

How Western Sovereignty Occludes Indigenous Governance: the Guarani and Kaiowa Peoples in Brazil

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Abstract: Recent international relations (IR) scholarship has developed a growing awareness of this discipline's colonial roots, prompting a search for decolonising approaches. This article is about indigenous sovereignties and how they have been occluded in the currently globalised European system of states. The method employed is a case study of two of the most impoverished and brutalised Indigenous Peoples in Brazil: the Guarani and the Kaiowa. In an attempt to transit between the world of Westphalia and non-European worlds, it starts by engaging in a conversation with Guarani and Kaiowa knowledge. Then, through a long-term historical analysis, it examines the main colonial processes that caused the occlusion of Guarani and Kaiowa sovereignty. Finally, it provides a broader perspective on how the diffusion of the European model of sovereignty, confronted with Indigenous resistance, has led to the social exclusion of Indigenous Peoples worldwide.

Keywords: Indigenous Sovereignties; Colonisation; Internal Colonialism; European System of States; Social Exclusion.

It was *ymã guare*, ancient time. It was during the Third Earth, when white people entered the territory now known as Brazil. Ñanderu was recreating the world, after his father had destroyed the Second Earth with darkness and fire. In order to decide what the white people and the Guarani and Kaiowa people would be like, he proposed a game. Ñanderu put a series of objects on the ground: to one side, he put male adornments used during religious Guarani rituals; to the other, he put pen, pencil, paper, and the Bible. Ahead, he put the children: a Guarani boy and girl, and a white boy and girl. Ñanderu told them to choose their preferences. While the Guarani children chose the objects related to learning through the Guarani spiritual experience, the white children chose the objects related to learning at school (Vietta 2007; Crespe 2015). As a result, the Guarani and Kaiowa ancestors decided to continue following their *ñande reko*, their own way.

That is one of the central narratives of Guarani and Kaiowa history, and one that provides the foundations for their political sovereignty. As I will show, they are organised as an anti-state polity, structured around three main forms of authority: religious leaders (*ñanderu* or shamans), secular leaders (*tendotá*), and the great assembly (*Aty Guasu*) (Pi-

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mentel 2012). Each of these political actors, though contemporary, somehow refer to *ymã guare*. Through the authorised narrative from the shaman, *ymã guare* provides ethical-moral guidelines for the exercise of Guarani and Kaiowa self-government.

However, their sovereignty has not been fully exercised. Brazilian state and society have limited this by imposing a colonial legal order over Guarani and Kaiowa lands, weakening traditional leaderships, and denying and concealing the very existence of the colonised as a political body. I characterise this practice of limiting an existing and legitimate sovereignty to the point where it presents the appearance of a non-sovereignty as occlusion.

This concept is proposed as a means of examining and characterising the political aspects of colonisation. It is now widely accepted that the Indigenous presence is being concealed in the master narratives of the global interstate system. But not only that: 'After being written out of history by selective processes of memory-making [...], indigenous peoples are silenced in political modernity' (Picq 2013: 122). Occlusion is thus the concrete and specifically political form of silencing Indigenous Peoples who resist colonisation. As a concept, it combines elements of subjugation, othering, denial of difference, and so on with an element of resistance. It recognises both the power of western colonial institutions and the power of Indigenous polities, since occlusion signals the persistence – both juridical and factual – of sovereignties that have been attacked over centuries with immense physical, structural, and epistemic violence.

Occlusion takes place along a sequence of events, starting with fully exercised native sovereignty and resulting in the prominence of the coloniser institutions. In order to follow this progression, this article departs from the characterisation of traditional Guarani and Kaiowa sovereignty by presenting a short summary of Guarani and Kaiowa history, and a consideration of their world views. Next, it addresses the main processes that culminated in the occlusion of their sovereignties, thus introducing the history of their colonisation in Brazil. It shows that the Guarani and Kaiowa preserved themselves as fully self-governed anti-state societies until the 19th century. Finally, it draws some conclusions from this case study in order to add to a general understanding of how the diffusion of the European model of state sovereignty has led to the social exclusion of Indigenous Peoples worldwide. My thesis is that political occlusion is a major piece in the puzzle of the subalternisation of Indigenous Peoples.

I have opted to study the Guarani and Kaiowa peoples because theirs is an extreme case of indigenous poverty and human rights violations, leading to a true humanitarian crisis. Severe land dispossession is accompanied by high levels of child mortality and malnutrition, alcoholism, unemployment, inappropriate housing, insufficient access to water or sanitation, low life expectancy, high suicide rates, and – to crown it all – the regular assassination of Guarani leaders by hired killers.

In order to extract decolonial alternatives from this dismal situation, it is vital to understand the ways in which colonisation operated and still operates, and the complicity between this practice and the European system of states.¹ Such an attempt, from within IR, faces a specific methodological challenge. The social sciences have long relegated relations

between states and Indigenous Peoples to the realm of domestic politics. Since its inception, anthropology has collaborated with this process by depicting traditional societies as peoples situated in a lost past, a time asynchronous with the modern world of western and westernised societies. Critical studies by scholars such as Johannes Fabian (2013) have sought to rescue anthropology from its (largely self-assigned) colonial role. A more recent discipline, IR, has willingly inherited this role by stating that the world of international politics is a world of modern nation-states, in which other polities do not or should not have voice or space.

The separation of knowledge into strictly divided disciplines is part of the modern/positivist project of constructing an academic building based on the premise that each science should correspond to a well-bounded object and a specific method. J Marshall Beier (2005: 60) argues that IR is a discipline only in terms of the epistemological beliefs of its practitioners, which are given ontological status through the disciplinary practices those practitioners adopt, as if there was a clear division in the world of facts. Indigenous Peoples have been left out of IR, despite their historicity as sovereign polities. This is because in the positivist process of the division of labour among the social sciences, societies have been separated into 'complex societies', subjected to the study of economy, political science, and sociology; and 'primitive societies', subjected to the study of anthropology. The hidden premise is that 'primitive societies' were determined more by cultural aspects than by economy or politics (Beier 2005: 67; see also Jones 2006: 4). Such a disciplinary division of knowledge, according to Beier, is inseparable from the processes still under way in late colonialism. Therefore, disciplinary IR as well as anthropology is a colonial practice that implicitly 'speaks' about the 'primitive' nature of Indigenous Peoples and their subaltern place in the world. Only relationships among peoples civilised enough to constitute themselves as states could fit into IR.

Recent IR scholars have developed a growing awareness of the colonial roots of their discipline, and sought to develop decolonising approaches (Jones 2006). This article intends to transit between the world of Westphalia and non-European worlds (Ling 2014), thus engaging in conversation (Beier 2005: 221) with Guarani and Kaiowa thought. It proposes to overcome the continuing colonial commitments in the social sciences and to reinforce decolonial critiques in order to address one of the most urgent challenges in contemporary global politics, otherwise kept invisible by disciplinary practices.

Guarani and Kaiowa history: from *ymã guare* to the time of law

In her study of world politics, Ling proposes a model of dialogics useful for a 'world-of-worlds' in which a common world 'emanates [sic] from the *interaction* among Multiple Worlds' (: 2014: 14). Although Ling's proposal allows taking into account the existence of Indigenous worlds, 'interaction' is not the most effective way of describing the violence of the friction between Europeans (and their heirs) and the Guarani and Kaiowa peoples. Their perspectives seem to demand a framework able to deal with the destruction of their world, and it is their own historical narratives that offer such a framework, particularly

some aspects on the ancient time and the genesis of the world, which will be presented next.

Guarani and Kaiowa tradition² usually presents history in three periods: *ymã guare*, or 'ancient time'; *sarambi*, or 'dispersal'; and the 'time of law' (Chamorro 2015: 24-25). Ancient time dates to far before the time of colonial contact (Crespe 2015: 356). It can refer to a time prior to the existence of humans on Earth, the life of spiritual ancestors, and the many cycles that precede current existence on this planet. Many contemporary references are taken from this historical period in the Guarani and Kaiowa political imaginations.

First, Earth was created to be the dwelling of the gods. That first planet was destroyed because Yrivera married his sister, Xaredy, which provoked the fury of Karai Papa, a higher god. Karai Papa ordered the destruction of the Earth with darkness, the fall of heavenly bats and jaguars (*mbopi'ete* and *jaguaru'i*), and extreme events like floods and fires. A second Earth ensued, which was also destroyed with darkness and fire, leaving room for the creation of the third and current Earth. Spiritual and material ancestors of the Guarani and Kaiowa have survived each of these Armageddons, and their *hexakara* – the highest among shamans – have guaranteed the continuity of their special relations with the gods. Every cycle of destruction and creation of the Earth occurs in order to promote purification (Vietta 2007: 137).

In the beginning of the Third Earth, the historical-mythical choice referred to earlier took place. While there are many different versions in oral tradition, they all have largely the same structure, and the same profound political meaning. In the version learnt by the historian Aline Crespe (2015: 353), adult men make the choice. To the one side, Nanderu put ritual objects such as *mbaraka*, *mymby* and *jeguaka*; to the other, guns, gold and money. Guarani man chose the ritual objects, while the white man chose the metal objects. In this narrative, as told by the shaman-assistant Delfino Borvão, it is clear that, even with the understanding that their ancestral choice had made them poor, this was the correct choice: 'richness is deceiving [...]. Only prayer can help ascending to heaven and knowing the true world'; ... 'the white choice is mistaken. Gold is worth nothing. What is valuable is the world, the land, and the prayer' (Crespe 2015: 355).

Ancient time also refers to the life of material ancestors, the time when there was full autonomy and freedom in their territories (Crespe 2015: 356), and when their traditional social organisation prevailed. Guarani and Kaiowa ancestors were organised as peoples against the state (Clastres 2013). Their institutions contradicted the idea of conceding freedoms and powers to a central institution. The space of chiefdom was occupied by a leader who exercised authority without any kind of policing power that might allow him to sanction his decisions by means of a legitimate monopoly of force. The Guarani and Kaiowa lived in extended families, formed by up to 60 nuclear families, in great communal houses under the leadership of a grandfather. In the 16th and 17th centuries, those extended families lived five to 10 kilometres from each other, and generally did not establish villages. A group of allied extended families formed a territory of exclusive usage, or *tekoha* (Cavalcante 2013: 58-61; Benites 2014a: 40).

The main Guarani concept involving land is that of *tekoha*, which is still extensively employed today. Its etymology sheds light on its meaning: *teko* is the Guarani way of being, ‘the ethical-moral system, the set of principles, norms, and laws which guide a community [...] and which is usually translated as culture and religion’ (Chamorro 2015: 226); and *ha* is an indicative of place (Crespe 2015: 25); it is ‘where life happens.’ Therefore *tekoha* is the space – and the many resources it brings that make life possible – where one can be and belong as Guarani. According to Maria Ladeira (2008: 97), the Guarani notion of territory is connected to a geographical space where relations that define their way of life can be developed: ‘space [...] implies other limits, defined by ethical principles and values that match the people’s world view’. One of the values implied in the notion of *tekoha* is the possibility of moving through the space, or *mongu’e* (a Guarani word that also designates ‘politics’). Although the *tekoha* was an area of exclusive usage, it included routes of free circulation for members of other *tekoha*, which created the sense of a great network established over that geographical area. According to Spensy Pimentel (2012: 104), one of the meanings of the *tekoha* ‘is the network of relations sewn onto the geographical environment, neither pure sociality, nor pure territoriality’.

In brief, *ymã guare* starts with the genesis of the world and reaches a time still alive in the memory of the elders, about one century ago, when Guarani and Kaiowa lifeways were preserved in the *tekoha*.

The second period of history was the *sarambi*, or dispersal. It roughly corresponds to the 20th century.³ Movements outside traditional lands were mostly forced resettlements in reservations, while some were migrations motivated by a fear of the growing number of settlers (João 2011: 44–45). This period stands out in Guarani and Kaiowa memory, because it was the time of the loss of land. Being dispossessed of their lands meant a severe blow to their autonomy and traditional lifeways. Both in reservations and in areas then characterised as private farms, the combined power of settlers and the state apparatus prevented the Guarani and Kaiowa from guaranteeing the proper usage of territory and its assets (such as forests and rivers), or maintaining traditional trails and paths that provided sociality. Reservations were subjected to the power of specialised state bureaucracies, and farms were protected with private firepower, backed by the settler judicial system as well as the police. Guarani and Kaiowa lands were crossed by barbed wire fences and roads for motorised vehicles, and their forests cleared with chainsaws and tractors. The growing influence of and dependence on coloniser societies were no longer avoidable, and the paths that materially structured the old social networks were no longer available.

By the end of the 20th century, this situation had reached a tipping point. When deforestation reached practically all the areas where Guarani and Kaiowa peoples had sought refuge, it was necessary to fight back. The collective decision to promote more offensive political struggles coincided with a wave of global treaties and laws protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Hence the third period of history is the time of law, a time of struggles supported by international treaties such as ILO Convention 169 and the Brazilian Constitution of 1988.

The expectations of the time of law are connected both to the ancient time of mythical-historical events and to the certainty of better days to come: *ára pyahu*, or a new 'time-space'. The hope of recovering the land and the old days should not be misunderstood as a naive intention of bringing back the past: '[To the Kaiowa,] going back to the first days, however, is not repeating such past, but inspiring in it' (Chamorro 2015: 25). Or, as Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000: 250) states, '[a]ll our pasts are futural in orientation. They help us make the unavoidable journey into the future. There is, in this sense, no "desire for going back", no "pathological" nostalgia that is also not futural as well.' *Ára pyahu* is thus the product of such mode of history. It is the future when Guarani and Kaiowa virtues will be (re)enacted, made possible by the power of prayers chanted by the shamans.

The idea of *ára pyahu* makes the struggle for the *tekoha* something more than a struggle for land. It is a struggle for the material conditions for the exercise of self-government. *Tekoha* is not a territory that is frozen in time, but a space to be and belong to as Guarani, where 'other times' can inform the present. Ideas once believed, that Indigenous societies are 'static' or 'cold', or the more respectful version by Levi-Strauss that they are societies against history that 'cherish the dream of remaining as they were in the beginning of time' (cited in Goldman 1999: 4) seem wrong. Actually, their conception of a 'timeless time' (Blaney and Inayatullah 2010: 197) is deliberately employed as the basis for an alternative model of politics.

In their own versions of their history, Guarani and Kaiowa peoples are the central agents of their fates. The white man's technological and economic superiority derives from the original choice of being Guarani, a cost the Guarani and Kaiowa decided to bear in order to preserve their spiritual bonds with gods. In a self-critical discourse, they believe that the loss of land was also their responsibility: 'If they lost the land, it was a consequence of not praying as they should' (Crespe 2015: 353). And taking the land back will also be their responsibility. Therefore, they struggle and pray (Benites 2014a), for both strategies are indispensable for their political quest.

In the 1970s, *Aty Guasu*, the Great Assembly of Guarani and Kaiowa leaders, decided that the Guarani and Kaiowa should reoccupy traditional territories (*jeike jey*). *Jeike jey* is 'a response or reaction organised by *Aty Guasu*, faced with the violent expulsion of extended families from their territories, intending to reoccupy and recover the territories lost to farmers' (Benites 2014b: 233). This tactic was only adopted after extensive discussions among and the deliberation of chiefs from many extended families, only in the presence of shamans. In a move that denotes a conscious political use of their cyclic conception of time, *Aty Guasu* decided to call reoccupation camps *tekoharã*, or future *tekoha* (Chamorro 2015: 241).

Those camps lack state recognition or protection; families living in them endure harsh material conditions, and their lives are endangered. But the mobilisation around the recovery of their lands put in motion mechanisms of social reproduction and the reconstitution of ways of solidarity that were damaged in the past. For the Kaiowa leader Ambrósio Vilhalva (cited in Chamorro 2015:244), the camps have awakened children's interest in Guarani and Kaiowa culture. Reoccupations are the seeds of *tekoharã*, where renewed

communities will rehabilitate the generative virtues of land, and recover traditional ways. There and then, a new lifecycle will begin. It will be *ára pyahu*. Woods, animals, and their spiritual protectors will once again inhabit their lands.

Shamans contribute to the regeneration of *tekoharã* for, among other reasons, they can recover ancient prayers. They can transit across the spiritual world, establishing relations with deities, in a similar way as secular leaders constituted political relations across the many *tekoha* trails. Crespe (2015) emphasises that, for powerful and experienced shamans, such as her interlocutor's grandfather, José Borvão, the timeline – which they call *tape guasu* – is a trail he can walk with the power of his chants. By means of the discipline of prayers learnt since early childhood, shamans can walk the timeline and revisit *ymã guare*, 'in order to learn how Guarani people used to live, how they used to pray, and how they must pray now and here on Earth to re-establish the balance of life' (Crespe 2015: 357). That makes the shaman a history-teller, a political authority, and an actor imbued with the power to promote necessary change, all at the same time.

Finally, another significant part of their struggle lies in daily strategies for survival. Resistance, in this sense, corresponds to the art of 're-existing' (Walsh 2013) in the face of efforts by colonising states to 'eradicate them culturally, politically and physically' (Alfred and Corntassel 2005: 597). Their pathways start 'with people transcending colonialism on an individual basis' by generating 'an authentic existence out of the mess left by colonial dispossession and disruption' (Alfred and Corntassel 2005: 612).

This mode of resistance deploys its full strength within an anti-statist polity, such as the Guarani and Kaiowa: resistance is promoted despite little central co-ordination. Everyone struggles to work out how he/she can contribute, whether by perpetuating religious rituals; speaking the Guarani language; retelling traditional Guarani-Kaiowa histories; generating children; performing *changa* (temporary work for settler society); collecting garbage; promoting land reoccupations; recording and playing Guarani protest hip hop; enrolling in university programmes tailored for Indigenous students; teaching in Indigenous schools; becoming anthropologists, lawyers and public health agents; speaking to international media and organisations; and participating in *Aty Guasu*. What turns these individual strategies into a collective strategy is the common identity and the common will to perpetuate as a people.

In Chakrabarty's terms, this section was about a past and a future 'that already "are"'. Here, the Guarani and Kaiowa are not 'human embodiments of anachronism' (Chakrabarty 2000: 238), but the authors of a specific form of worlding. Here, they can offer alternative answers to the impositions of Eurocentric 'progress'. The next section is somewhat more connected to history as 'the indispensable and universal narrative of capital' (Chakrabarty 2000: 254). It intends to comprehend history by 'recovering the process which caused the present to be what it is' (Goldman 1999: 3–4). Still, it is not merely a footnote to the history of European expansion, because it counters nationalist and Eurocentric versions, and indicates that the Guarani and Kaiowa peoples occupied a vast territory up until the 19th century.

The colonisation of the Guarani and Kaiowa in Brazil: from traditional sovereignty to territorial dispossession

The Guarani⁴ originally inhabited a vast territory ranging from the shores of Uruguay to the Brazilian state of Rio de Janeiro, extending westwards up to today's Bolivia and Paraguay, and southwards towards Argentina. This article refers to the history and the current situation of Guarani-speaking people living between the Paraguay and Paraná Rivers (see Figure 1), in what is now the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul.⁵

Figure 1: The Plata River basin



Source: Kmusser 2015.

The colonisation of these Guarani peoples began in the 16th century. During the first four centuries of the Conquest, their lands were extremely peripheral from the viewpoint of European powers: they presented little opportunities for obtaining resources that could

be employed in the struggle for power. As a consequence, only peripheral groups from the Portuguese and Spaniard colonies launched occasional assaults on their lands, with little or no practical impact. Native peoples of the New World were entirely indigenised: in the settlers' minds, all those peoples were 'Indians', equally inferior to Europeans, although some were allies and others were enemies.

Around 1540, the first Portuguese and Spaniard travellers arrived at the upper Paraguay River. During the second half of the 16th century, they formed alliances with Guarani peoples at the bay where the city of Asunción was founded (1537), and with other Guarani groups northwards. These voyages were part of the search for the Eldorado. People living in the lower Plata basin wore metal accessories which they claimed to have obtained in the interior. Only in 1548, adventurers along the Plata River became aware that other European groups had already conquered the mines they were searching for in the territories of Tawantinsuyu, the Inca Empire. The Portuguese Crown concentrated on ensuring control over coastal territories, and gave little attention to these outlying areas.

After the 1580s, Spaniards from Asunción created *encomiendas*, land concessions to be exploited with slave labour, and established a settlement called Santiago de Xerez in the upper Paraguay, mostly with Jesuit missionaries. Neither this settlement nor the Paraguayan *encomiendas* represented any effective territorial occupation. From the end of the 16th to the mid-17th century, Xerez was progressively abandoned due to disease and violent incursions by Portuguese subjects. These were the *Paulistas*, groups of pillagers and slavers later known as *Bandeirantes* (trailblazers) (Cortésão 1952: 100; Chamorro 2015: 61). Their social episteme, supported by theories of Just War, was based upon the idea that non-Christian peoples could be legitimately killed or enslaved. The institutions of the European system of states supported such a view, with a standard of civilisation that did not take non-European peoples into account as political interlocutors.

Between 1632 and 1645, Guarani leaders broke the alliance established with missionaries, since the latter were unable to prohibit the entry of other Europeans into the lands of the former. *Paulistas* continued their incursions throughout the rest of the 17th century (Chamorro 2015: 66). There was no reaction from the Spaniards, because they did not have enough energy or interest to engage in direct conflict with the Portuguese, but also because they were enemies of the Jesuits, whose actions were interpreted as denying access to Indigenous labour (Queiroz n.d.: 45).

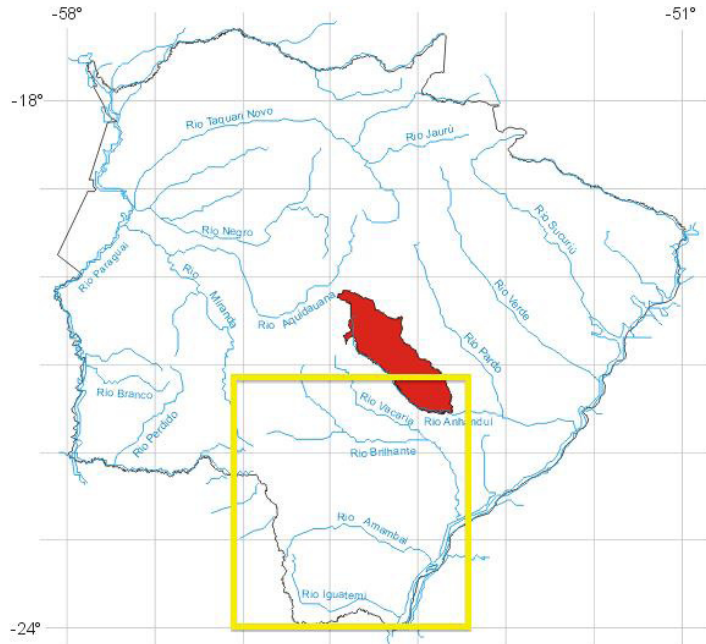
The actions of the colonisers ultimately altered regional geopolitics: 'the withdrawal of the Guarani groups opened space for Indigenous groups from the Chaco, such as the Mbayá-Guaikuru and the Chané-Guaná' (Queiroz n.d.: 46), which had been traditional enemies of the Guarani groups. But the territory between the Iguatemi and Brillhante rivers (see Figure 2) remained a refuge for the Guarani resistance. A successful strategic retreat took place: they abandoned river margins and hid in the woods, on ridges and around springs, which provided better positions against Portuguese offensives.

In 1719, *Bandeirantes* discovered gold north of the Guarani lands, near the Cuiabá River. The nature and geographic scope of their incursions henceforth changed. All their efforts were directed at gold prospection, and the routes to the mines did not touch Guara-

ni territory. Other peoples, such as the Guaikuru, Payaguá, Southern Kaiapó and Bororo, then suffered the war waged by the Portuguese.

Figure 2: Major rivers in Mato Grosso do Sul

Mato Grosso do Sul
(hidrografia)
■ Campo Grande



Source: Ambiente Brasil 2015.

The discovery of gold alerted the Portuguese Crown to the importance of regularising colonial boundaries. Since the Tordesillas Treaty (1494), colonial domains were defined as a strip of coastal lands that did not include Cuiabá. In 1750, the Portuguese obtained the signature of the Treaty of Madrid, which confirmed their right to territories west of the Tordesillas line. The south of the Mato Grosso remained an object of Paraguayan exploration, mostly to collect mate tea, and of Guarani resistance.

After the independence of Paraguay (1811) and Brazil (1822), the new states adopted institutional arrangements similar to those of their former metropolises, and those territories were recognised as the sovereign domains of the new settler states. This also enabled the new-born states to be incorporated into the international system, although peripherally.

With independence came neo-colonial bonds with Great Britain. Under the hegemony of free commerce brought by British imperialism, the Brazilian Empire continued to perform a dependent role in the international division of labour as an exporter of agricultural goods and importer of industrialised goods. This was functional from the point of view of Brazilian elites, and met the minimum economic conditions that permitted the exercise of state sovereignty. These elites were progressively more capitalist, since coffee farmers increasingly assumed the commercial functions related to coffee production,

and incoming European immigrants brought a capitalist rationale with them (Fernandes 2006).

Although independence represented the acquisition of a new status by settler societies, it did not bring a favourable outcome for colonised peoples. Independence in the Americas were 'movements for colonist-independence' (Ferro 2005: 207), the most advanced stage of colonial expansion. Once settlers got rid of the legal and administrative limits imposed by the former metropolises, they intensified the colonisation of Indigenous lands and populations. It was the beginning of internal colonialism (Casanova 2002).

The success of coffee plantations in the south east made cattle farming a viable activity in Mato Grosso, and started its integration with the broader Brazilian economic universe (Queiroz n.d.: 52-53). After the 1840s, a front of expansion that reached some Guarani and Kaiowa lands was opened. Squatters established small homesteads, but claimed ownership of thousands of hectares. In practice, the Brazilian Land Law of 1850 favoured this type of plundering. Farms thus obtained were later divided and sold, prompting the arrival of more settlers. New attempts to remove Guarani and Kaiowa peoples were made, in order to free their lands for private appropriation, and guarantee settlers' safety of movement. Guarani and Kaiowa people were offered protection in villages located in the São Paulo province. The few families that accepted the 'invitation' succumbed to smallpox and the attacks of Kaingang groups.

Renewed government attention was paid to Guarani and Kaiowa territory due to the Paraguayan War (1864-1870). Also known as the War of the Triple Alliance, it was fought between Paraguay on the one side and Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay on the other. After the conflict, the Brazilian state gave the Companhia Mate Laranjeira a concession of 5 million hectares, part of which fell in Guarani and Kaiowa territory (Vietta n.d.: 332), for the extraction of mate tea. Most of the labourers were Indigenous people, with thousands of Guarani and Kaiowa working in conditions akin to slavery (Ferreira and Carmo n.d.: 347, 349).

In the 20th century, the transformation of the geographic environment reached unprecedented levels. Telegraph lines, roads and railroads were built as part of the modernising projects of the Eurocentric Brazilian Republic, founded in 1889. The Brazilian elite fully embraced the triumphalist *belle époque* culture. While European empires fought over Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe, the Brazilian state reinforced the occupation of borders in order to guarantee 'national security'.

In 1910, the Brazilian government founded the Service for the Protection of the Indian (SPI), grounded on territorial nationalism, social Darwinism and positivism. In southern Mato Grosso, the SPI promoted land demarcations that worked as forced territorialisation. It restricted Indigenous groups to reservations, at once securing the liberation of thousands of hectares for settlement, and imposing state control over Indigenous communities. Farmers started expelling or exterminating Indigenous communities (Cavalcante 2013: 84, 86). Life in the reservations represented the end of autonomy for those families, and the decline of the traditional authority of shamans and other political leaders. Some

were still recognised as legitimate leaders, but the scope of their authority was severely reduced by these state actions.

Indigenous labour was used to install telegraph lines, build roads, cut down forests, and run cattle farms. The loss of traditional means of life and the advent of new needs obliged Indigenous men to work for the settler society. Traditional customs became more difficult to observe, and traditional social bonds were weakened.

With the decline of the mate extractive industry in the 1940s, the federal government promoted new settlements. Brazilian nationalism demanded the effective occupation of the country's border regions. This was the time of the 'March towards the West', which amounted to a great offensive against Indigenous Peoples who lived in the current Mato Grosso do Sul. A National Agricultural Colony of 300 000 hectares was established, and some 10 000 families settled in it. Many Indigenous communities lived in the areas assigned for the colony.

For the Guarani and Kaiowa, it was the beginning of their ultimate land dispossession. Actively promoted by the state, the new frontiers of expansion encouraged systematic deforestation. When new groups were reached, they were removed to reservations. Until then, some of the Guarani and Kaiowa had preserved their sovereign traditional institutions in territories settlers had not reached. Confined in reservations from then on, traditional leaders had little or no capacity to defy assimilationist state authorities backed by the police and the army.

After 1950, the establishment of private farms began a process of the expulsion of Indigenous families from their territories. It was the time of the *sarambi* (dispersal). Many extended families were disarticulated. Each family searched refuge where it could, in the lands of distant relatives, in the remotest woods, in Paraguay, or in the towns. At some point between the 1950s and the 1970s, they ran out of woods. Deforestation had destroyed the last alternatives to life in the reservations. Most Indigenous lands had been expropriated. Only 17 632 hectares were left, and these were the areas of the SPI reservations.

The Guarani and Kaiowa then tried to recompose extended families and, in the 1970s, organised the Great Assembly (*Aty Guasu*) in order to fight the enforced dispersion of Indigenous families from their traditional territory. In the 1980s, after a huge effort and the systematic use of reoccupation tactics, they achieved the demarcation of little more than 6 000 hectares. Not even in those lands, though, could they enforce their decisions according to their sovereignties: demarcated lands were governed by the new *indigenista* service, the National Foundation of the Indian (FUNAI).

As a consequence of the colonial process described above, the Guarani and Kaiowa currently live in a dire situation. Prejudice and discrimination against them are extreme and often violent, reinforcing the destructive potential of poverty. Land scarcity is the main cause of their exclusion. About 70 000 people occupy 0.19% of Mato Grosso do Sul, amounting to an average of 1 hectare per person. Some reservations have been swallowed by urban expansion and have become suburban ghettos, marked by drug and alcohol abuse as well as violence.

Processes for the demarcation of Indigenous lands, although prescribed by the Federal Constitution of 1988, have been obstructed by federal bureaucracies, resulting in instability and violence around the unenforced rights of occupation. Procedures for the demarcation of 59 pieces of land in Mato Grosso do Sul have not even started.

Fighting against land scarcity, many groups live in 25 reoccupation camps spread around 14 different towns. In those camps, about 2 700 people live with no proper housing, water, food, access to health or education. Many suffer constant intimidation by gunmen hired by commercial farmers, while waiting for the state to demarcate their lands.

Farmers, though, are not willing to concede. According to current Brazilian law, if the land is identified and demarcated as Indigenous, current possessors have practically no rights to compensation. This places farmers on a collision course with Indigenous groups. Moreover, farmers are not willing to let go of the areas where they produce soy beans and sugar cane for export, which give them access to federal loans at low interest rates, and elevate them into a regional economic elite.

For this reason, many Guarani and Kaiowa leaders have been killed by gunmen, mostly in the course of reoccupations. In Mato Grosso do Sul, an average of 31.7 Indigenous people were killed every year between 2003 and 2012. Structural violence is manifested in many ways: Mato Grosso do Sul is the state with the highest rate of Indigenous incarceration in Brazil; the child mortality rate in 2010 was 38:1000 among Guarani and Kaiowa, whereas the national rate was 25: 1000; and between 2000 and 2013, there were 684 suicides among the Guarani and the Kaiowa (Gomes 2008; Rangel 2011; Machado, Alcantara, and Trajber 2014; Fasolo 2014).

In sum, Survival International (2010: 2) describes their situation as that of genocide: a series of events that submit the members of these groups to conditions hampering their physical, cultural, and spiritual existence, and humiliating experiences that breach the principle of human dignity.

How European sovereignty imposed the occlusion of Indigenous sovereignties

During the past five centuries, a set of heterogeneous agent-structures (or actor-networks) – the global interstate system, the Brazilian state, and the Guarani and Kaiowa peoples – has become entangled in the same ‘time knot’ (Chakrabarty 2000: 243). The global interstate system is a consequence of at least five centuries of European expansion and the diffusion of its political institutions, particularly the European model of sovereignty. While the Westphalian order implied that sovereignty was an attribute exclusive of states, the jurists of the European colonial powers employed the doctrine of sovereignty to deny self-government rights to non-European peoples (Anghie 2004). In the following centuries, European political models were imposed as the only acceptable ones, part of the standard of civilisation. The European system of states is now global precisely because of the imbalance imposed by the world of Westphalia.

In Brazil, the war of the state against Indigenous Peoples was also influenced by the global spread of the Westphalian rationale. Both the Brazilian state and society incorporated the cosmological commitments necessary for international recognition as 'civilised', and the legitimacy to exercise exclusive sovereignty over its territory. In the process, the country destroyed the sovereignties of many Indigenous Peoples.

Despite this colonial offensive, many Indigenous Peoples in Brazil survived. They include the Guarani and Kaiowa. Although lacking recognition under the Westphalian order, they are political units with specific decision-making institutions and particular conceptions of well-being and the future. Indeed, they seem to prefer being loyal to their lifeways over becoming reserve armies of labour on the peripheries of capitalism. Their agency must thus be recognised as a precondition of their current situation: it is because they do not accept a subaltern integration with the settler society that internal colonialism reduces them to tiny reservations deprived from basic resources. The outcome is the humanitarian crisis that has been inflicted upon the Guarani and Kaiowa peoples.

This fact is related to a historical process that involves the expansion of the European system of states with the establishment of Europeanised states in lieu of the former colonies; the indigenisation of colonised societies which refuse to be assimilated; the occlusion of indigenous sovereignties under regimes of internal colonialism; and their social and moral exclusion in the colonial situation.

The first phase of this historical process, culminating in the current social exclusion, comprised the appearance and consolidation of the European model of the modern sovereign state. From medieval political diversity emerged the absolutist monarchic dynastic state. The clash between these polities engendered a conception of sovereignty based on the principle that the actor who controls the territorial unit must have authority to take all political decisions in that territory (Murphy 1996). Western European sovereign states were thus invented.

During that process, some states launched colonial enterprises, both overseas and over contiguous lands, in order to obtain resources in the European struggle for power. Colonisation was limited, in geographical terms, to places accessible to the means of transport available at the time. But the violence of the first wars of conquest was exemplary. Eventually, the colonial formula expanded worldwide, steadily conquering more and more distant territories. With colonisation, European institutions, values, ideas and rules were diffused to European settlers on other continents and to non-European groups willing to intermeditate in colonial relations. Those cultural elements were exported, often through violence, or imported, as symbolic resources that could represent the difference between being completely enslaved and retaining a degree of autonomy.

During the establishment of new states in the Americas, the diffusion of the European model stemmed from a dynamic of social selection marked by the survival of the most Europeanised political groups. The independence of settler states represented the onset of 'internal colonialism' (Casanova 2002). Europeans were replaced by their descendants born in the colonies. Settlers continued exploiting Indigenous Peoples, just as they did before. But the formers were now a class that had incorporated 'the rationalization

of colonialism', absorbed 'bureaucratic-authoritarian predispositions derived from traditional society or the colonial experience', and agreed to reproduce its practices (Casanova 2002: 83-84). In fact, in order to become independent, local settler rebel leaders assumed an European political form: the territorialist modern state. No other form would exempt the settlers from being recolonised.

In order to legitimise the occupation and government of expropriated territories, the new states required the 'collective delegitimation' of native sovereignties (Strang 1996: 31). Indeed, the agents of colonisation refused to perceive or accept native polities, authorities and knowledge. By sticking to an epistemology grounded on exclusive binaries and essentialisms, they characterised natives as primitives who lacked culture and, *a fortiori*, lacked political institutions such as sovereignty. Designations such as 'Indians', 'aborigines', or 'Indigenous Peoples' imposed a homogenising umbrella identity that conveniently erased the polities of the colonised. Indigenisation is therefore the imposition of an exogenous and generic identity onto a colonised people (Pratt 2007: 398-399), as part of the binary social classifications useful to the colonial enterprise (Quijano 2000: 342).

Indigenisation resorts to what Chakrabarty (2000: 8) called 'historicism', and Fabian (2013: 61) called 'the denial of coevalness', that is, refusing to accept that the colonised Other lives in the same historical time as the coloniser Self. It is present, for instance, in John Stuart Mill's pronouncement that Indians and Africans were not civilised enough to govern themselves (Connolly 2000: 186). According to Antony Anghie (2004: 4), this 'dynamic of difference' – i.e., the 'endless process of creating a gap between two cultures, demarcating one as "universal" and civilized and the other as "particular" and uncivilized' – supported the 'development of many of the central canons of international law, most particularly, sovereignty doctrine'.

So the very idea of 'Indigenous Peoples' is a result of the colonial enterprise. It is essentially a relational idea, a category that has emerged from the confrontation of a colonised people, which already lived in a particular space, and a coloniser people, who arrived subsequently. The double standard of the international society (Suzuki 2005) – in which its 'members were not obliged to treat non-members according to the norms that applied to relations between themselves' (Keal 2003: 84), thus originating two distinct moral regimes – threatened with colonial war any non-European society unwilling to peacefully obey the demands of European traders.

Colonial agents deliberately ignoring the political institutions of the colonised, delegitimising their self-government experiences, trying to suppress their sovereignties, and expropriating their territories caused the effective and violent concealment of Indigenous sovereignties before the European system of states.

Such an offensive has a material and a formal component. The material component is land deprivation. Colonisers physically removed Indigenous Peoples from their territories where they had exercised their political sovereignty. The formal component is legal internalisation. Colonial states internalised Indigenous Peoples, transforming them into objects to be managed or governed 'by some combination of hierarchy, eradication by assimilation or expulsion, and tolerance' (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004: 44). In that

way, even in reservations or state demarcated 'Indigenous lands', Law and public policies prevent Indigenous sovereignties from being fully exercised, resulting in both social and moral exclusion.

The idea of social exclusion usually implies that poverty happens because a group of people is excluded from a given social order. However, in dialogue with the history of Indigenous Peoples, this idea generates a paradox: the material hardship faced by those groups results from their forced inclusion (not exclusion) on the margins of a colonial order (Martins 1997: 28). Settler expansion leads to land dispossession. Without land, Indigenous Peoples become vulnerable to impoverishment dynamics typical of class relations in capitalism, and they no longer succeed in preserving traditional patterns of nutrition, housing, child care, etc (see Bodley 1988; Tauli-Corpuz 2004; Eversole 2005). This is because land is not only the space where Indigenous groups exercise economic activities that ensure their well-being, but also the territory where they can choose the best strategies for promoting their material, psychological, and spiritual well-being.

But poverty is not enough to account for the situation of most Indigenous Peoples. The idea of moral exclusion can help unravel the causes of genocide, linking it to specific cultural-psychological dynamics. Indigenous Peoples are not only expropriated, but are also forced to cohabit with settler societies. Because colonial ideology dehumanises the colonised (Fanon 1968), settlers tend to exclude Indigenous Peoples from moral considerations applicable among settlers themselves. Therefore the colonial situation (Balandier 1993) forces Indigenous Peoples to live with settlers who do not consider the former to be human or deserving of humane treatment. Moral exclusion then ensues. When settlers distinguish among themselves, as 'those entitled to the fullest privileges of membership in the community', and Indigenous others, 'whose privileges are restricted or non-existent' (Wilmer 1993:67), they are morally excluding Indigenous Peoples, with appalling results.

The Guarani and Kaiowa case provides a vivid example. As other indigenised peoples all over the world, they are considered to be beyond the moral concerns of the settler societies, 'and [are] eligible for deprivation, exploitation, and other harms that might be ignored or condoned as normal, inevitable, and deserved' (Opotow, Gerson and Woodside 2005: 305). Indeed, for most settlers in Mato Grosso do Sul, considerations of fairness do not apply to Guarani and Kaiowa people. Opotow, Gerson and Woodside (2005: 306) have written that morally excluded people suffer 'rudeness, intimidation, and derogation'; 'oppression and structural violence (e.g. racism, sweat shops, poverty)'; 'persecution and violence directed at particular individuals or groups (e.g. hate crimes)'; and 'direct violence and violations of human rights'. This description fits the Guarani and Kaiowa as well.

Colonisation assaulted (and assaults) Indigenous lives in many ways. Yet many Indigenous Peoples are alive and politically organised around their common identities. Since it is not accurate to state that Indigenous polities have been destroyed, and since it cannot be ignored that they have been concealed and weakened, the concept of occlusion is necessary. This section has sought to indicate how attempts to destroy Indigenous sovereignties caused their occlusion, and how this produced social and moral exclusion as side-effects.

Final considerations

As Beier (2005: 221) stated, 'Indigenous people(s) and their knowledges should be of interest not because we might suppose that they can inform our theories, but because what they have to tell us *is bona fide* international theory in its own right'.

Of course, Guarani and Kaiowa perspectives are much larger than the narratives I have chosen to mention in this article. And I am no authorised voice invoking any special legitimacy to interpret their ideas. But I intend to, in dialogue with their knowledges, underline their profound political content.

First, the reading of their narratives reminds us how impoverishing the artificial separation between politics and spirituality advanced in the Westphalian conception of sovereignty actually is (Inaytullah and Blaney 2004). Separating the fields of politics and spirituality, and conferring prominence on the former, the Westphalian reading of the world has restricted the inventory of political actors and the catalogue of how politics are made, generating a reductionist ontology, perpetrating violence against difference, and producing a history of sameness in IR. The Guarani and Kaiowa teach us that the spiritual is political, and that there are no politics outside spiritual commitments.

Second, the abovementioned narrative about their mythical ancestors choosing to remain loyal to their *ñande reko* tells us about their understanding of sovereignty. For them, being sovereign is being able to choose to live according to their lifeways, and guaranteeing the enforcement of their cosmological commitments in a proper territory. It is not by chance, therefore, that they insist on recovering the land. *Tekoha* is the place for governing themselves, according to Guarani and Kaiowa ways. If the Brazilian state is to respect their right to self-government, guaranteed in ILO Convention 169, it must not only complete the recognition and demarcation of all Guarani and Kaiowa lands, but also review its assimilationist laws and bureaucracies.

Third, there can be no dignity, either for the colonised or the colonisers, in the colonial situation. Some form of decolonisation must take place, meaning that settler state and society must learn to respect Guarani and Kaiowa rights in their own terms, as well as the rights of all Indigenous Peoples in Brazil. Such awareness of our common future is stated in Guarani and Kaiowa narratives in which they admit to be praying for destruction. As long as these territories remain lost to them, shamans will continue to pray for destruction, be it in the form of fires, storms, floods, droughts or frost. They do so even though they understand that such destruction will affect them as well, because 'they are around here as well':

While we do not have our land back, *ñanderu* are praying to harm the whites. They are going to pray for a crisis to come, in the stock market, to affect the money. Another says he will modify the rain, to bring many storms or droughts. Another is praying for a disease to attack soy plantations, something that nobody has ever seen like. A new disease. [...] The Indians who are asking for their lands back are praying for that indeed, for the rain, the storm, the flood to come,

and to cause them economic damage. But we know that it will hit us to. Because we ask for it, but we are around here as well (Delfino Borvão, cited in Crespe 2015: 339-342).

Finally, this excerpt shows their clarity about the more structural causes of the colonial violence directed at them: it is the money that flows from soy beans. The expansion of global commodity chains to the last economic frontiers is the greatest historical force attacking their territories. The Brazilian developmental state is legitimising and promoting these attacks, while betting all its chips on deepening its dependent insertion into global capitalism as an exporter of primary goods.

The empirical trait that motivated this attempt to understand the relation between the expansion of European interstate system and the occlusion of traditional Indigenous sovereignties is the moral and social exclusion of the Guarani and Kaiowa people. At the time of writing, in June 2016, 70 men, including farmers and hired killers, attacked Guarani and Kaiowa communities in the city of Caarapó in southern Mato Grosso do Sul. Seven men were shot, including a 12-year-old boy. One of them died instantly. None of the shooters has been arrested, so far. Local media have supported the farmers and the attack.

This article indicates that Guarani and Kaiowa peoples have had their own forms of political sovereignty since immemorial times, and that the advancement of Brazilian colonisation has reduced the territorial and social scopes of validity of their sovereignties. The social exclusion experienced by Guarani and Kaiowa communities – manifested in extreme poverty, discrimination and violence – is a direct consequence of the occlusion of their sovereignties, and their submission to a colonial situation under the power of Brazilian state and society.

Decolonisation requires the recognition of Guarani and Kaiowa sovereignties, embodied in a model of shared governance among the state, settler society, and Indigenous Peoples. Only such recognition, together with the restoration of previously pillaged lands where Guarani and Kaiowa lifeways can be re-established, can bring some chance of producing societies of material and psychological wellbeing, thus transcending the genocidal state and society that currently exist in Brazil.

Notes

- 1 The 'European system of states' is taken to mean not only the complex of relations among European peoples, but the system of relations that began in Western Europe and expanded to settler societies (as in Brazil and Australia) and Europeanised groups in colonised societies (such as India and Indonesia), and eventually became a global system of international relations, which Ling (2014) calls 'the world of Westphalia'.
- 2 Guarani and Kaiowa conceptions of time deserve an entire article. This is a brief summary, based on the anthropological sources given.
- 3 According to Chamorro (2015: 26), 'Even the War [between Brazil and Paraguay] is not evoked as the promoter of a rupture [in Guarani and Kaiowa memory], and the most frequent memories of the work in mate extraction date to the last years of Companhia Mate Laranjeira's actions. Hence, for Kaiowa, the milestone between the first and the second time [between ancient time and dispersal time] seems to be the occupation of land by new proprietors, the moment when they started having more difficulties to continue living as they lived before.'

- 4 When dealing with periods prior to the 18th century, it is more appropriate to refer to 'classic Guarani' or 'Guarani-speaking peoples' (since Guarani is also a language), or 'peoples of the Guarani tradition' (which is more common in archaeology). That is because there were many Guarani-speaking peoples in the region at the time of the Conquest, and thoroughly surveying their ethnic boundaries falls outside the scope of this article. The Guarani-Ñandeva (or simply Guarani) and the Kaiowa are descendants of the classic Guarani. The Guarani and the Kaiowa contemporary ethnic identities were produced at some stage in the 18th century.
- 5 The state of Mato Grosso do Sul was excised from the state of Mato Grosso in 1977.

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