to remedy the situation, because the men before him “have done nothing but to look at their own private interests.”<sup>82</sup> It was his duty, then, and another means for mobilization, to “teach” his men, as if his pupils, about the “principles that wheeled the System,” and their rights. Having understood that, the men in the Guaraní army could count on his protection like “sons” (*hijos*).

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<sup>80</sup> José de Abreu to Brigadier Tomás da Costa Correa Rabelo e Silva. San Borja, October 8, 1816 in *AA* vol. 31, 364

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Andrés Artigas to José Artigas. April 26, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 38.

As he established a paternalist relationship with them, they could rest assured that he would do everything in his power so that they could be content.<sup>83</sup> Even, occasionally, allow some mischief.

As the Littoral prepared for a new invasion by Portugal and mobilized a war apparatus, new politics was taking shape in Misiones: the foundations for long-term economic development, leadership legitimized through the exercise of sovereignty in the traditional Cabildo power structures, and the reincorporation of practices of reciprocity in the dispersed Guaraní people, as well as the presence of high degrees of coercion to keep those in place.

*Provincial Identity: the Misionero “Brothers” on the Eastern and Western Shores*

On August 25 1816, José Artigas instructed Andresito that, in exactly 17 days, he should initiate “hostilities” against the Portuguese troops.<sup>84</sup> Knowing of the enemy’s superiority in both arms and men, Artigas believed that the best defense was to attack and take the Portuguese army by surprise on multiple fronts, one of them Misiones.<sup>85</sup> He had been formulating the plan since at least January. First, he ordered Andresito to relocate from Candelaria to Santo Tomé, locating Captain Manuel Miño towards the north, around the town of Concepción.<sup>86</sup> As the various points were reinforced, Artigas asked Ensign Pantaleón Sotelo to come from the south, passing through Yapeyú to “gather all the people who are not working, to prepare and train them.”<sup>87</sup> From La

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<sup>83</sup> Andrés Artigas to the Cabildo of Corrientes. Cuartel General en el Miriñay, February 9, 1817 in *AA* vol. 34, 43; Andrés Artigas to the Cabildo of Corrientes. Cuartel General en el Miriñay, February 15, 1817 in *AA* vol. 34, 54.

<sup>84</sup> Artigas instructs Andresito in *AA* vol. 31, 350.

<sup>85</sup> His plan also included entering through the frontier between Rio Grande do Sul and the Banda Oriental in five different fronts.

<sup>86</sup> José Artigas a Andrés Artigas. Purificación, June 27 de 1816 in *AA* vol. 31, 343.

<sup>87</sup> José Artigas a Andrés Artigas. Purificación, July 3 de 1816 in *AA* vol. 31, 344.



Cruz, he received at least another 200 men.<sup>88</sup> Mobilization was total. Women should accompany the troops, be in charge of the horses, and those of an older age who could no longer serve should also contribute by bringing along cattle to provide food.<sup>89</sup>

As war neared, Andresito wrote to every Cabildo under his control, expressing the federalist ideals in a call to arms. In asking for their collaboration, he expressed his ideas about why they should work together. In his words, the long-standing oppression by the “ambitious infernal monster” that had made them “bend their necks” had caused a “profound lethargy,” leading the population to have “been asleep [in the] innocence of not knowing their rights.”<sup>90</sup> The situation had now changed, though, as the “veil that darkened” their eyes had been removed, and even the most “obtuse” men could now claim Freedom.<sup>91</sup> As an “opportunity” had presented itself, all the Pueblos should be ready to pick up their arms to defend it.<sup>92</sup> It was a powerful message that identified what these people had been missing, who had provoked that situation, and what should be done to change things. Andresito was confident that every Cabildo would “obey” since he knew of their “decision towards the system and [their] untarnished patriotism.” They should not worry, as “heaven [was] protecting” them, he believed.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Andresito to Artigas, July 22, 1816 in *AA* vol. 31, 349.

<sup>89</sup> Joaquín de Oliveira Alvares. Jefe de la Legión de San Pablo a Joaquín Javier Curado. Campamento del Arroyo Elias, October 27 1816 in *AA* vol. 31, 80; *AA* vol. 31, 345.

<sup>90</sup> Circular de Andrés Guacurará y Artigas a los pueblos de Misiones. Santo Tomé, September 3, 1816 in *AA* vol. 31, 352.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* Original reads: “lo vemos hasta en los brutos cuando por su desdicha se ven oprimidos, no descansar día y noche de solicitar su libertad hasta ver concluido su intento.”

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* According to original: “habiéndose abierto un claro por el que podamos nosotros dirigir nuestras marchas hacia el frente del león que procura devorarnos” (...) “es preciso que enarbolemos nuestras armas para sostener el estandarte de nuestros derechos, herencia que desde el alto imperio la hemos heredado.”

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

Through the acknowledgment of receipt from Cabildos, we can identify the reach of Andresito's message. At least sixteen pueblos – essentially all of the former Jesuit missions located in the territory between the Paraná and Uruguay rivers – replied, confirming their desire to comply.<sup>94</sup> At that precise moment, these sixteen pueblos were what Andresito envisioned as the political entity Misiones. As he wrote to them asking for collaboration, he was asserting his authority over the territory. At the same time, he was spreading a message and proposing a union. As he made this proposition, once again, the past became a resource, and worked as the background that brought these pueblos together. We can see, for example, the use of religious elements to establish legitimacy and evoke a positive memory of the mission experience. But we also see this past, most likely the one that unfolded after the Jesuit expulsion, as representative of their oppression and an explanation for their compromised situation. In evoking this shared struggle, Andresito was working to demonstrate the pueblos' interconnection, and provide reasons for them to join together in the defense of sovereignty. While this was a sovereignty rooted in the local autonomy of the pueblos, much as the Artiguist project articulated, by placing these Pueblos under the shadow of one same struggle, Andresito was letting them know that their connection was wider. Combining past and present experiences, he was suggesting that they should see Misiones as a political entity of its own.

While the sixteen Pueblos that were located west of the Uruguay River were very much a part of this entity, through the next steps and in the communications of Andresito we can see that he had an even broader conception for what he envisioned as the territory of Misiones. As the

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<sup>94</sup> The pueblos that replied were Yapeyú, La Cruz, Santo Tomé, Apóstoles, Concepción, Santa María Lamayor, San Xavier. Mártires, San José, San Carlos, Candelaria, Santa Ana, Loreto, San Ignacio Mini, Corpus, San Francisco de Paula. September 1816 in *AA* vol. 31, 352-356.

conflict was approached, Andresito sought to take his influence even further, reaching out to the pueblos located east of the Uruguay river. This area, named by the Portuguese administration as “Sete Povos das Missões,” had been under their occupation since 1801. While a key part of Artigas’ plan was to stop the advancement of the Portuguese, for Andresito, crossing the water to move toward what he called the “Pueblos orientales de las Misiones” was an opportunity to reunite with his “brothers and peers.” It also meant, in the long run, securing that territory and its resources to the Artiguist project.

### **The *Pueblos Orientales* of Misiones**

Delineating imperial borders in the area of the missions was difficult. Even though the Treaty of Badajoz in 1801 declared that Spain should have authority over the territory east of the Uruguay river, the Portuguese remained in the area. As a necessary strategy to establish their domain, they worked to attract the support of the people already there. It is in this context that we should see the men and women that inhabited the eastern pueblos. As recent studies for that area have demonstrated, the Indigenous groups in the region were agents in the formation of their lives and actively used the fluidity of borderlands to negotiate better social and economic positions.<sup>95</sup> To make this process explicit, historian Eduardo Neumann has coined the idea of a “tripartite frontier,” one in which the Indigenous groups were as influential as the Portuguese and the Spanish in the formation of the frontier territories in the Río de la Plata.<sup>96</sup> In looking at ways in

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<sup>95</sup> Elisa Frühauf Garcia, “As diversas formas de ser índio: políticas indígenas e políticas indigenistas no extremo sul da América portuguesa,” PhD diss., (Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2007), 136.

<sup>96</sup> Eduardo Neumann, “A fronteira tripartida: a formação do continente do Rio Grande - século XVIII” in *Capítulos de História do Rio Grande do Sul*, ed. by Luiz Alberto Grijó, Fábio Kuhn, César Augusto Barcellos Guazzelli and Eduardo Santos Neumann (Porto Alegre: Editora da UFRGS, 2004): 25-46.

which Portugal sought to attract the support of the inhabitants of the former eastern missions, we can establish goals and priorities for those communities that will later help us understand their response to Andresito's propositions.

As invasion was ongoing, one of the ways that Portugal sought to attract support was through the distribution of spoils of war, something that we know appealed to at least some of the Guaraní soldiers. Seeing the opportunity for immediate economic gain in a context of crisis, many Guaraní people not only declared their loyalty to Portugal, but also helped their troops in occupying San Miguel and the remaining pueblos.<sup>97</sup> In a clear attempt at maintaining support in the long run, for the first time in centuries the Portuguese Crown declared that those who enlisted in the Guaraní militia were to be given a salary.<sup>98</sup> Another measure implemented in 1801 was the liberation of the Guaraní population from the community system, establishing a private understanding of land ownership and labor, a measure that applied to everyone, not just a chosen few as on the Spanish side. It was the Crown's way of showing that they would have freedom to prosper if they chose to stay -- of course, according to a very liberal understanding of freedom.<sup>99</sup> The fact that many families actually decided to stay could be an indication that the Guaraní saw concrete possibilities of prosperity under Portuguese rule.<sup>100</sup> As the Guaraní stayed and established themselves in some of the "*freguesias*" that were founded to mirror the former reductions, many families were able to indeed find fairly comfortable economic and political

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<sup>97</sup> Hevelly Ferreira Acruche, "Portugal e Espanha no extremo Sul das Américas: fronteiras, gentes, direitos e soberania (1750-1830)," PhD diss., (Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2017), 318.

<sup>98</sup> Frúhauf Garcia, "As diversas formas," 274.

<sup>99</sup> Acruche, "Portugal e Espanha," 318.

<sup>100</sup> Max Roberto Pereira Ribeiro, "Os Guaranis nas precariedades da guerra: o impacto do recrutamento nas Missões Orientais (Rio Grande de São Pedro, primeira metade do século XIX)," in *Saeculum - Revista de História* n. 33 (Programa de Pós-Graduação em História/ UFPB, 2015): 99

spaces. For instance, by 1810 about 72% of the males had settled as farmers.<sup>101</sup> As such, they took part in the extraction of yerba-mate and the production of cotton in the region, which they then exchanged for cattle from the other side of border. Some of these activities were so profitable that they allowed for some Guaraní to assume or maintain positions of authority in the government, as *cabildantes*.<sup>102</sup>

The abovementioned circumstances indicate to us that while these Indigenous groups were occupying spaces of transition, they were able to navigate a complex political context and provide temporary loyalties to parties who could benefit them most. Max Roberto Pereira Ribeiro argues that their “actions were part of individual and collective strategies that attended to concrete necessities of the social world.”<sup>103</sup> In practical terms, the Guaraní were seeking ways to better position themselves within this frontier world, by joining the militias, or participating in the administration of the pueblos. Even if under a new form of imperial control, they could improve their lives economically and politically, while still being connected to the rest of the missions through the highly-integrated trade that took place in the margins of the Uruguay River. In a frontier area where people were used to crossing limits, being under Portuguese authority may have not felt like such a profound change and could actually bring some benefits.

The fluidity of the frontier meant constant adjustment, and as contexts changed, alliances had to be renewed. When the May Revolution came, a new period of adjustment took place. Recent research has shown that the new war dynamics established in the frontier region by 1811 made explicit the “unequal reciprocity” that marked the association between the Guaraní and the

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<sup>101</sup> Pereira Ribeiro, “Os Guaranis,” 101, 102.

<sup>102</sup> Pereira Ribeiro, *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Pereira Ribeiro, 93.

Portuguese.<sup>104</sup> In a visit to a *povoado* (town) founded by lieutenant José de Abreu in Inhanduí, a region south of the “Sete Povos,” Brazilian politician and military José Joaquim Machado de Oliveira talked about a visible separation between the city folks and the Guaraní militia. While residents were constructing a chapel and organizing all the buildings in the available highland areas, the Guaraní *aldeia*, established in the lowlands, was surrounded by the town’s sewage system, in a clear demonstration of not just lack of integration into that society, but actually, of exclusion.<sup>105</sup> In addition, if we look at the military situation in the actual Portuguese territory of Missões, we see that the further the Portuguese meddled in the frontier, the more the Indigenous groups in the area were affected, undermining economic stability.

As war became imminent, Indigenous peoples were drafted in high numbers. Studies indicate that actually 76% of those who were drafted were farmers.<sup>106</sup> That in itself meant a disruption in agricultural production, as less hands were available to work in the fields. To make economic matters worse, the army used the crops cultivated by the Guaraní to feed the soldiers, as well as selling the surplus at the border to acquire horses. Not only were they losing a significant portion of their workers, but their food storage, if it existed, was decreasing at high rates. At various levels and by different means, these people were paying the price of a war that would hardly bring any advantages to them if the Portuguese won. As their economic gains were being threatened, and the unequal reciprocity that permeated their relationship became more

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<sup>104</sup> Mariana Milbradt Corrêa, “A ocupação da fronteira meridional do Império Luso a partir do aldeamento da população indígena missioneira,” *Travesía, Suplemento Electrónico N° 2: VIII* (AUGM, 2017): 3-25.

<sup>105</sup> Source mentioned in Milbradt Corrêa, “A ocupação,” 19.

<sup>106</sup> Pereira Ribeiro, “Os Guaranis,” 103.

explicit, their fragile alliance was likely in danger. The Portuguese were well aware of it and were considering removing the population from the frontier area when Andresito approached.<sup>107</sup>

### **Bringing Light to the “Naturales” of the *Pueblos Orientales***

“Now then, beloved brothers of mine, open your eyes and see. See what is approaching, see what already shines on you. It is the beautiful light of freedom.”<sup>108</sup> With those words, in a sort of prophetic way, Andresito addressed the people living on the eastern side of the Uruguay River. Since they were his brothers, he needed their help. As his family, he was bringing them something in return.<sup>109</sup> To make those benefits explicit, Andresito wrote a letter – an exhortation – to be circulated in the “Oriental Pueblos of Misiones.” In doing so, he left us with a document that registers much of the rhetoric used to attract their support, as well as the ideas behind his operation.<sup>110</sup> It combines Artigas’ teachings with Andresito’s own experiences as someone born and raised in the missions’ area, and a plan for what he imagined as their future. As we saw with the reincorporation of Concepción and Candelaria, expanding the territory under his control was important for both Artigas and Andresito as he took the leadership of Misiones. As early as then, we can find evidence of their intention of including the eastern pueblos in the idea of Misiones as

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<sup>107</sup> Exhortation from Andrés Guacurarí y Artigas, Ciudadano, Capitán de Blandengues y Comandante General de la Provincia de Misiones to the Naturales of la Banda Oriental, 1816, in *AA* vol. 29, 44. Original also consulted, in Archivo General de la Nación de Montevideo, Fondo Museo Histórico, tomo 11. “Para que los Portugueses no los arreen para adentro,” said Andresito.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. “Ahora, pues, amados hermanos míos, abrid los ojos y ved que se os acerca y alumbra ya, la hermosa luz de la libertad,”

<sup>109</sup> Capucine Boidin has identified the original expression “brother” in the letters of Belgrano being translated to Guaraní as “ore amo pende reko háva”, which in a literal translation would mean “we are your relatives.” The author uses the word “allegado” in Spanish. Capucine Boidin, “Textos de la modernidad política en guaraní (1810-1813),” *Corpus* [En línea], Vol 4, No 2 (2014). URL: <http://corpusarchivos.revues.org/1322>

<sup>110</sup> It should be mentioned that we work with the Spanish version of this exhortation, which is the one available to us. We can imagine it is an adaptation of the one sent to the pueblos on the other side of the Uruguay. It is likely that it has survived because Andresito sent a copy to Artigas, thus the reason for it being in Spanish.

a political body. In fact, Artigas had included a claim over the eastern missions in the instructions written to the Banda Oriental representatives before the General Assembly organized by Buenos Aires in 1813.<sup>111</sup> He was constantly encouraging Andresito to reach out to “the other side,” recommending peaceful and constant communication to let them know about the “fate that [was] threatening them.”<sup>112</sup> When it was time to seek their help, Andresito laid out the reasons why he was there, what was at stake, and what the “Naturales” from the eastern Pueblos could gain from it. We will first look at the elements contained in the exhortation, and then insert them into the context of the missions and indigenous experience in order to explain how he sought to craft his leadership and a call for the sovereignty of Misiones.

Legitimized by “the grace of God,” Andresito had come to “liberate the seven pueblos of this shore,” he argued.<sup>113</sup> As “Captain of Blandengues and General Commander of the province of Misiones,” he had had the honor of “removing [some communities] from the governance of Buenos Aires, and rescuing others from the yoke of Paraguay,” as both were “enemies of the cause that I defend,” the maintenance of their local sovereignty. As he “sensed” the pueblos on the other side were under a similar threat, he had decided to confront the Portuguese, who had been tyrannically “enslaving” the Indigenous people for the past 15 years. The Portuguese were not the only enemy, as both they and the Spanish, with their “intrigues,” had imposed “great stagnation, misery, and other misfortunes during [their] governments.” It was urgent that they “break the chains of [that] tyranny.” Anchored in a strong notion of self-government, Andresito offered to “give the Pueblos the full enjoyment of their rights, so that each Pueblo can govern

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<sup>111</sup> Artigas to the representatives of the Pueblo Oriental. Montevideo, April 13, 1813 in *AA* vol. 11, 103.

<sup>112</sup> José Artigas to Andrés Artigas. June 15, 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 4.

<sup>113</sup> Exhortation in *AA* vol. 29, 44-45. Citations that follow during this paragraph are taken from this document. We only have the Spanish version available, but it is likely that it was also circulated in Guaraní.



itself without the influence of the Spanish, Portuguese, or any other province.” He was offering them their “freedom,” as well as the protection of his army. Furthermore, he wanted them to “restore their jobs lost in 1801.” The word used (*trabajos*) could be a reference to the political positions that the Guaraní lost after they were incorporated by the Portuguese, but it could also be a promise of economic prosperity in this very unstable context.

In Andresito’s discourse, we find carefully crafted elements that sought to establish a connection to the missionary past that the residents of Misiones shared. Similar to what we had seen in his communication to the sixteen occidental Pueblos, Andresito once again turned to religion to affirm his legitimacy, comparing himself to Moses and the liberation of the people of Israel.<sup>114</sup> In fact, religion seemed to have been a key component of what formed Andresito’s identity. We know of at least two priests who accompanied his army.<sup>115</sup> One of them, Franciscan Friar José Acevedo, his secretary and “compañero” who even took the lead in combat when needed, was influential in much of his writings.<sup>116</sup> It is possible to imagine that Andresito saw Christianity as an element of connection with his fellow residents of the mission pueblos. Another element that hailed from the time of the missions was the respect for the autonomy of each Cabildo, which was strengthened by the elimination of the “*departamentos*” established after the Jesuit expulsion.

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<sup>114</sup> The strong use of religious arguments has been noticed by Lucia Sala, en “Democracia durante las guerras por la independencia en Hispanoamérica,” in Frega and Islas, *Nuevas Miradas en torno al artiguismo*, 109.

<sup>115</sup> On February 23, 1816, Artigas mention the presence of father don Ignacio León Moreira accompanying Andresito’s troops, in *AA* vol. 29, 28.

<sup>116</sup> Historians such as Francisco Bauzá and Ana Frega suggest that this document was in fact produced by Franciscan friar José Acevedo, who accompanied Andresito in all his movements. There is no way of proving its authorship, but even if Acevedo was in fact the one penning these words, we can still infer that it was the message Andresito wanted to convey, since he was the one signing it, in Ana Frega, *Pueblos y soberanía*, 280-281.

The mention of the hardships faced by the Indigenous population, through the territorial and political reconfiguration after the Jesuit expulsion, was another key element of this shared struggle that formed their identity, and that he wished to highlight while building their relationship. When mentioning both the Spanish and Portuguese, but particularly the latter, he established the condition of oppression that united the indigenous experience. Andresito made it explicit that they, the Naturales, were the sufferers of that oppression, through ongoing colonialism. Mentions of “misery” and “ill” akin to the “crudest slavery” expressed their suffering, which undercut the possibility of economic prosperity in the area.<sup>117</sup> These elements, the product of a “continued struggle,” would provoke a “shared understanding” about what needed to be done in the region, and perhaps lead to “collective political action,” framed under the expectation of a restoration of the Pueblos’ rights.<sup>118</sup> As Andresito identified this as an ongoing threat, in his words there was a recognition that the fight for independence was still incomplete. Furthermore, in mentioning threats coming from other provinces, he identified new enemies of the sovereignty of the pueblos, in a possible reference to Buenos Aires, and even perhaps Paraguay, dangers that needed to be addressed.

Besides the justifications used by the *Comandante*, identifying the specific target of these messages uncovers yet another layer of the leadership that Andresito was trying to construct. As stated in the same exhortation, the messenger selected to spread his ideas was Miguel Antonio Curaeté, who would travel through the pueblos, “gathering all of the naturales (...) who, infiltrated by the sweet voice of freedom, want[ed] to follow the *Patria*’s flag.” If the intention

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<sup>117</sup> “Pues habrán ya experimentado los Pueblos los grandes atrasos, miserias y males en los gobiernos del Español y Portugués.” Exhortation of Andresito to the Naturales of Misiones – Banda Oriental, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 44.

<sup>118</sup> Tilly, Conclusion to *Riots in the Cities*, 233.

was for all the Naturales to join, the exhortation was addressed to some very specific people. In the one copy that we have available, the intended recipients were Captain Vicente Tiraparé, Justo Tuebay, Cecilio Tiraparé, Ignacio Tiraparé, and Fernando Tuebay, members of a powerful family that administered São Borja. To understand the significance of this address, it is helpful to look back at how Guaraní leadership had been transformed during the mission experience and following the Jesuit expulsion.

### **Rebuilding Guaraní Leadership**

For the duration of the Jesuit presence in the Río de la Plata, the participation of the Guaraní in the political leadership of reductions had happened through a hybrid administrative structure that allowed for the maintenance of *cacicazgo* relationships based on kinship and reciprocity, as well as the emergence of an enlightened bureaucratic body that worked in the Cabildo and more closely with the missionaries.<sup>119</sup> In this way, it was possible to maintain traditional structures of leadership while opening new opportunities for social advancement.<sup>120</sup> As colonization advanced, the formation of Indigenous militias became a key element of defense on the Spanish frontier.<sup>121</sup> In the case of the Río de la Plata, their participation was so massive that it is estimated that more than a third of the male Indigenous population participated in the *Comunero*

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<sup>119</sup> Wilde, “Entre las tipologías políticas,” 19–54.

<sup>120</sup> Eduardo Neumann, *Letra de índio. Cultura Escrita, Comunicação e Memória Indígena nas Reduções do Paraguai* (Sao Paulo: Nhanduti, 2015).

<sup>121</sup> Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 33.

revolt of 1724.<sup>122</sup> The double avenue of authority seen in the administration of the reductions repeated itself during the organization of this new military structure. If in the first stages of missionary settlement caciques occupied the post of military chief, by the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century records indicate a rising presence of military leaders from outside the *cacicazgo* units.<sup>123</sup> We see, then, the emergence of a novel kind of leadership formed in spaces created by the colonial structure that rivaled with pre-existing ones.

The changes that came with the Jesuit expulsion and the reforms at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century contributed to this process of transformation in authority. While Barbara Ganson argues that significant flight from reductions intensified the erosion of *cacicazgo* power, Guillermo Wilde proposes that the influence acquired by the more enlightened indigenous leadership born within the *cabildo* institution dwindled after the Jesuits' removal, as the colonial administration favored contact with caciques as a strategy to insert themselves into the administration of communities.<sup>124</sup> One way or another, or perhaps through a combination of both in different areas, the reality was that several conflicts among the indigenous elite were documented during this period. The new legislation that allowed for the "liberation" of a select part of this group, as we

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<sup>122</sup> Guillermo Wilde, "Jesuit Missions and the Guaraní Ethnogenesis. Political Interactions, Indigenous Actors, and Regional Networks on the Southern Frontier of the Iberian Empires," in *Big Water: The Making of the Borderlands between Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay*, ed. Jacob Blanc, Frederico Freitas, and Zephyr L. Frank, (Tucson, Arizona, Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2018), 63.

<sup>123</sup> Kazuhiza Takeda, "Cambio y continuidad del liderazgo indígena en el *cacicazgo* y en la milicia de las misiones jesuíticas: Análisis cualitativos de las listas de indios Guaraníes," *Tellus* 12, no. 23 (2012): 59–79.

<sup>124</sup> Ganson, *The Guaraní Under Spanish rule*, 128; Wilde, *Religión y poder*, 227.

have seen, intensified the disputes, as the communities were expected to sustain these families for a period of time.<sup>125</sup>

During the revolutionary period, new kinds of leadership emerged. We should remember that Andresito himself was neither a cacique nor a Cabildo bureaucrat, but rather had been formed in yet another setting of this multilayered context of frontier – that of cattle ranching and horse riding in the shores of the Uruguay river, which converted many men into military leaders as the wars of independence intensified in the zone. Besides Andresito, other Guaraní leaders such as Pantaleón Sotelo and Francisco Javier Sití came from that frontier world.<sup>126</sup> It was a moment of marked reconfiguration of indigenous leadership. While Cabildo corregidores and *cacicazgos* were still an “important element in the organization of the region’s territoriality,”<sup>127</sup> as evidenced by Andresito’s interest in addressing particularly the Tiraparé family of São Borja, new political participants emerged in Indigenous communities, providing an opportunity for alliances to be redefined.

As in his previous military movements, Andresito worked tirelessly to establish his leadership, and did so using multiple strategies. For his subordinates in the Guaraní army, he presented himself as a guiding figure, who taught them about the extension of their rights, and balanced reciprocity with open violence to keep their loyalty, in a vertical relationship. In his interactions with various Cabildo administrations, and the authorities in Candelaria and

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<sup>125</sup> This process was seen in other parts of the Spanish colony as well, such as the Andes. For studies that highlight the loss of power suffered by the curacas, see Scarlett O’Phelan Godoy, *Kurakas sin sucesiones: del cacique al alcalde de indios. Perú y Bolivia 1750-1835* (Cuzco: Centro de Estudios Regionales Andinos Bartolomé de Las Casas, 1997); David T Garrett, *Shadows of empire: the indian nobility of Cusco, 1750-1825* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>126</sup> Machón and Cantero, *Andrés Guacurari y Artigas*, 17.

<sup>127</sup> Wilde, “Jesuit Missions and the Guaraní Ethnogenesis,” 61

Concepción, his rhetoric changed. He recognized their knowledge regarding their rights, and moved away from the paternalist and didactic tone he used with the Guaraní army. It is in Concepción and Candelaria as well that we find evidence of Andresito's interests in forging an indigenous *misionero* elite that combined diverse sources of authority. We had mentioned the incorporation of Corregidor Manuel Cayré and Ignacio Mbaibé to Andresito's forces. Both remained actively by his side until his last days of conflict. While the Mbaibé *cacicazgo* had remained in Concepción since at least 1677, the same was not true for Manuel Cayré, whose last name appeared under several different *cacicazgos*, which may suggest that his position of authority had been reached through the development of the kind of bureaucratic body that we saw before.<sup>128</sup> After incorporating the territories, Andresito designated Mbaibé as Comandante of Candelaria, honoring his position of leadership within the Guaraní structure and his military experience, while Cayré remained as the Corregidor of Concepción. Mbaibé's family had been one of the few to receive their "liberation" through the reforms of Avilés in 1804, demonstrating that Andresito's leadership reached several spheres of influence as he crafted this Guaraní *misionero* power structure.<sup>129</sup>

In his contacts with the eastern Pueblos, Andresito maintained a tone that demonstrated his respect towards the leaders on that side of the Misiones territory. Rather than establishing a vertical relationship, he demonstrated his interest in a horizontal alliance. For example, he conversed with the Cabildos and caciques in language that produced a familial ideal, but instead

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<sup>128</sup> In 1801, we can find Cairé (Cahiré, Cairé) under the *cacicazgo* of Santiago Ñeenguirú (the Cayres had been under various *cacicazgos* since the 17th century). Kazuhisa Takeda, "Los padrones de indios guaraníes de las misiones jesuíticas (1656-1801): análisis dinámico y comparativo desde la óptica de los *cacicazgos*," *Surandino Monográfico*, no. 1 (2016): 66-105.

<sup>129</sup> Wilde, *Religión y poder*, 323.

of addressing them as his “sons,” as he did with his subordinates in the Guaraní army, he treated these men on the other side as his “brothers.”<sup>130</sup> In order to demonstrate his interest in respecting their local autonomy, he went further, and called them his “equals” (*semejantes*).<sup>131</sup> In an effort to make that explicit, in a rare occasion in this world that mostly required him to prioritize his adoptive last name, in the exhortation he included his full name, Andrés *Guacurarí y Artigas*. Besides qualifying their alliance, this appeal to familial notions also worked, once again, to rescue a past element that they had in common, that of a respect for kinship that had characterized Guaraní relations before and during colonization and helped solidify leadership in the missions.<sup>132</sup> Along with that, came the element of reciprocity, also fundamental in the Guaraní and missionary structure.

As Andresito constructed his rhetoric of leadership and a vision for Misiones, he was able to take those traditional elements that worked for the past reality of the missions and insert them into the context of the present revolutionary movement. Occupying a place of authority that had been made available to him by this same context and through his connection with the Criollo world, he recognized the value of kinship, reciprocity, and local autonomy and, with the help of Artigas, managed to use those elements to approximate the authority of Indigenous leaders, which was grounded in traditional *cacicazgos* and also colonial administration.<sup>133</sup> As he circulated through the frontier and through various Pueblos he constructed himself as a leader who was able to offer military protection as well as aspirations of freedom. He looked to the past

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<sup>130</sup> Andrés Artigas to José Artigas. Candelaria, September 14, 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 9.

<sup>131</sup> “Yo vengo á ampararos, vengo á buscaros, porque sois mis semejantes y hermanos,” in *AA* vol. 29, 44.

<sup>132</sup> Wilde, “Entre las tipologías políticas,” 23.

<sup>133</sup> Julia Sarreal has highlighted how the Guaraní understanding of leadership opened ways for the emergence of “charismatic leaders.” Sarreal, *The Guaraní and Their Missions*, 63.

for a shared identity and translated that previous struggle into a joint fight to guarantee and expand rights in the present. As he brought these leaders together, he reinforced the existence of a political entity that he saw for the territory of Misiones, one that could exist because of this shared past, but that needed this context and opportunity of the present to fully emerge.

### **To the Last Drop of Blood: Seeking to Recover the Lost Land**

With this renewed alliance solidifying, Andresito and the Guaraní army advanced towards the eastern pueblos on September 12, 1816. After a few minor setbacks, his forces, who had been boosted by those of Captain Miño and Pantaleón Sotelo, conquered all the missions except for São Borja, where Francisco das Chagas Santos had strategically stationed his troops since 1811.<sup>134</sup> In the thirteen days that São Borja was under siege, several skirmishes with casualties occurred. Demanding their surrender and trying to avoid the death of “innocent men,” Andresito explained his motivation to the commanding Portuguese General: he had come to “rescue” what the Portuguese had “taken” from the Indigenous in a “ignominious way” in 1801, “our native (...) territories.”<sup>135</sup> Appealing once again to history, Andresito restated that the land “belongs to the Naturales Misioneros, to whom correspond the right to govern it.” In this exchange, the Guaraní leader was confirming the final element that formed their identity, which now had a name: *misionero*. It was a claim to an ancestral territory on behalf of the Indigenous people of the missions who had lived there for centuries. This rhetoric was not new, as it was very similar

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<sup>134</sup> A first Portuguese invasion had taken place then, as we mentioned in previous chapters.

<sup>135</sup> Original reads: "Para evitar esta gran efusión de sangre que amenaza será mejor que rinda V. S las armas y entregue el único Pueblo que me falta, pues vengo a rescatarlo, no habiendo otro fin que me mueva a derramar la ultima gota de sangre, sino lo nuestro nativo quitado con toda ignominia el año 1801, como a V. S. debe ser notorio, ni se le ocultará que estos territorios son de los Naturales Misioneros a quienes corresponde de derecho el gobernarlos, siendo tan libres como las demas Naciones." Andrés Artigas to the General of the troops of San Borja, Francisco das Chagas Santos. Cuartel Sitiador, September 25, 1816, in *AA* vol. 31, 361.



to the one used by the Guaraní during the war that followed the Treaty of Madrid.<sup>136</sup> We do not know whether Andresito had knowledge of this previous claim, but his interpretation certainly demonstrated the need to look at the past to assert territorial sovereignty.

The element of ethnic and political fragmentation is often mentioned by those who study the experience of the missions.<sup>137</sup> This was, of course, complicated by the expulsion of the Jesuits and the migrations that followed into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Guillermo Wilde partially credits Belgrano's difficulty in mobilizing Guaraní groups precisely because of his inability to see them in a nuanced way.<sup>138</sup> The importance of keeping this fragmentation in mind is undeniable to properly understand the various facets of what was happening on the ground. But it is also important to remember that parts of this territory now divided by the Uruguay River and an imperial line were in fact connected through a significant portion of the colonial period. Many of the mission pueblos had estancias and "vaquerías," areas assigned to them to exploit the wandering cattle, that extended for long distances. The Jesuits of Yapeyú, for example, founded the Vaquería del Río Negro in 1702, in an area that encompassed a vast territory well beyond Uruguay river, reaching half of what is today Uruguay. Towards the north, in what would be today Rio Grande do Sul, was located the "Vaquería de los Pinares." As these production units entered into the export economy along with other commodities, the circulation of goods provided opportunities for connections in the territory.<sup>139</sup> Even if illegally, this exchange continued into

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<sup>136</sup> Territorial claims during the Guaranitic war were founded on a "historical narrative" that rescued the mythical moment of foundation of the reductions. God had created the reductions and given them to their ancestors. He then had sent religious men (the Jesuits) so that the Guaraní could learn to be Christians. In Pereira Ribeiro, "Os Guaranis," 114.

<sup>137</sup> Diego Bracco, "Charrúas, bohanes, pampas y guenoa minuanos en los pueblos de Misiones," in *Folia Histórica del Nordeste*. 27, (Sept-Dec 2016): 199-212.

<sup>138</sup> Wilde, *Religión y poder*, 322, 332.

<sup>139</sup> Juan Carlos Garavaglia, *Economía, Sociedad y regiones* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 1987), 165.

the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the Portuguese occupied the region. It is fair to imagine that as these commercial exchanges took place, they also promoted an approximation among the people involved in it, and the various Pueblos. What the European states had viewed and imposed as imperial limits were a blurry line for those who inhabited it the region and who actually could see more what they had in common than what divided them, as was true for Andresito.

Besides providing arguments to support his demand for the return of indigenous land, in the exchange carried out with Chagas Santos, Andresito made another very explicit statement, one that disclosed the extent of political sovereignty that he envisioned for Misiones and those residents under his umbrella. It was not only that the Naturales Misioneros had the right to govern this territory however they saw fit. It was also that they were “as free as any other Nation” to do it.<sup>140</sup> Andresito appears to have been using the term “nation” in the sense of a political community connected through the obedience of a common authority and its laws, a connotation that had been around since the previous century but was consolidated during the wars of the independence.<sup>141</sup> He was, therefore, making use of a very contemporary term to define Misiones as a political community with territorial and political sovereignty. Furthermore, he was equating it to any other political entity existing or emerging in that period of reconfiguration in America. If necessary, he argued, he was willing “to shed the last drop of blood” to defend it.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Andrés Artigas to the General of the troops of San Borja, Francisco das Chagas Santos. Cuartel Sitiador, September 25, 1816, in *AA* vol. 31, 361. Artigas seem to have collaborated with Andresito’s needs to state Misiones’ sovereignty. On a letter from June 20, 1816, Artigas told Andresito that the Portuguese “did not see us [likely the Banda Oriental] as an independent nation, with men who are free and capable of deciding their own fate, but rather as slaves and always dependent upon them.” José Artigas to Andrés Artigas. June 20, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 42.

<sup>141</sup> Nora Souto and Fabio Wasserman, “Nación,” in *Lenguaje y revolución. Conceptos políticos clave en el Río de la Plata, 1780-1850*, ed. Noemí Goldman (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2008), 84.

<sup>142</sup> Andrés Artigas to the General of the troops of San Borja, Francisco das Chagas Santos. Cuartel Sitiador, September 25, 1816, in *AA* vol. 31, 361.

### **The Impact of Andresito's Message: Political Reception**

The Portuguese forces in the town of São Borja were about to give in after almost two weeks of siege. However, Chagas Santos' position was strengthened when his subordinate lieutenant colonel José de Abreu surprised the Guaraní army as it attempted to enter town across muddy waters. After a bloody confrontation, Andresito and his troops were forced to withdraw, recrossing the Uruguay River to the western shore, under intense gunfire.<sup>143</sup> Despite this loss, and the inability to seize control over the last standing ground, we find evidence that Andresito's words had been quite effective in getting the attention of the people living in the missions, and provoked a significant military mobilization that expanded support.

Leading a flotilla up the Uruguay River to go meet Andresito in São Borja, Captain Justo Yegros highlighted the "affection" with which he was received by residents all over the coast.<sup>144</sup> When confronted by José de Abreu's troops in Ibicuí days before, Yegros could hear among his men cries of "death to the tyrants who try to oppress us!".<sup>145</sup> The similarity between the sentiments reflected in this report and the rhetoric used by Andresito to convoke *misioneros* on both shores is quite remarkable. Narrating the entrance of the Guaraní army in the eastern pueblos, Diego Arouche de Moraes Lara, Infantry captain of the São Paulo legion, explained that the "revolt of the Indians" had been in the works for some time, through "intrigue, seductions, influences of liberty, secretly managed by the *Artiguenhos* of the occidental missions."<sup>146</sup> He

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<sup>143</sup> Tenente Coronel José de Abreu to Brigadeiro Tomás da Costa Correa Rabelo e Silva, São Borja, October 8 1816, in *AA* vol. 31, 364-367.

<sup>144</sup> "El gran cariño," Justo Yegros to Andrés Artigas. September 15, 1816, in *AA* vol. 31, 357.

<sup>145</sup> "Mueran los tiranos que nos intentan oprimir." Justo Yegros to Andrés Artigas. September 1816, in *AA* vol. 31, 357, 360.

<sup>146</sup> Diego Arouche de Moraes Lara, capitão da Infantaria da Legião de São Paulo, "Memoria da campanha de 1816, escrita em 1817" in *Revista trimestral de Historia e Geographia*. n. 7. (October 1845): 140 [hereafter RHG].

highlighted the “mediation of the Indians of that country [the eastern missions], facilitated by the coincidence of the tongue and secret communication.” A year before, Andresito was giving hints of this sort of interaction with the other side, as he knew of the existence of “Indians addicted to the system” in São Borja and was planning to send an ally, a skilled horse rider known as Zuasnabar, to appropriate “supplies and ammunition” with their help.<sup>147</sup> When Andresito decided it was the moment to advance towards the Pueblos on the eastern shore, captain Lara believed that their success was made possible by “rebellious Indians of the Militia Regiment.”<sup>148</sup> These men, who were guarding the posts, “switched sides in great numbers” to join the Artiguist cause, and “gave way to the entrance of Artiguist troops.” The desertion in the militias was so significant that it practically made the regiment “useless,” Lara argued. In fact, when the Guaraní army arrived in São Borja, it had doubled in size, with troops being estimated by different sources at about 2,000 – not counting the men of Sotelo.<sup>149</sup> Inside the town, only about 200 men remained to resist, mostly Portuguese Grenadiers, but also “a few Guaraní.”<sup>150</sup>

One of the most significant cases of desertion from the Portuguese army was that of the troops under the control of Captain Vicente Tiraparé, who we had seen before as one of the targets of Andresito’s exhortation.<sup>151</sup> During the siege, Tiraparé, who had a career in the Portuguese forces, joined the Guaraní army along with at least 100 men, in a clear demonstration that Andresito’s message had resonated. Having been presented with the option of joining

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<sup>147</sup> José Artigas to Andrés Artigas, Paysandú, June 27, 1815 in *AA* vol. 28, 250.

<sup>148</sup> Diego Arouche, “Memoria...” in *RHG*: 319.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*; Tenente Coronel José de Abreu to Brigadeiro Tomás da Costa Correa Rabelo e Silva, São Borja, October 8 1816, in *AA* vol. 31, 367.

<sup>150</sup> Brigadier F. das Chagas Santos to ten. General Curado, October 8 1816 in *RHG*: 281.

<sup>151</sup> We learn this from Francisco das Chagas Santos in a communication to Joaquim Xavier Curado. Santo Tomé, February 13<sup>th</sup> 1817, in *RHG*, Appendice à memoria da campanha de 1816, 299.

Andresito, he weighed his alternatives, as it had become the common practice in that frontier zone, and switched sides. As with some of the Guaraní from the eastern pueblos who decided to help the Portuguese control the territory, the Indigenous people in this frontier region were once again making a conscious decision about where to place their loyalty, this time perhaps not because of the prospect of economic gain, at least in the short-run, but anchored in the possibility of joining a political entity, a province, that would allow for their full exercise of sovereignty, and maybe, in the future, economic prosperity.

At this point, we can see all the elements that Andresito identified as components of the identity that united the Indigenous peoples, predominantly the Guaraní of Misiones and were to exist in their envisioned state. It was based on a past of shared experiences that included life in the missions and also the struggle against Spanish and Portuguese domination. While being united through this shared identity, they had the right to administer a specific territory, defined by their long-time presence there. This administration was to contemplate notions of reciprocity, in a horizontal alliance, particularly with this indigenous elite. It was also accompanied by a value of local autonomy that fit well with the federal perspective proposed by Artigas and that was inspired by the *pactista* understanding of retroversion of sovereignty, anchored in a contract between multiple corporate bodies, in an interesting combination of ancient and modern “political logics.”<sup>152</sup> In this way, Andresito crafted a rhetoric that combined elements of appeal to the Indigenous peoples of Misiones, but that were inserted into a logic that spoke to the context of independence and defense of the territory, and aligned with federal notions regarding sovereignty. Joining Andresito, the Guaraní army, and the Artiguist cause in moving against the

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<sup>152</sup> Mauricio Bruno, “El lenguaje de la revolución. Los textos de agitación política en la revolución oriental (1811-1820)” in Ana Frega et al., *Los Orientales en Armas*, 97.

Portuguese was a call to rewrite their past of oppression, a call for independence, and a call for sovereignty, they proposed.

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The Guaraní army's inability to occupy São Borja forced Andresito to retreat to the western part of Misiones, having suffered significant loss of lives. The imbalance of resources and training in the armies became evident, as Artigas' defense strategy had failed on two other fronts as well. With the excuse of preventing any further attacks, but following a plan that had been laid out previously, on January of 1817 Chagas Santos took the offensive. With orders to ransack and burn, he destroyed several mission pueblos in the Mesopotamia. La Cruz, Yapeyú, Santo Tomé, Concepción, Santa María, San Javier, Mártires. San José, Apóstoles and San Carlos were spared destruction and only looted. As the Portuguese troops arrived in the pueblos they mostly found them empty. With most of his forces redeployed south to support Artigas, Andresito preferred to avoid open battle, and instead traveled through the Pueblos to warn residents of the imminent danger. As he traveled south towards the Miriñay river, most residents abandoned their houses to join his convoy looking for protection. After this devastation, Chagas returned to São Borja with significant booty. To the north, after Ignacio Mbaibé was forced to abandon Candelaria for the same reason, the Paraguayan administration aggressively returned to the area and burned down the Pueblos of Santa Ana, Loreto, San Ignacio Miní and Corpus. After some months, Andresito managed to gather his troops, and one by one recovered the Pueblos that had been lost on the western side. In response, Chagas once again crossed the river with his troops and conducted an attack in July, but was defeated in Apóstoles. Such was the destruction

in the territory, though, that Andresito had to found Asunción del Cambay as the new capital, populating it with the survivors who managed to escape the brutality of the invaders. Most of the pueblos never recovered from the attacks. Despite another attempt in March of 1818, the Portuguese could not manage to make a comeback, and focused on controlling the eastern side of Misiones, which was never again a target for the Guaraní army. The disparity of resources between the armies did not allow for the incorporation of that area into Andresito's envisioned state. Still, the Guaraní army, with the orientation and support from both the Provincia Oriental and forces from Corrientes, was able to block the advancement of the Portuguese in the territory west of the Uruguay River, impacting the delineation of borders that stretch to current days. Their consolidation was very much a product of the engagement of Indigenous groups in the defense of their sovereignty, while searching for better political and, in the long run, economic conditions.

The Portuguese invasion played an important role in the construction of Andresito's vision for a provincial state for Misiones, as it evidenced the oppression to which residents had been subjected in this zone of frontier. His knowledge and personal experience directly impacted in the mobilization of support and allowed for the extension of his leadership among Indigenous groups. However, the Portuguese presence also served to expose the fragility of Artigas' project of political inclusion, as some commanders of rural towns offered their support to the invaders. The origin of the invasion itself made it visible that, for at least part of the rioplatense elites, more important than guaranteeing independence was to assure that the ideals of local autonomy did not grow roots in the Littoral. To understand the variables at play during this moment, it is useful to look back and explore some of the motives behind the Portuguese military incursion. They demonstrate that, even more so, for a particular elite group, it was necessary to curb any

attempts that contemplated such a deep expansion of citizenship defended by Artigas and Andresito.

***Being Americano: The Limits of Political Expansion***

It was no secret that Portugal had always been interested in re-establishing its territorial claims to in this region of the Río de la Plata and used every moment of political instability in former Spanish territories to do so. In 1815, a new momentum emerged, with a somewhat unexpected support that united the ambitions of the Portuguese court with the frustrations and intolerance of a group of Buenos Aires and Montevideo politicians displaced by recent events. After being ousted from the Directory in 1815, Carlos María de Alvear relocated to Rio de Janeiro and worked from there to regain influence in the region. Alvear counted on the support of Manuel José García, who he had previously appointed as ambassador to Brazil. Helping them was Nicolás de Herrera, an experienced Montevideo politician and diplomat who had participated in the Bonapartist Bayonne Assembly. In Buenos Aires he served as a member of the First Triumvirate and in the Directory constituted by Alvear. Despite their participation in the revolutionary governments, these men had very close relationship with imperial powers. García had been a known “Carlotista,” that is, he defended the idea that Carlota Joaquina, sister of Ferdinand 7<sup>th</sup> and wife of John 6<sup>th</sup> of Portugal, should assume authority over the Spanish American territory after the forced abdication of her brother by Napoleon in 1808.<sup>153</sup> Alvear, who had interestingly been born in one of the mission towns, became famous for his plea to the

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<sup>153</sup> Marcela Ternavasio, *Candidata a la corona: la infanta Carlota Joaquina en el laberinto de las revoluciones hispanoamericanas* (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2015).



British Ambassador in Brazil, Lord Strangford, in January of 1815, for the incorporation of the territory of the Río de la Plata to the British Crown. To him, it had become clear in the past five years that the “country” was not in condition to govern itself.<sup>154</sup> Meanwhile, Herrera was in constant contact with the Portuguese Ministry of State, and too believed that the incorporation to a monarchy was the best course of action for the Río de la Plata at this point.<sup>155</sup>

The trio Alvear, García, and Herrera worked tirelessly to encourage Portugal to send troops and put a halt to Artigas’ domination, proposals of expansion of rights, and the disruptive circulation of federal ideas in the Littoral region. Herrera was concerned over the alterations to the social hierarchy that Artigas and his men were promoting. In recounting the advancement of Artiguism in the Littoral to the Portuguese Ministry of State, Herrera’s rhetoric was profoundly marked by colonial-era prejudice based on racial lines. To him, one of the dangers of the revolutionary ideals was that it had led to divisions among “whites,” a likely reference to the provincial conflicts that unfolded after 1810.<sup>156</sup> “Whites” to Herrera were both Criollos and Spaniards, who had not shown solidarity to each other in the beginning of the independence era in 1810, but instead constructed ideas and images aimed at damaging one other’s reputations. Herrera believed that Spaniards had portrayed Criollos as “criminals, inept, cowards, and barbarians,” while Criollos saw Spaniards as “infamous tyrants.” While attacking each other, both groups, he claimed, had taught “the Indian, the Black, the Mulato” to insult and mistreat

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<sup>154</sup> Carlos María de Alvear to Lord Strangford, Buenos Aires, January 25, 1815.

<sup>155</sup> Nicolás Herrera to José Rondeau, Río de Janeiro, August 22, 1815 in *Archivo General de la Nación Argentina* [AGNA], Sala 7, Fondo y colección Andrés Lamas, colección de documentos, 1810-1841, legajo n° 36, as cited in Virginia Macchi, “Las armas de la revolución: el discurso político de los oficiales del ejército auxiliar del Perú (1810-1816),” in Dossier *La movilización militar y las formas de la política en el espacio rioplatense, 1810-1880* (Historiapolitica.com), 13, [https://historiapolitica.com/datos/foros/foro\\_movilizacionmilitar\\_macchi1.pdf](https://historiapolitica.com/datos/foros/foro_movilizacionmilitar_macchi1.pdf)

<sup>156</sup> Nicolás de Herrera to the Portuguese Ministry of State. Rio de Janeiro, July 19, 1815 in *AA* vol. 30, 11-16. Following citations from same letter.

their “masters and bosses,” in a clear demonstration that he understood that society was guided by a vertical axis of power markedly racialized.<sup>157</sup> Now, the “dogma of equality” defended by Artigas was enabling a war “between the rich and the poor; the master, the lord, the ones who command, [against] those who obey.” The “most respected White families [were] disappearing or being reduced to mendicancy,” in his perspective.<sup>158</sup> The foundation for these changes, Herrera believed, were the “pestilent doctrines of philosophers” that had “disorganized” society and politics and were now guiding the “multitude against any government.”<sup>159</sup>

Herrera was highly preoccupied with the changes introduced by the ideals of the revolution, and the impact that they would have for his class. As we saw in chapter 5, he was a figure of much influence and forged contacts with Ángel Fernández Blanco, one of the main opposers of Artiguism in Corrientes. As the son of an established family in the Banda Oriental, it is possible to imagine that Herrera feared economic losses from a possible agrarian reform that Artigas wanted to implement. Under the current circumstances, for him and his political group, it was preferable that the Río de la Plata suffered a new imperial invasion, rather than accepted ideas that would bring about fundamental changes to what they considered the correct social order. To Herrera, “republican ideas ... are contrary to the prosperity of such an immense country.”<sup>160</sup> Therefore, he urged the Portuguese Crown to act against the massive social disorder that he was describing. When attacks materialized a year later, then Director Juan Martín de Pueyrredón did not endorse them, but did not do anything to support Artigas or try to stop the

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 11. “Los Europeos Españoles, y su partido, presentaron como criminales, ineptos, cobardes y barbaros a los criollos, y acostumbraron al Indio, al Negro, al Mulato, a maltratar a sus amos y Patronos.”

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>160</sup> Herrera to the Portuguese Ministry of State. Rio de Janeiro, July 19, 1815 in *AA* vol. 30, 15.

Portuguese advancement either. Rather, he kept attacking the Artiguist forces in Santa Fe, Entre Ríos, and the Banda Oriental, and therefore forcing them to wage war in two different battlegrounds.

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The more the Artiguist project infiltrated in the countryside and set roots in the Littoral's popular groups, the more it attracted opposition from elite sectors. At one point, Andresito recognized that, as long as the Artiguist system as a whole remained under attack in the Mesopotamia, there would be no solid ground to consolidate the project for Misiones either. Starting in 1818, Andresito engaged with conflicts that went beyond the jurisdiction of Misiones, as to help guarantee the success of the regional alliance promoted by Artigas, and consequently the protection of local indigenous sovereignties. He actively sought to spread the ideals of the Liga, and his presence captivated considerable portions of the population in the countryside of Corrientes. At the same time, however, the Portuguese invasion made it clear that the possible fissures in the alliance went beyond economic interests. As Andresito made attempts to cross into the Criollo world and assert himself as a regional political authority, he was faced with resistance from some rural commanders, such as the Esquivel brothers from Caa Catí. Much of this challenge was a product of the constant discrimination that still marked social and political relationships after the May Revolution and prompted criollos to question indigenous rule.

This next section will explore some of the limitations that Andresito's authority faced as he circulated the Mesopotamia. His case demonstrates how the extension of political rights to popular groups was far from consolidated or normalized, even if ideas of equality were being constantly used by political leaders to mobilize support. Monica Quijada has highlighted the

difficulty with which Indigenous groups were met when trying to fully exert their sovereignty.<sup>161</sup> While it could very well be that the Indigenous peoples saw themselves as holders of that sovereignty, many times that same sovereignty was not recognized by other groups accustomed to holding positions of power. In several situations, Andresito's authority was questioned and disrespected. In fact, precisely because of the extent of political inclusion proposed and implemented by Artigas and embodied by Andresito, the Artiguist model in the Littoral began to deteriorate. While the defense of local sovereignties was beneficial to elites in face of Buenos Aires' centralist policies, the expansion of citizenship forced these same groups to face a radical social change, that eventually was amply rejected, unleashing a social war that marked the boundaries for this political expansion.

### **Expanding Frontiers of Authority**

In the first section of this chapter, we saw how Artigas received constant complaints from the people of Mandisoví, who insisted that Indigenous groups were destabilizing the region. Diving deeper into this episode provides a means for us to see the difficulties faced by Andresito as he sought to reorganize and administer Misiones, mobilize Indigenous groups, advance frontier control, and make decisions that economically impacted Criollo groups. In these moments, his power as *Comandante* was put to test.

The dispute over authority in the area of Mandisoví started when commander Manuel Antonio Ledezma, from Curuzú Cuatiá, a neighboring town, informed governor Méndez about rumors that the Indigenous peoples of Salto and Paysandú, on the eastern shore of the Uruguay

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<sup>161</sup> Monica Quijada, "Los límites del 'Pueblo soberano': territorio, nación y el tratamiento de la diversidad," in *Historia y Política* n. 13, (2005): 150.

River, were plotting to attack the region. As proof, Ledesma mentioned a letter between Andresito and Manduré, which had supposedly been intercepted by one of the commanders of Paysandú. To Ledezma, the letter reinforced these rumors that the “Indians” were out to kill “every white man,” under the pretext that the whole territory was “theirs.”<sup>162</sup> Ledesma requested that Méndez send ammunitions, in the name of his “Patriotism,” so that the town could defend itself from any attacks. These complaints were also directed to Artigas, who asked Andresito about the situation.<sup>163</sup> Andresito was very straightforward in denying these accusations and sought to find out more, since his “honor [was being] attacked.”<sup>164</sup> A few weeks later, he reported back to Artigas.<sup>165</sup>

After the expulsion of Jesuits, this area which had housed the former estancias of Yapeyú, had slowly been occupied by people from Corrientes. There was constant dispute over the territorial limits, and for this reason Manuel Belgrano had formally created and placed Curuzú Cuatia under the jurisdiction of Corrientes’, while Mandisoví should be governed by Misiones. When Andresito became commander of that territory, Artigas confirmed his authority over the area of Mandisoví. According to Andresito, instead of an actual threat of aggression by Indigenous people, what was happening was in fact a conflict over territorial and economic control. After Artigas ordered that the border with the Uruguay River be completely closed because of the imminence of Portuguese attacks, Andresito had taken measures to block any movements. This decision had infuriated the local residents, since it impeded the continuation of

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<sup>162</sup> Manuel Antonio Ledezma to Juan Bautista Méndez, March 30, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 170.

<sup>163</sup> Artigas to Andresito, April 12, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 33.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*; Andrés Artigas to José Artigas. April 15, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 33.

<sup>165</sup> Andrés Artigas to José Artigas. April 26, 1816, in *AA* vol. 29, 38.

a century-long illegal trade of “cattle and mounts with the other side of the Uruguay,” carried on by both Criollos and Indigenous peoples on both sides.<sup>166</sup> As a means of disrupting Andresito’s authority, the commanders on the frontier had appealed to the fear of an ethnic war that was present. They also used the imprecision of limits and jurisdictions as an strategy to question Andresito’s power, as the commander of Mandisoví, for example, claimed to be under the authority of Entre Ríos to reject his orders.<sup>167</sup> Either out of fear of economic loses, or because of a lack of respect for Andresito, Artiguist support was fragile in those towns, as Andresito identified Pedro Alem, the one person informing Ledesma, as not being “addicted to the cause.”<sup>168</sup>

While the situation on the frontier had a clear and important economic component to it, Andresito also identified how these commanders hesitated to obey him because of who he was.<sup>169</sup> It is not clear what Andresito was referring to, but to Artigas he confided it was very “sensitive” to him that these commanders not only ignored his orders, but also did not even care to reply, treating him with “contempt” (*menosprecio*). Andresito appeared to struggle with other leaders’ negative perception of him. The Guaraní commander told Governor Méndez that what moved him to act was his “aspiration for freedom” and the desire to be recognized as a “loyal American.”<sup>170</sup> That was the only reason why he had followed Artigas’ instructions and tightly closed the border. However, he was now realizing that, because of this decision, the groups

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., “El que yo haiga activado mi celo sobre esas costas lo atribuyen á levantamiento porque se les priva el cabe que ellos tenían por sus negocios.”

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Andrés Artigas to Juan Bautista Méndez. Candelaria, April 15, de 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 34.

<sup>169</sup> “Por quien soy.” Andrés Artigas to José Artigas. April 26, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 38.

<sup>170</sup> Andrés Artigas to Juan Bautista Méndez. Candelaria, April 15, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 34.

affected were perceiving him as a tyrant and oppressor.<sup>171</sup> What is more, he presented himself to Méndez as someone with “limited faculties,” and asked him to decide whether he could see any fault in his writings, as if that could justify how the commanders were reacting to him. It was clear in this situation that, as Andresito sought to employ the “American” side of his identity and receive the respect of all those who were defending one same cause, he faced open rejection. As the Guaraní army and the Comandante made excursions beyond Misiones, it became even clearer that, yes, economic loss played a role in driving people to defy his authority, but so did his ancestry.

### **The Mesopotamia in a “Social War”**

We started this chapter learning about the arrival of Andresito into Corrientes in August of 1818. His entrance there, followed by his 8-month rule, represented a crossroads in his performance not just as a Guaraní, or Indigenous leader, but as a regional leader charged with upholding the federal ideas that were key to the defense of sovereignty. If on the one hand his presence in the government could be seen as the consolidation of his power, on the other hand it was a sign of the resistance that was forming against the *Liga* and gaining force in the Littoral. Groups that had previously supported Artigas were now looking elsewhere for political solutions. After a period of relative advancement between 1815 and 1816, the conflicts with the Portuguese and the intensification of military demands made the cost of war, coupled with the extreme social changes that the elite groups were witnessing, too high for some groups. At the same time, more

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid, 35.

empowered Indigenous leaders kept circulating in the territory, testing that equilibrium even further.

Despite facing much skepticism of his authority, Andresito developed a seemingly positive relationship with the governors of Corrientes. When he was appointed Comandante of Misiones in 1815, José de Silva, then governor, welcomed his leadership in a kind manner, expressing their shared goals of pacifying both provinces, through “Liberty and Union”: “I celebrate it very much that it has fallen upon you [Usted] the command of these premises, for that I congratulate you and [know that] you can count on me in any circumstances.”<sup>172</sup> In a similar fashion, Juan Bautista Méndez, who returned as governor after Silva, actively collaborated with Andresito, and even consulted with him on matters of public order.<sup>173</sup> As external as well as internal challenges intensified around 1817 and 1818, the Guaraní leader promised Méndez to become a “key pillar” in securing the rights of the province.<sup>174</sup> Artigas had previously recommended that Andresito always kept a good relationship with Corrientes, since they were “pueblos hermanos” that “sustained the same system and are governed by the same principles.”<sup>175</sup> The solidification of this alliance was fundamental for the maintenance of Artiguism. Andresito understood this, and was ready to help should Méndez need.

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<sup>172</sup> “Yo celebro muy mucho que haya recaído en V. El mando de esos establecimientos, de ello le doy la enhorabuena y contando V. en todo acontecimiento con mi voluntad espero sus Comunicaciones.” José de Silva to Andresito. Corrientes, May 7, 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 54.

<sup>173</sup> Apparently, Méndez had written to Andresito, asking what to do with situations against the public order. Andresito advises Méndez: “el que la hizo deberá pagar”. Andrés Artigas to Juan Bautista Méndez. Santo Tomé, July 19, 1816 in *AA* vol. 31, 348.

<sup>174</sup> Andrés Artigas a José Artigas. Campo General Volante en San Antonio de Saladas, July 29, 1818 in *AA* vol. 37, 255.

<sup>175</sup> José Artigas to Andrés Artigas. June 20, 1816 in *AA* vol. 29, 42.



In a sort of inversion of the experience witnessed in 1814 when the city of Corrientes rejected support to the Artiguist cause but was pushed by the countryside to accept it, this time there was a positive relationship with at least some of the Capital politicians, but commanders in some towns started to resist. For example, after the incorporation of Candelaria in 1815, requests to guard the frontier on the Paraná river and deny the entrance of people from Paraguay who sought to purchase cattle were constantly ignored.<sup>176</sup> Similarly, when Comandante Mbaibé of Candelaria was escaping the invasion of Chagas Santos in 1817, his request for help was denied by Juan Mariano Esquivel, commander of Caa Catí, who instead openly negotiated and sought an alliance with the Portuguese forces.<sup>177</sup> While it is probable that economic factors played a factor in the uneven support, in the communication that circulated we start to see the rise of a social and ethnic argument used to justify this defiance to authority, particularly as Indigenous groups strengthened their capacity to participate in decisions.

In the context of the Portuguese attacks against Misiones, and in the spirit of regional collaboration, in May of 1818 Governor Méndez was organizing a unit to fortify the Guaraní army so that they could try, once again, to incorporate the Eastern Misiones. Méndez instructed Captain José Francisco Vedoya to march and combine forces with Andresito. Instead, Vedoya decided to use the forces to depose Méndez, install a new cabildo and call a congress. Knowing the importance of Corrientes for the League, Andresito considered that it was necessary to split his forces and help restore command. Artigas was under intense fire from the Portuguese in

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<sup>176</sup> José Artigas to the Cabildo of Corrientes. December 25 1815, in *AA* vol. 29, 122.

<sup>177</sup> Juan Mariano Esquivel (de Caacati) al Cabildo Gobernador de Corrientes. Arerunguá, February 11, 1817 in *AA* vol. 34, 43.; El Marqués de Alegrete to Ministro de Guerra Conde da Barca. Porto Alegre, July 24, 1817 in *AA* vol. 34, 374.; Francisco das Chagas Santos al General Joaquín Javier Curado, Cuartel de San Borja, April 14, 1817 in *AA*34, 83.; Cap. Francisco Antonio Fernandez narrates how Captain of Militias León Esquivel requested Portuguese help, in *RHG*: 306.

Paysandú. As to not distract him, Andresito did not inform Artigas, and of his own doing marched to Corrientes to provide help. His intention, he later narrated to his father, was to give an “example to the Correntinos, to Artigas, and to the entire world, of [his] actions.”<sup>178</sup>

As Andresito crossed the frontiers of Misiones and the indigenous world in July, he confronted demeaning views towards Indigenous people and his leadership. For example, Francisco Casado, commander of Caa Catí, refused to call him by his last name, and referred to him instead as “Andrés.”<sup>179</sup> To the Cabildo installed by Vedoya, Casado fiercely criticized Andresito’s pretensions of using his title in his letters, and thought it was an insult to his troops to have to fight alongside the “indios Misioneros”.<sup>180</sup> As social conflicts intensified, Andresito had become aware that Corrientes was not a safe haven for his indigenous alliance. The relationship between the *pueblos de indios* and the *pueblos de españoles* had always been one of submission of the former in that area. On his way to Corrientes, he mentioned the desire to rescue 300 *misioneros* who had been defeated in San Carlos and dispersed after its surrender. Since these people were wandering in the territory without formal residence, he felt they were in danger. A little while later, when passing by the town of Garzas, he saw the destruction that Vedoya had caused. Fearing that the Indigenous residents were robbing cattle to support the Artiguist troops in San Roque, a group of Criollo men – “los Piris de Ensenadas and Alférez Torres” – marched to the town of Garzas and assassinated practically every inhabitant, not sparing even women or children. Out of 60 people, only three little boys survived and were taken

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<sup>178</sup> Andrés Artigas to José Artigas. Campo Volante de Saladas, July 29, 1818 in *AA* vol. 37, 255. Original “No relacioné enteramente a V.E (...) me revestí de prudencia, oprimí este disvario, hasta que diese un ejemplo tanto a estos, a V.E y al mundo entero de que mis pasos solo se dirijian al primer objeto de nuestros desvelos.”

<sup>179</sup> Francisco Casado to Cabildo Gobernador de Corrientes, Mburucuya, July 11, 1818 in *AA* vol. 37, 244 (original in *Actas del Cabildo de Corrientes* t. 49, AGPC, 113).

<sup>180</sup> July 1818, *Actas del Cabildo de Corrientes* t. 49, f. 116, in AGPC.

to the city of Corrientes to become servants.<sup>181</sup> When Andresito finally arrived in the capital, after defeating Vedoya on the way, he took active measures to change the negative perception that residents of this city held about Indigenous people. To Artigas, he said: “if you had heard (...) the ignominy with which [Vedoya] treated us. (...) But the evil [he was doing] was not to me, instead, [it was] to his province.”<sup>182</sup>

### A Guarani Ruling Corrientes

In this scenario of open conflict with Portugal, a racially-charged social war within the region, and disputes between Criollo leaders, Andresito arrived in Corrientes. With him came a force of some 1,000 men. Correntino chronicler Manuel Florencio Mantilla described them, based on Fermín Félix Pampín’s diary, as a “terrifying and disgusting horde: an *indiada* barely clothed, filthy, ugly and with a ferocious aspect; some dressed in rags, others wearing ripped *chiripaes* (gaucho trousers), and yet others, covered with scraps of leather.”<sup>183</sup> This description makes clear the kinds of discourses that existed about Indigenous peoples in the Capital of Corrientes. After controlling the situation politically, as described in opening of this chapter, Andresito attempted strategies of inclusion into the Correntino society. For example, he organized plays, a common artifact used in the Jesuit missions to represent and reinforce social hierarchies, and balls.<sup>184</sup> A few members of the elite, mostly foreigners, attended these functions, but the majority refused to

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<sup>181</sup> D. Mantilla, *Memorias Pampín*, 68.

<sup>182</sup> Andrés Artigas to José Artigas. Campo Volante de Saladas, July 29, 1818 in *AA* vol. 37, 257. “Si V.E. huviese oydo las preparaciones q. tenia hecha Bedoya p. Nosotros, la innomimia con que nos ha tratado, pero no, el mal no me lo ha hecho ami, sino ásu Prov.”

<sup>183</sup> M. F. Mantilla, *Cronica historica*, 213.

<sup>184</sup> Wilde, *Religión y poder*, 209.

attend a performance by Indigenous actors, evidencing the limits of Andresito's acceptance in this society.

After failing to convince the Corrientes elite of his Americanidad, Andresito changed strategies, creating unprecedented moments that shook elite society to the core. The day after the ball that very few people attended, he convoked the elite men in the main plaza, and forced them to work an entire day under the sun picking up debris.<sup>185</sup> While Pampín highlights the violence behind Andresito and his associates' actions, the Postlethwaite sisters, young English ladies who lived with their merchant father in Corrientes during this time, found that "there was something laughable in the Indian's whim."<sup>186</sup> In a more nuanced but still condescending account of events than Pampín or Mantilla, the sisters narrated another impactful story. After having found several Indigenous children working as servants in the elite houses, Andresito ordered the kidnapping of all the sons of the elite. A week later, they were released without harm, with the hope that their parents had learned that "Indigenous mothers also had feelings."<sup>187</sup> Andresito was trying to highlight to the correntino elite the humanity of the long oppressed naturales. In the narrative of Pampín, while the well-off residents were scared of this profound social change, closing down their businesses, "the regular folk kept going about their day, as if ignoring their faith of having in power a leader through a conquest [in opposition to by right or in a legitimate way]."<sup>188</sup>

Administratively and economically, Andresito made many changes. In keeping with the counsel of a local junta, he ordered the confiscation of arms, organized the reopening of

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<sup>185</sup> D. Mantilla, *Memorias Pampín*, 105.

<sup>186</sup> Letter LVI, W. P. R to General Miller, in J. P. and W. P. Robertson, *Letters on South America*, 167. The Postlethwaite family was friends with the Robertson brothers, and contributed some narratives to their book.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>188</sup> D. Mantilla, *Memorias Pampín*, 90. Book version includes brackets content.

businesses, and reviewed tax collection procedures.<sup>189</sup> He sought to persuade the Indigenous peoples who were hiding in the woods to join the army, in a same fatherly way used by Artigas and Andresito himself before.<sup>190</sup> He deepened the ideas of Artigas about land reform, expropriating city land that had been occupied by private parties.<sup>191</sup> While Pampín narrates a version of the occupation featuring a terrorized population, Miss Postlethwaite relates that, while Andresito was there, only one robbery was registered.<sup>192</sup> The Postlethwaite family was also treated with “marked respect and attention, not only by him, but also by his officials and men during all of their stay in Corrientes.”<sup>193</sup> In the end, they concluded that “Andrés was himself a kind-hearted man, and much better informed than could have been expected.”<sup>194</sup> It is likely that the commercial alliance with Peter Campbell, the naval officer of Artigas, and the considerable economic benefits amassed by them due to the expansion of foreign trade in Corrientes, helped in the construction of this broadminded view.

During his stay in Corrientes, another situation emerged, this time in Santa Fe, which demanded reinforcements from whoever in the League was available to help. Keeping up with his promise to protect the regional alliance, Andresito, who was already visiting the town of Goya, in the shore of the Paraná River, dispatched troops down to Santa Fe, as it was being attacked by forces from Buenos Aires. Artigas registered a communication in which Andresito

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<sup>189</sup> Actas del Cabildo de Corrientes t. 49, AGPC, 173-179v.

<sup>190</sup> Andrés Artigas, Cuartel General de mis Fuerzas Libres Occidentales Guaranises, en Corrientes, September 21, 1818 in Fondo Mantilla 36, AGPC.

<sup>191</sup> Corrientes, August 10, 1818 in *AA* vol. 37, 263.

<sup>192</sup> “W. P. R. to General Miller,” in J. P. and W. P. Robertson, *Letters on South America*, 163-164.

<sup>193</sup> “W. P. R. to General Miller,” in *Ibid*, 164.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

recalled sending about 400 men and two flotillas.<sup>195</sup> Among those were Peter Campbell, and a group of men that M. F. Mantilla described as “Guaraní Indians, Indians from the town of Santa Lucía, slaves, mulattoes from the Capital, and people from the countryside.”<sup>196</sup> In essence, Andresito’s support basis. A few days later, Méndez received a note from Santa Fe’s governor Estanislao López, thanking him for helping orchestrate “the assistance sent by the General Commander of the *Fuerzas Libres Occidentales Guaraníes*.”<sup>197</sup> Méndez was very content with this recognition, and praised the act, exclaiming that those who defended the “law of nations” (*derecho de gentes*) were protected by Heaven, in a new demonstration of political language being used to grant legitimacy.<sup>198</sup> After his stay in Goya, and a quick passage by Entre Ríos, the Guaraní army returned to Corrientes.

Andresito left the city on his own time, in March of 1819, despite Artigas’ insistence that he removed troops as early as December. Before leaving, he published a manifesto addressed to the residents of Corrientes. Indicating how he saw a possible union for the overall territory, Andresito emphasized how Paraguay and Buenos Aires were constantly trying to divide them politically.<sup>199</sup> A new Portuguese attack, endorsed by the latter, was now demanding his attention, he stated. Still, he wanted the people of Corrientes to know that, even though he was on his way to exit the province, he would always be vigilant and care for them, and could come back if needed. “[Divine] Providence had given [him] two arms, and enough forces, so that with one hand [he] could combat (...) the Portuguese Crown, and with the other, (...) the Rebellious

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<sup>195</sup> José Artigas a Manuel Luis Aldao. December 10, 1818 in AA37, 351.

<sup>196</sup> M. F. Mantilla, *Cronica historica*, 215.

<sup>197</sup> Proclama del Gobernador Intendente de Corrientes Juan Bautista Méndez in AA37, 353.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Andrés Artigas to the Citizens of Corrientes. Manifest. March 17, 1819 in Fondo Mantilla 36, AGPC.

Americans who would not recognize [his] magnanimity.”<sup>200</sup> Even when criticizing Buenos Aires because of their “painful” “differences” and Paraguay because of their “neutrality,” he still believed it was possible to end “divisions,” prioritizing what united them, their Americanidad. His troops would “fight until the end” to defend the Pueblos, he promised.<sup>201</sup>

Andresito left a small commission to organize the transition and reinstall Méndez, and went back to Misiones to fight his last battle, before being imprisoned by the Portuguese and sent to Rio de Janeiro, in June of 1819, to never be seen again. Although Méndez, a Criollo, was once again the governor, the experience of being commanded by an Indigenous person had provoked resentment in the elites of Corrientes. According to future governor Pedro Ferré, “the correntinos had a formal antipathy [towards the Guaranis] that had its origin in the excesses perpetrated when Corrientes was under their rule.”<sup>202</sup>

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As Artigas’ authority over the Littoral was consolidated, his project became more inclusive. Andrés Guacurarí y Artigas, as commander of Misiones – and as a Misionero, Guaraní and Americano – embraced a federalist, Republican government that respected the pueblos’ sovereignty. As someone of indigenous ancestry, Andresito was able to connect the political aspects of the Confederate project to understandings of the region that went beyond Criollo society. If Artigas *expressed* these understandings, constantly mentioning that the Indigenous groups were the ones who should have the most rights in the American territory, Andresito

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Pedro Ferré, *Memoria del Brigadier General Pedro Ferré* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta y casa editora Coni, 1921), 27.

*embodied* them. As Comandante of Misiones, he led the government of this province-size area, making administrative decisions and promoting its economic development. While thinking of a Guaraní state, its territorial limits, source of legitimacy, and means for economic development, Andresito created conditions to cross boundaries and connect to a world that had been up to now accessible to Indians only marginally, but which at that precise moment had been open to change. He envisioned this state and appealed to participants with reference to conceptions of a shared past of oppression. He constructed a leadership style that was based on elements of his Indigenous ancestry, but that also incorporated new ideas about freedom and notions of citizenship. Andresito navigated and infiltrated as much as he could. He also conducted the defense of this territory against a foreign invader – Portugal – seeking to secure sovereignty over the area. Furthermore, with an imagined project in mind, he sought to expand it, and only failed to accomplish this expansion because Buenos Aires interfered, and brought an army equipped with immense resources.

It is true that Andresito was largely influenced politically and intellectually by the ideals of his adoptive father. It is also true, we believe, that through his own personal experience he provided the scope for this segment of the Artiguist project and a meaning that went beyond securing authority over a portion of land. It defended a model that preserved these pueblos' sovereignty, and therefore appealed to a group that had long been excluded from major political decisions. Using his *misionero* identity, he promoted cohesion in the territory and established his leadership. However, at the moment of consolidating his leadership in areas outside of Misiones, and solidifying the regional alliance of the *Liga de los Pueblos Libres*, this same indigenous identity limited his effectiveness, rather than served as an advantage. In these cases, Andresito operated mostly as an *Americano*. As his advances reached new territories, his project clashed



with longstanding social prejudices, and drove the conflict that was pushing Mesopotamia into a so-called “social war.”<sup>203</sup> As the elite groups increasingly witnessed the loss of political control and with it, potential territorial and economic loss, the earlier reciprocal alliance lost its meaning, and the support from elites, and even some Indigenous peoples, slowly faded away.<sup>204</sup> Not only did previous supporters withdraw their resources, but they also directly confronted Andresito, while others, unable to engage in direct military conflict, invited foreign powers to come do the job for them. Eventually, this last strategy, the Portuguese invasion, would be responsible for halting Andresito’s experiment in the Mesopotamia, and led to his defeat. At the same time, it worked to lay the ground for the last stages of the Artiguist experience in the region. Ideas of local autonomy continued to prosper in the Littoral for decades. Proposals of an inclusive citizenship, however, were slowed down.

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<sup>203</sup> M. F. Mantilla, *Crónica Histórica*, 215.

<sup>204</sup> See examples in *AA* vol. 36, 14, 108.

## Epilogue

“Our history is one of heroes. (...) Its magnificent monuments can be seen from the walls of our city all the way to the margins of the Paraná River,” José Artigas declared, as he spoke to the people attending the Congress of Tres Cruces in Montevideo in April of 1813.<sup>1</sup> While highlighting the past experiences shared by Americans during the defense of the revolutionary ideals in the Littoral, Artigas was also looking forward. In the characterization of their achievement, he outlined his imagined limit for a regional union – from the Mesopotamia to the Banda Oriental. Contrary to ideas coming out of Buenos Aires, which focused on a presumed, but not necessarily real, vision of American unity, the Artiguist movement argued that it was possible to establish a reciprocal alliance in the Littoral, one in which all stakeholders could decide if and how to participate – at least in theory. The strong emphasis on individual sovereignties, crafted using old and new political rhetoric, could allow for the combination of just the right amount of traditional, well-established means for granting legitimacy inspired by Natural Law, and novel, inclusive paradigms of citizenship. As such, it claimed to reject centralizing forces that emanated from the former viceroyalty’s capital, and that aspired to dominate not just the political life of the region, but also its economy.

As the Artiguist influence grew, it found space among popular groups as well as elites. The appeal to this second group was focused mostly on the system’s ability to detain centralist political ambitions and open trade through alternative ports like Montevideo. At the same time, authorities of places like Corrientes, very much on the fringes of the empire, strived for a proper

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<sup>1</sup> Artigas to the Pueblo Oriental, Congreso de Tres Cruces, Montevideo, April 4, 1813 in *AA* v. 11, 67-70.

defense. The intense military activity resulted in constant movement of troops and opportunities for free-spirited collection of goods along the way. In this scenario, Artigas became a key intermediary between yearnings of popular groups and the maintenance of private property. While he promoted land reforms to those who he believed needed the most – his “infelices” –, he also approved laws that generated social control and amplified labor force. He was a strong political intermediary, evidenced here by his arbitration between interests of the capital city of Corrientes and the pressures of countryside towns to be fully integrated in political decisions across provincial lines. Still, he proposed that each one of them had something to contribute, and therefore, together, they could potentialize each other. Through this plethora of offerings, his federal ideals established deep roots into the Mesopotamia.

While Artigas is a main character in this narrative, this is not a story of Artiguism in the Mesopotamia *per se*. His ideas – how they were formed, used to inform decisions and transform political activity – serve as the backdrop of a larger experience, that of popular groups and how they engaged with and appropriated the political debates of the period. The evidence surveyed in this study demonstrates that the degree of success of the available political models during the period directly derived from their ability – or lack thereof – to generate connections with popular groups in the region. From the onset of the May Revolution, as fast as Belgrano’s campaigns to convert Paraguay in 1810 were launched, when given the opportunity to express their wishes, Indigenous groups received offers and carefully considered benefits and disadvantages. Particularly in these first instances of political accommodation, initial ideas of an American unity transmitted by Criollo politicians were shattered by everyday needs and expectations, and sometimes a sheer disconnect with local realities. Such was the case of the claims for military incorporation during the expedition, that were openly rejected, by omission or desertion,

particularly in Misiones. When required to provide support to Belgrano, the forces did not work as homogeneously as initially predicted.

Between 1813 and 1814, there was a considerable rise in popular political engagement in the Mesopotamia. We find, for example, Domingo Manduré and his men actively processing political discourses, and displaying a set of conceptual tools that identified sovereignty with an intrinsic freedom and equality possessed by Indigenous groups, as well as their ability to decide about major political leaders and even defend their views, should they be threatened. The concepts offered by Artigas intensely resonated with these men, as they allowed for the maintenance of this declared freedom. At the same time, a covert lenience with groups that possessed more of a wandering tradition and connection to notions of property outside of European norms also granted to Artigas the support of masses of soldiers increasingly used to finding their pay by looting and collecting cattle as they marched. Alternatively, specific Indigenous groups that had found ways of positively positioning themselves economically within the model proposed by Buenos Aires employed every resource to defend it. The Cabildo de Indios of Yapeyú that was in office in 1813 made an extensive defense of sovereignty anchored in their need to have a hierarchical authority, due to their self-perceived administrative shortcomings. Pablo Areguatí's experience, as someone who highly benefited from a relationship with Criollo leaders and even persecuted opposers of Buenos Aires' politics, serves to obliterate preconceived notions of automatic ethnic alliances, and highlight plurality when constructing support. These experiences emphasize the usefulness of looking at *popular* political participation, rather than focusing on an Indigenous category of analysis. As ethnic generalizations would be detached from the reality of the time, the term popular permits us to

bring to the forefront political contributions of those groups marginalized in traditional interpretations of the Río de la Plata's past until recently.

As the conflicts between Buenos Aires and the League intensified, popular groups demonstrated their allegiance in various ways. In Corrientes and Misiones, they responded to calls for mobilization, sent resources when possible, and helped legitimize Artigas' leadership by seeking out his authority. While doing so, they were making claims of sovereignty, exercising their purported rights of declaring support. In exchange, Artigas offered a political model that expanded citizenship to include these groups not just as voters, but also as political leaders. This was evidenced by the straightforward messages exchanged with the authorities in Corrientes, that advocated for the inclusion of all residents, regardless of their class, in the electoral process to define state models.<sup>2</sup> It was also present in his indications that the Pueblos de Indios should be administered by "one of their own," that is, they should be governed for and by themselves.<sup>3</sup> While Artigas was one of the Criollo voices sponsoring these ideals, popular groups, through their engagement, were the agents pushing for these changes, and as they did so, they played a significant role in intensifying conflicts over power in the Río de la Plata.

The main expression of this political inclusion seen in the Mesopotamia was the appointment of Andrés Artigas as the leader of Misiones. Perhaps as a strategy to gather support, his leadership built upon on shared experiences and Guaraní and Criollo understandings regarding authority mobilized entire pueblos and areas beyond the limits of the Uruguay River. Behind a *misionero* identity, he included even those settled in Portuguese territory, and toyed

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<sup>2</sup> Circular [signed by J. B. Méndez] to all of the towns of the Province of Corrientes. May 4, 1814 in *AA* vol. 19, 61. "Convoque a los individuos de ese Partido del caracter que sean (...) para que voten."

<sup>3</sup> José Artigas to José de Silva. Paraná, May 9, 1815 in *AA* vol. 29, 57-58.

with physical as well as cultural frontiers.<sup>4</sup> Andresito applied his knowledge with hybrid cultural marks to create a project for Misiones as an autonomous political entity. He also understood the importance of Artigas' regional project to his own, and worked to defend it. When doing so, Andresito engaged with Criollo leadership structures, and took his authority past social boundaries of the period. As the *de facto* governor of Corrientes, he administered the province for about eight months, collecting support and resources from popular groups as well as resentment from the wealthy, Criollo (and European) residents.

While Artigas functioned as a mediator between plural understandings of a society and politics, he attracted followers from a wide social spectrum. As his rhetoric progressed towards amplifying rights to the least privileged, who could now receive land, be economic agents, and even think of leading entire provinces, a “fear of social disorder” (“*temor al desorden social*”) started to weigh in more than the ability to balance diverse needs.<sup>5</sup> When the Portuguese decided to take another shot at invading the Banda Oriental in August of 1816, encouraged by scorned Buenos Aires politicians, the occupation of the Río de la Plata by an imperial power that defended traditional socio-economic norms suddenly seemed like not such a bad idea. After an intense resistance as they passed through the Banda Oriental's countryside, elite groups received the Portuguese officers with open arms in Montevideo. As the offensive became stronger once again in Misiones, Andresito left Corrientes to provide support. On June 28, Portuguese Captain Conde da Figueira reported the arrest of “Artiguinhas,” as he was known to them, close to Paso de São Isidro.<sup>6</sup> Guarani colonel Pantaleón Sotelo took over the leadership of the Guaraní army,

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<sup>4</sup> Portuguese according to an imperial perspective.

<sup>5</sup> Frega and Islas, *Nuevas Miradas en torno al artiguismo*, 139.

<sup>6</sup> Conde da Figueira to Thomaz Antonio de Villanova Portugal. Cuartel General en el Pueblo de San Borja, June 28, 1819 in *AA* vol. 36, 125.

while Artigas made promises to the indigenous forces reunited in Asunción de Cambay of “defending their first Inca king, and avenging his adoptive son Andrés.”<sup>7</sup>

From that moment on, the conflicts only intensified. Artigas’ troops started to suffer successive defeats against the Portuguese. Besides failing on the battlefield, Artigas also lost the support of his former allies, like *caudillos* Francisco Ramírez from Entre Ríos and Estanislao López from Santa Fe, who signed the Treaty of Pilar with Buenos Aires, a deal that involved maintaining their autonomy as long as they captured Artigas. Sotelo was also killed in battle, and replaced by another Guaraní leader, Francisco Javier Sití.<sup>8</sup> By the beginning of 1820, essentially all Criollo leaders of the region, with the exception of Juan Bautista Méndez from Corrientes, were gathering to chase him, and yet he managed to resist.<sup>9</sup> Then, under the influence of Ramírez, Sití too turned against Artigas.<sup>10</sup> On August 11, 1820, the leader of the Banda Oriental lamented the fact.<sup>11</sup> He made it known to Sití that, in his perspective, Ramírez’ only intention was to divide the people of the Misiones, as to take advantage of them in collusion with the Portuguese. The result could only be the “destruction of the entire province.”<sup>12</sup> While Artigas

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<sup>7</sup> Francisco das Chagas Santos to the Conde da Figueira. Cuartel en San Borja, October 24, 1819 in *AA* vol. 36, 198. We know of this from the deposition of Guaraní militiaman Hilario Candiré, who switched sides to the Portuguese troops.

<sup>8</sup> For an account of events in Misiones between 1819 and 1820, see Jorge Francisco Machón, *Misiones después de Andresito: apuntes históricos*, 3rd ed. (Argentina: J.F. Machón (the author), 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Ramírez observed that Artigas could “take [Corrientes] wherever he wants.” J. W Reyes Abadie, O. Bruschera, and T. Melogno, *El Ciclo Artiguista. Documentos de historia nacional y americana*, v. II (Montevideo, Medina, 1951), 593.

<sup>10</sup> Further research is required to explore Sití’s reasons for siding with Ramírez. He praised his “friend Manuel Olavarrieta” for having “opened [his] eyes,” but did not state which arguments convinced him. The available evidence suggests that Sití favored economic conditions offered by Ramírez, who guaranteed to end the war and resume yerba mate processing. In the deal, Sití would be responsible for organizing the activity, but Ramírez constantly intervened, which eventually led them to break off ties.

<sup>11</sup> José Artigas to Francisco Javier Sití. Campamento en marcha, August 11, 1820 in *AA* vol. 38, 408.

<sup>12</sup> José Artigas to the Cabildo of Misiones. Campamento en marcha, August 11, 1820 in *AA* vol. 38, 407.

was still in the territory of Misiones, Sití constantly complained about entire divisions abandoning his leadership, some of which, like those led by Pedro Cuti, Pablo Araminbí and José Matias Abucú, were later registered accompanying “the old Artigas.”<sup>13</sup> According to the Portuguese, he still counted on the support of several Guaicurú men as well.<sup>14</sup> Many desertions on the Artiguist side were registered too. While Méndez still tried to assemble residents of Corrientes, most would hide as to not go, or ended up deserting.<sup>15</sup> To prevent even more bloodshed between brothers, he said, Artigas informed Sití that he would reunite families and instruct them to go home, so that “everything can be over.”<sup>16</sup> He then asked for exile in Paraguay, promising to not get involved in any political actions. The Artiguist cycle in the region had finally ended.<sup>17</sup>

After Artigas’ withdrawal, Ramírez went on to create the República de Entre Ríos, incorporating the territories of Corrientes and Misiones. Sití, the last Commander of an independent Misiones, worked out a personal deal with the Portuguese and crossed the Uruguay River to settle on the eastern shore, in San Miguel, abandoning any claims of territorial sovereignty. Ramírez power lasted less than a year, as he, too, was betrayed and killed, by López’s forces. Corrientes went back to being an autonomous province in 1821, publishing the first provincial constitution of the future Argentine territory. Roughly around the same time, commander Juan Gonzalez Alderete gave notice of the “destruction of the Abipons” of Chaco,

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<sup>13</sup> Francisco Javier Sití to Francisco Ramírez, Cambay, August 6, 1820 in *AA* vol. 38, 401; Francisco Javier Sití to Francisco Ramírez, Cambay, August 22, 1820 in *Correspondencia Oficial* t. 9, f. 150, AGPC.

<sup>14</sup> Francisco das Chagas Santos to the Conde da Figueira. Cuartel en San Borja, May 22, 1820 in *AA* vol. 36, 342.

<sup>15</sup> Francisco das Chagas Santos to the Conde da Figueira. Cuartel en San Borja, June 16, 1820 in *AA* vol. 36, 359

<sup>16</sup> José Artigas to the Cabildo of Misiones. Campamento en marcha, August 11, 1820 in *AA* vol. 38, 407.

<sup>17</sup> Artigas stayed in Paraguay for the next three decades, until he passed away in 1850.



evidencing Corrientes' constant animosity towards the group.<sup>18</sup> The suggestion of Juan Vicente Gómez Botello to end the source of poison had been accepted.

As for Misiones, it took another 133 years for it to become an Argentine province. Having been annexed by Corrientes, then occupied by Paraguay and Brazil in different moments, Andresito's story of an envisioned state was a fundamental argument for its creation.

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<sup>18</sup> The document is missing its last page, and therefore author and date. However, using documentation from the same file, we can infer its authorship and estimate the date. In Correspondencia Oficial t. 10, f. 99, AGPC.

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