

## FOREIGN CLOTH IN THE LOWLAND FRONTIER: COMMERCE AND CONSUMPTION OF TEXTILES IN BOLIVIA, 1830 - 1930

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*"El chiriguano por ser soberbio no se rebaja a usar los adornos de las tribus limítrofes, que le son inferiores pero se amolda fácilmente a usar los vestidos y adornos de razas que le son superiores. No se rebaja a usar las plumas de ave, a grabarse el rostro y los brazos, a usar zarcillos de palo, como los tobas y otros, pero imita y pretende superar a sus superiores los blancos, vistiéndose como ellos, usando el sombrero fino los hombres, la manta de lana y seda las mujeres, el calzado y la bota los jóvenes, el zarcillo extranjero las doncellas."*

Bernardino de Nino, Etnografía chiriguana (La Paz, 1912), 198.

### Introduction

It is difficult to find information on the consumption of foreign-made textiles among indigenous groups in the historical past. Description of such consumption by travelers and anthropologists, potentially prime sources for such a study, are hard to come by. In the case of the Chiriguano Indians<sup>1</sup> upon whom I will concentrate in this paper, anthropologists in the early twentieth century focused upon what they considered "traditional" material culture, trying to reconstruct images of unadulterated, pre-contact indigenous cultures in which the only material culture admitted was that which did not contain European-made materials. This is certainly true of the pioneer anthropologist Erland Nordenskiöld's classic treatise on this subject, The Changes in the Material Culture of Two Indian Tribes Under the Influence of New Surroundings, published first in 1920. Even Fr. Bernardino de Nino's sensitive 1912 ethnography on the Chiriguanos, the most complete source on this ethnic group for the early twentieth century, in the chapter on clothing and adornments assumes that the "ancient Chiriguano dress was very simple and too immoral", as among the "Chacobos in the north of Santa Cruz and others in the Bolivian Chaco", although the economic basis of the latter ethnic groups was very different<sup>2</sup>. In other words, De Nino, as was common in early twentieth-century discourse influenced by Social Darwinism, assumed that there was a neat evolutionary progression in

history that could be seen in part through clothing patterns. The “nomadic” (thus “primitive”) peoples of the Chaco who relied primarily on hunting and gathering were seen as a type of mirror into the past for other groups, such as the Chiriguanos whose economy was based on swidden agriculture, a “superior” type of organization.

It is possible to write a paper, if not various books, on how the prejudices that early twentieth-century anthropologists brought to their work provided distorted pictures of indigenous societies they were describing. That, however, is not the purpose of this paper, though these distortions must be taken into account. Suffice it to say that recent research on the Chiriguanos is beginning to radically change our understanding of these peoples’ past. Thierry Saignes and Isabelle Combes, for example, have asserted that the Chiriguanos are in profound ways a mestizo people, who evolved out of the mixture of Guaraní migrants from what is now Brazil and Chané peoples in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries<sup>3</sup>. The Chiriguanos, residing in the lush subtropical valleys of southeastern Bolivia, relied primarily on the bountiful corn harvests that the mild climate and superb soils provided. A political culture which emphasized individual and village independence permitted only relatively loose alliances between villages and the development of at best regional chieftainships that successfully attacked Inca-held Andean highlands and later, resisted Spanish and creole conquest<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, the main reason for the successful assertion of independence from Spanish dominance over many centuries (the Chiriguanos were fully conquered only in the late nineteenth century) was this ethnic groups’ ability to continually adapt to new circumstances and change if necessary<sup>5</sup>.

The ability to adapt and to change, to not assume that indigenous peoples either do not change very slowly or that they follow a linear, evolutionary pattern imposed by Western ideas of how natives are supposed to act, is essential in understanding the Chiriguano case. As we shall see, assumptions about the evolution of market participation and consumption of Western goods (in which we assume that people in the present consume more than people in the past), or assumptions about power relations between indigenous peoples and those of European descent, do not hold true in conventional ways for the Chiriguanos. I will try to show this through a study of the consumption of imported cloth among the Chiriguanos for the post-independence period, concentrating on the nineteenth century. While these peoples might be in many ways exceptional (but then, which people are not in some way exceptional?), I suspect that some of the patterns in consumption and relative power found here might apply to other ethnic

groups as well.

### **The Importance of Imported Cloth on the Frontier**

My need to understand the Chiriguano outside of a conventional framework within which Latin Americanists generally put indigenous peoples began a few years ago, when I realized that what scholars assumed to be the usual relationship between Europeans and Indians was rather different in the case of these peoples. I found that frontier ranchers and even the Bolivian government, in reverse of the procedure in the highlands, were paying tribute to the Indians!. Although the landowners, for example, tried to assuage their honor by calling these payments rental fees for utilizing frontier grazing lands, it was in fact a tributary relationship. For one, landowners were paying "grazing fees" for land which they, at least on paper, owned. This included even one of the great warriors and heroes of the independence movement, General Francisco Burdett O'Connor, who in the early republican period became the largest landowner in the department of Tarija. O'Connor, as well as other ranchers in the region, "provide gifts to the Indians every year so as not to receive damages" to their cattle herds and other possessions along the frontier<sup>6</sup>.

In addition to the reversal of ordinary tributary relations between Indians and Europeans, an analysis of merchant records from the city of Tarija showed another unexpected characteristic of the Chiriguano frontier. Records from prominent merchants in the second half of the nineteenth century show that every important trader was heavily involved in trade along the eastern frontier with the Chiriguano. For example, Juan de Dios Trigo's probate records from 1854 reveal that at least one quarter of this merchant's resources, representing approximately 3,000 pesos, were related to trade with the frontier. His son, Bernardo, in the late 1840s and early 1850s accumulated 6,000 pesos capital in the eastern frontier region before venturing to Valparaíso and Buenos Aires. The Trigos, as well as all the other traders from Tarija and elsewhere, sold mostly imported cloth from Britain, France, Belgium, and Germany<sup>7</sup>.

Who were the merchant's consumers along the frontier? We know that few mestizos or whites lived in the vast frontier fringe where cattle by far outnumbered Bolivian citizens. Unfortunately, demographic data on the eastern frontier is sparse for the nineteenth century, although what information there is confirms the impression of a lack of members of national society. Cordillera province, the largest and southern-most province of Santa Cruz department, in the 1830s contained only around 2,000 inhabitants<sup>8</sup>. Salinas province in Tarija had a similar pattern.

Unfortunately we do not have a census of Salinas before 1871, when the economic boom of the eastern frontier had already begun and presumably a significant number of migrants had entered the region. Even then, the province, with 11,053 inhabitants but half the department's surface area, had the smallest population (20%) in Tarija, except when one counts "the savage population which is encountered between the Pilcomayo and Bermejo rivers" which the census taker calculated topped 50,000.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, as far as we know, the settlers along the frontier were a poverty-stricken lot. Cattle ranching, the predominant economic activity of the region, was not yet lucrative as it would be in the following decades when the renascent silver mining industry brought about increasing demand for livestock. If the diaries of Francis Burdett O'Connor, the largest landowner of Salinas province and a man obsessed with the efficient administration of his properties, are any indication, cattle ranching did not bring in great earnings in the 1850s<sup>10</sup>. In turn, the other potentially lucrative market for merchants like the Trigos along the frontier, the military, was in even worse shape. Soldiers in the forts were paid infrequently and often wore rags because they could not afford to purchase new clothing<sup>11</sup>.

Thus, much of the trade was not with the poor and sparse mestizo population along the frontier, but with the Indians on the other side of the frontier. Other evidence also suggests that this was the case. One of the five clauses in the 1843 peace treaty between the Chiriguano and the Bolivian military specified that "all Christians [i.e. whites or mestizos] who want to enter the Cordillera with any type of trade may do so with complete security", suggesting that commerce with the Chiriguano was an important activity for the Bolivians.<sup>12</sup>

Another piece of evidence, though somewhat late for our purposes, are the many photographs taken in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of the Chiriguano.

The use of European textiles among men is universal. Indeed the few pictures of Chiriguano men in their "traditional" costume, such as the one exhibited in the 1890 exposition of Catholic missions in Turin, Italy, look deliberately set up and artificial<sup>13</sup>. The photos of Chiriguano chiefs in particular are noteworthy for their use of European dress, including pants, belts, shirts and, in some cases, portions of Bolivian military uniforms<sup>14</sup>. It is more difficult to determine the origins of womens' clothes, but it is most likely that the wide swaths of cloth even of "traditional" dress that women used also were of foreign manufacture.

Given the use of imported cloth by the Indians, how important was it? Estimating the actual volume of trade along the frontier is unfortunately

impossible because the government had no interest in keeping this information. Until we find the records of the most important merchant houses that traded along the frontier, we will not know the exact numbers. However, we have some data for the turn of the century on the most important fair, held in Saucos every August, that shows the significance of this trade. In 1900, two of the largest merchant firms of Tarija (Mateo Araoz é Hijos and Trigo Hermanos) turned over at least 40,000 Bolivianos (Bs) worth of merchandise from the fair; in 1902 the representative of one merchant firm, Jofré é Hijos, returned with 50,000 Bs from Saucos to purchase letters of exchange with which to buy more cloth.<sup>15</sup> These figures are even more surprising because at this point the Saucos fair was already on the decline: the conquest of the frontier by cattle ranchers, the growing predominance of German and Argentine merchant firms, and Chiriguano migration to Argentina had greatly diminished living standards and eroded the consumer base of the frontier region<sup>16</sup>.

#### **Gaining access to cloth imports**

Although in many cases the evidence is only suggestive, a strong case can be made that the Chiriguano Indians participated in the consumption of imported cloth to a much greater degree than previously realized. Through what mechanisms did this ethnic group gain access to this consumption good? The trip from the factory floor in Liverpool or Brussels to, say, a Chiriguano village in the Huacaya valley was a tortuous one, involving many different intermediaries and different types of exchange. After all, we know that money was scarce, if not completely absent from the frontier. In addition, what resources did the Chiriguanos have that made possible the acquisition of these goods?

Both of these issues, mechanisms of access to imports and Chiriguano resources, are closely related. Indeed, it is possible to periodize how Chiriguanos gained access to these goods based on an understanding of shifting political and military power, access to lands, labor relations, and migration patterns. Three overlapping periods are discernable, characterized by slowly shifting means of acquiring imported cloth. The first period, covering the first four decades from independence to the 1860s, is characterized by tributary relations and Argentine trade. In the second period, from about 1850 to the early twentieth century, Indians acquired imports through fairs. By the 1800s a new mode of acquisition began to take hold, characterized by advances in goods and money from cattle ranchers as part of a debt peonage system, and acquisition of goods through purchase directly in Argentina, in return for wage labor. This last phase lasted for

about a century, though in the past decade these types of relationships have waned somewhat. Let us now examine each of these phases in somewhat greater detail.

### **Tribute and Trade**

We have already briefly alluded to the tributary arrangements between Chiriguano peoples and cattle ranchers in the early republican period. This was, however, only one means in which the Chiriguanos received tribute. Local authorities, from the subprefect to lower officials, also provided Chiriguano village headman, called *tubichas*, with goods and money. Thierry Saignes has published a partial list of the disbursements by the Tarija departmental treasury. While treasury officials listed monetary amounts, it is clear that a significant portion of this money was actually spent on clothing, such as in 1842 "24 pesos 4 reales to pay for the clothing, and other items which have been bought to give to Captain Arauca."<sup>17</sup> According to Saignes, between 1840 and 1865 the Tarija treasury paid an average of 85 pesos per year to the "indian allies", but this was only one level of government for which we have precise figures. I have evidence that this list is at best incomplete and that in fact much higher sums were paid to *tubichas* during this period<sup>18</sup>. I suspect that earlier in the century, especially in the 1830s, cattle ranchers paid more than government officials. Tribute possibly went from a "private" function to a "public" (i.e. governmental) duty as the nineteenth century wore on.

Regional chiefs, or *mburubichas*, traveled to the city of Tarija to negotiate over the terms which would make these chiefs into Bolivian "allies". We have the description of such a voyage in the diary of Francisco Burdett O'Connor, who in 1850 helped Guayupa, the powerful chief of the Ingre valley, get to the city of Tarija with some of his men and helped pressure the new prefect to pay the 100 pesos that the *mburubicha* demanded. When the prefect refused to pay, O'Connor himself borrowed money to pay a portion of the fee<sup>19</sup>. When exactly this money was used to purchase cloth is not clear; I suspect that in many cases the Chiriguano chiefs purchased cloth while in the city of Tarija, undoubtedly a less expensive proposition than buying textiles from frontier merchants.

In other words, the Chiriguanos parlayed their political and military power into access to goods not available within the indigenous economy. Tribute payments, whether in coin or cloth, were just one means. Another important way in which Chiriguanos achieved access to cloth was through the "theft" of cattle. As in the case of the Araucanian Indians of the Argentine pampas, the taking of cattle can be interpreted in many ways.

Along the southeastern Bolivian frontier, as in the pampas, most of the land (despite the paper assigning the land to creole ranchers) in fact was controlled by the Indians. What ranchers might have interpreted as thefts, in the Indians' eyes was only the rightful taking of animals on their own land. In the nineteenth-century pampas, the Araucanians built their own commercial empire by selling the livestock across the border, to Chilean customers<sup>20</sup>. The Chiriguano and Chanés did likewise, selling cattle on their lands to entrepreneurs in thriving Orán, on the Argentine side of the eastern frontier<sup>21</sup>. While this commerce was probably on a lesser scale than the massive trade on the pampas, it was nevertheless significant. Many of the wars between Chiriguano and creole forces can be seen as struggle over these livestock sources. As I have explained elsewhere, the Chiriguano's strategy in conflicts with the settlers up until the 1860s was not to kill cowhands or soldiers, but to kill or take as many cattle so that the creoles had little reason to remain in Indian lands. In fact, government authorities ascertained that conflict was imminent when the warriors began killing or "stealing" cattle<sup>22</sup>. Was this one way in which the Chiriguano showed their superiority over the creoles by asserting control over frontier resources?

Unfortunately, the exact mechanisms for gaining access to textiles are not very clear. We do know that the Indians bartered cattle for other goods, though the product for which they bartered is not specified. Given the fact that the Salta merchants, who also controlled trade to Orán, were mainly cloth merchants and, up to the 1860s, the wholesalers for Tarija merchants, it is highly likely that the major good for which the Chiriguano bartered was cloth. In addition, a major trade route between northern Argentina, Tarija and Santa Cruz skirted along the Andean foothills, right through Chiriguano territory. Surely merchants sold (or gave as payment for transport services or simply for permitting transit) textiles to the Indians on their way to Santa Cruz. They might have exchanged cloth for cattle along the way as well.

As far as we know, the Chiriguano did not sell corn, their staple crop which grew abundantly in their territory. Apparently, the Indians distinguished between their subsistence crop (corn) and goods that could be commercialized (cattle). In fact, the selling of cattle complemented very nicely the Chiriguano's subsistence strategy. As one scholar has put it, the struggle between creoles and Chiriguano can be characterized as a struggle between cattle and corn. Cowhands deliberately herded cattle onto the corn fields as a way of getting rid of the indigenous settlements<sup>23</sup>. What better way of counteracting the ranchers' strategy than using the fissures in creole society between merchants and ranchers by selling the noxious cattle to the

former? In this way the Chiriguanos were able to gain resources from the ranchers and use them to purchase goods produced outside the indigenous economy such as imported textiles.

### **Frontier fairs**

It is likely that the region's fairs began to develop in the second half of the nineteenth century. The combination of greater penetration by cattle ranchers (by this time balance of power was shifting in favor of creole society), a significant independent Chiriguano population, and a commercial revitalization of southern Bolivia and northern Argentina, provided a vibrant market along the frontier. Fairs developed in Iguembe, Muyupampa, and Saucos to take care of increased supply and demand. The fair in Saucos (present-day Monteagudo) was by far the most important fair, located between the large independent Chiriguano communities of the Caipipendi valley to the north, and the cattle estates and the populous Franciscan missions to the south. Saucos also was the most important node of commerce between the frontier regions and the highlands. The fair, held in the month of August, attracted the most important cloth merchants from Tarija, coca and cloth traders from Cochabamba, mule and donkey breeders from Argentina, and merchants from Santa Cruz who hawked sugar, coffee, and rum<sup>24</sup>. As we have seen, even in the early twentieth century the volume of trade in Monteagudo was quite high. It is significant that all three fairs were located next to regions with the highest number of independent Chiriguano communities. While we have no description of the fairs' consumers, Chiriguanos undoubtedly helped maintain the vitality of the fairs through their barter or purchase of cloth and coca, a favorite item of consumption among members of this ethnic group.

The importance of fairs along the frontier represent a transitional stage in the development of markets in the region. One development, the predominance of Franciscan missions, restricted the development of fairs, though in the long term it probably stimulated consumption. The Franciscans encouraged the Indians' dressing in European clothes. The friars gave school children European clothes to wear, as a means to attract the children to school, and as a visible means of "civilizing" them<sup>25</sup>.

Many missionaries equated the wearing of European-style clothes as a step from the Indians' innate "barbarism", to show that the Indians had indeed become citizens of the nation. The missionaries' conceptions are somewhat ironic, for, as Thierry Saignes has asserted for the eighteenth century, the Indians saw the friars' distribution of clothes as one clear sign



of their own superiority. In the Chiriguanos' eyes, the Franciscans' frequent presents were payments to keep the Indians there, perhaps not unlike the tribute payments by ranchers and government officials<sup>26</sup>. It is not certain that this relationship was quite as clear in the nineteenth as in the eighteenth century. However, Fr. Bernardino de Nino, one of the most sensitive Franciscan observers of the early twentieth century, noted that the Indians demanded clothes for their children if the friars wanted them to go to the mission schools<sup>27</sup>. In any case, the distribution of textiles in the long term undoubtedly made the Indians more dependent on purchased textiles and expanded the market for these goods.

### **Debt Peonage and Migration**

By the late nineteenth century however, two developments, the expansion of cattle ranchers, and Chiriguano migration to Argentina, began to counteract the pattern of high consumption of textiles among Indians in the region. Both ranchers and migration to Argentina had existed before the late nineteenth century. Beginning in the middle of the 1860s an invigorated highland mining economy and improved weaponry made possible the expansion of cattle ranching throughout the region. The establishments of forts at Ingre and Iguembe in 1866, the foundation of a mission at Macharetí in 1869, the Huacaya war of 1874-78, and the establishment of forts at Cuevo meant the incorporation of Chiriguano lands into the ranches and the whole-scale absorption of Indian villages into the hacienda system<sup>28</sup>. Ranchers forced the Indians into debt peonage to control the labor force and prevent escapes. As a result, living standards among the captive Chiriguano population plunged. Each year, landowners gave their workers a set of clothes, often of very poor quality, the value of which they were then required to work off. In addition, administrators discounted food and coca rations. Although I have not been able to gain access to actual hacienda account books in the region, it is likely that prices of clothes and food were highly inflated, for it is clear from other records that hacienda peons were never able to work their way out of debt<sup>29</sup>.

The only solution for the Indians to improve their condition was to escape the oppressive hacienda regime, and escape they did in increasing numbers in the late nineteenth century. The sugar plantations of northern Argentina, located in eastern Andean valleys of Jujuy and Salta, were the Chiriguanos' most common destination. We do not have statistics on the transnational migration, since the Chaco frontier was poorly guarded on both sides and nobody bothered to keep this type of information on indigenous peoples. Not only did hacienda peons escape, however; Indians

from the Franciscan missions (which held about 40% of the total Chiriguano population by 1900) also left to work in the sugar cane fields of northern Argentina<sup>30</sup>. On the missions and in the surviving independent communities, much of this migration (at least initially) was seasonal. After the sugar cane harvest, most men (and the few women migrants) returned to their villages.

The Chiriguanos did not only leave because of oppression at home; they also had positive reasons to go. The Indians knew Argentina as *mbaporenda*, "the place where there is work"<sup>31</sup>. Not only did they find work, but also access to the goods that they desired, including clothes. In fact, descriptions of Chiriguanos returning from Argentina almost uniformly mentioned not only the bad habits they presumably picked up in the plantation labor camps, but also the new clothes and the mule or donkey they had acquired<sup>32</sup>. Migration thus depressed trade in cloth in two ways. First, the Chiriguanos received clothes in return for their labor in Argentina or purchased them there rather than in Bolivia. Secondly, many Indians (especially those who escaped the haciendas) left Bolivia permanently, diminishing significantly the number of consumers in the region. From 1875, when one estimate pegged the Chiriguano population at 46,000, the number of Indians diminished largely because of emigration to probably less than 20,000 by the 1920s<sup>33</sup>.

This pattern of hacienda control and emigration has persisted until very recently. Only in the 1980s have conditions loosened somewhat on the haciendas for the Chiriguanos; beginning in 1989 poor economic conditions in Argentina have finally led to a decrease in migration to the sugar plantations of Jujuy<sup>34</sup>. Thus, the domination of the hacienda in the region continued for about a century, while in turn migration patterns and the drain of the frontier population of Indians (at least in part as a reaction to the oppression of the haciendas) persisted for about the same period.

### **Effects on Chiriguano society**

We have thus far discussed the scope of the textile trade along the frontier and the changing means by which Chiriguanos achieved access to imported textiles. While the study of consumption patterns is a valuable goal in itself (since very little work has been done on this, particularly on historical indigenous societies), the most important issue must be what effect consumption patterns had on indigenous societies themselves. How did the demand for textiles not made within indigenous society shape social and political roles? How, if at all, did the Chiriguano economy change as a result of this demand?

The changing means of access to imported cloth give us important clues as to the role of imported textiles in Chiriguano society. While, as I have suggested, the consumption of cloth is an important factor to keep in mind when discussing changes in Chiriguano society, it is by no means the only causal factor. Changing patterns in textiles consumption also serve as indications of larger transformations of indigenous society. Alterations in consumption patterns formed part of a complex web of interactions which transformed indigenous society in conjunction with changing political, economic, and social conditions in Chiriguano territory, as well as within Bolivia, and, to a certain extent, Argentina.

As discussed above, during the first four decades after Bolivian independence, the political power that the Chiriguanos wielded along the frontier to a large degree provided them with access to imported textiles. Tributary relations, both with the various levels of the Bolivian government and with the landlords, favored the capitán (or tubichas), the leaders of Chiriguano society. While Chiriguano political culture emphasized individual freedom of action, once the chiefs had been selected by the community and convinced the village of a certain course of action, the village's adult males (tellingly called soldados by the creoles) were expected to follow their capitán to the letter. The tubichas in turn kept position through the redistribution of goods that they obtained. In this way, they presumably kept the village content with their rule and created obligations among its inhabitants to follow their suggestions. Lengthy community meetings, where the adult males talked and talked until they came to a consensus, highlighted this process. As Pierre Clastres has shown for most "face-to-face" societies such as the Chiriguano, requirements for chiefdomship (other than heredity) included good oratorical skills<sup>35</sup>.

Bolivian ranchers paid their tribute to the tubichas; high government officials paid the regional chiefs, the mburubichas, for their "services". This provided another resource for the chiefs with which they consolidated their power in their communities. Unwittingly, the creoles thus strengthened the hand of the militarily powerful chiefs, often to their own detriment. For the policy of paying tribute was in many an abject failure. As Francisco Pifarré asserts, the period between 1840 and 1875 was a period of almost constant warfare in which Chiriguano groups frequently changed sides and used the creole troops for gaining advantage in the Machiavellian world of Chiriguano power politics. Moreover, the various departmental governments (and probably the ranchers as well) supported different village alliances, confusing the political situation along the frontier and providing goods for a large number of different chiefs<sup>36</sup>. Since the chiefs served as nexus for the

distribution of textiles, the main form of tribute payment, they were able to accumulate greater power than they had in the eighteenth century. The payment of textiles promoted a more hierarchical indigenous society at odds with the emphasis on individual liberty in Chiriguano society.

Most textiles and other goods payed as tribute (the only kind about which we have sufficiently detailed information) could be distributed among the "soldiers" and also among the women. Thus, in 1839 a tubicha received one and a half varas of cloth and a dozen knives, "or in 1843 the Tarija prefect provided his Indian "allies" with "ponchos made of Castilian cloth, blankets, knives, tobacco, and some trinkets for their women"<sup>37</sup>. These goods, in all likelihood, were meant for redistribution by the chiefs among the mass of the Chiriguano population. The redistribution consolidated the tubichas' hold on power because of their ability to deliver highly valued goods not produced within Chiriguano society.

Of course, the distribution of textiles was by no means egalitarian in Chiriguano society. The chiefs received clothes made espacially for them, such as in 1842 the 24 pesos 4 reales spent on "clothing for capitán Aracua"<sup>38</sup>. The creoles, just as had the Spaniards before them, were very conscious of status differentiation. Chiefs were to wear better clothes, even militia uniforms in some cases, to distinguish themselves from the mass of the Indians. The differential dress codes probably played into the chiefs' hands, since here was a visual sign of their superiority. Dressing better was only part of this status differentiation; chiefs also often had more than one wife as well as other marks of high status.<sup>39</sup>

The adoption of ready-made textiles changed the role of Chiriguano women, one of whose main occupations had been weaving the cloth for the tiru and the cutuma, respectively the main male and female clothing pieces. The introduction of voracious cattle into Chiriguano territory destroyed cotton production, forcing the Indians to rely on imported textiles. The expansion of the cattle ranches coincides nicely with the flourishing of the frontier fairs, suggesting a causal relationship between the decline of Chiriguano territorial integrity (and thus cotton production) and the need for imported cloth. The woman's long cotton or wool dress made of European textiles even changed its name (though apparently not its shape), to tipoy<sup>40</sup>. The decline of weaving probably diminished the status of Chiriguano women, though we have no information on this point.

The decline of Chiriguano power on the frontier was extremely rapid after the Huacaya War (1874-78). Much of this can be explained by causes external to Chiriguano society, such as the introduction of the repeating rifle, the increasing resources of the state due to income from the silver

mining boom, and the like. However, it is likely that differential access to textiles also played a role, for it is in this period that the tubichas lost some of their control over the distribution of textiles in their villages. Not only did ranchers and the government refuse to continue to pay tribute, but the mass of Chiriguanos began to gain access to cloth by migrating to work on the Argentine sugar plantations. In many cases, the sugar plantations paid their workers directly in cloth, such as in 1855 in the Zenta valley, where plantation owners paid the Indians a piece of tobacco each week, a daily food ration, and eight varas of rough cloth per month.<sup>41</sup>

The items acquired in Argentina by returning migrants diffused throughout their villages very quickly. Good Chiriguano manners included the sharing of scarce goods among relatives and friends; individual accumulation, so common in Western culture, was frowned upon in polite society<sup>42</sup>. The textiles and other goods thus began to be distributed through horizontal networks, competing with the vertical networks the tubichas had fostered for much of the nineteenth century. This "democratization" of access to textiles in Chiriguano society probably also helps explain the rapid demise of the independent villages once migration to Argentina became prevalent. The combination of external pressures through the aggressive expansion of the ranches with the decreasing authority of the tubichas made Chiriguano society much more vulnerable. Although this point should not be overdone - external causes were in all probability more important than the more egalitarian distribution of textiles - the lack of armed resistance after 1878 by Chiriguanos is notable. Significantly, the last major attempt to throw out the creoles occurred under the aegis of a messianic leader in 1892 who had no claim to tubicha heritage. Indeed, when a year later some of the major Chiriguano chiefs attempted to revive the rebellion, they were unsuccessful<sup>43</sup>.

The way in which the Chiriguanos had gained access to textiles also affected relations between landowners and their peons. Debt peonage was the rule on haciendas along the frontier, but the Indians helped make possible the accumulation of debt by insisting on advances when they went to work for an hacendado. Apparently, many insisted on an advance and then left the ranch; in 1927 two important ranchers petitioned the government for "guarantees for the landowners in the contracts with the peons they employ; because the flight of peons to Argentina and other distant places is frequent, defrauding (the landowners with) the advances received (clothes and money). It must be said that it is impossible to get any peon without an advance"<sup>44</sup>. In addition to being a tactic for cheating the landowners out of his goods, the provision of textiles at the beginning of the contract also

fulfilled a need to create a redistributive relationship between landlord and peon, as had earlier occurred between tubicha and soldier. I have argued elsewhere that Landlords in many ways took over the functions of the tubicha (though clearly for their own ends)<sup>45</sup>. However, hacendados could never muster the same kind of legitimacy -nor was it necessarily in their interest to do so- making it easier for Chiriguano to renege on these exploitative labor contracts. Ranchers also used other means to hold their Chiriguano workers. To bolster their hold over their peons, landlords provided their workers with alcohol and coca. Moreover, a severe competition developed between landlords to attract Chiriguano women to their estates, for they calculated that the emotional bonds created between their workers and the women made the men less likely to leave<sup>46</sup>.

These supplementary means to keep workers on the estates shows the ineffectiveness of simply distributing textiles. As observers noted, the quality of these clothes was often inferior, certainly of poorer quality than what the Chiriguano could get in the sugar plantations of Argentina<sup>47</sup>. Beyond the issue of quality, it is clear that the Indians' standard of living decreased significantly under the hacienda regime. The yearly distribution of clothes among the men (which were then discounted heavily from wages) was much less than what the Indians had been able to afford previously. Thus, consumption dropped along the former frontier, also spelling the eventual doom of the fairs by the late 1920<sup>48</sup>.

### Conclusion

We can see how the consumption of imported textiles was an important part of the history of the Chiriguano frontier. Consumption patterns, the ways in which the Indians gained access to these goods, and the transformations in Chiriguano (and frontier) society intermesh very nicely. These patterns help us understand another dimension of Latin American frontier that is rarely discussed. It also shows that the evolutionary models common for understanding indigenous peoples, a holdover from racialist assumptions of the early twentieth century, are sometimes simply wrong and should be reexamined. The consumption of imported textiles remained relatively high while the Chiriguano remained independent of creole society. In the first forty-odd years after independence the Indians parlayed their military and political strength (relative to the weak Bolivian state and ranchers) into access to imported cloth, often by selling to frontier merchants the cattle the ranchers paid the Indians not to take from the Chiriguano's own territory. Almost continuous warfare and the payment of tribute mainly in cloth by both government officials and ranchers to Chiriguano chiefs

kept vertical ties within the communities strong.

Only with the growing strength of the cattle economy and the conquest of the Indian villages beginning in the late 1860s did this pattern rapidly change. As Chiriguano migrated in increasing numbers to the sugar plantations in northern Argentina, they gained independent access to quality textiles in return for their labor. This eventually weakened the position of the tubichas (who also were receiving little or no tribute from creoles), leading to a rapid breakdown of village society and the ability of the Chiriguano to resist encroachment. While the landowners also distributed cloth among their workers, the debt peonage arrangements in general depressed Indian living standards and also diminished the demand for imported textiles. This, as well as seasonal and permanent migration of the Indians to Argentina, led to the decline of the frontier fairs by the 1920s. Thus, through looking at patterns of textile consumption we can question the notion of frontier "development" and the relative advantages -even in terms of classical economic concepts of supply and demand- of frontier conquest in Latin America.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>ESUS

<sup>2</sup> Erland Nordenskiöld, The Changes in the Material Culture of Two Indian Tribes Under the Influence of New Surroundings (New York, 1979 - repr. 1920); Bernardino de Nino Etnografía chiriguana (La Paz, 1912), 189.

<sup>3</sup> Combès and Saignes; Thierry Saignes, Ava y karai. Ensayos sobre la frontera chiriguana (siglos XVI-XX) (La Paz, 1990), 21-53.

<sup>4</sup> There are a number of general histories of the Chiriguanos. The best summary is Francisco Pifarré, Los Guaraní-Chiriguano: Historia de un pueblo, V. 2, (La Paz, 1989). Also see Saignes, Ava y karai; Branislava Susnik, Chiriguanos, (Asunción, 1968); and Lorenzo G. Calzavarini, Nación Chiriguana: Grandeza y ocaso (La Paz, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> Saignes, Ava y karai, págs. 21-82.

<sup>6</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of tributary relations, see Erick D. Langer, "Las guerras chiriguanas: Resistencia y adaptación en la frontera subboliviana (siglo XIX)", Paper presented at the Primer Congreso Internacional de Etnohistoria, Buenos Aires, 1989. The quote is from Tomás Ruiz to Governor of Tarija, (Tarija, Nov. 24, 1836: 3-4, Correspondencia Oficial, Ministerio de Guerra (hereinafter MG), Vol. 90, N° 55, Archivo Nacional de Bolivia (hereinafter ANB).

<sup>7</sup> Erick D. Langer and Gina Hames, "Commerce and Credit on the Periphery: Tarija Merchants, 1830-1914" Hispanic American Historical Review, forthcoming.

<sup>8</sup> In 1834, the government counted 1,817 inhabitants. In 1839, the province only contained 2,127 individuals. This was out of a total of 54,457 and 62,727 inhabitants respectively in Santa Cruz department. See "República Boliviana, Departamento de Santa Cruz, Censo general de almas que tiene el expresado, correspondiente al próximo pasado año de 1834", Correspondencia Oficial, Ministerio del Interior (hereinafter MI), vol. 55, N° 33; and "República Boliviana, Departamento de Santa Cruz, Censo general que manifiesta el número de almas que tiene el expresado correspondiente al año próximo pasado de 1839", MI, Vol. 82, N° 28, ANB.

<sup>9</sup> "Tarija: Cuadro sinóptico general del censo Urbano y Rural del Departamento", MI, vol. 195, N° 93.

<sup>10</sup> O'Connor for example appeared to lose more cattle to disease and theft than he was able to sell. See for example, "Diario de Francisco Burdett O'Connor", Nov. 26, 1854, Private Archive of Eduardo Trigo O'Connor D'Arlach (hereinafter AETOD).

<sup>11</sup> See for example E. Borda to minister of interior, (Tarija, Feb. 14, 1884) MI, vol. 221, N° 55, ANB.

<sup>12</sup> J. Vicente Soza to minister of war, (San Luis, Dec. 1, 1843), MG, vol. 169, N° 73, ANB.

<sup>13</sup> See the copy available in the Archivo Franciscano de Tarija. Many photos of Chiriguanos are available in De Nino, Etnografía; by the same author, Misiones franciscanas del Colegio de Propaganda Fide de Potosí (La Paz, 1918); Arthur Chervin, Anthropologie Bolivienne, vol. 1 (Paris, 1908); and Erland Nordenskiöld, Indianerleben: El Gran Chaco (Südamerika) (Leipzig, 1913).

<sup>14</sup> See for example De Nino, Etnografía, frontispiece, 157; Pifarré, 299.

<sup>15</sup> Juan de Dios Trigo to Eduardo Kraudt, (Tarija, Oct. 8, 1900); José Araoz to Aramayo, Francke y Cia., (Tarija, Oct. 22, 1900), "1900-1901 Tarija: Agosto 1900 to Noviembre 1901"; Jofré é Hijos to Aramayo, Francke, (Tarija, August 4, 1902), "1902-1903 Tarija: From Octubre 15/901 to Febrero 2/902", Archivo COMIBOL, Tupiza.

<sup>16</sup> Langer and Hames.

<sup>17</sup> Saignes, Ava y karai, 178-180.

<sup>18</sup> See for example Erick D. Langer and Zulema Bass Werner de Ruiz, eds., Historia de Tarija: Corpus documental (Tarija, 1988), 208.

<sup>19</sup> "Diario, Junio 1849-Setiembre 1850", (June 12-13, 1850), 57-59, AETOD.

<sup>20</sup> Kristin L. Jones, "Conflict and Adaptation in the Argentine Pampas, 1750-1800", (Ph. D. diss., University of Chicago, 1984); Raúl Mandrini, "La sociedad indígena de las pampas en el siglo XIX", in Antropología, comp. Mirta Lischetti (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1987), 311-36; Rafael A. Goñi, "Arqueología de sitios tardíos en el Valle del Río Malleo, Provincia del Neuquén", Relaciones de la



Sociedad Argentina de Antropología (1986-7), 37-66; Miguel A. Palermo, "La innovación agropecuaria entre los indígenas pampeanos-patagónicos: génesis y procesos", Anuario IEHS, 3 (1988), 43-90.

<sup>21</sup> See for example José Manl. Sanchez to Francisco B. O'Connor, (Caraparí, Feb. 14, 1833) MG, vol. 12, N° 32, ANB.

<sup>22</sup> Langer, "Las `guerras`".

<sup>23</sup> Susnik, Chiriguano, 60; also see *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Manuel S. Mendieta, Tierra rica, pueblo pobre: Por nuestras fronteras (Sucre, 1928), 61.

<sup>25</sup> Erick D. Langer, "Missions and the Frontier Economy: The Case of the Franciscan Missions Among the Chiriguano (1845-1930)", in The New Latin American Missions History, Langer and Robert H. Jacksons, eds. (Lincoln, forthcoming).

<sup>26</sup> Saignes, Ava y karai, 119-122.

<sup>27</sup> De Nino, Etnografía, 117.

<sup>28</sup> Erick D. Langer, Economic Change and Rural Resistance in Southern Bolivia 1880-1930 (Stanford, 1989), 123-142; Pifarré, 269-391.

<sup>29</sup> Langer, Economic Change, 148-150; Nordenskiöld, Indianerleben, 300.

<sup>30</sup> Erick D. Langer, "Franciscan Missions and Chiriguano Workers: Colonization, Acculturation, and Indian Labor in Southeastern Bolivia", The Americas, 42:1 (1987).

<sup>31</sup> Silvia Hirsch, "Mbaporenda: El lugar donde hay trabajo. Migraciones chiriguano al noroeste argentino", Paper presented at the Primer Congreso Internacional de Etnohistoria, Buenos Aires, 1989.

<sup>32</sup> See for example De Nino, Etnografía, 79n; Nordenskiöld, Indianerleben, 6.

<sup>33</sup> Angélico Martarelli, El Colegio Franciscano de Potosí y sus misiones: Noticias históricas 2. ed. (La Paz 1918), 326; the 1920s estimate is my own. Also see Chervin, Anthropologie, 82.

<sup>34</sup> For conditions prior to the 1980s, see Kevin Healy, Caciques y patronos: Una experiencia de desarrollo rural en el sur de Bolivia (Cochabamba, 1982); and Acción Cultural Loyola and Corporación de Desarrollo de Chuquisaca, Estudios socio-económico de la Provincia Hernando Siles, 2. ed. (Sucre, 1979).

<sup>35</sup> Pierre Clastres, Society Against the State (Oxford, 1977).

<sup>36</sup> Pifarré, 285; Langer, "Las `guerras`".

<sup>37</sup> Saignes, Ava y karai, 178; Langer and Ruiz, 208.

<sup>38</sup> Saignes, Ava y karai, 179-180.

<sup>39</sup> De Nino, Etnografía, 204. Maintaining various wives was a necessity for the chief, because he needed the women to produce corn beer, called canqui, for the many festivals he sponsored.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>41</sup> B. Vallañe, Orán y Bolivia a la margen del Bermejo, (Salta, 1857), 37.

<sup>42</sup> De Nino, Etnografía, 125.

<sup>43</sup> Hernando Sanabria Fernández, Apiacuaiqui-Tumpa (La Paz, 1972); Saignes, Ava y karai, 187-198, 210-211.

<sup>44</sup> Ramón E. Cortés and José Manuel Padilla, "Estadística de la Provincia del Azero año 1927", in Eulogio Ostria Reyes, Informe Prefectura Departamento de Chuquisaca, (Sucre, 1927), 103, ANB.

<sup>45</sup> Langer, Economic Change, 154.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 149-150.

<sup>47</sup> Nordenskiöld, Indianerleben, 300.

<sup>48</sup> Mendieta, Tierra rica, 61.