

# DISRUPTING THE COLONIAL SUBJECTIVITY IMPOSED BY BORDERS: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE GUARANI PEOPLE IN BRAZIL

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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to show how the imposed demarcation of borders by the Brazilian State has contributed to the establishment of other frontiers - not only physical but also epistemic and symbolic ones - against indigenous peoples. This practice has artificially constructed colonial subjectivities, whose representation has been dragged on since the colonial period, having been reinforced amidst the corporate-military dictatorship (1964-1985), and today is materialised in the anti-indigenous government of Jair Bolsonaro. Above all, this research shows how the Guarani cosmology - i.e., world narrative - has been reformulated due to the multiple forms of violence committed against their people. This has resulted in alternative territorialisation strategies that disrupt these colonial subjectivities in the form of migratory movements and the repossession of ancestral territories, their *Tekohas*.

**KEYWORDS** Borders, Colonial, Subjectivity, Guarani, Brazil

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Gabriela Sarmet is a Brazilian researcher investigating land-related conflicts and their colonial legacies. She holds a BA in International Relations from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and an MSc in Violence, Conflict, and Development from SOAS, University of London. For the last eight years, she has been advocating decoloniality as an alternative political horizon to overcome the colonial matrix of power, particularly in her home country and region, Brazil and Latin America. To challenge years of studies where she was introduced only to white references and references from the Global North, she dedicates herself to learning from and disseminating indigenous references in her writings. Believing that another world is possible, she understands that other world narratives can inspire us to this alternative collective construction.

## INTRODUCTION

The historical exclusion and repression of indigenous peoples in Brazil can be explained by how these groups were forcibly confined to limited spaces. Territorialisation through territorial demarcation reproduces the Western modern/colonial model of nation-State by the physical application of the law, often through the use of violence. Furthermore, it also materialises epistemological and subjective restrictions that further separate indigenous communities, *Quilombolas*, and other traditional peoples, from other Brazilian nationals.

Through the lens of decolonial and critical border thinking, this paper analyses geographical and epistemic aspects of the demarcation of Brazilian borders<sup>1</sup>, understanding them as political projects of power. Borders have been affecting the survival and subjectivities of indigenous peoples since the colonial period. The cosmology of the Guarani people of the Brazil-Paraguay border region is illustrated here as an effort to retell the history of Brazil's border demarcation, now from their perspective. It is important to mention that among the more than 300 indigenous peoples that exist in Brazil today, with approximately 900,000 people, the Guarani are the most numerous ethnic group in the country - numbering around 85,000<sup>2</sup>. It is important to note that the Guarani people are very plural, and in Brazil they are in three large groups: Kaiowá, Nandeva, and M'byá.

When done without prior consultation with the affected communities, the imposition of border designs, whether physical, cultural, or legislative, ends up substantially limiting the possibility of the physical and cosmological survival of these peoples. Nevertheless, I understand that the Guarani people's migratory movement, in general, has been appropriated as a decisive element of their resistance. By subverting the demarcated borders, either through migration or land repossession, they manage to disturb the colonial subjectivities imposed on them when relating to the land through their own cosmology.

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<sup>1</sup> Walter D. Mignolo and Madina V. Tlostanova, "Theorising from the Borders: Shifting to Geo- and Body-Politics of Knowledge", *European Journal of Social Theory* 9, no. 2 (May 2006): 208, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431006063333>.

<sup>2</sup> International, Survival. "Povos indígenas do Brasil". Accessed 20 June 2021. <https://www.survivalbrasil.org/povos/indios-brasileiros>.

The determination of colonial subjectivities begins with the "imperial classification of inferiority attributed to all bodies that do not meet the criteria of knowledge established by white, European, Christian and secular men"<sup>3</sup>. By recognising this dichotomous logic of exclusion in the conception and demarcation of borders, it is also possible to identify the coloniality of power<sup>4</sup> present in this formulation. It acts as an element of division, control, and domination by replicating a colonial logic that justifies the exploitation and confinement of wretched bodies<sup>5</sup>.

The Guarani in Brazil are no exception. This notion of colonial subjectivity over their bodies and minds since the colonial period was reinforced during the corporate-military regime (1964-1985) and remains rooted to this day in the collective imagination of a considerable portion of the Brazilian population. By understanding migratory movements and land repossession actions as strategies for the territorialisation of the Guarani, this paper argues that these are expressions of community autonomy and resistance that disrupt the notion of colonial subjectivities in which they have been trapped.

## BORDERS AS ARTIFICIAL COLONIAL, AND IMPERIAL CONSTRUCTS

The colonial matrix of power, or coloniality of power, reflected in the demarcation of borders in today's modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system<sup>6</sup> has its origin in the inter-imperial competition between European Empires. The 'First Occupant' principle was utterly neglected in this race for power when it came to indigenous peoples' prior presence in colonised lands.

When the Portuguese first invaded the region today known as Brazil, sources indicate that the territory already had over 4 million people<sup>7</sup>. In this sense, the story of 'discovery' that dominates all Brazilian textbooks is nothing more than an intentionally framed discourse. In

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<sup>3</sup> Mignolo and Tlostanova, 210.

<sup>4</sup> Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America", *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, no. 3 (1 November 2000): 533–80.

<sup>5</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of The Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963).

<sup>6</sup> Ramón Grosfoguel, "Colonial Difference, Geopolitics of Knowledge, and Global Coloniality in the Modern/Colonial Capitalist World-System", *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 25, no. 3 (2002): 203–24.

<sup>7</sup> Leslie Bethell, *História da América Latina* (São Paulo, SP, Brasil; Brasília, Brazil: EDUSP : Imprensa Oficial ; Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão, 1997), 131.

an epistemological movement, the colonality of power produces truths with unquestionable validity, attacking the foundations of other epistemologies and sustaining itself in the demarcation of geographical and cognitive boundaries<sup>8</sup>.

The demarcation of the territorial limits of *Abya Yala*<sup>9</sup> - the name by which the American continent was known by the natives before colonisation - began as an imperial power dispute between the Portuguese and Spanish crowns, resulting in the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) signed under the Catholic Church's tutelage. From this period onwards, theories emerged questioning indigenous peoples' humanity, doubting whether they had souls, as in the Christian-European colonial conception.

Later, in the Papal Bull *Sublimis Deus* of 1537, Pope Paul III recognised these peoples' humanity, condemning their slavery and advocating their conversion to Christianity. However, this was done by determining that they had 'nullius' souls, meaning that "their souls were as empty as the newly discovered lands (...) [and] they are not only capable of understanding the Catholic faith but they very much desire to receive it"<sup>10</sup>. It was a process of emptying indigenous peoples' existence of all meaning and reducing them to colonial subjectivities.

Supported by the rhetoric of salvation, the 'unquestionably desired' European modernity has been exalted and replicated over the years in Brazil by colonial practices of power, such as land dispossession and border demarcation. Such discourse perpetuates the control of subjectivities by determining who can (or cannot) be accepted within these spatial limits.

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<sup>8</sup> Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, "Fabrica Mundi : Producing the World by Drawing Borders", in *Scapegoat: Architecture, Landscape, Political Economy: 04 Currency*, 2013, 11, <https://researchdirect.westernsydney.edu.au/islandora/object/uws%3A29808/>.

<sup>9</sup> Emilio del Valle Escalante, "Self-Determination: A Perspective from Abya Yala", *E-International Relations* (blog), 20 May 2014, <https://www.e-ir.info/2014/05/20/self-determination-a-perspective-from-abya-yala/>.

<sup>10</sup> Papal Bull *Sublimis Deus*, 1537

The dispossession of Guarani lands by the colonial power, an example of how the coloniality of power operates, is analysed by the geographer Teresa Itsumi Masuzaki<sup>11</sup>. She states that the invasions resulted in the creation of new territorial logic that limited their space for survival, trapping them in restricted ecological and spatial conditions to reproduce their ancestral subsistence. The forcible reduction of Guarani territories was determined to facilitate the expansion of Jesuit civilising missions over what was considered '*terras nullius*', covering the borders of Argentina, Paraguay, and southern Brazil.

The so-called rationality behind this colonial discourse held to 'civilise' these peoples allowed for their confinement to demarcated areas. According to Guarani Kaiowá sociologist Celuniel Aquino Valiente<sup>12</sup>, this was done to facilitate their supervision and control. In this sense, from an early age, border demarcation's violence is a hallmark of the interaction between the Guarani and the Hispanic-Portuguese colonisers.

One example is the Guaranitic War (1750 to 1756), the name given to the violent conflicts that arose after the signing of the Treaty of Madrid (1750) between the colonial powers. This agreement, which was signed only between Portugal and Spain, forced the Guarani to migrate from the north-western portion of the Rio Grande do Sul's state towards the far south, closer to what is now Uruguay.

Tonico Benites' work illustrates another example of this offensive. Benites is a Guarani Kaiowa with a PhD in anthropology (UFRJ), who documented the first massive occupation policy of the Guarani-Kaiowá territories that began immediately after the end of the War of the Triple Alliance (1864-1870). At that moment, the Brazilian State opened that region to foreign capital through a vast land concession to Cia. Matte Larangeira for settlers to start growing yerba mate and implementing other colonisation strategies for territorial control of the Brazil-Paraguay borderland strip<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Teresa Itsumi Masuzaki, "A luta Dos Povos Guarani No Extremo Oeste Do Paraná", *PEGADA - A Revista da Geografia do Trabalho* 16 (15 May 2015), <https://doi.org/10.33026/peg.v16i0.3525>.

<sup>12</sup> Celuniel Aquino Valiente, "A Construção Da Identidade Guarani No Período Colonial", *Tellus*, 1 September 2017, 167–84, <https://doi.org/10.20435/tellus.v17i33.448>.

<sup>13</sup> Tonico Benites, "Trajetória de Luta Árdua Da Articulação Das Lideranças Guarani E Kaiowá Para Recuperar Os Seus Territórios Tradicionais Tekoha Guasu", *Revista de Antropologia da UFSCar* 4, no. 2 (1 December 2012): 167, <https://doi.org/10.52426/rau.v4i2.83>.

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF COLONIAL SUBJECTIVITIES

The conceptualisation of a Brazilian national identity has always been framed to reproduce modern/colonial thinking. One of the pillars of this particular form of rationality - which has self-determined itself as a reference, as the 'universal measure' - is separability<sup>14</sup>. This reflects the intentional manufacture of colonial subjectivities by stimulating a logic of exclusion and the annihilation of diversity within the country's existing subjectivities.

This separability aims at the divisibility of this plurality of ways of living, thinking, and being for the sake of a homogeneous understanding of the nation. In this sense, those who did not conform to this label of colonial subjectivity were treated as outsiders in Brazilian society, as happened with the Guarani indigenous people.

In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldúa challenges the construction of hierarchies that defends universalising principles based on this European rationality while defining all other subjectivities as "irrational"<sup>15</sup>. Suppose there has been a constant in the colonisation process in Brazil until today. In that case, it is that, historically, those present in the territories desired by the coloniser have always been ideologically objectified with the purpose of control and domination over their bodies and lands.

One example was the creation of FUNAI, the National Indian Foundation, a government body developed by the dictatorial regime (Law No. 5371, 5 December 1967) to adjust policies towards indigenous peoples to the State's modernisation doctrine<sup>16</sup>. The then-president of FUNAI followed the dictates of the corporate-military regime by disregarding the existence of indigenous lands within the borderland strip in western Paraná state, which substantially affected the lives of the Guarani people. From this, any territory occupied by

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<sup>14</sup> Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Unpayable Debt [A Dívida Impagável]* (Sternberg Press, 2019).

<sup>15</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987), 59.

<sup>16</sup> Clovis Brighetti and Rosângela Daia, "Encobrimento Indígena No Processo De Colonização Do Oeste Do Paraná", *Revista SURES* 1, no. 9 (16 February 2017): 116, <https://revistas.unila.edu.br/sures/article/view/650>.

these people was to be emptied or invaded to implement border control and surveillance posts, which led to the systematic massacre of the Guarani communities.

Similarly, under the military rule, 'Indigenous Posts' were created. They are administrative units governed by other indigenous communities with whom the government had previously reached an agreement in exchange for political support. Because of this, the Guarani always refused to remain within these confined boundaries, thus facing serious conflicts with government officials, who wanted to transfer the Guarani from the border areas to these spaces known as 'reserves', conceptualised as the places to which indigenous peoples "belonged"<sup>17</sup>.

The creation of these spaces reproduced the same colonial logic of confinement and control using territorial fragmentation as a necropolitical practice<sup>18</sup>, that is, to determine who could live and who should die. In this sense, to justify the offensives of the Brazilian dictatorial State against indigenous peoples, an imaginary of inferiority was reinforced over them - a notorious expression of the coloniality of power.

By constructing this ontological boundary between indigenous peoples and other Brazilian citizens, the government sought to legitimise these populations' incapacity to enjoy their rights as guaranteed in the Brazilian legal system (Law 6001/73). Segregating measures, such as creating reserves and not recognising lands previously occupied by the Guarani, define "the deserving from the undeserving"<sup>19</sup>. This occurs by feeding a national imaginary based on racist and objectifying notions, such as the idea that indigenous peoples should remain isolated from the rest of the population (for example, without access to national public services) or be integrated into a continuous movement of indigenous cultural annihilation.

In this way, entire communities have been reduced to colonial subjectivities, ontological beings without agency and with little value in society, who are therefore liable to be exterminated. This contempt for the (re)existence of peoples such as the Guarani thereby

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<sup>17</sup> Clovis Antonio Brighenti, "Povos Indígenas Em Santa Catarina", *Palotti*, 2012, 37–66.

<sup>18</sup> J.-A. Mbembé, "Necropolitics", *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (25 March 2003): 27.

<sup>19</sup> Li, "After Development", 1254.



reveals the lethal intimacy<sup>20</sup> between the legal apparatuses of the Brazilian State with the economic forces that have historically concentrated land, power, and income in the country at the expense of the death and exploitation of indigenous lands and bodies.

## THE GUARANI COSMOLOGICAL RESISTANCE

Amid this encounter marked by multiple forms of violence, there was still room to articulate resistance. According to Vicente Cretton Pereira, an anthropologist recognised for his extensive ethnographic work on the Guarani people, these communities ended up incorporating the impacts of colonisation into their ancestral knowledge<sup>21</sup>.

Rescuing the solid spiritual component of Guarani cosmology, spiritual leaders encouraged migrations towards what they called the ‘Land Without Evil’ (*Yvy Marae*, in Guarani). In this promised land, they would finally be free from the oppression of the colonisers who had once taken over their land, finding an ideal place to satisfy all their desires. By the Guarani narrative, this realisation would be achievable through migratory movement eastwards, to overseas, where *Yvy Marae* could be found<sup>22</sup>.

Once again, Benites' work here was pivotal in enabling me to delve deeply into Guarani cosmology and grasp its vivid vocabulary. *Tekoha*, in Guarani, means a territorial space with several shared areas that functions as a stage for inter-communal relations where they can carry out their livelihood<sup>23</sup>.

As Benites describes, the *Tekoha Guasu* (*guasu* meaning large/vast) is the composition of hundreds of communities interconnected by crossing points and kinship networks that allow a constant movement of people and other flows as exchanges of natural goods between the families occupying the region. In this sense, migration became part of the

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<sup>20</sup> Ferreira da Silva, *Unpayable Debt [A Dívida Impagável]*.

<sup>21</sup> Vicente Cretton Pereira, “Tekoa Hae Tetã: Lugar E Modo De Ser Guarani Mbya no Estado do Rio de Janeiro” (Dissertation, Brasil, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 2010), [http://www.dominiopublico.gov.br/pesquisa/DetalheObraForm.do?select\\_action=&co\\_obra=179981](http://www.dominiopublico.gov.br/pesquisa/DetalheObraForm.do?select_action=&co_obra=179981).

<sup>22</sup> Eduardo de Almeida Navarro, “Terra Sem Mal, O Paraíso Tupi-Guarani”, *Cultura Vozes* 89, no. 2 (1995): 66.

<sup>23</sup> Benites, “Trajetória de Luta Ádua Da Articulação Das Lideranças Guarani E Kaiowá Para Recuperar Os Seus Territórios Tradicionais Tekoha Guasu”, 166.

Guarani cosmology expressed by these flows as strategies for territorialisation and occupation of that vast area.

It is important to note that Guarani people are part of the Tupi linguistic family, but they designate themselves differently according to the region. Their ontological belonging<sup>24</sup> is guaranteed by preserving their collective memory around their territory, a vast area that used to integrate parts of Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay.

Usually, the displacement in the direction of *Yvy Marae* is done in small groups of large families, about 30 people, as was the case of a Guarani *Mbya* community that moved from eastern Paraguay and northeastern Argentina, crossing southern Brazilian states until it reached the coast of São Paulo, in the southeastern part of the country<sup>25</sup>. This was the starting point for the spread of the Guarani people throughout Brazil, mainly along the shores of rivers, lagoons, and the coast. However, until the mid-1930s, the largest Guarani families remained autonomously in their *Tekoha*, as some members began to negotiate their permanence in exchange for their labour in the yerba mate fields.

From the 1950s and 1960s, a new and even more violent period of Guarani dispossession began in Brazil. The government started to expand its control over indigenous territories, opening up the regions to create large private ranches. Areas in which the Guarani had a massive presence were recorded on maps of the time as ‘depopulated lands’, with the precise purpose of disseminating "depopulation" information about these areas<sup>26</sup>.

Hence, occupation/colonisation policies were implemented to occupy these regions and promote the "nationalisation" of these territories in the name of "development"<sup>27</sup>. As the anthropologist Kimiye Tommasino analysed, all the state policies during this period

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<sup>24</sup> Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 4.

<sup>25</sup> Egon Schaden, “Aspectos Fundamentais da Cultura Guarani”, *Editora Pedagógica e Universitária (EDUSP)*, 1974, 5.

<sup>26</sup> Clovis Brighetti and Rosângela Daia, “Encobrimento indígena no processo de colonização do oeste do Paraná”, *Revista SURES* 1, no. 9 (16 February 2017): 120, <https://revistas.unila.edu.br/sures/article/view/650>.

<sup>27</sup> Miriam H. Zaar, “A Migração Rural No Oeste Paranaense: A Trajetória Dos Brasiguaios”, 2001, 25, <http://www.ub.edu/geocrit/sn-94-88.htm>.

suggested that the Guarani population should no longer be considered to have a right to their originally occupied lands. This was justified by the idea that they were 'integrated'; either they were in a final phase of acculturation, or their culture had already disappeared.

No longer considered "obstacles to progress"<sup>28</sup>, those who were 'integrated' were actually homogenised as 'national workers' - achieving the government's main objective for indigenous peoples. At no point were the Guarani included in any decision-making process. With the colonial subjectivity imposed upon them, they were seen only as groups with 'too much land', land that must be taken and made productive, under the name of modern[/  
colonial] capitalist development.

In Clovis Birghetti's historical-ethnographic mapping work on the Guarani, he shows that this one-way discourse of 'progress' and 'modernisation' has denied the Guarani their fundamental rights from the very beginning. However, the doctrine of development reached devastating proportions with the coup d'état that implemented a business-military regime in the country. From the 1970s, the most extensive process of dispossession of the *Tekohas* began in favour of their conversion into private lands. Major development projects also began to occur during this period, such as construction of the Binational Itaipu hydroelectric power plant.

The intention to echo governmental power with giant installations was also done to reaffirm that the Guarani no longer needed their own land but required cultural integration into the 'modern world'. Initiatives such as these denied their physical and cosmological presence with very violent practices that came to be carried out by the National Institute of Colonisation and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), a federal autarchy to manage rural areas formed from a decree (no. 1110, 1970) also under military command:

They showed up like that, setting fire to the house. And then they didn't want to leave, then they came and said they had to set fire to it

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<sup>28</sup> Kimiye Tommasino, "Relatório de Identificação e Delimitação da Terra Indígena Guarani de Araçá'í (volume I - laudo antropológico)", 11, <https://doi.org/10.22456/1982-6524.43826>.

(...) No explanation as to why we had to leave, nothing about that. It was only INCRA; there was no police.<sup>29</sup>

As a result, the Guarani unleashed an enormous migratory movement in search of safer spaces. Their routes were many and very similar to those taken in the search for *Yvy Marae*, with people now moving mainly to Paraguay and the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, in central-eastern Brazil.

As stated, land dispossession has a different meaning for indigenous peoples, as their *Tekoha* are spaces of belonging and of recognition of their traditions, values, and practices and thus are the vital basis for their existence<sup>30</sup>. In this sense, the work of Tania Murray Li is very allusive to analyse the movements of the Guarani peoples as territorialisation strategies, as she states that "the dispossessed (...) the marginalised do not simply disappear" but often resort to migration to find better ways to "make their presence felt, exert influence and make demands"<sup>31</sup>.

## THE GUARANI'S TERRITORIAL STRATEGIES FOR DISRUPTION

Forced displacement from their lands has been the State's modus operandi for dealing with the Guarani, who today demand the demarcation of their *Tekohas* as a strategy to guarantee better living conditions to sustain their ancestral cosmology and livelihoods. This happened due to a paradigm shift promoted in the mid-1980s by spiritual leader D. Maria Tataxi, a resident of the São Vicente community in São Paulo, calling for the urgency of fighting for their ancestral lands:

It is necessary to be firm, to stay longer, to live years and years in the same place. (...) The white men take over the land as if they owned it. [And we] have to live,

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with Guarani Indigenous Leader João Centurião from Tekoha Ocoy-Jakutinga held in 1990. In: Brighetti and Daia, "Encobrimento Indígena No Processo De Colonização Do Oeste Do Paraná".

<sup>30</sup> Cíntia Pires Inêia, "Conflito, Território E Identidade: O Caso Dos Indígenas Guarani de Guaira/PR", *VII Congresso Brasileiro de Geógrafos*, 2014, 7.

<sup>31</sup> Tania Murray Li, "After Development: Surplus Population and the Politics of Entitlement", *Development and Change* 48, no. 6 (2017): 1253, <https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12344>.

build a community and live in harmony with nature because that is what *Ñhanderu* showed us.<sup>32</sup>

Her powerful speech illustrates how the Guarani began to understand that, to reaffirm and strengthen their cosmology, they would need to renew it so that it could sustain itself throughout the new times. Since then, more than 20 territories have been repossessed by the Guarani-Kaiowá, and their spiritual and political leaders have led all the repossessions<sup>33</sup>.

In doing so, they are also concerned with drafting documents and petitions to the government and the federal courts demanding further demarcation of their *Tekohas* that were once taken from them. With this, they have developed an effective strategy to pressure the federal government, calling for federal hearings in Brasilia, the country's capital. In this way, it was possible to share their cosmology with other Brazilian citizens, explaining their spiritual connection to the lands and their indispensability for maintaining the Guarani communities and their future generations.

However, current development initiatives led by the Brazilian State since 2019 have intentionally imposed physical, cognitive, and symbolic borders by reproducing notions of colonial subjectivities about indigenous peoples. Added to their labelling as incapable, the Brazilian government has increasingly reinforced the dictatorial legacy of authoritarian practices of confinement outside the lands claimed by these groups and/or practices of extermination.

Since his election campaign, Brazil's current president, Jair Bolsonaro, had promoted an anti-indigenous discourse. He declared several times that under his government, not even one centimetre of indigenous lands would be demarcated - directly contradicting their constitutional rights guaranteed in the 1988 Constitution. In reaction to this, a Guarani

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<sup>32</sup> Vicente Cretton Pereira, "Tekoa Hae Tetã: Lugar E Modo De Ser Guarani Mbya no Estado do Rio de Janeiro", 2010, 31.

<sup>33</sup> Tonico Benites, "Trajetória de Luta Árdua Da Articulação Das Lideranças Guarani e Kaiowá Para Recuperar Os Seus Territórios Tradicionais Tekoha Guasu", *Revista de Antropologia da UFSCar* 4, no. 2 (1 December 2012): 172, <https://doi.org/10.52426/rau.v4i2.83>.

Indigenous Commission was formed, and they managed to represent a motion against Provisional Measure (MP) No. 886/2019 at the Federal Public Ministry.

That MP, signed on Bolsonaro's first day in office, transferred the responsibility for demarcating indigenous lands from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Agriculture, the latter led by the agribusiness lobby. Despite this attempt to transfer that control to the hands of those who historically supported its dispossession and exploitation, the Guarani Indigenous Commission (with the support of other indigenous groups) managed to reverse this retrograde step, returning the discretionary power of demarcation to the Ministry of Justice.

In this sense, the current government has been the perfect manifestation of the colonial and dictatorial legacies reproducing and imposing colonial subjectivities on indigenous peoples. Despite that, the Guarani resistance strategies, both in migratory movements and in the repossession of territories, contribute significantly to disrupting these legacies embedded to this day in Brazilian politics.

As a way of demanding and liberating their *Tekohas* from exploitative greed, these direct actions challenge private property, and the intimate relations of the Capital with the State materialised in the artificial design of borders. Thus, the Guarani people transgress these limits imposed by modern/colonial logic by "re-elaborating alternative subaltern territorialities"<sup>34</sup>. Therefore, the proliferation of repossession camps, occupations, and ethno-political mobilisations of national reach are practices of liberation and disruption of colonial subjectivities and their multiple forms of violence.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

After facing years of violent attacks since the colonial period, the Guarani today have strengthened their movements to return to and take back their *Tekohas*. This act symbolises a

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<sup>34</sup> Marcos Mondardo, "Territórios de Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais: Estado de Exceção, Governo Bio/Necropolítico e Retomadas de Tekoha", *Horizontes* 37 (20 June 2019): 17, <https://doi.org/10.24933/horizontes.v37i0.769>.

cosmological re-adaptation that is nothing more than resistance practices against the destructive logic of so-called 'development'.

For centuries, Guarani communities have been forced to migrate to escape attacks by the State and large landowners interested in profiting from exploiting their bodies and lands. Today, it is estimated that there are at least 40 Guarani indigenous camps in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul alone, illustrating their strategy and concrete practice of territorial struggle for the return to their *Tekohas*. These communities are mainly established on the edges of railway tracks or in isolated areas.

Since 1980, hundreds of indigenous leaders have suffered threats to their lives, and dozens have been assassinated trying to defend their *Tekohas*. However, they continue in this movement of struggle and return to reconnect with their lands. With this, it can be said that the promised 'progress' has been re-signified by the Guarani in the reformulation of their own cosmology, based on a harmony that comes not from economic wealth but from the ancestral spiritual connection with their *Tekohas*.

With this article, I aimed to illustrate how demarcations of physical, epistemic, or legislative boundaries in Brazil are historically normalised and operationalised by the modern/colonial racist notion of the coloniality of power. Furthermore, this research also portrays the Guarani resistance movements as alternative strategies of territorialisation and disruption, resulting in disruption of the colonial subjectivities imposed on these peoples.

This other way of relating to the land, outside the logic of separability based on the extermination of the 'other' and contempt for diversity, has increasingly gained political strength as an authentic practice of resistance. When we understand territoriality from the perspective of other cosmologies that no longer reproduce modern/colonial thinking, it opens up space for the realisation of another possible world that is already under construction.

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