

Workshop

Amerindian Spaces:

**Rebellions and Alliances in the Latin American Borderlands,
1600-1900**



University of St Andrews, 16-17 June 2015

Hebdomadar's Room, St. Salvators Quad



Tuesday, June 16, 2015

9:10-9:20	Arrival and welcome
9:20-9:30	Introduction
9:30-10:15	Mark Harris - The Making of some Ethnic Spaces in the Lower Brazilian Amazon, c. 1650-1850. The Trombetas/Nhamundá and Tapajós/Arapiuns Regional Complexes: Rivers, Leadership and Political Organisation
10:15-11:00	Matthew Restall - The End of the World/the Centre of the World: Myths and Mysteries of the Belize Borderlands
11:00-11:20	Coffee Break
11:20-12:30	Discussion
12:30-1:30	Lunch
1:30-2:15	Heather Roller - Nurturing Independence: The Mbayá-Guaikurú in Colonial and Post-Colonial Brazilian Sources
2:15-3:00	Silvia Espelt Bombín - Between Autonomy and Voluntary Incorporation: the (de)Construction of a European Frontier between Brazil and French Guiana, 1600s-1730s
3:00-3:20	Coffee break
3:20-4:30	Discussion
5:30-7:00	Guided tour of St Andrews
7.15pm	Dinner

Wednesday, June 17, 2015

9:30-10:15	Cynthia Radding - Amerindian Spaces in the Production of New Spain's Northern Frontier
10:15-11:00	Pablo Ibáñez Bonillo - The Power of Silence in Colonial Sources: Filling the gaps of two episodes of the Portuguese conquest of Maranhão and Pará
11:00-11:20	Coffee Break
11:20-12:30	Discussion
12:30-1:30	Lunch
1:30-2:15	Sabine Hyland - Alliance and Revolt: The Case of the Chankas of Peru, 1607-1780
2:15-3:00	Hal Langfur - Cannibalism and the Body Politic: Independent Indians in the Era of Brazilian Independence
3:00-3:20	Coffee break
3:20-4:30	Discussion
4:30-5:30	Final discussion and publication plans
7pm	Dinner

Organisers: Silvia Espelt Bombín and Mark Harris

This workshop examines the exchanges that took place at the limits of the expansion of European empires and later independent states in Latin America between 1600 and 1900. These geographical territories have been conceptualised as “frontiers”, “borderlands”, “tribal zones” and “contact zones”.

Analytical frameworks for these territories started off in the late 19th century with Frederick Jackson Turner studying the North American frontier and suggesting how it shaped and impacted USA’s institutions and its configuration (he was frequently criticized for its imperialist approach). Herbert Eugene Bolton’s study of what he called the Spanish borderlands added to the debate the degree of cohabitation and cultural exchange taking place in those territories. Both approaches developed a school, and both have been questioned in what developed as a rather productive and ongoing discussion. More recently, Mary Louise Pratt argued that the “colonial frontier” was only a frontier to a colonising European state, and proposed “contact zone” instead. Pratt’s approach has also been used to study the internal frontiers, those placed within the territorial margins of an empire. By then, also Whitehead and Ferguson had broken new ground by putting forward the concept of “tribal zone”, located at the intersection of anthropological and historical discussions, defined as the “area affected by the proximity of the state, but not under state administration” (Ferguson and Whitehead, *War in the Tribal Zone*, 1992: 3). Adelman and Aron chose to reserve borderlands to areas contested by empires competing for territory, while frontiers were the “meeting place of peoples in which geographic and cultural borders were not clearly defined” (Adelman and Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders”, *AHR*, 1999: 815). The discussion continues, with researchers testing different approaches in different regions, for instance David J. Weber’s *Bárbaros* (2005), Cynthia Radding’s *Landscapes of Power and Identity* (2005) or Hal Langfur’s *The Forbidden Lands* (2006).

We want to explore these terms – zones, frontiers, spaces, hinterlands, territories – and their conceptual frameworks by looking at them through the alliances and rebellions that took place there involving principally Amerindians, but also people of African and European descent. Our focus is not the state, but the actors who negotiated, challenged and modified the relations taking place in those areas. Guha and others have already demonstrated how the study of state and other institutionally produced archival sources can be used to write the history of the people living at the margins or beyond the states. Recently, an interdisciplinary approach (e.g. history, archaeology, linguistics and anthropology) has proven even more relevant to attain a better understanding of the Amerindian spaces beyond states (e.g. Manuela da Cunha, *História dos Índios do Brasil*, 1992).

We aim to study different processes of resistance, accommodation/adaptation and ethnogenesis in highland and lowland South America and a wide territory of Central and North America, comparing areas in which research has been more extensively carried out with others in which approaches are relatively more recent. We expect that diving into the different regions’ histories, breaking the European-empire territorial divide and language barrier, we will appreciate change over time to understand structural changes and see if models of analysis can be constructed.

We envisage a three-century discussion because the chronological divide instituted by the independence of most, but not all, Latin American states from European countries is not necessarily useful. An overview might also show local changes in the agency of the actors in moments of evolution from a period in which these regions were colonial frontiers, borderlands, tribal zones or peripheries of a distant centre, to another in which there was a structural change in the administration of the territory (ie expulsion of the Jesuits or changes in legislation regulating

indigenous labour), or to a final one in which newly independent states sought to exert firmer control over the borders of their – still contested – national territory.

The workshop will have three key themes that we ask participants to address in relation to their own research area.

1. Social upheavals were frequently carried out thanks to the participation of different groups of people, very rarely by one group only. Our interest is to analyse how and why interethnic and/or inter-class alliances built, maintained, challenged, destroyed, or made long lasting within the specific context of rebellions. We hope for intra-indigenous alliances against Europeans, agreements and conflicts between maroon communities and indigenous groups and the authorities in the defence of a territory, alliances between peasants and local elites in a rebellion, or ethnic soldiering within and at the margins of empires, to name a few. The analysis of these cases will enlighten us on the nature of power politics, cultural exchanges, ethnogenesis and the construction of an empire or state.

2. While rebellions and/or alliances might have been short-lived, we ask participants to think about the broader implications of their specific cases of study and look at wider local, regional or global dynamics and impacts. Are we confronting a series of rebellions or alliances that need to be framed within specific contexts or do they reflect bigger social, cultural or political trends? Was a specific rebellion/alliance used a posteriori as a justification for a specific claim, for the incorporation or repression of a group in the official narrative, or even to set a limit to an expansionist state? Can we see an evolution in the regional dynamics of the area pre- or post-independence or pre-/post- a change in the state's presence in the territory?

3. We are also interested in the sources themselves and the terminology used. Too frequently produced by the vanquishers, sources tend to be biased and it becomes difficult to grasp the voice of the rebels or the alliances formed by the others, while might also downplay the role of some winners' allies. We ask participants to critically analyse the process taking place when researching mostly through written sources, and, if appropriate, how can these be contrasted with oral accounts, memoirs of rebellions and alliances, and interdisciplinary approaches.

The Making of some Ethnic Spaces in the Lower Brazilian Amazon, c. 1650-1850. The Trombetas/Nhamundá and Tapajós/Arapiuns Regional Complexes: Rivers, Leadership and Political Organisation.

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This presentation will analyse the making of two complex Amerindian territories on either side of the Amazon River. Geographically these places are contiguous, running roughly in a north-south line with the Amazon River as the point of articulation. Before conquest the regions were part of a larger commercial and political network. The archaeological details of these interconnections are not entirely clear but may have spread from Central Brazil to the Guianas and ultimately to the Caribbean coast, and to the Xingu river in the east and the Madeira river in the west. Archaeologists now see the settlements that occupied the main trunk of the Lower Amazon as multi-lingual and multi-ethnic and not centralised politically.

By 1850 these territories had become oriented inwards, and their long distance connections much modified. And each one possessed a different character. Yet internally they remained multi-ethnic zones largely outside the control of the nation-state. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the Tapajós/Arapiuns area was predominantly Tupi speaking Amerindian with large federal type polities with strong alliances. The Trombetas/Nhamundá region had small-scale village type polities (possibly Arawakan speaking) and recently established communities of escaped Afro-Brazilians. How can these differences be understood? Are they the result of colonial impositions or the dynamics of native social relations? How can these spaces be conceptualised and what is the character of their frontiers – ecological or social? How did the ethnic and political relationships within these spaces alter overtime? Did Afro-Brazilians and indigenous people develop strong bonds?

A central concern of this presentation is with the nature of rivers. What do we know about how these watery spaces were perceived by indigenous people and did these perceptions change as the territories over which they worked shifted and the limits of social relations transformed? Did rivers act frontiers or meeting places?

Overall, the presentation analyses the role of deep forest and riverine networks (also known as tribal zones) in the history of the Lower Amazon. Historical understanding of the Brazilian Amazon has developed significantly in the last 15 years. By addressing anthropological aspects of the lives lived outside of official historiography in these regions the aim is to stitch together some of the missing layers of this historical work.

The End of the World/the Centre of the World: Myths and Mysteries of the Belize Borderlands

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This workshop presentation explores two phenomena in the eighteenth-century history of Belize. One is that of flight by black slaves and free workers (mostly Europeans) across the borderlands between the British settlement and neighboring Spanish colonies (Yucatan, the Peten in northern Guatemala, and Omoa in Honduras). The other is that of the legendary Battle of St. George's Caye, when in 1798 British settlers and their black slaves apparently fended off a massive Spanish attack, a victory that is celebrated today as a foundational proto-nationalist moment.

The first phenomenon was completely unknown until very recently, and its implications for comparative colonialism, the slave experience, and Maya survivalism in this "Amerindian space", are still to be fully explored (e.g. see 2014 articles by Restall in the *Hispanic American Historical Review* and by Mark Lentz in *The Americas*). The other phenomenon has been shrouded in imperial/national mythology for two centuries, with no awareness at all, both within and outside Belize, of the fact that the battle never actually took place (archival work on the events surrounding the 1798 attack, including the implications for white-black-Amerindian relations in the greater Belize region, underpin a book project of mine in progress). An analytical interplay between these two phenomena helps us to better understand this fascinating, long-ignored borderland region that was both one of the ends of the world (to paraphrase Aldous Huxley) and yet at the centre of the core global battleground that was the early modern Caribbean.

Nurturing Independence: The Mbayá-Guaikurú in Colonial and Post-Colonial Brazilian Sources

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This paper reflects on the sources and methods for studying the history of autonomous indigenous groups in Brazil. The main case study is the Mbayá-Guaikurú (or simply Guaikurú) of the Paraguay River basin. This group is one of just a few groups to have been extensively documented in the colonial period and also featured in post-colonial ethnographies.

A mobile, equestrian society that occupied the borderlands between Spanish and Portuguese territories, the Guaikurú had a long history of raiding colonial settlements while occasionally forging short-lived peace agreements with Spaniards. In 1791, however, two bands of Guaikurú decided to make a more enduring peace with the Portuguese. Over the following three decades, thousands of autonomous Guaikurú came to live seasonally in the vicinity of Portuguese forts in the Upper Paraguay region. Their regular interactions and intrigues with the fort commanders produced a huge documentary record, much of which has survived in the public archive of Mato Grosso, Brazil.

With the end of Portuguese colonial rule, the Guaikurú largely fade from view, receiving only scattered references in official documentation. They appear briefly as rebels (when they attacked Brazilian forts and private properties in 1826) and then again as allies (when they fought

on the Brazilian side during the Paraguayan War). It is only during the late nineteenth century that the Guaikurú come more fully into view again, this time through the writings of early ethnographers who visited the surviving descendants of the nation, known as the Kadiwéu.

This paper explores the connections and disjunctures between the colonial sources and the later ethnographies of the Guaikurú. What new insights come from reading these two very different genres of sources together? What light do they shed on the history of interactions between outsiders and Guaikurú over the course of a century? Finally, what do they tell us about changing Guaikurú priorities and strategies? Colonial authors often lamented that although the Guaikurú were formally at peace, they were not “pacified”; instead, they acted like members of a sovereign nation and refused to give up their customary mobility. The nineteenth-century ethnographies—written around a century after the initial peace treaty with Luso-Brazilians—help us understand how the Guaikurú nurtured their independence over the long term.

Although focused on the history of the Guaikurú, the paper also draws on recent research on other autonomous Indian nations in Brazil, such as the Mura and Kayapó do Sul. Like the Guaikurú, factions of these groups made peace agreements with Luso-Brazilians in the eighteenth century, without ceding their autonomy. Their descendant groups also attracted the interest of ethnographers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, generating similar (if somewhat smaller) bodies of source material.

Between Autonomy and Voluntary Incorporation: the (de)Construction of a European Frontier between Brazil and French Guiana, 1600s-1730s

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Archaeological, linguistic, ethnographic and archival evidence is starting to suggest that the region comprised between the Amazon/Jarí and the Maroni Rivers, currently the State of Amapá (Brazil) and French Guiana, was a place of refuge for Amerindians well before the actual landing of Europeans on its shores. Home to a complex multi-lingual and multi-ethnic set of Amerindian polities, European control through trade posts or small scale plantations was attempted from the early 1600s, and more actively pursued by the Portuguese and French from 1680s onwards. The region remained contested by Portugal/Brazil and France until 1900, and historiography has tended to understand migrations of Amerindians, and alliances and wars between them and the French and Portuguese as responses to the Europeans’ colonising initiatives.

With this picture and analysis in mind, this paper discusses two overlapping processes. On the one hand, it reconstructs the exchanges taking place between different Indigenous groups (who spoke Arawak, Carib, and maybe Tupi and other now lost languages) in the region over a period of 130 years. This analysis shows commercial exchanges, migrations, shared ceremonies and rituals between Aruã, Maruan, Ariane, Galibi, Palikur and Tucujús, among other groups, in a region that seems to have had some kind of political connection or a recognised changing authority. On the other hand, this reconstruction suggests a gradual rapprochement between Amerindian groups living close to the Amazon to those living closer to Cayenne, which was translated not only in temporary visits or migrations, but also in settlements. From the late 1680s, there was also an increase in the number of Amerindian groups actively engaging with the French either through

settlement in Jesuit missions, temporary alliances or requests for missionary presence, while the Portuguese progressively denounced attacks from the revolted Indigenous allies of the French. Did these migrations, alliances and “rebellions” have to do with European politics, with Amerindian politics, or with both? This paper will respond to this question through some study cases to elucidate the complex reality of a territory located at the frontier of two European Empires that had been, and continued to be for decades, an Amerindian space.

Amerindian Spaces in the Production of New Spain’s Northern Frontier

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The vastness of the northern borderlands of the Viceroyalty of New Spain is captured in the phrase, *gran septentrión*, recovered from official documents and colonial correspondence. Understood in terms of both geography and imperial dominion, the spatial significance of the *septentrión* as a historical frontier is implicit in the primary sources, but as yet undertheorized in the secondary literature. Recent scholarly production in the fields of environmental history, historical ecology, and ethnohistory have enriched the layered meanings of *frontier* that are applied to different scales of territoriality among imperial powers, indigenous confederations, and communities in discreet regions and localities. The notion of Amerindian frontiers has been developed mainly for those regions that remained beyond the imperial dominion of Spain or other European powers in North America. The trans-disciplinary insights afforded by this research provide an excellent canvas on which to analyze the historical production of Amerindian spaces in the frontier societies that were linked to regional corridors running through the *gran septentrión*. This paper will explore these themes related to the materiality of space for the frontier province of Salinas, in eastern New Mexico, with its connections to the Great Plains, to the east, and to the mining and mission provinces of Nueva Vizcaya, to the south. It will place Salinas within the *gran septentrión* and interpret the spatial meanings of the frontier for different indigenous and hispanic populations that shaped the region over time and sustained its tenuous connections to the Spanish imperial sphere of North America.

The Power of Silence in Colonial Sources: Filling the Gaps of Two Episodes of the Portuguese Conquest of Maranhão and Pará

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Colonial narratives about rebellion and frontier relations in the Brazilian Amazon have survived centuries of historian’s work and have come down to us today with the strength of an undeniable truth. I will present two episodes of the Portuguese conquest of the Lower Amazon in order to demonstrate that the archival sources that are available today allow us to suggest a new reading of these traditional narratives. These new readings unveil some of the strategies of domination deployed by colonial actors in the construction of Otherness at the frontier.

The first episode is the Tupinamba rebellion that threatened the continuity of the colonial project in Maranhão and Pará from 1617 to 1621. I propose that this rebellion had a deep-political nature and was linked with a long process of resistance on the part of the Tupinamba, instead of being an individual reaction to the abuses of some European captains, as the sources suggest.

The second episode is the martyrdom of the Jesuit Luis Figueira in 1643. It has been assumed by historians that Luis Figueira was killed and eaten by Aruã people in the island of Marajó after his ship was wrecked near Belém do Pará. However, the sources do not offer any evidence for this assumption and I will demonstrate that this story was created by contemporary actors who were leading a series of wars against native people to increase their control of lands and slaves at the frontier.

Alliance and Revolt: The Case of the Chankas of Peru, 1607-1780

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This talk will focus on the historical anthropology of the Chanka ethnic group, an Andean people centered in the city of Andahuaylas, about 350 kilometers northwest of Cusco. This presentation examines how and why the Chanka nobility formed marriage alliances with local creole elites in the Spanish colonial period, and how these social relations across racial and cultural divides could either lead to or hinder revolt. Using unpublished archival materials from Peru and Spain, I explore how the alliances between Chanka nobility and powerful creole landowners could in lead to minor “revolts”, such as one in 1726, but ultimately prevented the Chankas from joining the major Tupac Amaru rebellion in the 1780s.

Cannibalism and the Body Politic: Independent Indians in the Era of Brazilian Independence

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Concentrating on the first two decades of the nineteenth century, this paper explores the limitations of state-directed efforts to incorporate Brazil’s autonomous native peoples, especially those known as the Botocudo. Analysis focuses on the sparsely settled tropical forests separating three of the colony’s major demographic centers: the colonial capital of Rio de Janeiro in the southeast, the inland mining district of Minas Gerais to the north and west, and the sugar-plantation zone of Bahia in the northeast. Significant discord divided state actors charged with implementing plans to transform into loyal subjects tens of thousands of hunter-gatherers inhabiting this mountainous expanse. The paper traces this friction to natives who contested and curbed official policies through active engagement with settlers and key agents of the state.

At issue, specifically, were disagreements that arose over the appropriate response to accusations of Botocudo cannibalism. For the crown and many of its ministers, regional officials, and military officers, a full-scale military assault was the obvious answer. Some authorities,

however, advocated a surprising level of restraint. Even as the crown pursued its aggressive policies, groups condemned as cannibals made conciliatory overtures that bolstered the claims of critics, some of them quite prominent, that patient, peaceful methods of incorporation should orient the state. The crown could not conceal reports about interactions with Indians that did not conform to its sweeping denunciations. The gap between policy devised in government chambers and actual exchanges with Indians in the forests ultimately exposed the fragility of state-directed efforts to incorporate these peoples as the colonial period came to an end. Relations with autonomous Indians became a telling test of royal power, revealing in the state's assertions of strength much about its weakness, undercutting its claim to effective territorial control, and testifying to native capacities to curtail the crown's most violent tendencies.

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