

Working Paper No. 16, 2019

School Centres for 'Savages'
In Pursuit of a Convivial Sociability
in the Bolivian Amazon

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Mecila:
Working
Paper
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The Maria Sibylla Merian International Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America (Mecila), Rua Morgado de Mateus, 615, São Paulo – SP, CEP 04015-051, Brazil.

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Editing/Production: Raquel Gil Montero, Alejandra Mailhe, Nicolas Wasser, Paul Talcott

This working paper series is produced as part of the activities of the Maria Sibylla Merian International Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America (Mecila) funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

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Printing of library and archival copies courtesy of the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Germany.

Citation:

Guiteras Mombiola, Anna (2019): "School Centres for 'Savages': In Pursuit of a Convivial Sociability in the Bolivian Amazon", *Mecila Working Paper Series*, No. 16, São Paulo: The Maria Sibylla Merian International Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America.

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School Centres for 'Savages'

In Pursuit of a Convivial Sociability in the Bolivian Amazon

Anna Guiteras Mombiola

Abstract

In the 1930s, the Bolivian elites promoted an education policy inspired by indigenist thought which sought to solve the problems faced by indigenous people – concerning welfare, hygiene, agricultural techniques, land issues – and to value to some extent their own culture. The ideal pursued was to shape a truly conviviality of Bolivian society with its otherness, giving rise to a new type of 'Indian' who would contribute actively and voluntarily to the progress of the nation. This educational project also addressed the Amazonian societies through the so-called school centres for "savages". The 'wild nature' and 'primitive state' of the ethnic groups with which these schools operated – specifically the Siriono and the Moré – however, meant that the educational actions undertaken under indigenist ideals were also impregnated with civilizing principles.

Keywords:

Bolivian Amazon | indigenous people | education

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1. Introduction

The first pages of *Indianer och hvita i nordöstra Bolivia*, by Swedish ethnologist Erland Nordenkiöld, informed its readers that in this book they would find “wild group[s] from the jungle”, “tribes, such as Itene and Siriono who, with arms in hand still defend their forests and their independence” (Nordenskiöld 1911: 1-2, own translation). His words did not differ at all from those written almost a century earlier by the French naturalist Alcide d’Orbigny (1839: 258, 260, 343; 1844: 253, 445-446), one of the first travellers to traverse the Bolivian Amazon in the early Republic. Both described the groups referred to by hearsay, by footprints or, if fortunate, by contact with one of their members, separated from their own and in the possession of landowners.

The Siriono – members of the Guaraní linguistic family – were well known, and feared, in the region since colonial times. Their area of influence extended over the pampas and forests that bordered the domains of the former Jesuit missions located to the East of the Mamore River, where the only land- and waterways connecting the main cities of the lowlands were found. The habitat of those then called Itene included both banks of the Itenez River – the natural border between Brazil and Bolivia –, extending in Bolivian territory from the union of the Blanco River with the Itenez until the confluence of the latter’s waters with the Mamore River. The great distances that existed between the course of these rivers and the nearest urban centres meant that the identity of this group was submerged in a certain haze from the beginning of the republican era (Orbigny 1839: 258-261, 341-344). Named after the generic word “*itene*” or “*itenez*” – a regional word with negative connotations that evoked its wildness –, it would not be until the first decades of the twentieth century that they would be recognized as More, belonging to the Chapacura linguistic family (Snethlage 1939). From the 1930s onwards, anthropologists of different nationalities (Germans, Swedes, North Americans) managed to live-together with both ethnic groups for a relatively long time and in their own environment. Their studies would lessen the enormous ignorance that existed about them both in academic circles and in Bolivian society.

Over the first half of the twentieth century, Western ethnologists and their Bolivian contemporaries – political elites, economic groups, and intellectuals from the Amazon area – coincided in seeing both groups as archetypes of the ‘wild’ man par excellence. This was evidenced by their fondness for nudity or body ornamentation, their lifestyles completely adapted to the rainforest they inhabited, the importance of hunting, fishing and gathering in their occupations, and the development of incipient agriculture. Hence,

in general terms, their culture was conceptualized as 'primitive' by using rudimentary technology (weapons and tools made of stone, palm leaves, wood, feathers) and having a very basic social organization, formed by different bands or extensive kinship groups, and under the leadership of the same man.¹ Likewise, the assaults on landowners, passers-by and sailors who entered their territories favoured their label as barbarians, indomitable and ferocious, and their perception as a threat to commercial traffic and the colonization of the region.²

At that time, in Bolivia, the ideas of modernity, progress and civilization propagated in the second half of the nineteenth century were consolidated with liberalism, fostering the assumption of the 'Indians' as primitive beings, rooted in their natural environment and stagnant in time (Salmón 2013). At the same time, the spread of scientific racism normalized the idea of the existence of races, distinct from each other and located in different stages of the social scale, justifying the domination and tutelage exercised over those perceived as inferior by those who considered themselves possessors of 'civilization' (Hannaford 1996; Wade 1997). Such ideas reached their maximum expression in the Amazon area.

As in other Latin American countries with indigenous majorities within their societies, the Bolivian 'Indians' – initially from the high plateau, then later in the lowlands as well – were identified as a scourge to the national society since the late nineteenth century. Indeed, their resistance to the liberal socio-economic project (abolition of tribute, privatization of communal lands) led Bolivian ruling groups to be wary of them: their subversive potential had been proven in the lowlands in 1892, and particularly in the highlands since the 1880s, reaching its peak during the 1899 federal war.³ All this favoured their stigmatization, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, as the main obstacle to the national development. Hence, among the measures adopted to solve the so-called 'Indian question', the task of regenerating the indigenous class, that is, improving its intellectual, moral and physical conditions, was assigned to education (Martínez 2010: 193, 255).

In the 1930s, the Bolivian authorities proposed an education policy of an indigenist nature, akin to that of their Latin American counterparts. A new pedagogical project for the 'Indians' which, contrary to what had previously happened, also addressed

1 See the studies of Wegner (1936), Snethlage (1939; 2016), Ryden (1941; 1942) and Holmberg (1950).

2 This is illustrated in the press: "Irrupción de bárbaros", *La Democracia* (Trinidad, 469, September 17, 1912); "Una tribu de sirionós que merodea por las haciendas del norte", *El Eco del Beni* (Trinidad, 254, November 11, 1916); "Para pacificar salvajes", *El Deber* (Trinidad, 3, July 15, 1929).

3 A recent study on the events of 1892 can be found in Combès (2014). Among the many studies on the impact of liberal measures and indigenous resistance see Condarco Morales (1965); Platt (2016 [1982]); Irurozqui (1994); Larson (2002): 145-175; Gotkowitz (2007); Mendieta (2010).

the Amazonian societies. This educational model was organized into school centres for indigenous people and sought to solve the problems faced by those through the complementarity of their own cooperative and reciprocal forms and Western knowledge and techniques. That is, an education that would break with social practices of colonial origin, offering opportunities and autonomy to its students. The ideal pursued was to shape a true conviviality of Bolivian society with its otherness, with its indigenous populations. A conviviality that here is understood from the Castilian meaning of the term *convivencia*. It implies not simply living-together or the coexistence in the same place. In the Spanish meaning of the term, conviviality also includes the actions of accompanying others in their daily activities, of participating in rites and celebrations – civic, religious, but also juridical, recreational – performed in community, of negotiation and agreement in the taking of decisions that affect the group, of the sense of personal belonging to it, the ways of living with the difference. This ideal model of conviviality, however, collided against the prejudices, stereotypes, categories and practices deeply internalized by the different segments of Bolivian society, including the very educators who promoted the model itself. This educational project was built on the indigenist thought aiming at the transformation of the ‘Indian’ of the jungle into a Bolivian citizen, and whose educational actions were inscribed in evolutionist theses due to the ‘wild nature’ and ‘primitive state’ of the groups with which one would act. The following pages examine the implications of the implementation of this model among the Siriono and Moré peoples in the Bolivian Amazon. Firstly, the educational policy of the 1930s will be briefly outlined; then the most significant aspects of this pedagogical project in the Casarabe and Moré centres will be characterized; and, finally, the factors that led to the end of this experience will be addressed.

2. The ‘Indian Question’ and the Bolivian Educational Policy of 1930s

During the first half of the twentieth century, Latin American countries adopted actions aiming to redefine the place occupied in nation-building by the components of society considered marginal to the dominant culture. This otherness in most countries was embodied by the ‘Indian’ populations. The solution to what was then expressed as the ‘Indian question’ generated, as Giraudo (2010: 520) points out, a debate that transcended national borders, developing to a continental level due to exchanges of ideas and an awareness of the projects developed by other countries.

This would give rise to the *Indigenismo*, a trend of thought outlined since the decades of 1910s and 1920s by politicians, intellectuals, lawyers and educators from Mexico, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, among others. Its goal was to solve the problems faced by the

indigenous populations – concerning welfare, hygiene, agricultural techniques, land issues, education – and to value their 'own elements' such as culture, traditions, language and institutions, seeking their definitive inclusion in the capitalist model and nationality. Among the so-called indigenists was a great diversity of political positions and ways of thinking. Despite considering themselves as defenders of the Indian cause, they adopted different and even contradictory tendencies: some establishing close links with indigenous movements, others assuming a tutelary approach that aimed to keep these movements under state control, some others promoting a cultural *mestizaje*⁴, and some who came to defend all positions.⁵

In the first decades of the twentieth century, schools became one of the instruments used by Latin American governments for the transformation of the indigenous populations. The idea that the States should educate everyone, but not in the same way was firmly established in the Americas, existing a differentiated education for the 'Indians' from the rest of every country's population. The politicians of each country implemented diverse rural education programs that, despite their differences, coincided in the same will: to turn the 'Indians' into a useful social factor to ensure its modernization as full members of society, the strengthening of the nation, and the progress of homeland (García 2010: 176-211; Giraudo 2010; Giraudo and Lewis 2012: 4-5).

At the beginning of the 1930s, the Bolivian educators adopted an educational policy close to the ideals of Peruvian *indigenismo*⁶ and addressed the 'Indian question' from a new perspective: the insertion of the educational experience into the very heart of the community. It was no longer an eradication of native culture and traditions but rather a modification of them, which constituted, as Brienen (2011: 164) points out, a substantial change in the mentality of Bolivian educators and intellectuals.

The foundation of the country's first school following these ideals took place on August 2, 1931 among the Aymara population of the village of Warisata, in the Bolivian high plateau, promoted by Elizardo Pérez. According to Talavera Simoni (2011: 60-67), this project drew on the previous experiences of indigenous teachers who in the 1910s and 1920s had taught their peers how to read, write and count in indigenous schools created by private individuals, as well as on the knowledge acquired in the country's

4 On the cultural *mestizaje* aspired by Latin American countries from the mid-nineteenth through to the mid-twentieth centuries, in its construction process as nation-states see Wade's work (2018) published in this Working Paper Series.

5 A recent synthesis of indigenismo in Latin America in Tarica (2016). New perspectives on indigenismo in the Americas can be found in the compilations of Giraudo & Martín-Sánchez (2011), Giraudo & Lewis (2012) and Calabia Sáez & Martín-Sánchez (2017).

6 See the proposals of Peruvian *indigenismo* – especially, Cuzco indigenismo – in García (2010: 206-211, 230-251, 265-289) and their expression in the Bolivian indigenist program of 1930s in Pérez (2013 [1962]).

first Normal School where teachers were formed following the pedagogy of the 'new school', with Pérez being a member of the first generation of these normalist teachers.

The basic ideas of the Warisateño model were, firstly, the end of the illiteracy of the 'Indians' and the promotion of bilingual education; secondly, the education of both adults and children in work rules, discipline and order, and in moral and civic values; thirdly, their training in modern agricultural techniques and artisan trades in accordance with their skills and vocations, without relinquishing their forms of collective production based on the principles of reciprocity; fourthly, the community's cooperation in the construction and maintenance of the school centre through land, production and work; fifthly, the training of indigenous teachers among members of the community; and sixthly, the organization of their authorities in the so-called Parlamento Amauta, a government body for the future administration of the school centre with no involvement of the teaching element. In summary, Warisata sought the cultural 'improvement' of indigenous people through literacy, socialization and capacitation (Larson 2005; Brien 2011: 179-192; Talavera Simoni 2011: 92).

The ideal pursued by Warisata's promoter (and the teachers who supported him) was the formation of another culture, the Indo-American, born of Western progress and one's own tradition and culture (Pérez 2013 [1962]: 37). The final aim of the Warisateño pedagogical project was to give rise to a new type of 'Indian'. After the abandonment of his servile condition and the recovery of his dignity through the work carried out in the schools, the 'new Indian' would contribute actively and voluntarily to the development of the country's economy and could insert himself more positively into Bolivian society, which was considered a fundamental step for the progress of the nation.

The Warisateño model gained considerable popularity among educational authorities from several Latin American countries in the 1930s and 1940s. This is evidenced, firstly, by the visit of Mexican teachers to Warisata in 1939 in order to learn about the educational programme for the indigenous peoples developed there; secondly, by the celebration in Patzcuaro (Mexico), in 1940, of the first Inter-American Indigenous Congress in which several Warisata's teachers – Elizardo Pérez among them – had an outstanding participation; and thirdly, by the implementation of Warisateño teaching techniques by the Ecuadorian, Peruvian and Guatemalan educational systems.⁷

In Bolivia, the educational model implemented in Warisata inspired the foundation of similar schools throughout the country under Presidents Toro (1936-1937) and Busch (1937-1939), who envisioned education as the fundamental instrument in turning the

⁷ A personal view of Warisata's impact on the American continent can be found in Pérez (2013 [1962]: 321-367). For the viewpoint of Mexican teachers on the Warisateño model and its significance for the development of education among the indigenous peoples of Latin American countries, see Velasco (1940).

'Indian' into a factor of national progress (Gotkowitz 2007: 113). The appointment of Elizardo Perez to the post of Director General of Indigenous Education promoted a system whereby a central school (school centre / *núcleo escolar*) worked alongside other affiliated schools (sectional schools / *escuela seccional*) (Larson 2005: 44-47).

Most of these centres were established in the high plateau and sub-Andean valleys, but there were also centres located in the lowlands, particularly in the Amazon basin. Its populations were perceived as the most 'primitive' of the country, with an existence confused with nature, a scarce technological development and a lack of abstract thought and complex social organization, devaluing them morally, aesthetically and intellectually: in short, they were seen as 'savages' (Mader 1997). The interest of the Bolivian elites in intervening in these 'non-subjected' societies – from State, and not religious, or private instances, as had occurred to date⁸ – and establishing national sovereignty on the country's borders⁹ would give rise to a new category of schools. From then on there would be two types of schools: school centres for peasants (*núcleos escolares campesinos*) in the high plateau, and school centres for 'savages'¹⁰ (*núcleos escolares selvícolas*) in the lowlands. The latter were an integral part of Bolivia's indigenous education policy since its creation. The objective was to create a system of school centres in the most remote areas of the country that would allow: firstly, the 'recovery' for society and the education of the 'savages' groups that lived there, that is, their 'civilization' and 'modernization'; secondly, the acquisition of the same cultural references as the rest of Bolivians, to ensure their full insertion into convivial sociability, and, therefore, their 'nationalization'; thirdly, the encouragement of the exercise of their rights – labour and property, particularly – preventing their exploitation as a forced

8 The aim was to establish a pedagogical model for the uncontrolled nomadic populations living in the so-called borderlands that was different from the one applied until then by which intervention in these societies had fallen on Catholic missionaries, who had become the main instrument of 'civilization' in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

9 It should be remembered that between 1932 and 1935 there was a terrible confrontation between Bolivia and Paraguay over control of the territory and natural resources of Chaco boreal. The conflict ended with the death of a good part of the Bolivian troops – mostly indigenous – and the loss of almost the entire Chaco territory, which passed into Paraguayan hands. According to Gotkowitz (2007: 102), for the ruling elites, the loss of the Chaco symbolized the defects of Bolivian society and raised the urgent need to build a more cohesive country, both socially and territorially.

10 The translation of the terms is taken from Brien (2011: 223). *Selvícola* is a complicated concept of translation because it included two inseparable meanings to people of those times. Used to refer to the "native of the jungle" (*hombre de la selva*), a simple reading could be interpreted as the designation of those who lived in the jungle, in the forests, in the middle of nature itself. However, the assimilation of nature to culture, coming from positivist thought, favoured the understanding that the wilder the nature was, the wilder and primitive the culture of its inhabitants would be. Thus, for the intellectuals and politicians of the time, the concept of *selvícola* is described as referring to individuals who are in "the stage of savagery" because "the jungle itself lives in them as it is their natural environment" [Main characteristics of the sironó (undated), in Carlos Loaiza Beltrán's private archive (ACLB), no doc. code]. The literal translation (sylvicultural) does not carry this meaning, which is why I use Brien's – although problematic – translation. Henceforth, all translations from Spanish into English are mine.

(or unpaid) workforce; and fourthly, the emergence of new urban centres where they would live among white-mestizo settlers, without being subject to them and carrying out agricultural activities.¹¹

In the second half of the 1930s, educational authorities approved the foundation of the first school centres for 'savages', all in the Amazon area. Most did not prosper. Only the centres of Casarabe and Moré developed an educational task among the 'primitive' indigenous within the ideals of the Warisateño model.

3. Warisata in the Amazon: the Centres of Casarabe and Moré

The Bolivian Amazon is populated by a great diversity of ethnic groups. Most of them were reduced to 'Christian civility' from the middle of the seventeenth century in the missions of Mojos, by the Society of Jesus, and in Apolobamba by the Franciscan Order; others were contacted during the expansion of the extractive fronts of the cinchona and rubber throughout the nineteenth century.¹² In both cases, their ability to work, pay taxes, or understand the law helped them be perceived as sufficiently 'civilized' in the 1930s. The 'Indian question' in the Amazon, then, lay in those ethnic groups that still refused any dealing with republican society,¹³ being Siriono and Moré the ones that most worried both the regional elites and national political leaders.

The concern of the regional elites for the lack of control over these populations, and the adoption of the school centres system as the official educational policy of Bolivia from 1936 onwards favoured the creation of the first two school centres for 'savages' in the country. Their creation was not an easy task since the dispersion of the groups to 'educate' meant that there was neither an obvious location for their emplacement nor a pre-existing school that could be turned into a centre, as was the case in the high plateau (Brienen 2011: 224-225). In May 1937 the centre of Casarabe was founded by the teacher Carlos Loaiza Beltrán in the Siriono's area of influence, in a place located in the middle of "virgin and secular jungle" about 14 leagues from Trinidad, capital of the department of Beni. Months later, at the beginning of 1938, the centre of Moré was placed on the left bank of the Itenez River, about five hours of steam navigation

11 The importance, objectives and organization of the school centres for 'savages' are outlined in the Indigenous Education Code, in force since 1939 after several years of experimentation with the new educational model. Regarding this code, see Pérez (2013 [1962]: 466-490).

12 On the missional process see Block (1997); Lehm (2016); Ferrié (2018: 119-180). On participation in the rubber economy see Vallvé (2010: 295-364) and Córdoba (2012a, 2012b).

13 Besides the Siriono and More, among them there were the Pan-Tacana-speaking groups that had been left out of the missionary activity: the Chacobo, who inhabited the forests to the west of the Mamore River; the Araona, Toromona and Pacahuara, in the northwestern forests bordering the Beni and Madre de Dios Rivers; and the Caripuna, who reached the banks of the Itenez, despite living mostly in Brazilian territory.

from its confluence with the Mamore River, being the teacher Luis Leigue Castedo the responsible of its organization.¹⁴

Both Loaiza Beltrán and Leigue Castedo knew of the State's interest in spreading the "philosophy of the so-called indigenous crusade" throughout the country, and assumed as their fundamental mission the "contact with the savages of the jungle not yet reduced" in order to make them part of "the marvellous oeuvre of indigenous education".¹⁵ For that purpose they prepared a plan of 'savage' education that guided the educational actions destined to lead to an "ethnic restoration", to a convivial sociality, to the transformation of the Siriono and Moré into Bolivians who lived peacefully with the rest of the members of society.¹⁶ Although this plan was intended to provide the first experience of socialization of non-subjected indigenous groups in the country without the intervention of any kind of religious institution, the fact is the practices and even concepts used referred to those employed by Catholic missionaries in the past in the Bolivian Amazon.

These actions began with the task of "penetration" and "conquest" – following the terminology used by both teachers – which consisted in establishing a continuous relation with each band or family contacted through the gift of beads, food or tools. With this approximation policy, the team of educators sought to gain their trust, learn their language, know their customs and, finally, persuade their leaders of the convenience of their move to the school centre.¹⁷ This was followed by a set of measures aimed at their sedentariness. Initially, the Siriono and the Moré received baptism and the first notions of catechesis and were vaccinated.¹⁸ The use of clothing and a haircut 'appropriate' to their sex – short for males, long for females –¹⁹ were also emphasized. Castilian names were given to them, transforming their "savages names" into surnames.²⁰ At the same time, trees, brushes and weeds were cleared. Once this task was finished,

14 "Para los que no saben qué es Casarabe", *Revista Casarabe* (Casarabe, 1, July, 1943); "Núcleo indigenal 'Moré' de la Provincia del Iténez", *Renovación* (Trinidad, 63-65, March 18 – April 1, 1938).

15 See respectively Leigue Castedo, 1957: 181 and Indigenous plan for Casarabe (Trinidad, February 20, 1937) in ACLB, no doc. code.

16 This plan was never officially approved and was reshaped throughout the 1930s and 1940s. See Indigenous education plan for the department of Beni (La Paz, November 23, 1936) and Law Project for the organization of centres for 'savages' in the Bolivian lowlands (La Paz, May 7, 1947), in ACLB, no doc. code.

17 Indigenous plan for Casarabe (Trinidad, February 20, 1937) and Report of activities (Casarabe, 1938) in ACLB, no doc. code; and Leigue Castedo, 1957: 36-39, 183-186.

18 Report of activities (More, May 10, 1942) in Archivo Histórico de La Paz (ALP), Ministerio de Educación (ME), 950, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1942, s/f.

19 Distribution of clothing and bedding (Casarabe, April 5, 1944) and Supplies ordering (More, June 10, 1944) in ALP/ME, 951, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1942, s/f.

20 General summary of students (Casarabe, November 23, 1938) and Identity of the students (Casarabe, August 31, 1941) in ACLB, no doc. code; Leigue Castedo, 1957: 11, 20, 40-42.

the buildings of the centre were constructed (school, boarding school, workshops, teachers' houses, students' house-rooms) and a place was set up in the surroundings in which agricultural and livestock activities would be carried out.²¹

Once settled in their respective centre, Moré and Siriono were socialized through an educational strategy whose purpose, following the postulates of the Warisateño model, was threefold: emancipatory, economic and civic.

Firstly, a socio-political structure was organized with the indigenous leaders, who were given a relevant role within the nucleus. Among the More, the existing confrontation between the different family groups was appeased and an attempt was made to maintain the pre-existing native leadership by distinguishing two of their family leaders. Among the Siriono a kind of school council was created: it was formed, initially, by the adult men and women with whom the centre was founded and, later, with the leaders of each of the bands that were reduced until the mid-1940s. In both cases, these leaders were mediators between the school staff and the rest of the community, dealing with conflict resolution and the equitable distribution of work and products.²² This incipient governing body was to provide the necessary elements to govern themselves within national interests and "within their wise laws of respect", become autonomous "with legal representation and rights of their own", and ultimately emancipate themselves from State tutelage and participate in republican life as all Bolivians were doing.²³

Such participation required, secondly, the transmission of those work habits that were pursued by the educational policy of the time, and with which it was intended to make them productive, socially and economically organized people. This required apprenticeship in artisan trades in the school workshops (carpentry, blacksmithing, pottery, leatherwork and shoemaking, in the case of men; cooking, sewing and tailoring, in the case of women); cooperation in the maintenance of the buildings, the opening of roads and the construction of docks; the care of fruit trees and various crops (rice, manioc, sugar cane, banana), the raising of livestock on nearby ranches, and the exploitation of tropical products (rubber) found in the surrounding forests by using modern techniques.²⁴ This production supplied each of the centres, and its surplus

21 Report of activities (Casarabe, January 3 and July 27, 1938) in ACLB, no doc. code.

22 Report of activities (Casarabe, 1941) and Basis of a work of savages and civilizing union, in Photo album, sheet 4 anv. and rev., in ACLB, no doc. code; and Leigue Castedo, 1957: 11, 37-39, 106-107, 132.

23 Report of the Inspector of the school centres for 'savages' of the lowlands (Casarabe, August 27, 1947), in ACLB, no doc. code.

24 Report of activities (Casarabe, January 3, 1938; February 20, 1939; 1941) in ACLB, no doc. code; Report of activities (More, July 15, 1942), in ALP/ME, 950, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1942, s/f.; Tres grandes obras efectivas en el Beni, La Patria (Trinidad, 155, September 12, 1940).

was sold to regional and Brazilian merchants, in exchange for inputs that could not be produced, such as salt.²⁵

Thirdly, the 'social' work of the nucleus sought the entry of the Siriono and Moré into republican civility. This socialization demanded, firstly, instruction in basic knowledge to acquire Western cultural elements; secondly, Catholic indoctrination through catechesis; thirdly, literacy in Castilian to "establish between them and us, the civilized, the indestructible bond of language, spiritual vehicle par excellence and element of social union and affinity", in Loaiza Beltrán's words;²⁶ fourthly, civic and physical education through music, dance, games and combined exercises that should "regenerate" the 'indigenous class';²⁷ and fifthly, friendship with the white-mestizo people, which meant the end of the violence that had characterized these encounters with Siriono and Moré in the past, and evidenced not only their abandonment of 'savagery', but also their belonging to the Bolivian nation.²⁸ For this reason, ethnologists, religious, educators, politicians and the military stayed in both school centres on several occasions.²⁹ In addition, the indigenous children attended school along with the teachers' children – and, in Casarabe, of the neighbouring colonists who lived in the vicinity of the centre – "to erase class differences"³⁰ as the Warisateño model expected.

All these activities were implemented through a strict schedule that regulated the distribution of work and leisure time within the centre, and which was intended to teach order and discipline.³¹ Likewise, these activities were led by a teaching staff composed of the director, teachers skilled in handwork, teacher-explorers – whose mission was to locate and persuade groups interned in the jungle –, as well as a health worker and a cook.³²

25 Report of activities (Casarabe, 1941) in ACLB, no doc. code; Report of activities (Moré, November 20, 1944), in ALP/ME, 954, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1944, s/f.

26 Of the education of the savages (c. 1939), in ACLB, no doc. code, page 8.

27 It should be remembered that the pedagogy of the 'new school' – in which Loaiza Beltrán and Leigue Castedo had been trained – advocated the development of the integral formation of individuals through intellectual, moral and physical education (Martínez 2010: 268-273).

28 "Tres grandes obras efectivas en el Beni", *La Patria* (Trinidad, 155, September 12, 1940).

29 "Los núcleos indígenas de Casarabe y Moré vistos por un científico extranjero", *La Patria* (Trinidad, 148, April 18, 1939); "Las autoridades educacionales viajan a Casarabe" and "5 estudiantes viajaron al núcleo indígenal Moré", *La Patria* (Trinidad, 157, October 10, 1940); "El paleontólogo Mr. Holmberg habla sobre el núcleo de Casarabe", *La Patria* (Trinidad, 162, November 28, 1940); "Observaciones de una visita al Beni", *La Patria* (Trinidad, 164, December 31, 1940); "Autógrafos", *Revista Casarabe* (Casarabe, 1, July, 1943).

30 Report of activities (Casarabe, July 27, 1938) in ACLB, no doc. code; "Informe sobre la escuela indígenal de Casarabe", *El Ideal* (Trinidad, 89, January 26, 1939).

31 Informe de las actividades del núcleo (Casarabe, 1 agosto 1937), en ACLB, sin signatura.

32 Distribution of the Casarabe and More centres, in Archivo de la Casa de la Cultura del Beni (ACCB), Public Treasury, 1940, 1942, 1944, no doc. code.

The final goal of the sociability of the Siriono and the Moré was their nationalization. The directors of both centres encouraged their participation in the various activities organized to commemorate civic celebrations which were attended by political and educational authorities, such as the National Holiday or the Indian Day.³³ On these dates a civic program was prepared that included the hoisting of the national flag, the singing of the national anthem, the participation in civic parades and processions, and the recitation of patriotic and/or indigenist poems in front of the national altar. There were also athletic demonstrations (races, gymnastics, soccer or basketball games) and artistic representations where plays and “civilized” dances (waltz) were combined with the performance of native dances and traditional songs – with their adornments and clothing – exhibited as an ancestral sociocultural value.³⁴

These acts were meant to demonstrate the conversion of these stateless ‘savages’ peoples into individuals who felt part of the nation by showing their knowledge of the Castilian language, their interiorization of the value of the patriotic symbols, and the assumption of the national interests – this is, economic progress and the safeguarding of sovereignty at the frontiers.

4. The Rupture with the Warisateño Model

The conservative military regimes that followed the governments of Toro and Busch made some adjustments to the orientation of the indigenous educational policy developed to date. At the beginning of the 1940s, the vice-president of the National Education Council wrote a detailed report about the situation of indigenous education throughout the country. The document denounced the lack of curricula and work programmes, the absence of a defined and scientific educational organisation, and the shortage of normalist teachers among school staff, as well as the low quality of the training of most of them (Donoso 1940).

The result was the abandonment of Warisata’s ideals. From the 1940s onwards, the new educational authorities opted to return to an education focused on simple literacy, the adoption of hygienic values and training in agricultural work (Larson 2005: 47-50; Choque and Quisbert 2006: 58-66, 81). While the Warisateño model was being

33 The Supreme Decree of 2 August 1937 declared that day as Indian Day, commemorating the founding date of the Warisata school six years earlier.

34 General Program of Celebrations presented by the More centre (More, August 6, 1944), in ALP/ME, 954, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1944, s/f. In the same collection see *Homenaje al Día del Indio* (Casarabe, Tip. La Patria, August 2, 1942) and *Programa de Festejos en Conmemoración del 117 aniversario de la Independencia Nacional* (Casarabe, Tip. La Patria, August 5, 1942).

replicated in different parts of the country and celebrated on the international stage,³⁵ the Ministry of Education began to advocate for an education for indigenous people based on 'inclusive' principles but dissociated from their own cultural practices. Successive governments continued the school centre model and rural education. In a parallel process to that of other Latin American countries, the goal now was the emergence of a peasant 'Indian' by stimulating his skills and knowledge in agricultural and handicraft techniques and guiding them towards the market and the property to, ultimately, 'integrate' them into the nation (Talavera Simoni 2011: 96-99, 111-114; Brienen 2011: 284-285). The education split into two orientations, one for indigenous people and the other for the urban population, would be maintained until the 1960s, despite the profound social changes that occurred after the National Revolution of 1952.³⁶

The centres founded in the Amazon area following the Warisateño principles were not exempt from such reordering, nor from the political change that had caused it.

The educational activity developed in the centres had not been free of detractors from its inception; however, the controversy escalated at the beginning of the 1940s. According to the Indigenous Education Code, the recruitment of non-subjected indigenous people was "the private and primary function of the State, through the School for 'Savages' (*Escuela Selvícola*)" (Pérez 2013 [1962]: 478),³⁷ and other institutions and individuals were forbidden from doing so. The will to enforce this rule generated unease among the different actors involved: firstly, the distrust of local economic agents – farmers, ranchers, rubber traders – who overnight saw their free access to the indigenous workforce for their properties limited;³⁸ secondly, the resentment of those individuals who had been admonished for their lack of commitment to the project by entering into connivance with local entrepreneurs and providing them with Siriono and Moré workers;³⁹ and thirdly, the rivalry for control of the Siriono with the evangelical mission

35 In the Final Act of the first Inter-American Indigenous Congress (Patzcuaro, Mexico, 1940), the resolutions approved in the field of education took the experiences of Bolivia, whose proposals were incorporated into the "indigenous education plan". See Giraud (2010: 541-542).

36 The increase in social conflict in the 1940s strengthened trades unions in mining, manufacturing, and handicrafts, while the middle classes promoted a socialist and strongly nationalist trend as an alternative path for Bolivia. This gave rise to a new political party, the National Revolutionary Movement, which advocated for a reformist and nationalist policy and took over the government of the country in 1952. Among the measures taken during its time in office were the approval of universal suffrage, the agrarian reform – which modified the structure of property –, the nationalization of the mines, and in what is of interest here, the universalization of education by extending it to all of society.

37 We refer readers to footnote 10 for the translation of the term "selvícola".

38 Report of activities (Casarabe, April 7, 1938; September 21, 1943; February 13, 1944), in ACLB, no doc. code.

39 Report of activities (Casarabe, 1941; August 23, 1943; February 13, 1944), Reports to the principal (Magdalena, June 24, 1941; Casarabe, December 20, 1943; Tibaera, s/f), in ACLB, no doc. code.

of Ibiato, located a few leagues from Casarabe and which had obtained permission to catch non-subjected groups of the area in 1932.⁴⁰ At the same time, these local agents launched a smear campaign against the school centres and, in particular, their directors. The latter were accused of misappropriation of wealth, abuse of authority, exceeding the limits of their functions, and neglect of their pedagogical duties with the indigenous people to take advantage of their work.⁴¹

These accusations resulted in the dismissal of Casarabe's director, Carlos Loaiza Beltrán, in 1944.⁴² The new management oriented the activities of the centre towards a greater productive development, more in accordance with the educational policy of the moment. The new team of educators established contracts with the local administration and local businessmen. The fulfilment of these contracts forced the intensification of the Siriono's dedication to the harvesting of the different crops of the centre and to the elaboration of manufactured articles in their workshops. At the same time, the lack of remuneration for the Siriono's work allowed the new management, on the one hand, to give them to the white-mestizo people who had been settling in the centre to work on their fields, and, on the other hand, to initiate the exploitation of resinous trees that grew in the surroundings.⁴³ Its objective was to "place this indigenous centre at a higher level of industrialization" so that it would end up "becoming a true work centre of great proportions".⁴⁴ This rearrangement of the activities of the centre was in detriment of the 'social' work of education promoted by its founder, which was reduced to the literacy of the Siriono.⁴⁵

In December 1947, the inspector of the school centres for 'savages' of the lowlands, with headquarters in Trinidad, received the visit of several Siriono. They stated that they had escaped from Casarabe because of the punishments unjustly inflicted by the responsible personnel, and they threatened the educational authorities that, if the situation was not redressed, all the students would leave the school "going back to the jungle".⁴⁶ Although the escapes were a common event under the first director,⁴⁷

40 Report on evangelical mission (Casarabe, December 25, 1937) and Complaint of the evangelists' acts (Casarabe, March 4, 1943), in ACLB, no doc. code.

41 Report of activities (Trinidad, February 7 & 16, 1944; More, October 20, 1944) in ALP/ME, 954, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1944, s/f.; "El asunto de Casarabe", *La Flecha* (Trinidad, 43, June 28, 1944).

42 Report to the Chief of the School District (Trinidad, 9, February 26 & 28, 1944), in ACCB, Records Copier, 1944, ff. 127-130, no doc. code.

43 Report of activities (Casarabe, April 14, 1944), in ACLB, no doc. code and Report of activities (Casarabe, November 15, 1944), in ALP/ME, 954, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1944, s/p.

44 Report of activities (Casarabe, August 16, 1947), in ACLB, no doc. code.

45 Report of activities (Casarabe, April 14, 1944; August 16, 1947), in ACLB, no doc. code.

46 Report of the Inspector of the school centres of 'savages' of the lowlands (Trinidad, December 22, 1947), in ACLB, no doc. code.

47 Report of activities (Casarabe, January 3 & April 7, 1938), in ACLB, no doc. code.

the truth is that they multiplied under the next managers: many returned to the forest, where they were captured by neighbouring landowners; others went to the mission of Ibiato.⁴⁸ Indeed, the inquiries carried out confirmed that at that time, there were only 64 students left, when in 1944 about 260 Siriono resided in Casarabe.⁴⁹ That is why the educational authorities decided to definitively suppress the centre, since “the authentic sense of recovery of the indigenous people, who in the past had fulfilled their social function of incorporating land and men into the national heritage, had disappeared”.⁵⁰ In 1948, Casarabe became an agricultural settlement inhabited only by white-mestizo settlers,⁵¹ and its Siriono students were transferred to Ibiato’s mission which, in terms of its school administration, was subordinated to the Ministry of Education.⁵²

In More, none of those accusations were successful.⁵³ The nucleus functioned during its entire existence under the direction of Leigue Castedo, who only left office temporarily due to the political changes that the National Revolution entailed.⁵⁴ Under his management, the affinity of the faculty to the new education policy begun in the 1940s (Pérez 2013 [1962]: 385) meant that productive aspects became more important in the following decades. The managers of Moré encouraged, on the one hand, the expansion of agricultural work, handicrafts, wood and rubber in order to move towards “superproduction”, and, on the other hand, the mechanization and industrialization of the nucleus to turn it into an economically autonomous urban centre. At the same time, with the agrarian reform of 1953, the learning of the notion of patrimony and individual property became, along with work, a fundamental principle to be transmitted to the Moré to ensure their transformation from ‘Indian’ into ‘peasant’ or ‘labourer’.⁵⁵ These actions encouraged the Inspector of the school centres for ‘savages’ of the lowlands

48 Report of activities (Casarabe, April 14, 1944), in ACLB, no doc. code; Report to the Chief of the School District (Trinidad, December 11, 1944), in ACCB, Records Copier, 1944, f. 754; Government Authorization (Trinidad, May 15, 1945), in ACCB, Records Copier, 1945, f. 573.

49 Report of the Inspector of the school centres of ‘savages’ of the lowlands (Trinidad, December 22, 1947); Principles that gravitate over the work of the centres (undated), in ACLB, no doc. code.

50 Report of the Inspector of the school centres of ‘savages’ of the lowlands (Trinidad, December 22, 1947), in ACLB, no doc. code.

51 “Se destruyó la obra de Casarabe”, *El Eco del Beni* (Trinidad, 665, September 9, 1948) and “El núcleo Casarabe se convierte en escuela granja”, *La Unión Beniense* (Trinidad, September 25, 1950).

52 Note from the School District Chief (Trinidad, September 16, 1948) and Note from the Prefect of the Department (Trinidad, July 5, 1950), in ACCB, Records Copiers, 1948 & 1950, ss/ff.

53 This would have reflected the remoteness of Moré from the immediate interests of “all political influence, and from the pernicious environment” of the power groups of Trinidad. Report of the Inspector of the school centres of ‘savages’ of the lowlands (Trinidad, March 20, 1949), in ACLB, no doc. code.

54 Note to the Comptroller Office (Trinidad, June 5 & 26, 1952), in ACCB, Public Treasury, 1951, s/f.

55 Notice 58 (More, January 17, 1949), in ACLB, no doc. code; General work plan (Moré, June 30, 1952), in ACCB, Public Treasury, 1951, s/f.

to affirm that Moré was a “proper school of work, all there are occupied”.⁵⁶ All these activities were carried out with about 150 More;⁵⁷ a number that did not vary much due to the flu epidemics that decimated them in the first years of their settlement,⁵⁸ and also due to those who refused to submit to school escaping to the forest.⁵⁹

This situation persisted until 1963. Made “of each neighbour, Indian or not Indian, a small owner” and “already formed [the village] with its Authorities and its economic reserve”, the teachers declared their educational work finished and left the nucleus of Moré (Leigue Castedo 1957: 187).⁶⁰ The following year, the missionary of Ibiato also retired from his functions (Lehm 2004: 18). After the definitive departure of its administrators, Moré and Ibiato became communities inhabited exclusively by indigenous people;⁶¹ at that time, Casarabe was no more than a mestizo village.

5. Conclusion

Having concluded the pedagogical activities developed in the school centres for ‘savages’ of Casarabe and More, their respective founders prepared two albums of photographs with which they wanted to reflect the “indigenist task” carried out under their management.⁶² Both in the albums and in the correspondence with the Ministry of Education, the two teachers expressed their adherence to the theses of the indigenist thought of the era. The educational efforts undertaken by both teachers were part of the strategy developed by Bolivian indigenismo of the 1930s to solve the ‘Indian question’.

Through an education adapted to the ethnic, geographical and sociological differences of indigenous peoples, its purpose was to dignify their culture, to give rise to a “new type of Indian” from the combination of their own tradition with Western progress and, ultimately, to create the ideal conditions for shaping that Indo-America. It can be said

56 Report of the Inspector of the school centres of ‘savages’ of the lowlands (Trinidad, March 20, 1949), in ACLB, no doc. code.

57 Report of activities (More, October 20, 1944) in ALP/ME, 954, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1944, s/f.

58 Report of activities (La Paz, October 30, 1939 & June 5, 1940) in ALP/ME, 345, Ministerio de Instrucción, 1939-1941, f. 56 & f. 396; Report of activities (More, May 10, 1942) in ALP/ME, 950, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1942, s/f.

59 Report of activities (More, January 21-22, 1942) and Notices 26 & 27 (More, January 19, 1942) in ALP/ME, 945, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1941, s/f.

60 This book was published in 1957. Its second edition is dated that same year, undoubtedly a typographical error, given that it added a last section which gives information on the years 1962 and 1963.

61 On the present time of the More and the Siriono of Ibiato see respectively Semo 1995; Lehm 1997; Gutiérrez 2006, and Stearman 1987; Califano 1999; Lehm 2004.

62 For analysis of the textual and visual narration of both albums, see Guiteras Mombiola & García Jordán 2017, and Guiteras Mombiola [forthcoming].

that Warisata designed convivial practices whose aim was to intentionally shape social change and the social organisation. This 'ideal' model of conviviality – “a programme of good or ideal conviviality”, following Müller (2018: 3, 6) – was however conducted in conditions of asymmetry. Indeed, as Graubart (2018: 2, 15) points out, “the relations of coexistence in the Iberian empire produced legal markers of difference between groups that interacted regularly” which, with time, ended up becoming categories that perpetuated asymmetric relations. These relations, however, did not involve simple barriers since “the towns – in what here refers, the indigenous and the non-indigenous ones – not only coexisted, but their differentiated existences were interdependent”. Thus, the ideologues of Warisata placed themselves in a position of authority and adopted a patronising or paternalistic attitude towards those indigenous people with whom they collaborated,⁶³ developing hierarchical but reciprocal relations that were the result of their daily interactions in the activities of the centres (construction and creation, extension of knowledge, adaptation to the environment) and ultimately aimed at building a new future Bolivian society. However, afterwards, the conservative government's access to power in the 1940s revealed the strong persistence of “internal colonialism” in the Bolivian elites' perception of society (Rivera 2010), of what they believed the nation should be. They could only conceive of a productive role for indigenous populations. The educational policy, then, advocated as its sole objective the transformation of the 'Indian' into a useful social factor, that is, into a 'peasant'.

In the Amazon, this internationalization of hierarchical (and domination) relations was, if possible, even greater. It was inconceivable to the local actors to give those indigenous groups who threatened their lives and businesses any other treatment than that of subordination. Since colonial times, culture had been associated with nature, understanding that the wilder nature, the wilder the culture of its inhabitants. And later, evolutionist thought encouraged perceiving Amazonian societies to be in the lowest and primitive state of the social scale (Mader 1997; Pizarro, 2009). The 'Indian question' in the lowlands was therefore the 'recovery' of those societies for Bolivian society. The actions developed in the school centres for 'savages' were influenced by both indigenist and evolutionist principles, and the individuals among whom action was to be taken were assumed to be 'savages' and 'primitive'. Here, the ideal conviviality imagined by the followers of the Warisateño pedagogical project would only be possible if a series of civilizing actions were previously developed: common life, rules and discipline, use of time, instruction, and so on. These actions were taken for the socialization of the Siriono and More. Only then would their emancipation be possible, understanding that after abandoning their ancestral 'savagery' they would

63 Elizardo Pérez (2013 [1962]: 93, 98, 115, 146) emphasizes the word term *tata* – father in Aymara language – used by Warisata's students to refer to him, while one of his teachers, Carlos Salazar (2005 [1943]), called them children. This aspect has been studied by Brien 2011.

cease to be perceived as subjects of tutelage and would become subjects of right the same as any other Bolivian.

In the end, both Moré and Siriono neither disappeared when their culture was diluted by contact with civilization, as indicated by the salvage anthropology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Bossert and Villar 2013: 7), nor did they insert themselves completely, actively and positively into the national society as both educators and Bolivian public authorities had hoped. A significant number of members of each ethnic group remained in the school centres as they were administered by their founders, who were committed to both the school and the Warisata principles. Despite this, both groups refused to remain in contact with the white-mestizo Other – whether teacher, businessman or missionary – when the model of conviviality articulated by the teachers of More, Casarabe (and, later, Ibiato) did not correspond to their own concept of conviviality and negotiation with difference (Orving and Passer 2000).

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