

FORGING FRONTIERS: FÉLIX DE AZARA AND THE MAKING
OF THE VIRREINATO DEL RÍO DE LA PLATA

Jeffrey A. Erbig Jr.

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Approved by

Advisor: Kathryn Burns

Reader: John Chasteen

Reader: Cynthia Radding

ABSTRACT

JEFFREY A. ERBIG JR: Forging Frontiers: Félix de Azara and the Making of the Virreinato del Río de la Plata

(Under the direction of Kathryn J. Burns)

This essay examines the geographical production of the Virreinato del Río de la Plata and the formation of its northern frontier with Brazil. I use the work of Félix de Azara to demonstrate how he and other cartographers transformed the administrative apparatus of the viceroyalty into a spatial enterprise. I argue that mapping was an integral technique of colonial governance that engendered material consequences, and that the spatial vision of the viceroyalty was challenged even in the process of its reproduction. The essay is broken into four parts. In the first two, I examine the overlapping and mobile patterns of human settlement along the interstate borderlands and how Azara negotiated and abstracted them to create readable maps. The third section focuses on resettlement programs that Azara oversaw to populate the frontier, while the fourth provides a close reading of the maps and natural history that he published of the region.

To my family. Amidst the transience of my life you remain constant for me.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

On September 15, 1785, Félix de Azara and his team of engineers and surveyors returned to the city of Asunción after nearly a month's journey to survey the Río Tebicuary.¹ In a series of journal entries, Azara complained of the sleepless nights, loud, inundating thunderstorms, and rapacious mosquitoes that had tormented the crew. Alongside these grumblings, however, appeared copious notes and observations of the human and physical landscapes that he had encountered in his travels. He and his team had traversed numerous villages and farms, met with local officials, and collected whatever data they could on populations, administrative structures, heads of cattle, and local histories. Aided by local guides and laborers, they also measured mountains, collected animal specimens, and charted the twists, turns, and flood patterns of the serpentine river.² Azara would make many similar journeys over the course of the next fifteen years to the borderland regions of Spain's new viceroyalty, known as the Virreinato del Río de la Plata, in an attempt to bring spatial order to a previously remote and unmanaged region.

Azara's survey of the Río Tebicuary, near the viceroyalty's northern frontier with Brazil, was a small slice of perhaps the largest effort ever to map the boundaries between Spanish and Portuguese South America. He was commissioned to the region under the statutes of the 1777 Treaty of San

¹ This essay discusses a number of rivers, many whose names were derived from the Guaraní language and whose spellings appear differently according to the language of source material. As most of the maps that I analyze here were published in French, I use those spellings throughout to facilitate reference. As will be shown, however, the difficulty of translating names from Guaraní led to debates over the limits of territorial jurisdictions in the region.

² Félix de Azara, "Diario de la Navegación y Reconocimiento del Río Tebicuari," in *Colección de Obras y Documentos Relativos a la Historia Antigua y Moderna de las Provincias del Río de la Plata*, ed. Pedro Angelis and Andrés M. Carretero (Buenos Aires: Imprenta del Estado, 1836).

Ildefonso, signed by the Spanish and Portuguese crowns, and consequently became part of a long tradition of European cartographers and scientists sent to the colonial world since the first moments of encounter. As with those who had gone before him, his mission was utilitarian; he was to create a map to demarcate jurisdictional limits for the two crowns and serve as legal precedent for future disputes.

However straightforward this endeavor may have initially appeared, Azara was not simply mapping an extant territorial arrangement. He was instead working to produce a frontier, both on the map and on the ground, that would be stable, secure, and easy to administer. Only a year before the treaty was signed, the Spanish crown had created the Virreinato del Río de la Plata in an effort to increase the state's presence in the region. From the time of the earliest explorers, much of the region had remained distant from the continental hub of Peru and was managed largely by Jesuit missionaries, small farmers and ranchers, and a handful of landed elites. Its remoteness engendered continual contraband trade, making the region like a leaky faucet for the crown's investments. By establishing the viceroyalty, the crown hoped to simultaneously intercept contraband and transform local resources into a lucrative export economy. Signing a declaration and creating a new administrative hierarchy was not enough, however, to realize a cohesive and efficient colonial state. The Portuguese loomed large to the north, mounted indigenous communities raided cattle herds in the south, and a disorganized populace seemed to be wasting whatever resources they had. To make the viceroyalty secure and functional, it was necessary to claim and control its lands. This was to be accomplished first by representing it visually, through maps, and then by replicating those maps materially through resettlement programs, mounted guards, and land distribution. Azara was involved in all aspects of the project.

To date, few comprehensive studies investigate the means whereby the Virreinato del Río de la Plata and its subdivisions were imagined and produced, how spatial ordering was integral to governance

within the state, or how these territorial forms were resisted.³ Historians have touched upon these issues in a variety of ways, however, most notably in recent studies of colonial science and cartography. In these works, scholars have argued that geographic representations of the colonial world were influenced by the social and cultural contexts where they were staged and produced. As the state was the primary patron for research in the New World, the information collected and produced by cartographers reflected its vision.⁴ Taking this into account, scholars have reimagined maps as situated truth claims rather than transparent windows into natural spatial arrangements. They have begun to point to the powerful ways in which maps represented colonial spaces as stable entities, and how processes of representative inclusion and erasure in maps corresponded with imperial objectives.⁵

³ John Lynch has offered perhaps the most comprehensive study on the political structuring of the Virreinato de la Plata and its subdivisions, called intendencies. While he focuses on the viceroyalty's administrative ordering, however, I am particularly interested in the implications of the spatialization of the governing structure, including the formation of its boundaries and the representation of it as a natural whole. See: John Lynch, *Spanish Colonial Administration, 1782-1810: The Indendant System in the Viceroyalty of the Río De La Plata* (London: University of London, 1958). Also, with regards to the viceregal frontiers, see: Donna J. Guy and Thomas E. Sheridan, eds., *Contested Ground: Comparative Frontiers on the Northern and Southern Edges of the Spanish Empire* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998). A rich body of literature does exist regarding the spatial enterprise of the Virreinato de Nueva España, the formation of its frontiers, and the development of intendencies, most notably the work of David Weber. See: David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). Finally, several recent studies point to the production of provincial space in Portuguese South America. See: Hal Langfur, *The Forbidden Lands: Colonial Identity, Frontier Violence, and the Persistence of Brazil's Eastern Indians, 1750-1830* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 37-49, 50, 318. Alida C. Metcalf, *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500-1600*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 9-12, 40, 77, 87-8.

⁴ Despite the clear evidence of many scientific endeavors in colonial Latin America, particularly from Bourbon Spain in the eighteenth-century, it is only very recently that historians have begun to give attention to the production and meaning of their works. While the ethnographic data contained in travel documents has been thoroughly probed, the cultural aspects of natural science expeditions have been more elusive. David Goodman has attributed this paucity to the presupposition amongst historians that the Spanish state and its Catholic leanings limited the development of scientific knowledge within its jurisdiction. Nuria Valverde and Antonio Lafuente, "Space Production and Spanish Imperial Geopolitics," in *Science in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires, 1500-1800*, ed. Daniela Bleichmar, Paula De Vos, Kristin Huffine, and Kevin Sheehan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 9-34. See also: Susan Deans-Smith, "Nature and Scientific Knowledge in the Spanish Empire Introduction," *Colonial Latin American Review* 15, no. 1 (2006): 29-38.

⁵ Whereas most nineteenth- and twentieth-century historical studies of cartography throughout the globe adopted positivistic narratives the triumph of rational and objective sciences in their attempt to create a real and neutral image of the world, this story has been revised substantially. Most notably in the works of J.B. Harley, David Woodward, and the *History of Cartography Project*, historians and geographers alike have begun to express an incredulity toward the supposed transparency of what was primarily European map production. David Woodward, "Origin and History of the History of Cartography," in *Approaches and Challenges in a Worldwide History of Cartography* (Catalunya: Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya, 2001), 23-29., J. Brian Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, ed. Paul Laxton (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001)., Ed Dahl et al., "Theoretical Aspects of the History of Cartography," *Imago Mundi* 48

These studies of cartography in the Americas have tended to take one of two approaches. The first has been to analyze maps through their relationship with broader political, material, and epistemological structures. In doing so, scholars have been able to explain the ways in which cartographic forms and techniques varied and changed both in Europe and the New World from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. María Portuondo argues that in the sixteenth century, cosmological standards in Europe were radically altered because of their inability to accurately represent newfound colonial possessions. Furthermore, the shifting imperatives of metropolitan patrons in Spain caused cartographers to develop a variety of mapping genres according to whether their works were to be published or kept for private use. This trend of state influence continued into the eighteenth-century, as Nuria Valverde and Antonio Lafuente show, when cartographic representations of human geography flourished in terrestrial interiors, while coastal maps strictly represented the physical landscape. Whereas missionaries and secular cartographers sought to demonstrate historical conquests of indigenous communities and possibilities for future expansion within state boundaries, coastal maps avoided ethnographic data in favor of synchronic “stability” in order to avoid jurisdictional debates with imperial competitors. Amidst these changes and differences, maps were continually used as references to support naturalist scientific endeavors, which according to Paula De Vos, were a sort of venture capitalism aimed at collecting physical specimens for potential commercial production. They were essential to the projects as they allowed scientists to target areas of exploration, navigate their journeys, and catalogue their discoveries. In spite of the state dominance over cartographic production, however, local populaces and indigenous elites occasionally had a hand in the process. As Barbara Mundy argues, maps produced by indigenous actors evidence competing epistemological

(1996): 185-206., Raymond B. Craib, *Cartographic Mexico: A History of State Fixations and Fugitive Landscapes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

understandings of spatial arrangement, usage and representation.⁶ Still, these cases were few and far between and the state remained the chief agent of mapmaking at the time.

Complementing this structural approach, Neil Safier offers a second method, analyzing as an alternative the episodes and processes of cartographic knowledge production. He contends that the categories posited by structural analyses of cartography, most notably those of national or linguistic contexts, are inadequate because many maps transcended such frames. He focuses instead on what he considers the two poles of Enlightenment science in the New World – the naturalists and collectors filtering and separating information and the compilers and editors “reducing” them for publishable “simplicity.” Treating cartography as a transnational labor network of conceptualization and production, he traces several narratives of exploration and mapmaking to reveal the influences of a variety of actors.⁷

Whether emphasizing context or process, these studies of science and cartographic production demonstrate how maps represented colonial space in ways that were advantageous to state interests. By representing their colonial possessions cartographically, officials could protect their boundaries from incursions, establish legal precedent, locate resources, and strategize future endeavors. These scholars’ emphasis on cartographic representation, however, forces them to adopt narratives that begin and end with maps. They assume that maps were powerful and influential documents, but do not demonstrate the linkages between maps and any material changes in the colonies themselves. Most of the maps that they cite were produced for European audiences, whether in Spain or abroad, but no mention is made

⁶ Valverde and Lafuente, "Space Production," 198-9, 204-6, 209, 212, 215. María M. Portuondo, *Secret Science: Spanish Cosmography and the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 8, 62-6, 95, 217, 258-66. Paula De Vos, "Natural History and the Pursuit of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Spain," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 40, no. 2 (2007): 210, 213-15, 223-25, 227. Barbara E. Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain: Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 112-17, 119-25, 126-33, 145-58, 181-211.

⁷ Neil Safier, *Measuring the New World: Enlightenment Science and South America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 71, 79-80, 90, 126-7, 146-7, 156. See also: Neil Safier, "The Confines of the Colony: Boundaries, Ethnographic Landscapes, and Imperial Cartography in Iberoamerica," in *The Imperial Map: Cartography and the Mastery of Empire*, ed. James R. Akerman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

of how cartography engendered any differences on American soil. Furthermore, by privileging maps as subjects of study, these works adopt deterministic narratives that offer little discussion of resistance; in each case the story ends with the colonial state achieving its aims with little contestation. Even Mundy's study of indigenous cartography in Mesoamerica tells a narrative of declension, whereby tropes of indigenous mapping genres gradually gave way to imperial styles.⁸ Safier attempts to account for resistance by emphasizing the participation of local actors in the process of surveying, as well as highlighting the work of American-born cartographers, but here too the narrative is one of European overwriting and erasure.

To understand the importance of spatial control as a technique of governance and location of resistance, it is necessary to move beyond studies of cartography and turn to other historiographic traditions. Scholarship on mission communities along colonial borderlands has been particularly fruitful in this regard. Recent studies by Cynthia Radding, Barbara Ganson, and James Schofield Saeger demonstrate how political culture on missions was dictated by spatial arrangements. Radding contends that in Chiquitos, the constructed landscape of missions and their exteriors ordered daily routines, patterns of labor, and privileged spaces of worship. Within this landscape, indigenous peoples adapted preconquest modes of leadership to mission offices, which were in turn sorted by the spatial divisions (*parcialidades*) of their towns; this created a spatially-ordered representative structure for members of each community.⁹ Saeger points out that missions in the Chaco region were oftentimes strategically located to establish trans-continental commercial routes, but that these settlements frequently became sites of illicit contraband trade; this was due to the porous nature of missions. Both he and Ganson, in

⁸ Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain*, 181-211. Considering indigenous maps in light of the material spatial relations at the time, Mundy posits a dialectic relationship between the reorganization of landscapes and the maps that were used to represent them. As the concept of a disparate demographic of social hierarchy through the nobility gave way to a structure of private and bounded property, cartographic representations were changed by, and also reproduced, this conceptual and material shift.

⁹ Cynthia Murrieta Radding, *Landscapes of Power and Identity: Comparative Histories in the Sonoran Desert and the Forests of Amazonia From Colony to Republic* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 65, 70-83, 163-4, 167, 175.

her study of the Guaraní along the Paraná and Uruguay Rivers, demonstrate that indigenous communities participated in mission economies, but moved on and off the settlements and maintained connections across imperial boundaries.¹⁰ Missions were sites of incorporation into colonial economies and structures of governance, but local communities used them in ways that belied state and ecclesiastical initiatives.

Like scholarship on borderland missions, agrarian studies of the hinterlands of Buenos Aires point to the relationship between power and territorial control. With the creation of the new viceroyalty, Buenos Aires became a capital city and a hub for economic production and exchange. The territorial shift engendered large population growth in the region, and most immigrants were small-scale farmers. Examining the economic practices and demographic composition of the region's population, historians have debated over the abundance of accessible territories. On one hand, Juan Carlos Garavaglia, José Luis Moreno, and Jorge Gelman argue that there was a nearly unlimited offer of lands, and that small farmers could flourish on public spaces since the state restricted the expansion of cattle ranches. Conversely, Eduardo Azcuy Ameghino suggests instead that the processes of territorial appropriation by large-scale landholders occurred throughout the eighteenth century and accelerated in the 1780s, squeezing small-scale farmers off public lots and establishing a hierarchy of labor.¹¹ In each case, the state became an increasingly important arbitrator of regional disputes.

¹⁰ James Schofield Saeger, *The Chaco Mission Frontier: The Guaycuruan Experience* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000), 23, 40-2, 47. Barbara Anne Ganson, *The Guaraní Under Spanish Rule in the Río De La Plata* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 144, 150-5, 185-6.

¹¹ Juan Carlos Garavaglia, *Pastores Y Labradores De Buenos Aires: Una Historia Agraria De La Campaña Bonaerense 1700-1830*, 1 ed. (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 1999), pp. 36-41, 48-51, 145-6. José Luis Moreno, "Población y Sociedad en el Buenos Aires Rural a Fines del Siglo XVIII," in *Población, Sociedad, Familia y Migraciones en el Espacio Rioplatense: Siglos XVIII y XIX*, ed. Juan Carlos Garavaglia and José Luis Moreno (Buenos Aires: Cántaro, 1993), 25-36. Jorge Gelman, "Familia y Relaciones de Producción en la Campaña Rioplatense Colonial: Algunas Consideraciones desde la Banda Oriental," in *Población, Sociedad, Familia y Migraciones en el Espacio Rioplatense: Siglos XVIII y XIX*, ed. Juan Carlos Garavaglia and José Luis Moreno (Buenos Aires: Cántaro, 1993), 76-97. Eduardo Azcuy Ameghino, *El Latifundio y la Gran Propiedad Colonial Rioplatense* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: F.G. Cambeiro, 1995), 42-6, 50, 126, 136-7.

Both the literature on borderland missions and on agrarian studies evidence the means whereby structures of power and governance were mediated spatially. They also indicate modes of resistance to spatial hierarchies embedded in the landscape, whether through migration, squatting, contraband trade, or even armed combat. In each of these studies, however, the focus on the nuances of local landscapes comes at the expense of an analysis of broader regional or viceregal units; they treat provinces such as Paraguay, the Banda Oriental, and Buenos Aires, or the viceroyalty in general, as containers for historical analysis, rather than produced spaces. Consequently, they are unable to account for interregional conflicts, the relationship between spatial organization and population distribution, or the development of particular economic markets.¹² At times, their narratives indicate the impacts of broad spatial reorganization, particularly Ganson's discussion of the Guaraní War, but in no instance do they treat it as a lens of analysis.

Taking into account the contributions of these three historiographic trends, this essay investigates the spatial production of the Virreinato del Río de la Plata, primarily through an analysis of the formation of its northern frontier with Brazil. By understanding the viceroyalty as a produced space, rather than natural entity, I make several interventions.¹³ Most importantly, I establish

¹² For more on interregional conflicts see: Oscar R. Nocetti and Lucio B. Mir, *La Disputa por la Tierra: Tucumán, Río de la Plata y Chile, 1531-1822* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1997). and Sergio Serulnikov, "Patricians and Plebeians in Late Colonial Charcas: Identity, Representation, and Colonialism," in *Imperial Subjects: Race and Identity in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Andrew B. Fisher and Matthew D. O'Hara (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009). Nocetti discusses the tensions between Spanish colonials in Lima and those in the Río de la Plata, particularly over access to the flow of silver exports from Alto Perú. Serulnikov discusses the formation of "patrias chicas," or regional patterns of identification in Alto Perú, which were exacerbated by the presence of military units dispatched from Buenos Aires at the expense of local militias. For more on the relationship between the creation of the Virreinato del Río de la Plata, internal migration, and economic activity, see: Tulio Halperín Donghi, "La Expansión Ganadera en la Campaña de Buenos Aires," in *Los Fragmentos del Poder de la Oligarquía a la Poliarquía Argentina*, ed. Torcuato S. Di Tella and Tulio Halperín Donghi (Buenos Aires: Editorial J. Alvarez, 1969). Donghi discusses the impact in Buenos Aires first of being linked to the silver trade with Alto Perú, and later about the consequences of being severed from it at the time of revolution.

¹³ Drawing upon the work of sociospatial theorists, such as Henri Lefebvre, I consider all spaces to be social productions. Though Lefebvre is primarily interested in finding some sort of reality behind spatial constructions, generally related to the organization of labor relations, I am most concerned with analyzing how colonial geobodies were produced and reproduced both materially and discursively. See: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991), 73-9, 85-92, 98-99, 110-19, 130-8.

connections between the production of cartographic representations and material transformations of the physical and human landscape. Situated alongside other texts, the map was an important part of a discursive network that reshaped the ways in which actors on both sides of the Atlantic envisioned the region. The viceroyalty and the provinces that it was thought to contain would serve as epistemological containers for taxonomies of the human and natural landscape. In turn, these discursive conceptualizations engendered material transformations, including land distribution and resettlement programs designed to replicate and reinforce the imagined territorial body. Representations of space thus existed dialectically with the landscapes that they depicted.

In addition, I consider resistance to be inherent to the process of spatial production. The story was not simply about the creation of a new conception of territory, but rather how this new spatial arrangement was a powerful technique of colonial governance. Producing a knowable colonial space was a means to protect state interests from foreign encroachments, to control its populace, and to exploit its resources. However, as with any government project, it was neither an uncontested nor controlled endeavor, as a wide range of actors were invested in the outcome. They included not only the writers of the treaty, but also indigenous populations, local administrators, commissaries like Azara, and even French publishers. The legal declaration of the new territorial state and its borders was merely the first step in a perpetual process of its discursive and material production. While there is little evidence of open resistance, as there was with previous cartographic projects, it was instead through the process of reproducing the spatial imagination that various actors were able to transform it.¹⁴ Others, however, simply chose to ignore the implications of the hardening of state boundaries as best as they could.

¹⁴ To make this gesture, I draw upon the work of Robert Kaiser and Elena Nikiforova, who have applied the Judith Butler's concept of performativity to the study of spatial scale. Rather than perceiving scales as ontological entities that stabilize political, economic, and cultural relations, Kaiser and Nikiforova suggest instead that they are instead ideological apparatuses and social constructions. Locations are not sites for performances, but are instead epistemologies that are performed into

Taking the work of Félix de Azara as a linking thread, this essay analyzes the multiple ways in which he and others contributed to the material and discursive production of the viceroyalty and its northern frontier. It is broken into four episodic parts. The first section discusses the complicated terrain that Azara and others attempted to arbitrate and arrange cartographically. Over a century of imperial border conflict engendered overlapping Portuguese and Spanish settlements and claims of jurisdiction, while former Jesuit missions and mobile indigenous communities dotted the terrain. Although Spanish and Portuguese officials hoped to organize this complicated landscape through the Treaty of San Ildefonso, the treaty's language did not correspond with the material reality and provided much room for interpretation.

In the second part, the story turns to the collection and production of geographic knowledge. Unfamiliar with the local terrain and ill-equipped to traverse the imagined boundaries of the treaty, Azara and his peers relied on local agents both to navigate their new environment and to jockey for competitive advantage against their rival state. They used historical maps and the testimonies of informants to negotiate conflicting interpretations of the treaty's terms. Azara in particular took great care to develop historical arguments that would bolster Spanish claims to possession. In these ways, the

being through such discursive practices as mapping, talk, and politics. This understanding of scale is a particularly useful tool for analyzing resistance. Whereas standard narratives of resistance derived from political economy or historical materialism require the overthrow of a particular apparatus of power and ideology, considering the issue in terms of performativity allows one to identify resistance also in the reproduction of scale itself. As one reproduces a particular scalar imagination through drawing a map, defining a political community, or even through mundane everyday life, they are able to transform it in subtle ways. In my case study, I consider the Virreinato del Río de la Plata and its supposedly nested provinces to be constructed scales of geographical understanding. Through the initial declaration of the viceroyalty and the subsequent Treaty of San Ildefonso, this particular spatial imagination was deemed a reality. It was only over time that that reality could be produced, and this was done through representation (mapping), physical architecture (resettlement program), and discursive repetition (natural histories, regional newspapers, etc.). In each case, however, the original declaration of the spatial scale of the viceroyalty was altered slightly according to the needs and interests of individual and collective actors. Robert Kaiser and Elena Nikiforova, "The Performativity of Scale: The Social Construction of Scale Effects in Narva, Estonia," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26 (2008). See also: Sallie A. Marston, John Paul Jones III, and Keith Woodward, "Human Geography Without Scale," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30, no. 4 (2005). Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993). Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: On Ideology," in *Critical Theory Since 1965*, ed. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1970).

cartographers were not simply depicting preexistent landscapes with their maps, but instead producing a particular vision that was amenable to state interests.

In the third section, I show that it was only after demarcating and drawing borders that Azara and others were able to replicate them on the ground, through planned resettlement projects, until his eventual return to Spain at the turn of the century. Following the creation of the viceroyalty and the declaration of its frontiers, absentee landowners competed with municipal leaders from the countryside for possession of borderland property, resulting in an unproductive and unmanageable landscape for viceregal officials. As a result, the Portuguese continued to inch southward, indigenous riders raided cattle, and valuable resources were wasted. Azara aimed to resolve the situation through systematic territorial reorganization. By simply offering free lands to farming families and dispersing settlements evenly along the frontier, he projected that the state could simultaneously prevent Portuguese advancements, force mobile indigenous communities to submit to a sedentary lifestyle, and produce a lucrative export economy of cattle ranching. Such an arrangement would also provide for greater moral oversight and care by ecclesiastical officials.

In the fourth part, the journey ends across the Atlantic, where Azara worked with Parisian associates to transform his compilation of notes and manuscripts into a travel narrative entitled *Voyages dans l'Amerique Meridionale*. In the two-volume text and its accompanying atlas, the specific spatial vision that Azara worked to produce was presented as a timeless and stable territorial arrangement. Furthermore, by using the viceroyalty and its provinces as units of analysis for a description of natural history, he reified their existence. The final work made no mention of the conflictive production of the spatial reality that it sought to represent; however, through a close reading of the atlas and the text, their autobiographical nature becomes evident. Finally, the text is considered within a wide readership on both sides of the Atlantic, where both British readers and Creole patriots used the concept of the viceroyalty as a means to define a national community. Following this path, this essay shows how

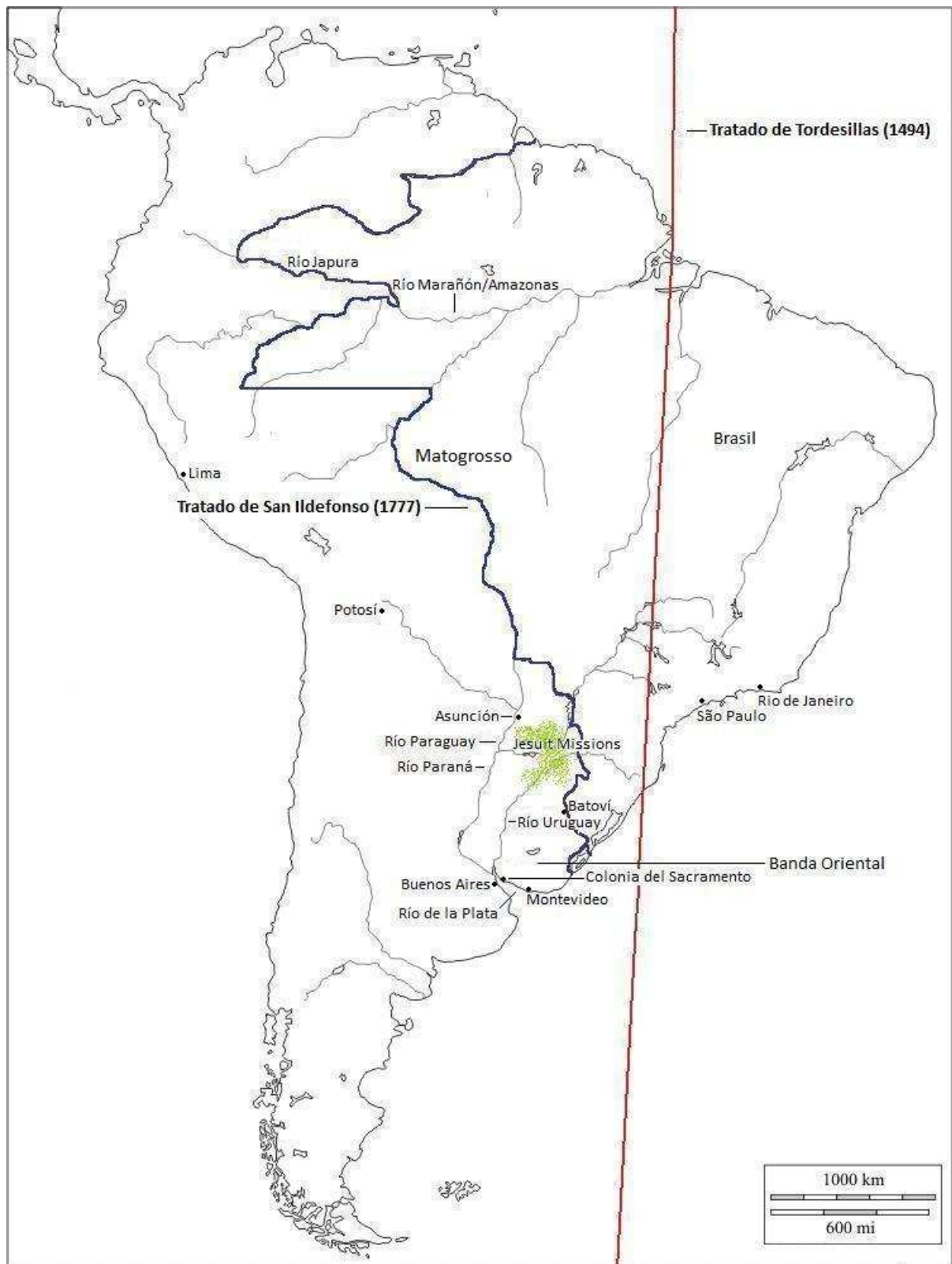
through cartographic representation and material replication, the Virreinato del Río de la Plata was produced, reproduced, resisted, and transformed.

CHAPTER 2

TREATIES, MAPS, AND THE CHANGING HUMAN LANDSCAPE

When Azara's ship landed in Rio de Janeiro on November 3, 1782, he was entering into a long history fraught with conflicting land claims and territorial reshuffling. By this point a lieutenant colonel for the Spanish military, he was an expert engineer and had experience demarcating boundaries. This in part led to his selection as chief commissary for one of the cartographic expeditions under the Treaty of San Ildefonso. As with the other demarcation parties, his project would be to formalize and represent a new spatial order out of a landscape of overlapping and conflicting settlement patterns. Using the treaty as a legal guideline, Azara would meet with local officials and laborers to identify, describe, and measure the local landscape. He would also consult local archives and meet with informants in order to gather whatever information he could about historical land claims and settlement patterns, as well as the material benefits of certain spatial units. Terrestrial and fluvial measurements would be taken alongside a Portuguese counterpart, while historical information would be collected on his own account in order to negotiate later the exact line of demarcation. The end result would be a synchronic map that rendered prior treaties and establishments invalid and set a new legal precedent for any future conflict. For these reasons, to understand the meaning encoded in Azara's maps, one must begin with the events leading up to the 1777 Treaty of San Ildefonso and the human history and landscape that it sought to arbitrate and overwrite.

From the early years of Spanish and Portuguese colonization, measures were taken to divide the two imperial realms. Most famously, the 1493 Treaty of Tordesillas dictated that an imaginary line be



Map 1 – Treaty Demarcations

drawn in order to partition each crown's possessions throughout the world (Map 1). The Tordesillas line became obsolete, however, in 1580, when the rival crowns were united under the Spanish king Philip II. For the next sixty years, the joining of Iberian authority allowed Portuguese settlers and missionaries in Brazil to cross their supposed western boundary without much administrative opposition. Consequently, when the two crowns were again separated in 1640, legal demarcations became incongruent with the continent's human geography. An agreement was eventually reached to recognize the legitimacy of new Portuguese settlements, but their proximity to Spanish possessions soon became problematic.¹⁵

This crisis of nearness was exacerbated in 1680, when Portuguese settlers founded Colônia do Sacramento (Sp: Colonia del Sacramento) across the Río de la Plata from the Spanish city of Buenos Aires. At the time, Buenos Aires was a small outpost and relatively insignificant in the Spanish colonial project. With the establishment of unregulated trade routes to the silver mines of Potosí, however, it had developed a reputation as being a key point of exchange in the contraband trade. For this reason, Spanish authorities feared that a Portuguese settlement across the river would amplify the trade and increase their losses. Known participants in the movement of silver and other contraband items along the Río de la Plata region, Portuguese settlers represented a threat to the Spanish colonial economy, and now they were dangerously close. As a result, the next 104 years leading up to Azara's arrival, would be characterized by countless armed conflicts between the Spanish and the Portuguese in the region and no less than six different treaties transferring possession of Colonia from one crown to the other (Table 1).¹⁶

¹⁵ Metcalf, *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500-1600*, 17-53, 75-76. José Ferreira Borges de Castro, *Collecção dos Tratados, Convenções, Contratos e Actos Publicos Celebrados entre a Coroa de Portugal e a Mais Potencias, Desde 1640 Até Ao Presente*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1856), 363-72.

¹⁶ Nocetti and Mir, *La Disputa por la Tierra*, 99, 112, 214. Lynch, *Spanish Colonial Administration*, 80-82. Alejandro del Cantillo, *Tratados, Convenios y Declaraciones de Paz Y de Comercio: Que Han Hecho con las Potencias Eranjeras los Monarcas Españoles De La Casa De Borbon: Desde El Año De 1700 Hasta El Dia* (Madrid: Alegria y Charlain, 1843), 28-43, 164-70, 408-10, 537-63.

From the perspective of the Iberian crowns, Colonia and other portions of the region were seen as quantifiable bargaining chips in a series of seemingly endless peace negotiations over the limits of their respective global empires. Within this context, frontier settlers were used by both crowns to establish sovereignty through occupation, but their settlement patterns were delegitimized if they obstructed broader state negotiations. At first, the tendency to uproot local populations was restricted to residents of Colonia and thus relatively benign, but beginning with the 1750 Treaty of Madrid, vast stretches of land became accessible in interstate agreements. This passing back and forth of larger territories, in the same way that Colonia had been handled before, engendered two changes – armed physical resistance by local populations and an increased need for cartographic mediation.

Perhaps the most well known result of the Treaty of Madrid was the Guaraní War of 1753-56, in which the Guaraní indigenous community took up arms against the joint efforts of the Spanish and Portuguese cartographic commissions. A vastly complicated and multivalent event, the conflict is evidence of the divergent spatial imaginations of crown authorities and local populations, as well as the material impacts that such territorial parceling and commoditizing had upon local inhabitants. By 1750, most of the Guaraní lived on or in relationship to one of the thirty Jesuit missions within the limits of the Spanish empire, which were located primarily near the Paraná and Uruguay Rivers (Map 1). The treaty signed that year in Madrid established the Uruguay River as a new interstate boundary between Spanish and Portuguese possessions and thereby severed seven of the missions from the rest. The Jesuits were ordered to abandon those east of the river and the Guaraní were given the option of either leaving or becoming incorporated into the Portuguese controlled Brazil.¹⁷

While much has been written about the local dynamics of the missions, resistance by the Guaraní, and the impact of this division, several points are important to the question of cartography.

¹⁷ Ganson, *The Guaraní under Spanish Rule*, 87-116.

Year	Treaty	Conflict Arbitrated	Spanish Sovereignty Recognized	Portuguese Sovereignty Recognized
1494	Tordesillas	Sovereignty over projected colonial discoveries	Newly discovered and possessed territories more than 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands	Territories less than 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands
1668	Lisbon	Portuguese War of Restoration		Previously held colonial possessions
1701	Lisbon	Anticipating War of Spanish Succession		Colonia del Sacramento
1715	Utrecht	War of the Spanish Succession		Colonia del Sacramento
1750	Madrid	Conflicting interpretations of the Treaty of Tordesillas	(1) Territory west of the Río Japurá to the Río Amazonas (2) Navigation over Río Putumayo/Içá (3) Colonia del Sacramento	(1) Territory to the right of the Río Guaporé (2) Territory to the south of the Río Ibicuí (3) Misiones Orientales (7 Guaraní missions east of the Río Uruguay)
1761	El Pardo	Difficulties in demarcating limits established by the 1750 Treaty of Madrid	Anulled cessions from 1750 Treaty of Madrid	Anulled cessions from 1750 Treaty of Madrid
1763	Paris	Seven Years War		Colonia del Sacramento
1777	San Ildefonso	Spanish-Portuguese War, 1776-1777	(1) Colonia del Sacramento (2) la Banda Oriental (3) Misiones Orientales	(1) Isla de Santa Catalina (2) Rio Grande de São Pedro
1778	El Pardo	Confirmed and added to San Ildefonso	(1) Islands of Annobón & Bioko (Gulf of Guinea) (2) Lands along Guinea Coast	
1801	Badajoz	War of the Oranges		Misiones Orientales*

*Though the treaty did not stipulate the transfer of possession of the Misiones Orientales from Spain to Portugal, soon after its signing, Brazilian troops advanced in the region and it was never returned.

Table 1 – Treaties and Concessions

First, there was a clear disparity between the spatial imagination of those who drafted the treaty and the local inhabitants that it would ultimately impact. Whereas the logic of the treaty envisioned the territory as a commodity to be parceled and bartered, for the local population it was the stage for their history and communal identification. The landscape itself represented a pantheon of spirits and divinities that, however much challenged by Jesuit doctrine, were at the very least associated with the past and lineage of the Guaraní.¹⁸ This latter spatial imagination, unsurprisingly, would neither be represented in the language of the treaty nor in the ensuing cartographic documents that it necessitated. Second, the separation of local people from their territorial possessions brought about severe material consequences. Crops could not be uprooted and transplanted from one locale to another and networks of production and trade could not be easily reformulated. As this disruption was coupled in 1767 with the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Spanish Empire, many Guaraní abandoned the missions on both sides of the river in search of opportunities elsewhere.¹⁹ Third, both the resistance of the Guaraní and the expulsion of the Jesuits evidence the charged nature of territorial signification and representation. It was no coincidence that the Guaraní sought to impede the cartographers themselves. These conflicting interests of the state and missions demonstrate the fact that the mapmakers were not simply revealing a shared spatial reality; they were instead developing and formalizing a situated understanding of what the land meant and was worth.

Before the demarcations of the Treaty of Madrid could be completed, the agreement was annulled by Spain's newly ascended king, Charles III, in 1761. Legal changes did not correspond with demographic movements, however, as the Portuguese had already established settlements along the Uruguay River in accordance with the 1750 treaty. As the treaty was no longer in effect, they were

¹⁸ Ibid., 95.

¹⁹ See: Lynch, *Spanish Colonial Administration*, 58-9, 62-5, 186-7., Roberto Di Stefano and Loris Zanatta, *Historia De La Iglesia Argentina: Desde La Conquista Hasta Fines Del Siglo Xx* (Buenos Aires: Grijalbo Mondadori, 2000), 125-27. Ganson, *The Guaraní under Spanish Rule*, 35, 39, 41, 83, 97-98, 104-8, 121-36, 144, 152-5.

illegally occupying Spanish terrain. The perpetuity of this problem, and the lack of administrative infrastructure in the region to order it, led the Spanish crown to take several measures by 1776. In a simultaneous act, Charles III authorized the creation of a new viceroyalty and a military expedition to Colonia and northward to reclaim lands. The organizational change would transfer jurisdiction over the Banda Oriental, Paraguay, the Río de la Plata, Charcas (which included Potosí), and other frontier provinces from Lima to Buenos Aires. As part of the viceregal transformation, a new system of colonial administration would be implemented to standardize governance and in several ways bypass the viceroy's jurisdiction, all in an effort to more tightly manage the region from Iberia.²⁰ What would come to be known as the intendant system was gradually implemented over the course of the next few decades. On the military side of the maneuver, the Spanish regained control over Colonia and in doing so alleviated some of their preoccupations about regional contrabanding.

Just one year after the Spanish invasion of Portuguese-controlled territories on the northern shores of the Río de la Plata, the Portuguese King José I died and his daughter, María I, ascended to the throne. Herself the niece of Spanish King Charles III, she drafted with her counterpart a new treaty to settle the continual land dispute. Superseding the previous litany of treaties, the Treaty of San Ildefonso included a similar provision to the 1750 Treaty of Madrid, calling for a massive cartographic expedition. In this way, the geographic areas of conflict would be divided with more exactitude than ever before not simply to create a precedent, but also to bring closure to competing interpretations and claims. The demarcated limits would regulate the navigation of rivers, conserve each crown's possessions, and assure that "at no time would doubts or disagreements be able to be offered." It would also "exterminate contraband" and create stipulations for such jurisdictional acts as the return of

²⁰ Lynch, *Spanish Colonial Administration*, 62-89. Peruvian authorities certainly were not pleased with the measure. On May 20, 1778, the Viceroy of Perú, Manuel de Guirior wrote a letter to the king petitioning for the restoration of Peruvian authority over the new viceroyalty, suggesting that the change was only supposed to be temporary. Nocetti and Mir, *La Disputa por la Tierra*, 229-32.

runaway slaves.²¹ The formal language of the treaty was not enough, however, to fully realize the border and achieve these aims.

Due in large part to the fact that neither crown possessed satisfactory levels of geographical information about the region, the Treaty of San Ildefonso left much space for interpretation. In an attempt to use physical features, such as rivers and mountains, as natural boundary lines, the treaty relied on scant and occasionally incorrect information about the areas it sought to divide and demarcate. In one particular case, Azara's team was ordered to draw boundary lines over two rivers that did not even exist. In addition to these errors of misinformation, the treaty itself contained vague instructions that the cartographers would have to negotiate with their counterparts. First, it frequently called for a demarcation line to be drawn at the origins of rivers or in a way to include both a river and all of its tributaries. As watersheds overlapped and customary naming practices obfuscated the point of origin for any river, the surveyors would be forced to improvise. This tendency was furthered in several cases where the frontier would be established at the last tributary that drained into a prominent river. Here, the classification of bodies of water as rivers or creeks complicated the problem of origins. A second area of negotiation arose in one case where the borderline made an abrupt westward turn at the halfway point of the Río Madera, which was nearly 2,000 kilometers in length. Unsurprisingly, its exact beginning was in no way self-evident. In a third instance, the treaty called for a straight line from the mouth of the Río Jaurú to the southern shore of the Río Guaporé, but noted that if the commissaries found "other rivers or natural terms where with more comfort and more certainty the line could be signaled," they would be permitted to draw it there.²²

²¹ See Articles XVI and XIX of the Treaty of San Ildefonso, found in: Cantillo, *Tratados, Convenios y Declaraciones de Paz y de Comercio*, 537-63.

²² See particularly: Articles III, VIII, IX, X, and XI of the treaty.

These spaces of ambiguity in the treaty became even more complicated when the physical and human landscape rendered impossible its logics and aims. In some specific cases, the language of the agreement called for the inclusion of particular settlements as part of either Portuguese or Spanish territory, but those populations were situated on the wrong side of a borderland river. The treaty also stated that if a river was populated on both sides by vassals of one crown, its navigation was strictly theirs, but if the two riverbanks had settlements from different governments, it would be shared. In some places, however, it assigned the navigation of a particular river to one crown or the other even though each state had an extant population along its shores. Finally, wherever possible, the treaty called for neutral areas to lie between the borders of Spanish and Portuguese holdings. This could be done through large spaces occupied by indigenous populations or those that were simply uninhabitable, but it was up to the commissions to determine where they would be established.²³

Not all of these ambiguities and contradictions necessarily engendered debate amongst the commissaries, although many of them did. They are, however, evidence of the interpretive element inherent to the cartographic work at hand. Relying upon local informants and resources, including Jesuit maps and those of 1750, Azara and others were not simply revealing an extant spatial truth. They were instead interpreting received information and using it to present arguments to their counterparts with the ultimate objective of producing a spatial order advantageous to their respective monarch.²⁴ They compiled local information and abstracted it on a large scale, and in turn sought to replicate such macro-cartographies on the physical landscape. This came most often in the form of placing physical markers to denote the serpentine path of the borderline or the origin of a river, but also included the issuance of land grants along frontiers. In this way, customary and local knowledge of the

²³ See here: Articles VI, XII, and IV

²⁴ While negotiations would ideally take place between the chief Spanish and Portuguese commissaries from each expedition, in Azara's case, the Portuguese did not send an expeditionary team. For this reason, he arbitrated through his superiors and Brazilian magistrates.

local landscape would be subordinated to a reified measure of produced space. To gain a glimpse into how this process functioned on the ground level, we turn to Azara.

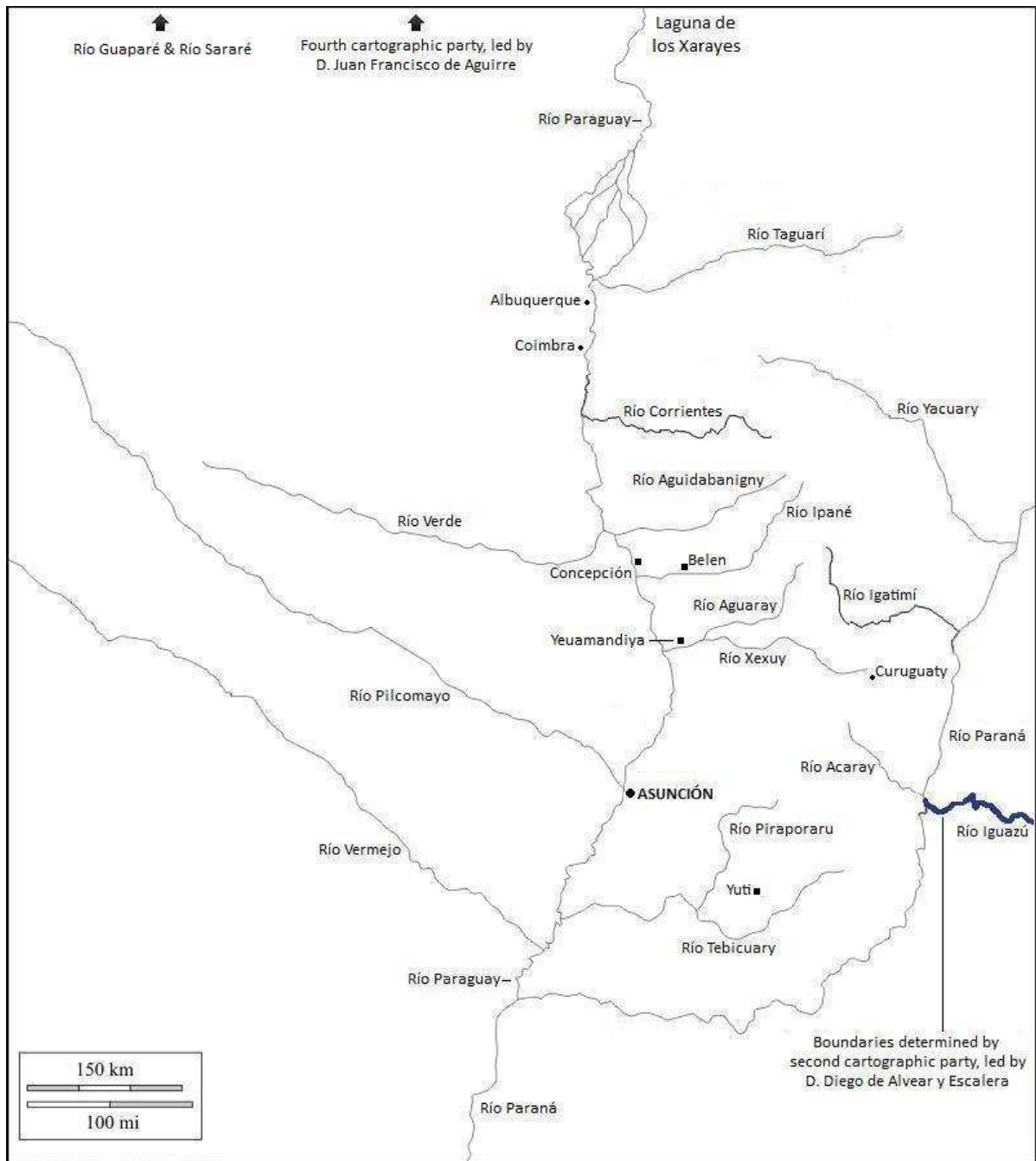
CHAPTER 3

MAKING THE MAP

By the time that Azara first set foot on American soil, he already had a storied career. Born in Barbunales, Spain, in 1742, he studied at the Universidad de Huesca de Aragon and later the Academia Militar de Barcelona. After graduating from the latter as a cadet, he traveled as part of the Spanish infantry to Algeria to fight Muslim armies, where he was shot in the chest and left for dead. The lingering effects of his wounds would travel with him to the Río de la Plata, but his military training as an engineer helped land him his post. Once in South America, he began his duty as commissary for one of four parties set to establish geographical limits for the Portuguese and Spanish empires under the Treaty of San Ildefonso.²⁵ The task of the four cartographic commissions would be to determine, measure, and demarcate boundaries from the Atlantic coast of the Banda Oriental to Matogrosso, deep in the continental interior (Map 1). Each Spanish party was to meet with its Portuguese counterpart at a determined location to compare notes and jointly measure and mark the limits.²⁶

²⁵ Charles A. Walckenaer, "Noticia sobre la Vida y los Escritos de D. Félix De Azara," in *Viajes por la America del Sur*, ed. Florencio Varela (Montevideo: Biblioteca del Comercio del Plata, 1848), 8-9.

²⁶ These were not small parties. The Spanish divisions were comprised of approximately one-hundred men, including engineers, treasurers, surgeons, mounted cavalry, escorts, masons, cooks, and laborers. They also managed nearly thirty carts, 150 oxen, and 500 horses. The grandiosity of these numbers does not even take into account the informants and guides that frequently traveled with contingents. Each party was comprised of primarily local actors, as such a team would be cumbersome, expensive, and unnecessary to bring across the Atlantic. Azara himself departed from Buenos Aires for Asunción with only 15 guards, as the project plan stated not only that he could recruit the rest in Paraguay, but also that men in certain areas there were "very accustomed to the labors of the woodlands." The project was not an isolated expedition, but instead tapped into and relied upon the resources and manpower of local populations. José Varela y Ulloa, "Plano para Ejecutar la Demarcación de esta América," in *Diario de la Primera Partida de la Demarcación de Limites entre España y Portugal en América*, ed. Jerónimo Becker (Madrid: Imprenta del Patronato de Huérfanos de Intendencia é Intervención Militares), 130-47.



Map 2 –Expedition Areas for 3rd Cartographic Commission

As coordinator of a large and multileveled team, Azara set out from Buenos Aires up the Río Paraná on January 2, 1784. His instructions were to travel first by river to Asunción and from there march across land to the town of Curuguaty, where he would rendezvous with the Portuguese. The two teams would then split into two subdivisions to establish a boundary beginning at the junction of the Río Paraná and the Río Acaray. The line parties would then continue north and west according to the language of the treaty, until they reached the joining of the Río Guaporé and the Río Sararé (Map 2).²⁷ With this order in hand, Azara spent that entire summer month crossing rivers and passing through portages until he reached Asunción on February 9. Rather than recruiting laborers and heading to Curuguaty, however, he instead tapped into his first source, the Governor of Paraguay, requesting all the information that he had regarding boundaries, towns, and jurisdictions. In fact, the cartographer would not arrive at his meeting point with the Portuguese for another seven years. While it is unclear exactly why it took so long to coordinate a joint effort, from the sources available it appears that Azara was unwilling to meet until negotiations had been completed. During those years of limbo, he occupied himself with collecting information and negotiating from Asunción.²⁸

Since Azara's understood task was not simply to draw existent boundaries, but rather to negotiate and create them, he took much time to investigate the local landscape. While it is unclear whether all of his recorded travels over the next seven years were directly pertinent to the treaty, his correspondence during that time reveals much about his task as a cartographer. From his initial weeks in Asunción, Azara persistently sought to rectify one particular area of ambiguity in his zone of demarcation. According to Articles VIII and IX of the Treaty of San Ildefonso, a border was to be

²⁷ Ibid., 137-42.

²⁸ In addition, he spent much of his time collecting information on the local landscape to later draft and publish. He took several journeys during this time, including the trip down the Río Tebicuary to survey the topography and collect specimens. "Carta al Gobernador del Paraguay" (27 feb 1784), found in: Félix de Azara, "Correspondencia Oficial E Inédita Sobre La Demarcación De Límites Entre El Paraguay Y El Brasil," in *Colección de Obras y Documentos Relativos a la Historia Antigua y Moderna de las Provincias del Río*, ed. Pedro de Angelis (Buenos Aires: Imprenta del Estado, 1836), 2.

established from the Río Paraná “until where the Río Igurey was joined to it along its western shore.” The division would continue along the Igurey “to its primary origin” and then “a straight line [would] be thrown for the highest lands until finding the head or primary spring of the closest river to the line that drains into the [Río] Paraguay.” The border would follow this river, which “maybe [would] be the Corrientes” until it reached the Paraguay, and then would continue north past the Laguna de los Xarayes. All this was to be done in accordance with Article VI of the treaty, which called for neutral spaces that could not be settled by vassals of either state.²⁹

Azara’s problem with this part of the treaty was twofold - the Río Igurey did not exist and the Río Corrientes could not be identified. This lack of clarity had also existed in the 1750 Treaty of Madrid, but the cartographers commissioned under its provisions had resolved the situation by marking the border along the Río Igatimí and the Río Ipané via the Río Aguaray. Such a resolution was unacceptable to Azara, however, because it did not allow for a neutral space between settlers from either side.³⁰ To alleviate the problem, his first proposal was to take advantage of the local human geography.

Sometime during his first few weeks in Asunción, Azara became aware that the Mbayá indigenous community occupied lands north of the Río Ipané. As these “barbarous (people)” and their possessions extended nearly 30 or 40 leagues north of the river, they would represent an ideal buffer between the two states.³¹ He suggested, therefore, that the cartographers “leave them neutral... in this

²⁹ Cantillo, *Tratados, Convenios y Declaraciones de Paz y de Comercio*, 537-63.

³⁰ Félix de Azara, "Memoria Sobre El Tratado De Límites De La América Meridional Celebrado Entre España Y Portugal En El Año 1777 Y Sobre Las Disputas Que Han Ocurrido En Su Ejecución," in *Memoria sobre el Estado Rural del Río de la Plata y Otros Informes*, ed. Julio César González (Buenos Aires, 1943), 33-6, 39-40.

³¹ The Mbayás were part of a broader network of nonsedentary indigenous communities in the regions of Chaco and Paraguay, known as the Guaycurúas. After years of fighting with Spanish colonials and missionaries, ecological crisis led them by the mid eighteenth century to request incorporation into missions, an act which allowed Azara to declare Spanish possession over their lands. Though not acknowledged by Azara, at the time of his arrival, the Mbayá were comprised of six regionally designated groups - the Cadiguegodis, the Guatiadogodis, the Apacachodegodegis, the Lichagotegodis, the

way rendering impossible the communication of vassals of the two crowns.” After consulting again with the governor, however, he came to believe that Mbayá lands actually belonged to the Spanish. At this point he wrote a letter to the viceroy in Buenos Aires to present to him two options. If the magistrate believed that the Spanish did not have a claim over the lands of the Mbayá, Azara would proceed in petitioning them as neutral, but if there was evidence to prove past or present possession, he would make a case that those territories be included as part of the Spanish dominion. The first argument would be made on grounds of Article VI of the treaty, referring to buffer zones, while the second would appeal to Article XVI, which called for settlements of each crown to be covered by their jurisdiction.³² In this way, the Mbayás themselves had no clear spatial status. If Azara could find historical evidence of Spanish ventures in the area, he would argue that they were vassals, but if not, he would treat them as an independent entity by legally and cartographically embedding them into the landscape as a human border. Either way, he had much research to do.

Rather than traveling right away to the disputed lands, Azara relied upon local informants and resources. He mentioned four specifically – the Paguyá indigenous community, three Mbayá chiefs (*caciques*), several Spaniards, and the diary of Jesuit Father Sánchez.³³ Although their reports “varied a lot,” he culled from them information about the economic benefits of possession. According to his sources, the lands of the Mbayá were great for livestock and had “so many *yerbales* that they are

Enacagas, and the Gotocogodegi. Whether or not he was aware of the differences between these groups, he stood the most to gain by treating them as a whole because it allowed him to claim for Spain the lands that each group occupied, whether or not they had accepted missions. Saeger, *The Chaco Mission Frontier*, 4, 6, 16-19, 23-5.

³² “Carta al Virrey” (12 apr 1784) found in: Azara, “Correspondencia Oficial e Inédita,” 3-7.

³³ Most likely Jesuit father José Sánchez Labrador, who worked in the region on Mbayá and other Guaycurúan missions from 1753 until the 1767 Jesuit expulsion. He would have been an important resource for Azara not only for his historical account, but also for his natural history of the region. See: Guillermo Fúrlong Cárdiff, *José Sánchez Labrador, S.J., y su “Yerba Mate” (1774)* (Buenos Aires: Librería de la Plata, S.R.L., 1960)., Guillermo Fúrlong Cárdiff, *Cartografía Jesuítica Del Rio De La Plata* (Buenos Aires: Talleres S. A. Casa Jacobo Peuser, 1936)., José Sánchez Labrador, *Paraguay Católico: Los Indios Pampas, Puelches, Patagones*, ed. Guillermo Fúrlong Cárdiff (Buenos Aires: Viau y Zona, 1936)., and José Sánchez Labrador, *Peces y Aves del Paraguay Natural Ilustrado, 1767*, ed. Mariano N. Castex (Buenos Aires: Compañía General Fabril Editora, 1968).

considered inexhaustible.”³⁴ There were even rumors of a “mountain of silver” and gold mines farther north. In addition to these material benefits, the possession of Mbayá lands would open communication with the province of Chiquitos, also under Spanish control, and thus promote an organic unity between coronal claims. Azara was warned by his informants, however, that the Portuguese had over the past few years established several forts, most likely Coimbra and Albuquerque, along the western banks of the Río Paraguay in what was supposed to be Spanish territory.³⁵

Convinced of the many material and administrative benefits of possessing Mbayá lands, Azara set out to develop arguments for ownership. The first was historical. Without mentioning sources, he claimed to have learned that two Franciscan priests, Fathers Méndez and Barzola, had traveled to Mbayá lands and that the former had established a *reducción* (mission settlement), where there was “a public church and bells.” After Méndez’s death, the Mbayás had abandoned the settlement, but Barzola later founded one nearby that too was abandoned. Two more Franciscan priests “went to the Mbayás,” and although they did not form settlements, their works were also “acts of possession.”³⁶ Azara continued

³⁴ A *yerbal* was land where herbs grew that could be used to produce *yerba mate*, a popular drink and important export of the region.

³⁵ Even more interesting than the wealth of information that was presented to Azara are the variety of forms in which it came. He confessed in a letter several months later to the viceroy that evidence for a gold mine was taken from a letter from Don Manuel de Flores to the Marques de Valdelirios, and that news of the mountain of silver was from the diary of one of Asunción’s elite, who had gone in search of it. He also cited oral testimony by various indigenous groups about Portuguese forts. But perhaps the most intriguing piece of evidence that he relied upon was what appears to be a local form of indigenous record keeping. Recounting the information he had received from Mbayá caciques about deaths in an attack on the Portuguese forts, he wrote, “the priest of Belen [a local mission] adjusted this number because of the knots and signs that the Indians showed him, in whose hands he saw some Portuguese rifles.” While he does not discuss this last source any further, from what he does mention, several observations can be made. First, historical information was contained by these indigenous individuals in some sort of knotted device. It may be a stretch to equate this document with the Andean *quipu*, but recent studies of cartography in Brazil have evidenced the use of similar devices. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the local Catholic priest both knew how to interpret it and believed it to be accurate. Even Azara, who was skeptical of some of his indigenous informants in general, deemed the evidence strong enough to warrant mention. “Carta al Virrey” (12 abr 1784) and “Carta al Virrey” (12 jul 1784) found in: Azara, “Correspondencia Oficial e Inédita,” 3-7, 11-13. For another account of knotted mapping devices in Brazil, see: Safier, “The Confines of Colony,” 172.

³⁶ While Azara does not specify what he means by “acts of possession” it most likely meant some sort of summons to Catholic orthodoxy. Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), 2-7, 70-1, 95-99. As noted by Seed, such a declaratory act would almost definitely not have been accepted by the Portuguese as a legitimate gesture of possession.

the argument by claiming that the Governor of Paraguay had given the lands of the Mbayás to the *reducción* of Belén and that his successor later confirmed the donation. According to the cartographer, no less than the previous four governors of Paraguay believed that these lands were part of their domain. To these historical claims, he added a moral one: “For 23 years the Mbayás have not done the least amount of damage to the province, and if they are ceded to the Portuguese, supposing that they will be missing the faith, they will become restless, renewing the war that caused so much ravaging in this province.” In one statement, Azara both conflated the Mbayás with the lands that they inhabited and placed a paternalistic moral responsibility upon the Spanish to care for them. If the Portuguese were to possess Mbayá territories, their apparent lack of Catholic instruction would cause this group to become unsettled and incited to warfare. According to this logic, the neutrality of Mbayá lands would be unacceptable as well, since they would have no one to settle them onto *reducciones* and offer them religious instruction.³⁷

Azara’s arguments were not enough to convince the Spanish viceroy. In spite of the detailed arguments about past possession and moral responsibility, he wrote back to the commissary on June 13 denying the request. While the exact transcript of this letter is not available, Azara’s response evidences not only a hierarchy of command, but one of knowledge. The viceroy’s principal contention to the Azara’s plan was that Mbayá settlements extended much further north than the cartographer believed. Possession of these lands would place Spain on the southern banks of the Río Taguarí and thereby impinge upon the Portuguese navigation rights afforded by the treaty. Azara accepted this assertion, but was quick to point out that his own perspective had been developed by the testimonies of a local priest and the three Mbayá *caciques*. He also noted that he had performed the entire investigation because local authorities in the province believed the lands to be theirs and “would have complained

³⁷ “Carta al Virrey” (12 may 1784) found in: Azara, “Correspondencia Oficial e Inédita,” 8-10.

about [him]" if he did not.³⁸ It is not clear where the viceroy acquired his information, but what is evident is that his assertion of settlement locations undoubtedly trumped those of local authorities and the Mbayás themselves. Resigned to the futility of his Mbayá argument, Azara turned his attention back to the nonexistence of the Río Igurey.

After receiving the letter from the viceroy, Azara set out to see first-hand some of the area that he was tasked to demarcate. In the 1778 instructions given to him in accordance with the treaty, he was to take the Río Igatimí for the imaginary Río Igurey, mark the border along its shores, and then trace the line to the Río Ipané via the Río Aguaray. This would be the same path drawn by the cartographers who had come through in 1753 under the Treaty of Madrid. Relying again on local sources, however, Azara soon became aware that the Río Aguaray did not run into the Río Ipané, but instead into the Río Xexuy, further to the south. This assertion was affirmed when he consulted one of the Portuguese maps that had been made as part of the previous treaty and found that it corresponded with what he had heard. This discrepancy opened the door for a reevaluation of the agreed boundaries.³⁹

Putting aside the claims over all Mbayá lands, but not forgetting their value, Azara's new line of argumentation was the need to include all Spanish settlements in their territory. While he had alluded to this issue in his response to the viceroy's decision, he spelled the argument out more clearly six months later in a letter to Don José Varela y Ulloa, chief commissary of the entire expedition. In the letter, Azara pointed out that if he were to place the division as instructed, three Spanish settlements

³⁸ Working only with Azara's response to the viceroy's refusal, it is impossible to know what his exact reasons were for rejecting the cartographer's plan. It seems likely, however, that as Azara's work was part of a much larger effort, the viceroy had to pick and choose his battles when negotiating the boundary with the Portuguese. Although possession of this particular strip was important to Azara, it may not have been of as significant interest to the viceroy. "Carta al Virrey" (12 jul 1784) found in: *Ibid.*, 11-13.

³⁹ Don José de Gálvez, "Instrucción De La Corte De España Sobre La Demarcación De Límites," in *Diario de la Primera Partida de la Demarcación de Límites entre España y Portugal en América*, ed. Jerónimo Becker (Madrid: Imprenta del Patronato de Huérfanos de Intendencia é Intervención Militares, 1920), 123-29.

would fall on the wrong side of the border – Concepción, Belen, and Yeumandiya. Furthermore, even if the Río Aguaray did run into the Río Ipané, Concepción and Belen would still be lost. As a resolution, he first suggested that the Río Ipané be replaced by the Río Aguidabanigny, since neither was listed in the treaty anyway. However, he went on in the letter to suggest a different line of demarcation. He mentioned a river north of the Río Aguidabanigny that could be the supposed Río Corrientes from the treaty. From this river, he suggested that a line be drawn to the Río Yaguarey, instead of the Río Igatimí. He reasoned that this river was indeed the real Río Igurey, due to a similarity in pronunciation, and posited that the error in translation could have come from either a copier or the one who produced the map used when they drafted the treaty. To make this case, he referred to the names present on the maps of the 1753 crew, which identified a river by the name of Yaguarey. This was in contrast to most contemporary maps, which did not include any river by that name, but instead chose the name Río Ivinheyma. Azara reinforced his argument by claiming that it met all of the statutes of the treaty with respect to navigation rights, the covering of possessions, and the presence of a buffer between the two empires. He also reminded his chief that such a demarcation would provide all of the benefits that they had hoped to gain by claiming the Mbayá territories earlier.⁴⁰

For the next four years, Azara remained quiet on the topic and no resolution was reached. Rather than pressing the issue, he took the time to embark on a number of expeditions not only to areas pertinent to the project, but also southward and to the west.⁴¹ Finally, on February 7, 1789, he sent a letter to Varela y Ulloa complaining about a lack of clarity from the Portuguese on where they wanted

⁴⁰ “Carta a D. José Varela y Ulloa” (13 ene 1785) found in: Azara, “Correspondencia Oficial e Inédita,” 14-17.

⁴¹ It was presumably during these years that he collected the botanical, taxonomic, and ethnographic data that he would later compile into a series of publications. In fact, in 1789 he sent the first manuscript of *Aves del Paraguay* to Madrid and two years later he finished a draft of *Geografía Física y Esférica*. Francisco de las Barras de Aragón, “Una Carta de D. Félix de Azara y Algunas Noticias de Sus Trabajos, Según Documentos del Archivo de Indias de Sevilla,” *Boletín de la Real Sociedad Española de Historia Natural* 15 (1915): 365. Rodolfo R. Schuller, “Notas Biográficas y Bibliográficas,” *Anales del Museo Nacional de Montevideo* 1 (1904): xxvi. Alvaro Mones and Miguel A. Klappenbach, *Un Ilustrado Aragonés en el Virreinato del Río de la Plata: Félix De Azara, 1742-1821: Estudios sobre su Vida, su Obra y su Pensamiento* (Montevideo: Museo Nacional de Historia Natural, 1997), 206.

the line. In the correspondence, Azara implored his superior not to make him send his team to resolve the issue without further elucidation because he did not want them have to withstand the region's harsh climate and hostile indigenous populations if it would all come to nothing. Despite his hesitation, preparations were made over the course of the next two years to finally meet with the Portuguese at Curuguaty and demarcate the lands. Azara begrudgingly made the trip, but after waiting several months for his Portuguese counterparts amidst rumors that they would not arrive at all, the team disbanded and he returned to Asunción.⁴²

From Asunción, Azara spent the next few years reiterating his case to the viceroy and corresponding with the local governor, Portuguese officials from Brazil, and others in order to reach an agreement. Apart from the case of the mysterious Río Iguerey and where to draw its boundary, he sparked a debate about the Portuguese forts on the west of the Río Paraguay, named Coimbra and Alburquerque. If these forts remained, he argued, Spain would lose all of its rights to the river and thus would be unable to sustain contact and trade with its provinces to the north. The Portuguese offered to pull troops from Alburquerque, a plan that was nearly approved, but Azara retorted by pointing out that it would not rectify the issue of navigation rights. He demanded instead that both establishments be vacated. His persistence paid off when on May 19, 1793, he received a letter via the viceroy upholding all of his suggestions. In a final resolution, Mbayá lands would be bisected and the boundary line would run from the Río Yacuary to the Río Corrientes then up the Río Paraguay. Alburquerque

⁴² Azara sent a letter on February 13, 1791, to the new viceroy, asking again for the team to be removed until some agreement was reached. The viceroy denied his request and by June of that same year the commissary finally arrived at the meeting point. The Portuguese tardiness only exacerbated the situation. In a July 30, 1791, letter to the viceroy, Azara requested permission to disperse his team and leave Curuguaty on this account. He complained, "I fear that the present century will probably pass without them appearing here," adding, "I am passing the better part of my life, and its most useful years in this exile, seeing that I will probably run out the rest of my existence uselessly...men are not eternal." Adding to this the issue of the expenses of maintaining the team, Azara suggested that if the Portuguese did not arrive by August or September, he would return everyone to Asunción. By the time that he received the viceroy's response, Azara was back in the capital city, and never again would he return to the small village to meet his counterparts. "Carta al Virrey" (13 feb 1791), "Carta al Virrey" (13 abr 1791), "Carta al Virrey" (20 jun 1791), "Carta al Virrey" (30 jul 1791), "Carta al Virrey" (19 sep 1791), and "Carta al Virrey" (19 oct 1791) found in: Azara, "Correspondencia Oficial e Inédita."

and Coimbra would be emptied, and while lands east of the river belonged to the Portuguese, they were virtually uninhabitable due to persistent floods in the area.⁴³

As a result of the resolution, each of the objectives that Azara sought to meet from the beginning was realized, including the possession of *yerbales*, access to potential mineral repositories, the navigation of certain rivers, and open travel routes between Paraguay and other provinces. Most importantly, all of this was done within the linguistic limits of the Treaty of San Ildefonso, in spite of the myriad of alternate resolutions that could have logically been made instead. The final step was thus to reshape the local landscape in order to reify the agreement and make it correspond with what was on the ground.

For the next two years, Azara would battle with the governor of Paraguay about the settling of newly acquired lands, particularly between the Río Corrientes and the Río Aguidabanigny, but also to the west of the Río Paraguay, near Coimbra and Albuquerque. He first implored the governor to offer lands to settlers in these areas to prevent them from being retaken by the Portuguese and to re-establish what he interpreted as a once existent roadway to the provinces of the north. He relied once again on maps, testimony, and historical arguments to make a claim for the path, but the governor would not be swayed; he was content to occupy lands near the Ipané. The issue became so contested that Azara even wrote to the viceroy in 1794 accusing the governor of receiving gifts from the Portuguese and making illicit arrangements. For his part, the governor locked the municipal archives to prevent the cartographer from further investigations.⁴⁴ Before the conflict had a chance to escalate any further, Azara was in Buenos Aires working on his new assignment.

⁴³ “Carta al Virrey” (19 jul 1792), “Carta al Virrey” (19 ene 1793), “Carta al Virrey” (30 abr 1793), and “Carta al Virrey” (19 may 1793) found in: Ibid.

⁴⁴ “Carta al Virrey” (17 sep 1793), “Carta al Gobernador” (14 jun 1794), “Carta al Virrey” (19 jun 1794), and “Carta al Virrey” (17 mar 1795) found in: Ibid. Walckenaer, “Noticia sobre la Vida y los Escritos,” 15-16.

CHAPTER 4

SYNCHRONIZING SPACE

Having finished mapping the frontiers with Brazil, Azara spent his last five years in the viceroyalty trying to make the new boundaries a reality. Despite whatever challenges the Paraguayan governor posed, the project to populate his province's borderlands was a relative success. Once in Buenos Aires, however, Azara faced a greater struggle in managing the vast plains south of the city and in the Banda Oriental, where unregulated property distribution had led to uneven settlement patterns and unstable frontiers. An analysis of his work to refashion this countryside demonstrates three key points. First, as the San Ildefonso cartographic expedition produced a new spatial imagination incongruent with the realities of the human and physical landscape, state oversight was necessary to produce the viceroyalty materially. The treaty's maps served as guidelines and precedent for managed programs of human resettlement and land distribution, but such changes did not come automatically. Secondly, issuing titles and selling frontier lands was not enough to reify the borders. Azara also recognized the necessity of distributing settlers evenly within that space and investing them in the state project in order to maximize regulation and control. Thirdly, as with each other step of the production of the viceroyalty, local actors challenged the new spatial arrangement in numerous ways. In some cases, resistance took the form of blatant disregard, but more frequently, the newly established frontiers provided opportunities for local administrators to develop patronage networks and even challenge colonial incursions.

By creating the new viceroyalty and fortifying its frontiers, the Spanish state hoped to achieve several interrelated objectives in the provinces of Buenos Aires and the Banda Oriental. Primarily, they aimed to prevent the southward expansion of Portuguese settlements, which exacerbated contraband trade and threatened the ports of Buenos Aires. In addition, the state hoped to better administer populations within their jurisdiction. Colonial subjects were also known participants in illicit trade, while mobile indigenous communities raided cattle and threatened settlements. Finally, in the vast plains that surrounded Buenos Aires, state officials saw two untapped and potentially lucrative resources – livestock and agriculture. Having opening up the capital city to external trade, they hoped to not only protect the silver trade, but also to create a regional export economy.⁴⁵

From the early days of the new viceroyalty and demarcation of its boundaries, Spanish officials in Buenos Aires began to sell titles to their borderland territories. While they hoped to fortify the frontier, this program was unsuccessful in meeting any of their key aims. The problem had nothing to do with uncertainties about state jurisdiction or the exact location of the boundary, but resulted instead from the uneven distribution of a small population across the region's expansive plains. In fact, nearly all lands in the region had been parceled and sold, but the vast majority of properties were owned by a small group of absentee landholders from Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Small and medium scale farmers, who comprised the largest group of settlers in the countryside, most often lived on public lands or squatted on private estates.⁴⁶

This pattern of large-scale absentee landownership obstructed the broader aims of the colonial state in a variety of ways. For one thing, the Portuguese continued expanding southward, as their

⁴⁵ Félix de Azara, "Memoria sobre el Estado Rural del Río de la Plata en 1801," in *Memoria sobre el Estado Rural del Río de la Plata y Otros Informes*, ed. Julio César González (Buenos Aires: 1943), 15. Julio Djenderedjian, "Da Locum Melioribus. Política Imperial, Procesos de Poblamiento y Conformación de Nuevos Espacios de Poder en la Frontera Platina a Fines del Siglo XVIII," 6-7. Donghi, "La Expansión Ganadera en la Campaña de Buenos Aires," 23-27.

⁴⁶ Gelman, "Familia y Relaciones de Producción," 82-97. Moreno, "Población y Sociedad," 25-36. Azcuy Ameghino, *El Latifundio y la Gran Propiedad*, 42-46.

program of land distribution allowed them to secure their settlements and provided a network for more. Spanish settlers, for their part, maintained relations with their northern neighbors, even working to hunt down and return runaway slaves. This unending threat of Portuguese advancements was exacerbated by tensions between the viceregal capital and local towns over the titling of properties. State administrators in Buenos Aires sold land in the region at such exorbitant rates that two competing networks of distribution emerged. On one hand, a small number of wealthy families used the standard state processes to acquire legal titles to enormous properties. On the other hand, poor farmers turned to local town officials to gain access to lands. Within this second network of distribution, regional patrons emerged and developed a rather populous clientele of poor farmers and immigrants, who would remain antagonistic with inhabitants of the capital.⁴⁷ Amidst these tensions, colonial settlers also faced the threat of mobile indigenous communities. Particularly along the southern frontier of Buenos Aires, mounted riders raided cattle and other commodities, only to sell them later to other Spanish colonials in Chile. The Charrúas and Minuanes posed a similar threat in the Banda Oriental.⁴⁸ This lack of control over Spanish and foreign populations also precluded a stable export economy. Contraband persisted, the lack of regulated and guarded properties made ranching nearly impossible, and to top it all off, wild dogs, lions, and tigers were reportedly decimating valuable livestock.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ The creation of the new viceroyalty brought new interregional linkages that engendered internal migration within the realm. Most notably, many settlers from regions such as Tucumán migrated to Buenos Aires and the Banda Oriental, bringing about a large population boom around the capital. Jorge Gelman estimates that from 1778-1810, the population swelled from approximately 12,000 to 34,000 people. Gelman, "Familia y Relaciones de Producción," 76-82. Azara, "Memoria sobre el estado rural," 13, 15, 16, 20-1. Djenderedjian, "Da Locum Melioribus," 4, 9-10, 13-15. Azcuy Ameghino, *El Latifundio y la Gran Propiedad*, 50, 126, 136.

⁴⁸ Azara, "Memoria sobre el estado rural," 17. Félix de Azara, "Informe Acerca De Un Reconocimiento De Los Guardias Y Fortines Que Guarnecen La Línea De Frontera De Buenos Aires, Elevado Al Virrey Don Pedro Melo De Portugal," in *Memoria sobre el Estado Rural del Río de la Plata y Otros Informes*, ed. Julio César González (Buenos Aires: 1943), 167, 176. In spite of the antagonistic way in which Azara portrays the Charrúas and other communities, there is evidence of relations of nonviolent material exchange between them and Spanish colonials in the borderland regions. Garavaglia, *Pastores y Labradores*, 48-51, 145-6.

⁴⁹ Azara, "Memoria sobre el estado rural," 5, 12.

Having recently arrived from Paraguay, Azara got his first glimpse of these vast flatlands through his survey of the *Guardias de Frontera* in Buenos Aires in 1796. He spent nearly four months studying the southern frontier of the viceroyalty, and produced an extensive report and resettlement plan, but by the following year he was already surveying the Banda Oriental. Building upon his research in Paraguay and Buenos Aires, he developed an ambitious project that was to serve as pilot for future resettlement programs. Aiming to remedy a massive project to populate the Patagonian coast with Spanish immigrants, which had gone awry, Azara proposed that they create a new settlement instead along the border with Brazil. The Patagonian settlers would be offered free property in the new town, which would serve as a corrective to the seemingly haphazard patterns of land titling and holding in the area. Convinced by the proposal, the viceroy supported Azara's program, and on November 2, 1800, with the aid of mounted guards, the settlement known as San Miguel de Batoví was established (Map 1).⁵⁰

Buoyed by the initial success of the Batoví experiment, Azara spent the next six months drafting a more extensive proposal to reorganize nearly the entire border with Brazil in the Banda Oriental. Entitled *Memoria sobre el Estado Rural del Río de la Plata*, this essay drew not only upon Azara's experience in Paraguay and Buenos Aires, but also upon Portuguese models of settlement.⁵¹ In it, Azara contended that unlike in Paraguay and settlements west of the Río de la Plata, in the Banda Oriental there was a paucity of parishes and schools and a glut of absentee landownership. The result, as discussed above, was a lack of organization, industriousness, and efficiency, all of which could be remedied by a particular spatial model. Azara thus developed a twelve-step program to repopulate the

⁵⁰ Ibid., 16-17. Mones and Klappenbach, *Un Ilustrado Aragonés*, 210.

⁵¹ Azara was so impressed with Portuguese patterns settlers that he even included in his plan a provision to incorporate those who came voluntarily. Azara, "Memoria sobre el estado rural," 6-7, 18. Azara, "Informe acerca de un reconocimiento," 173-74. Such a maneuver would not be unprecedented, however, as many Portuguese were incorporated into the viceroyalty after the 1777 treaty. Fabrício Pereira Prado, *A Colônia do Sacramento: O Extremo Sul da América Portuguesa no Século XVIII* (Porto Alegre: F.P. Prado, 2002).

frontier (Table 2).⁵² This simple reordering would in one gesture prevent Portuguese incursions, allow for control of the population, and provide the structure for a lucrative export economy.

The program was first designed to protect viceregal borders from the Portuguese in the north and indigenous communities on horseback both there and in the south. By seizing unoccupied lands along the frontier and redistributing them in equidistant settlements, Azara planned to stretch the region's thin population across the entire border. These towns would be established behind forts (*presidios*) rather than in the gaps in between in order to maximize security. Furthermore, local farmers

STEP	ACTIONS
1	Give freedom and land to Christian Indians
2	Reduce the unfaithful Minuanes and Chaurruás <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weaken them first by advancing ranches into their lands • Use force if necessary
3	Between the Río Negro, Río Ibicui, and Río Uruguay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build chapels every 16-20 leagues • Distribute lands on the condition that settlers live there for 5 years
4	Specify to the heads of households: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standards of care for their property • That they will be required to defend their lands
5	Form a government apart from Montevideo
6	Give titles to people in well populated lands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evict people from sparse settlements and distribute that land
7	Annul fraudulent land sales and give lands to the poor
8	Admit the Portuguese that come voluntarily
9	Between the Río Negro and Montevideo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a chapel every 16-20 leagues • Require the implementation of a schoolmaster
10	Signal the boundaries between properties to avoid future litigation
11	Have two fairs annually around the frontiers with Brazil
12	Kill wild dogs, lions, and tigers

Table 2 – Resettlement Plan

⁵² Azara, "Memoria sobre el estado rural," 1-5, 10, 17-18.

would be incorporated into the state's defense apparatus as land titles came in exchange for service in the local militias. These nonregular fighters would be complemented by mounted guards (*blandengues*) from each fort, who would routinely patrol the unpopulated lands that separated them. Marching the boundaries was to be a simultaneous act of surveillance and performance, designed to intercept and deter unregulated trespassing.⁵³

Along with replicating and securing the frontiers, the resettlement plan would also allow the state to better control its own population.⁵⁴ This began with indigenous communities, both reduced and free roaming, whom the Spanish did not consider to be sovereign entities. Azara developed a strategy to incorporate them into the colonial state and religious apparatus through the sedentary, agricultural lifestyle that he valued. To those families and communities who were deemed to be Christian, which most likely meant those who had accepted reduction, he recommended that the state offer freedom and free land. Conversely, the non-Christians, explicitly the nonsedentary Minuanes and Charrúas, would be squeezed off of their lands through the advancement of Spanish ranches. If that did not work to gain their submission, they would be reduced by force.⁵⁵ In addition to incorporating indigenous communities into the state's spatial apparatus, Azara's plan also aimed to produce a

⁵³ Ibid., 24. Azara, "Informe acerca de un reconocimiento," 170-1, 174-5.

⁵⁴ In understanding the managed spatial distribution of populations as an integral technique of governance, I draw upon the rich literature that exists on biopolitics, beginning with Michel Foucault. In his classic essay on disciplinary societies, Foucault suggests that through a particular ordering and partitioning of bodies in space, governments could more efficiently manage their populations, and could even create self-disciplining subjects. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 1 ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977). See also: Paul Patton, "Agamben and Foucault on Biopower and Biopolitics," in *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty and Life*, ed. Matthew Calarco and Steven DeCaroli (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), 206-09. Using this idea as an analytic helps to orient one's vision when considering the resettlement programs along the viceroyalty's frontiers. As will be shown through Azara's plan, by distributing small plots of land along the frontier and requiring civil defense, state officials could more efficiently manage production and exportation, while ecclesiastical officials would be more able to administer moral oversight. Individuals would become more invested in supporting the state apparatus, as it gave legitimacy to their land titles and was their avenue to the market. Lastly, the state could oversee the moral conduct of its population by attaching requirements, such as being married and living with one's family, to the legitimacy of one's property title.

⁵⁵ Azara, "Memoria sobre el estado rural," 17. Djenderedjian, "Da Locum Melioribus," 8. In his discussion of the southern frontier, Azara mentions a third category of indigenous communities; non-Christians who had accepted a sedentary agricultural lifestyle. These groups would be offered lands separate from the Spanish towns, but nonetheless along the frontier. Azara, "Informe acerca de un reconocimiento," 176.

particular kind of Spanish settler. Imagining a landscape of small and medium sized farms, he listed requirements for their new inhabitants. Priority or exclusivity in land distribution would be given to married families, on the condition that the entire family occupied their new plot and remained for at least five years. They would also be required not only to defend their property, but also to maintain it in an acceptable condition. A final stipulation would be the construction of a chapel for religious instruction, and the financial support of a schoolmaster for educational purposes.⁵⁶ In these ways, offering free land in an ordered fashion would help the state to manage the moral lives of its remote inhabitants.

Perhaps the most appealing aspect of this proposal would have been the enormous export economy that Azara promised it would bring. The expansive plains in Buenos Aires and the Banda Oriental had over the years provided the perfect context for the reproduction and proliferation of cattle. Furthermore, the region presented an ideal climate for developing an agricultural enterprise of cereal production. Although, according to Azara, these two resources had remained untapped because of a lack of proper management, the ability to trade from the ports of Buenos Aires presented a new opportunity to revisit their potential. In his estimation, the greatest mistake of the viceregal government was that instead of offering free lands, they tried to gain revenue by selling them. As this prevented the majority of the population from developing productive family farms, he suggested as a remedy the free issuance of property in the terms listed above. This would allow greater amounts of the population to develop small farms and ranches, which the viceroy could then tax. Furthermore, rather than restricting trade across the frontier with Brazil, Azara recommended that the state regulate it and again tax farmers and purchasers on their exchange. Between the markets in Brazil and those in Europe, Azara estimated that the crown could produce more than double the value of “all the mines and

⁵⁶ Azara, "Memoria sobre el estado rural," 17-18. Azara, "Informe acerca de un reconocimiento," 174-76.

monies from both Americas [combined].”⁵⁷ All of this was predicated on a system of territorial management, but through calculated comparisons with the Paraguayan enterprise, he deemed it both possible and well within reason.

For whatever promise Azara’s resettlement initiatives held, they were short lived. Soon after he drafted his plan and returned to Montevideo, armed conflict once again erupted between the Spanish and the Portuguese along their South American frontier. Batoví fell on June 29, 1801, and would remain a Brazilian possession thereafter. Tensions grew between inhabitants of the borderlands and of Buenos Aires, as the policy of populating the region diminished. Absentee landholders from the urban capital fought with local settlers over property rights and local power became increasingly severed from the viceroy. Five years later, as the English invaded the shores of Buenos Aires, revolutionary leaders tapped into the patronage networks that had developed along the borderlands to challenge the viceroy.⁵⁸ Azara’s written works, meanwhile, circulated amongst urban readers in Buenos Aires and were promoted by the editors of one of the city’s most important newspapers.⁵⁹ For his part, Azara returned at the end of 1801 to his native country and would never again return to the region where he spent nearly twenty years of his life.

⁵⁷ In discussing markets and calculating the value of exports, Azara focuses primarily on cattle production over cereals. Apart from leather, he considers the potential revenue from selling tallow, dried meat, and cheese to external buyers. These products would not only be sold in Europe and in Brazil, but also to sailors and to feed slaves in Havana and “other parts” Azara, “Memoria sobre el estado rural,” 19-22.

⁵⁸ Perhaps the most famous leader to emerge in this area was José Gervasio Artigas, who had participated as a member of the *blandengues* in the founding of Batoví. Djenderedjian, “Da Locum Melioribus,” 18-22.

⁵⁹ Several of Azara’s writings, including *Memoria sobre el Estado Rural*, were recommended in the July 25, 1801 printing of “Telégrafo Mercantil, Rural, Político-Económico, e Historiográfico del Rio de la Plata.” An article by Azara on *yerba mate* appeared in “Semanario de Agricultura, Industria y Comercio,” on June 4 and 11, 1806, but no recommendation was made of his *Memoria*. Evidence does exist, however, that Azara did write an article on the frontier settlements for “Semanario de Agricultura, Industria, y Comercio,” but that it was published neither promptly nor under his name. Mones and Klappenbach, *Un Ilustrado Aragonés*, 67-71.

CHAPTER 5

NATURALIZING THE LANDSCAPE

After returning to Spain, Azara dedicated much of his time to publishing his writings. Within a year of arriving, he published his notes on the natural history of birds and of quadrupeds, but his most widely cited work would be *Voyages dans l’Amerique Meridionale*, printed in 1809.⁶⁰ In each case, he used Paraguay and the Río de la Plata as spatial frames to catalogue and differentiate flora, fauna, and human populations. Azara’s multiple publications thus represented yet another step in the material and discursive production of the viceroyalty. It was transformed from an administrative apparatus to a natural body for scientifically organizing both the human and physical landscape. Part of a burgeoning genre of naturalist travel literature that emerged at the end of eighteenth century, Azara’s works presupposed the spatial divisions of the viceroyalty as natural containers and partitions within a broader

⁶⁰ Azara’s manuscripts were first published in France in 1809 by Dentu Publishing House, under the direction of the Parisian naturalist and conservator of maps at the French Royal Library, Charles Walckenaer. He had published his works on birds and quadrupeds in Spain, but he relished the opportunity to present them before a French audience. To him they were, “the only ones who could decide the merit of [his] works” because in Spain, “there is no taste for the sciences, and much less for natural history.” “Carta a Walckenaer” (25 jul 1805), “Carta a Walckenaer” (29 ago 1805) and “Carta a Walckenaer” (12 ene 1806) found in: Azara, “Correspondencia Oficial e Inédita,” 22. Mones and Klappenbach, *Un Ilustrado Aragonés*, 210-12. Walckenaer, “Noticia sobre la Vida y los Escritos,” 12-14. Writing to a cosmopolitan scientific community, Azara’s work presents a challenge to Mary Louise Pratt’s notion of an audience of “domestic subjects.” Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), 3. Whereas Pratt emphasizes the reception of travel narratives within individual colonial states, Azara made the conscious decision to not publish his work in Spain. His questions and commentaries were directed, rather, toward a broader scientific community. Furthermore, though not as an entire compendium, Azara presented his notes and findings to audiences in Buenos Aires before his departure. Mones and Klappenbach, *Un Ilustrado Aragonés*, 67-71. It would take more than two decades, however, for the French version to be translated into Spanish. Félix de Azara, *Viajes Por La América Meridional*, ed. Florencio Varela, trans. Bernardino Rivadavia (Montevideo: Biblioteca del Comercio del Plata, 1846), 1-5, 7, 28.

world taxonomy.⁶¹ *Voyages* was a text of particular interest not only for its plethora of empirical data, but also because it was through this publication that the maps produced under the Treaty of San Ildefonso first reached European eyes. In this work, Azara presented the viceroyalty as a timeless and unquestioned spatial entity. By abstracting and excising empirical data, he silenced in his text the divergent spatial understandings of local actors, obfuscated the perpetual movement of humans and contraband, and erased the hundreds of years of history that had produced the local landscape.⁶² The circulation and reception of this text over time established the viceroyalty as the singular means for the European audience understand the region's present and its past.

In *Voyages*, Azara sought to answer Old World questions with New World evidence, and the merit of his studies was measured by this standard. In spite of its title, the text was less about narrating his travels than it was about presenting empirical data. As with other scientific travelers of the time, Azara used history and geography as descriptive sciences from which other scientific fields could begin to theorize on natural law.⁶³ In fact, he rewrote his original manuscript in order to eliminate all narrative, suggesting that such literary elements were superfluous and annoying. He also took great

⁶¹ Azara's text was not the first text to be written that used Paraguay and the Río de la Plata as spatial frames for natural histories, but it was undoubtedly the most widely circulated. Father José Sánchez Labrador, whom Azara used as a reference during his expeditions produced several natural histories and anthropological studies within a region termed "Paraguay," but most of his works were not published until the early twentieth century, when the then nation-state was a presupposed entity. See: Sánchez Labrador, *Peces y Aves* Sánchez Labrador, *Paraguay Catholico*

⁶² Here, Lefebvre's thesis is quite useful, particularly his notion of representations of space. By representing a synchronic vision of colonial space, Azara presented it as timeless and ahistorical. This fetishization occluded both the processes whereby such a vision was created and the powerful ways that it impeded upon the lives of local actors. As a result, the map provided a coherent image. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 39-50.

⁶³ Richard Hartshorne, *The Nature of Geography* (Lancaster, Penn.: Association of American Geographers, 1939), 21. Though Azara may have been an extreme example for his lack of narration, this tendency to emphasize empirical observations of nature was typical of the time. Whereas in the past, Latin America and other parts of the world were conceived of in the European imagination through religious historiography, by the mid-eighteenth century, presentist accounts of nature were commonplace. Roberto González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 93-97. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 14-26. In some ways, however, his work was a sort of "experimental philosophy," whereby he would test the scientific presuppositions of the Old World in his unique context, and then comment on their credibility. David N. Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1993), 133.

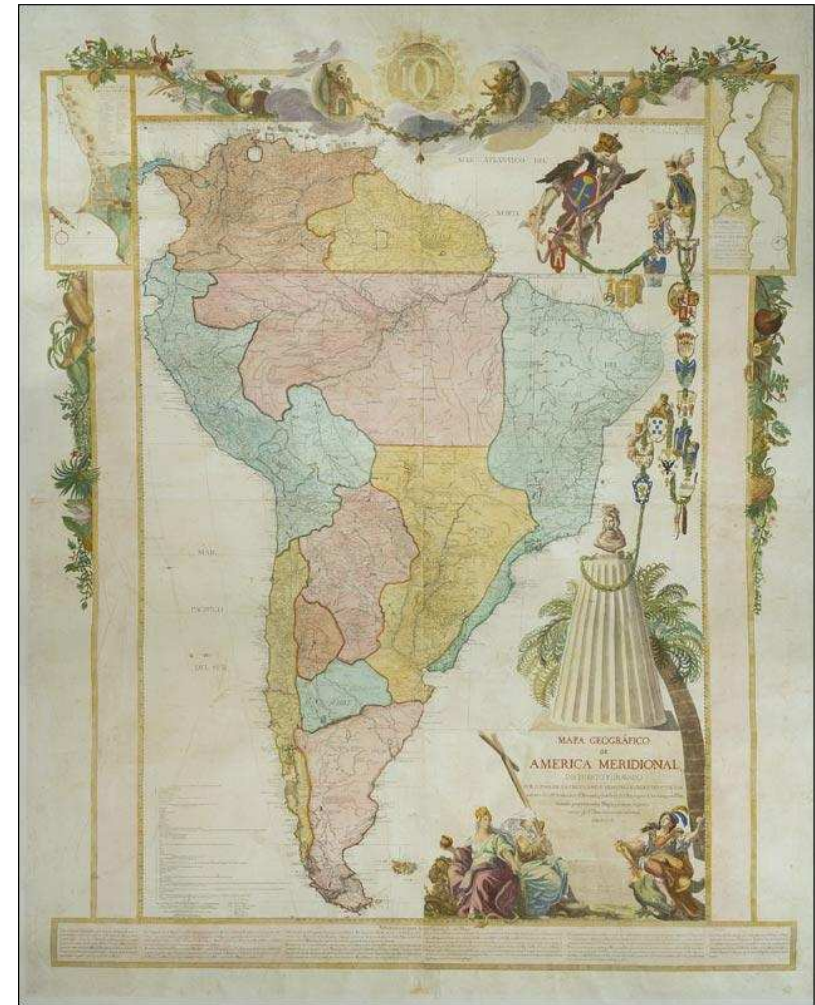
care not to disrupt contemporary systems of thought, stating that if any of his observations belied any pre-established scientific understandings, they should be disregarded.⁶⁴ Rather than narrating or theorizing the complexity of what he saw, his goal was to collect and organize information, presenting it much in the same way that one would a museum exhibit. To achieve this ordering, Azara utilized the standard categories of European naturalists for cataloguing the world and presenting evidence. This included long methodological discussions, the adoption of Latin names to identify plants and animals, and the elimination of all artistic flourish from his maps (Maps 3 & 4).⁶⁵ Most importantly, though, he presented his account of the natural world through the visual frame of the viceroyalty and its provinces, thus participating in their discursive reproduction.

To understand exactly how Azara's work presented and naturalized colonial space, it is necessary to begin with its atlas. Seen by readers to be a "very desirable supplement to their contents,"⁶⁶ the first five maps of the atlas presented large-scale perspectives that depicted a synchronic spatial vision. In doing so, they hid any narrative of how the landscape was produced. Place names were assigned and treaty borders were drawn, but no mention was made in the atlas or book about exactly how those lines and locales came to be. The stylistic nature of the maps made them incapable of

⁶⁴ "Carta a Walckenaer" (1 dic 1805) and "Carta a Walckenaer" (2 jul 1806) found in: Azara, "Correspondencia Oficial e Inédita," 23-25.

⁶⁵ At the time of Azara's research and writing, several manuals had been produced on how to do natural histories, including Carl Linne's *System of Nature* and Robert Boyle's *General Heads for the Natural History of a Country, Great or Small*. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 24, 29.; Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition*, 102-05.; González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive*, 105. Azara's empirical observations were validated by the accuracy of his measurements, which he hoped would aid in mathematically representing the natural world. He even stated in his introduction, "I have always avoided in my travels judging by approximation. Consequently, I cannot find any other error than that which is subject or exposed to an observation of latitude, although it be done with a good instrument." Azara, *Viajes por la América Meridional*, 28-30. Since the information that he found did not always fit into the preset categories of European naturalists, he at times adopted indigenous names for plants and animals. Unsurprisingly, this gesture was where he met his harshest criticism. See: Muir, "Art. li. Voyages Dans L'amerique Meridionale, &c.; I.e. Travels in South America," review of *Voyages dans l'Amerique Meridionale*, *Monthly Review* 62 (1810): 460, 473.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*: 477.



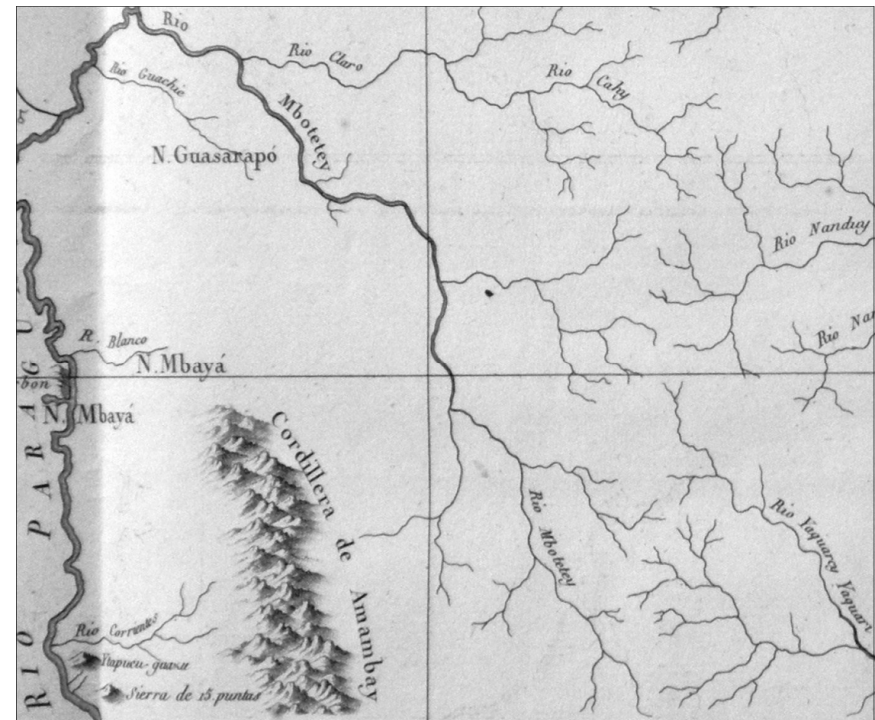
Map 3 ("Carta Géographique de l'Amérique Méridionale," left) & Map 4 ("Mapa Geográfico de América Meridional," right) - From the Flatlow Collection in the Rare Book Collection, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Comparing Azara's map with the famed "Mapa Geográfico de América Meridional," by Juan de la Cruz Cano y Olmedilla, demonstrates a key difference in style. Whereas de la Cruz Cano y Olmedilla surrounds his map with artistic imagery, Azara chooses instead to only present measured geographical data.

representing the overlapping settlements that Azara spent so many years negotiating, and the author considered such information irrelevant to the truth he sought to portray.

In many ways, however, the maps narrated Azara's journey and rationalized the constructed treaty lines through their physical features. A close examination of physical details reveals both Azara's desire to emphasize the boundaries dictated in the Treaty of San Ildefonso and to centralize his journeys. The things that were important to him during his travels and negotiations received disproportionate amounts of detail. This can be seen most easily in the second map in the collection, the "Carta Générale du Paraguay et de la Province de Buenos Aires." In this piece, Azara drew wide floodplains along the Río Paraguay north of the Río Corrientes (Map 5). This river did indeed flood, but so did many others. What made this particular area of inundation so important was its relationship to the treaty. As Azara argued in a 1793 letter to the viceroy, these floodplains represented a natural buffer between the Spanish and the Portuguese, and would prevent the Brazilians from settling along and using the river.⁶⁷ In a similar fashion, the Río Corrientes appeared on this map to be exaggeratedly long and wide, nearly reaching the Río Yacuary. Represented in this way, the river emphasized the boundary between Paraguay and Brazil as a natural division. The proximity of the rivers was further emphasized through the absence of the Cordillera de Amambay, a mountain range that Portuguese representatives had proposed as the boundary (Maps 5 & 6). Similar strategies appear in the disproportionate enlargement of tiny streams, such as the Arroyo Chuy and the Arroyo Tahin, which were also key markers in the treaty. Coupled with an elongated rectangular design that encompassed the entirety of the treaty frontiers and centralized Azara's zone of demarcation, the "Carta Générale" encapsulated his journeys and presented negotiated boundaries as logical borderlands.

In addition to silencing the historical production of spatial arrangements, Azara's maps also obfuscated the objects that they could not conceptually represent. Areas that he did not visit were

⁶⁷ "Carta al Virrey" (13 abr 1793) found in: Azara, "Correspondencia Oficial e Inédita."



Map 5 (“Carta Générale du Paraguay et de la Province de Buenos Aires,” left) & Map 6 (“Province des Chiquitos et gouvernement de Matogrosso et de Cuyaba,” right) – From the Flatlow Collection in the Rare Book Collection, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The excerpt on the left, from “Carta Générale du Paraguay et de la Province de Buenos Aires,” the atlas’s second map, shows the Río Paraguay as having a wide area of inundation. Also, the Río Corrientes nearly touches the Río Yacuary, which would have corresponded with the resolved boundary lines of the Treaty of San Ildefonso. The second piece is taken from “Province des Chiquitos et gouvernement de Matogrosso et de Cuyaba,” the fifth map in the atlas. Not only is there no evidence of flooding, but a large mountain range, the Cordillera de Amabay bisects the Río Corrientes and the Río Yacuary. The contradictions between these two maps can neither be explained by scale nor any other standardized convention. They must be understood therefore in their context of production. Azara produced the manuscript for the first of these two as part of his commission to represent interstate boundaries, while the second was copied from the work of D. Antonio Alvarez Sotomayor, chief of a different demarcation party (Azara, 1809, pp. 29).

drawn with less detail, and oftentimes included large swaths of white, empty space. Mountains appeared intermittently and non-fluvial features, such as forests and grasslands were scattered at best. Perhaps the greatest incongruity was related to mobile indigenous populations. Whereas Spanish cities and villages were marked with points, and church missions with crosses, the static nature of Azara's maps rendered them unable to adequately account for the mobile lifestyles of such groups as the Mbayá and the Guaná. This being the case, his map eschewed both their ethnic complexities and their territorial usages and arrangements. As a result, indigenous communities were represented in his maps under reified national categories in ambiguous spaces. Not only did this gesture conceal their patterns of migration, but it also engendered contradictions between several of the atlas's maps. For instance, in some of the presentations, the Mbayá occupy both the eastern and western banks of the Río Paraguay, while in others, they are relegated to the west (Maps 5 & 6). Visually distinct from the sedentarily-ordered Spanish populations, these groups were frozen in still-frame images that undercut the complexity of their movements and interactions.

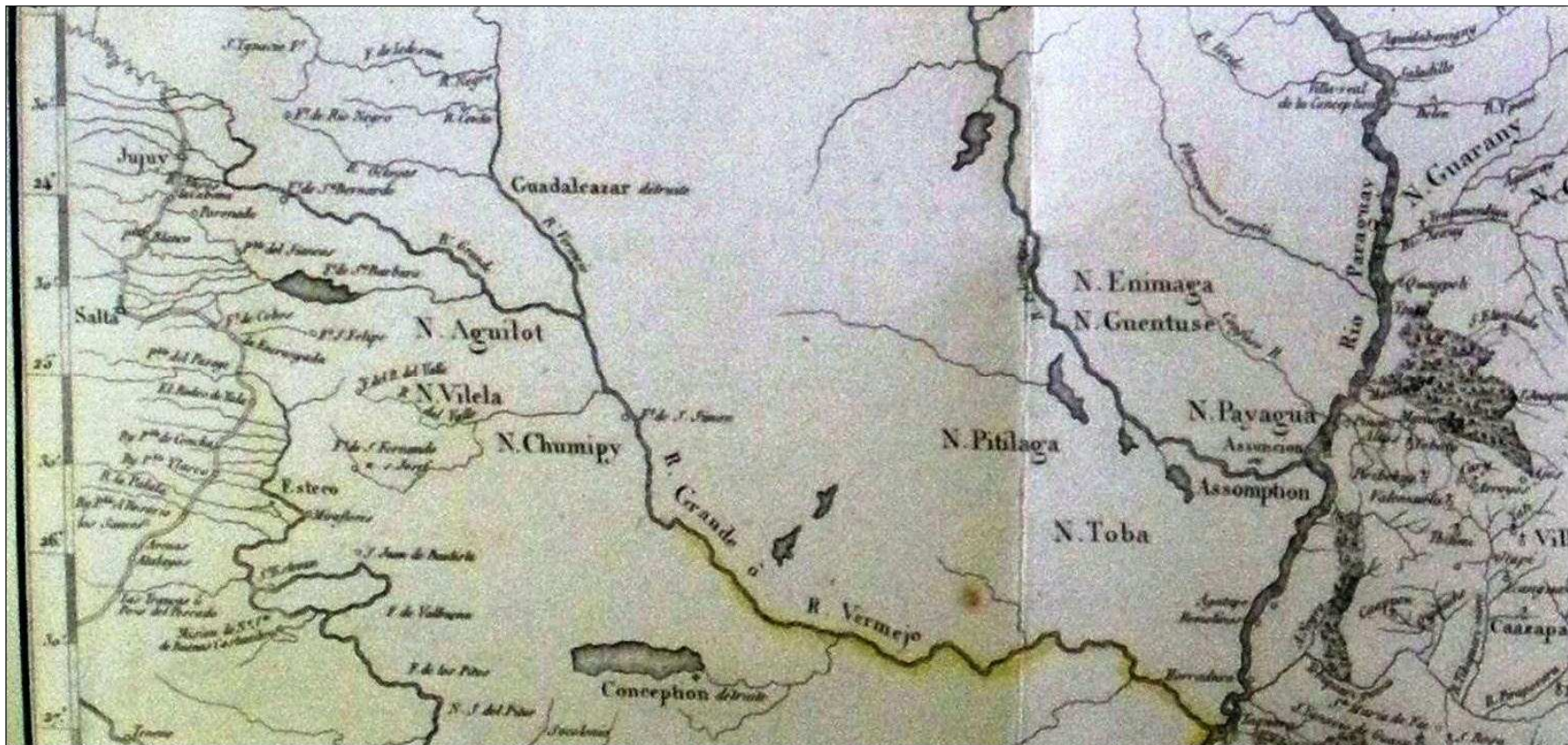
By freezing the dynamic and silencing the unknown, each of the maps carried to its public the aura of being a stable and objective unit. Within the limits of accepted cartographic convention, Azara defined the viceroyalty and its provinces through stylistic distortions. This began with the amplification of Paraguayan space. The opening map, the "Carta Géographique de l'Amérique Méridionale," revealed a Río Paraná that extended longer than the Río Amazonas, when in reality it did not even measure one half of its length. Likewise, the Río Pilcamayo matched the width of the Amazonas, when it too paled in comparative expansion. While some of this may have been improper measurement, Azara was able to create such a visual image through varying scales of latitude and longitude. Noting the bordering rulers and the gridlines of this map one can see that a degree of latitude was significantly larger than a degree of longitude. The effect was to establish rectangular gridlines and effectively stretch the continent (Map 4). Adding to the distortion of physical space, Azara applied a labeling

technique to add significance to his area of study. Instead of adopting a standardized method of marking and naming places, he included such tiny forts as Coimbra and Alburquerque, while omitting such important cities as Potosí. Again, the result was an unbalanced representation of continental space and settlement that privileged the areas of his journeys, primarily in Paraguay.

If the first map overstated the size of this zone, the second gave it cohesion. The stated centerpiece of his atlas, it was the only regional map that he imprinted with a labeled title: “Carta Générale du Paraguay et de la Province de Buenos Aires.” In this way, Azara was not simply representing a general area, but instead a coherent spatial body. Both the title and the orientation of the map – Asunción was placed nearly at the exact center – evidence the author’s objective. The Province of Buenos Aires was a subtext in the title and occupied the lower portions of the map, and while one quarter of represented space was Brazilian territory, it did not appear on the label at all. This map was about creating a visual image of the Paraguayan geobody. Azara indicated this himself in the introduction to his text, where he stated, “the principal objective of my travels, so long and multiplied, was to raise an exact map of [that country].”⁶⁸ The final three maps would serve similar functions for other territories, but none was as expansive as that of Paraguay.

Beyond labeling and orienting this map, Azara represented relationships with neighboring territories. As mentioned, he showed a stark divide with Brazil both through detailed physical features and dotted or solid boundary lines. While the map highlighted an ideological separation from Brazilian space, it is clear that actions on the ground presented a different reality. As discussed, contraband persisted after the retirement of the cartographic commissions, and Portuguese settlers and armed forces established themselves on the other side of the agreed border. The iconic nature of this map elided such complexity in favor of a coherent whole.

⁶⁸ Azara, *Viajes por la América Meridional*, 28.



Map 7 – “Carta Générale du Paraguay et de la Province de Buenos Aires” (1809) – From the Flatlow Collection in the Rare Book Collection, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Apart from the continental map, this was the only one in the collection to which Azara assigned a particular place name. In it, separate cities and territories are squeezed into the map and separated from the Paraguayan center only by empty space, giving the effect of proximity and of an organic body.

With an idealistic representation of the Brazilian border and an ostensibly proximate relationship with Buenos Aires, Azara also sought to demonstrate relationships with distant portions of the viceroyalty. Eying the left edge of the map, one can see that the cities of Salta and Jujuy, part of the Province of Tucumán, were squeezed in from the west (Map 7). While large unmarked spaces existed in between these cities and the eastern provinces of Buenos Aires and Paraguay, a single river extended from the latter two spaces to create an image of connectedness. In this way, the map represented a relationship between the disparate cities, and linked them to the central bodies of Paraguay and Buenos Aires. The final three maps in the atlas also demonstrated relationships within the viceroyalty. Depicting other provinces that comprised the colony, including Chaco, Chiquitos, and Cuyaba, each was measured by its longitudinal deviance from the viceregal capital, rather than the standard Parisian meridian.

Having looked at how the five-map atlas produced naturalized spatial bodies through emphasis, omission, and orientation, it is worthwhile to return once more to the textual portion of *Voyages dans L’Amerique Méridionale*. Representing the viceroyalty and several of its provinces as stable and natural spatial divisions, Azara used them as containers for organizing the natural world. With regards to the colony as a whole, he showed it to be naturally distinct from its territorial neighbors, both in climate and terrain.⁶⁹ Amidst these shared characteristics, Azara then discussed differences between each provincial unit. Focusing primarily on Paraguay and Buenos Aires, he differentiated plant and animal life, and enumerated twenty-eight indigenous “nations” or “tribes” that he considered to belong to the two regions.⁷⁰ In addition to referring to Buenos Aires and Paraguay in his general analysis, Azara provided a separate chapter for each of them, with statistical information including the demographic

⁶⁹ Ibid., 35-45, 55-68.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 138-86. It should be noted that Azara here uses “Buenos Aires” and “Río de la Plata” to signify the province of Buenos Aires as well as the Banda Oriental, which he conceived of as one unit.

dispersion of multiethnic societies. He also turned his gaze backward by providing historical narratives leading up to the realization of the two viceregal provinces. In each case, the existence of the provincial body was a historical inevitability.⁷¹ Paraguay and Buenos Aires were in this way not simply administrative units, but instead natural containers of history and data.

With such a comprehensive presentation of the viceroyalty and its provinces, it is unsurprising that readers would reiterate Azara's spatial imagination. Although tracking the reception of such a public artifact is nearly impossible, a survey of reviews indicates a wide readership.⁷² British journals were particularly poised to comment and recommend the text, as the South American revolutionary impulse began to provide for them new opportunities in the region. In these journals, two themes in particular emerged. First, Azara's work was a guidebook for future economic endeavor in the region. By better knowing the region, they could target potential goods and medicines in a sort of venture capitalism. Furthermore, the viceroyalty would provide them an alternative route through which to tap into Pacific Ocean trade markets. As one reviewer said, "Buenos Aires is, therefore, the most natural deposit for Chili, Peru, and Potosi, and is destined by nature to be the point from which they are to be supplied."⁷³ Secondly, and more importantly, Azara's spatial imagination provided space to discuss the inhabitants of the viceroyalty as a people. Reviewers evaluated the "national character of such a people" and marveled at how they could want liberty when they remained so geographically distant from its

⁷¹ Ibid., 31, 232-59.

⁷² As David Livingstone has shown, scientific publications tended to be read and interpreted differently according to geographical locale. Charting what he calls "geographies of readership" lends insight into the impact and transformation of knowledge across different discursive networks. David N. Livingstone, *Putting Science in Its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 113-23. With respect to Azara, Helen Cowie notes a different reception in England and in France. For the English, his writing style was not elegant enough, while the French took issue with his critique of Buffon.

⁷³ "Art. V." review of *Voyages dans l'Amerique Meridionale*, par Don Felix de Azara, Commissaire et Commandant des Limites, *British Review*, and *London Critical Journal* 2, no. 3 (1811): 126-130, 149. See also: Muir, "Art. li. Voyages Dans L'amerique Meridionale, &c.; I.e. Travels in South America," 470-71.

ideals. They even invoked the term “Plateans” to identify the people of the viceroyalty, and marked them as citizens of the territorial state.⁷⁴

Few records exist of receptions of Azara’s work in the viceroyalty itself, though some of his writings were recommended in key newspapers of Buenos Aires. It is likely, however, that his writings would have been of great interest to Creole scientists, of whom there were many by the turn of the century. Though much of the work of these scholars remains unpublished, new research has pointed to a proliferation of scientific studies produced in the Americas at the time. Some have even gone so far as to suggest that naturalist works fortified patriotic sentiments by highlighting the economic and scientific potential of individual regions. While such claims may be speculative, it is clear that Creole writers took seriously the demarcations of their colonial states. Over time, they would use those spaces to forge new historiographical narrative traditions and reimagine themselves as distinct from their European peers.⁷⁵ They too would transform the meaning of colonial space, this time through revolution.

⁷⁴ "Art. V.": 133-4, 138, 141-6.

⁷⁵ Helen Cowie, "Peripheral Vision: Science and Creole Patriotism in Eighteenth-Century Spanish America," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 40 (2009): 148, 150-1. Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*, 204-265 2001. Evidence shows, too, that despite a general incredulity toward New World scientific production, some European readers found it to be quite reputable. "Art. V.": 132-33.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Tracing the narrative of Félix de Azara's cartographic expeditions and publication ventures reveals much about the production of the Virreinato del Río de la Plata. To begin, it is clear that the spatial enterprise of the viceroyalty, particularly its need for clear and structured borders, ran counter to patterns of settlement, migration, and exchange in borderland regions. As shown through the litany of treaties signed between Spain and Portugal, as well as the Guaraní War, colonial spaces were things to be produced not discovered. Furthermore, the crown created this territorial state as a powerful technique of governance. Declaring the colony and its borders was not simply a gesture of administrative reshuffling; it was a spatial strategy designed to maximize profits, protect assets, and control the population.

Merely signing the viceroyalty into law, however, was not enough to realize its existence. The original declarative act was a first step, but it would take time for that vision to become a discursive and material reality. It is here that Azara and other cartographers played their first role. Rather than creating maps that reflected the local landscape, they aimed to overlay the borderlands of the viceroyalty onto the physical landscape. In doing so, they used historical arguments and surveyed the region to produce a structured territorial division that coalesced with physical features, all the while looking to exploit resources, connect colonial possessions, and gain competitive advantage.

Mapping was undoubtedly an integral piece in the production of the colonial space, but the lines that cartographers drew did not always engender material change. In some cases, it was necessary

to manage the distribution of populations in order to achieve the viceroyalty's desired effect. Using the map as a precedent and guideline, Azara attempted to replicate this spatial imagination on the ground through the Batoví project and a larger spatial calculus. In the end, the effort was short lived, and the vices that the crown had hoped to overcome spatially persisted.

Maps were also important as part of a broader discursive terrain in the production of the viceroyalty. While they were clearly not transparent reflections of a natural ordering, they provided a lens through which readers could understand and analyze the natural landscape. Azara used treaty maps and others that he had drawn and collected to offer a visual frame for his natural history. Treating the viceroyalty and its provincial units as containers for taxonomic and ethnographic information, he in effect treated them as natural entities. Although a close reading of the maps reveals Azara's biographical narrative, their mathematical measurements and bare-bones form obfuscated the process of their production. This work and others, by conflating the viceroyalty's administrative apparatus with the natural landscape, provided a means to discuss its population as a unified whole. In this process, the concept of the Platean citizen was born.

Tracing the narrative of the production and reproduction of the viceroyalty, one can also see the ways in which it was resisted and transformed over time. Though there were no collective efforts of resisting the spatial program, a broad variety of actors transformed it to suit their needs. Municipal leaders along the frontiers of the Banda Oriental used the state's impetus towards populating the frontier as a means to develop patronage networks and eventually challenge urban administrators from Buenos Aires. Meanwhile, revolutionary leaders used the concept of the viceregal space as a means to conceive of themselves as a people and also challenge the presence of colonial authorities. In neither case did the actors reject the limits of the treaty or the concept of the Virreinato del Río de la Plata; however, in both instances, they transformed it in ways that the crown could never have intended.

The spatial imagination of the viceroyalty and its provinces would persist as a colonial legacy in the decades following independence. It is no coincidence that when Azara's *Voyages* was first published in Spanish, it was dedicated to the president of the Republic of Paraguay as the work that "most accurately describes the rich regions" of his own country. It is also why Azara's map hung on the president's wall and helped him to "[display] a perfect knowledge of the country without ever having travelled it."⁷⁶ It had simultaneously become a symbol of national space and a tool for governance. It is here that the story ends, back in the lands that Azara helped to produce.

⁷⁶ Azara, *Viajes por la América Meridional*, 1-5. "Revolution in Paraguay," *The North American Review* 26, no. 59 (1828).

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