

## THE ‘INDIAN QUESTION’ IN THE BOLIVIAN AMAZON: *The School Centers of Casarabe and Moré*

**ABSTRACT:** Education was an essential ingredient of the state strategy to address the so-called ‘Indian question’ in the Americas throughout the first half of the twentieth century. In the 1930s, Bolivian intellectuals promoted a new educational policy inspired by *indigenismo*, a trend of thought that sought to solve the problems faced by indigenous people concerning welfare, hygiene, agricultural techniques, and land issues; it also sought, to some extent, to teach them to value their own culture. The educational experience, originally conducted in the village of Warisata and then spread across the Andes, has merited special attention from historiography. However, very little is known about Warisata’s replication in the country’s lowlands. This paper explores the originality, scope, and limitations of the first project of socialization of ‘non-subjected’ societies of the Amazon Basin. That project was inspired by the postulates of the innovative Warisateño model, which aimed to give birth to a “new Indian” who would contribute actively and voluntarily to the progress of the nation. The categories adopted in that project, and the practices carried out, were inscribed in the positivists’ thought, based on their view of the alleged “wild nature” and “savagery” of the groups with whom educators would interact. This study aims to contribute to the debate on the ‘Indian question’ in the Americas by highlighting the contradictions faced by intellectuals when designing projects for the “integration” of otherness into the nation.

**KEYWORDS:** Bolivian Amazon, indigenous education, Warisata, Sirionó, Moré

In the early 1940s, a Bolivian congressman bemoaned that his country “suffers from this disgraceful problem of the existence of wild tribes” in the lowlands. This opinion had emerged in the midst of a debate on state policies to solve what was then expressed as the ‘Indian question.’<sup>1</sup> Although at that time all indigenous peoples of the country were identified as primitive beings, rooted in their environment and stagnant in time, substantial

This article was prepared with the support of the Secretaria d’Universitats i Recerca del Departament d’Economia i Coneixement de la Generalitat de Catalunya, in the framework of the program Beatriu de Pinós (2017 BP 00048) and the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, under the research project I+D+i PID2019-103879GB-I00. I thank Pawel Chyc, Alexandre Coello, David Jabin, and Zulema Lehm for the suggestions, information, and documents shared, and the relatives of Carlos Loaiza Beltrán and Luis Leigue Castedo for their generosity in providing me with access to the documentation in their family archives. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers of *The Americas* for their insightful comments and to Raúl Guerrero and Konrad A. Antczak for revising its wording.

1. Facundo Flores Jiménez, República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la H. Cámara de Diputados de 1941*. CXVIII Legislatura, vol. II (La Paz: n.p., 1941), 756.

differences existed among them.<sup>2</sup> In the nineteenth century, the quintessential indigenous people of Bolivia were the Quechua and Aymara of the high plateau and its neighboring valleys, where the government was located, and most of the white-mestizo population was congregated. The ethnic groups that inhabited the region east of the Andes were generally perceived to be exotic, extraneous to the process of nation-building, insignificant, and wild. Over the first half of the twentieth century, the Andean natives and those lowlanders who had been under a missionary regime, Jesuit or Franciscan, were gradually assimilated to become peasants.<sup>3</sup> On the contrary, the ‘not-subjected’ societies—that is, those not subjected to the state, religious, or private concerns—were perceived as populations still in the wild, due to their existence fused to nature, their nomadic habits, their presumed scarce technological development, and their lack of complex social organization.<sup>4</sup> Feared in the past for the raids on the few villages of the region and assaults on anyone entering their territories—even encouraged in their chase, capture, and killing by the authorities—the violence of those ‘non-subjected’ groups decreased significantly over the first decades of the twentieth century, and peaceful encounters became more frequent.<sup>5</sup> Despite this significant change in their interaction with white-mestizo society, the way in which they were perceived remained unaltered: they would still be referred to as *salvajes* by their contemporaries.<sup>6</sup>

In the Amazon Basin, the increasing occupation of indigenous people’s territories by landowners, the dependence on certain tools that made their daily life easier, particularly the iron ones not available in the rainforest, and the epidemics and famines resulting from several floods even more devastating than the annual

2. Josefá Salmón, *El espejo indígena. El discurso indigenista en Bolivia, 1900–1956*, 2nd ed. (La Paz: Plural, 2013).

3. David Block, *Mission Culture on the Upper Amazon: Native Tradition, Jesuit Enterprise, and Secular Policy in Moxos, 1660–1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 149–173; Cynthia Radding, *Landscapes of Power and Identity: Comparative Histories in the Sonoran Desert and the Forests of Amazonia from Colony to Republic* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 240–293, doi.org/10.1215/9780822387404; Pilar García Jordán, “Yo soy libre y no indio: soy guarayo”. *Para una historia de Guarayos, 1790–1948* (Lima: Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos, 2006), doi.org/10.4000/books.ifca.8509; Erick Langer, *Expecting Pears from an Elm Tree: Franciscan Missions on the Chiriguano Frontier in the Heart of South America, 1830–1949* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), doi.org/10.1215/9780822390916; Cecilia Martínez, *Una etnohistoria de Chiquitos: más allá del horizonte jesuítico* (Cochabamba: Instituto de Misionología, Itinerarios, 2018); Francis Ferrié, *Apolobamba indígena* (Cochabamba: Instituto de Misionología, Itinerarios, 2018).

4. Lorena Córdoba, “Barbarie en plural: percepciones del indígena en el auge cauchero boliviano,” *Journal de la société des américanistes* 101:1–2 (December 2015): 173–202, doi.org/10.4000/jsa.14384.

5. See the reports of different authorities assigned to the lowlands, for example, Ministerio de Hacienda de Bolivia, *Exploración del Gran Chaco de Bolivia. Documentos referentes* (La Paz: Imp. de La Tribuna, 1882); Eulogio Arze, *Informe de la prefectura del Beni en el año de 1890* (Trinidad (Bol.): Imprenta de Francisco Suárez, 1890); and Pastor Baldovino, *Informe que presenta al Sr. Ministro de Gobierno el intendente de la Delegación Nacional en el Noroeste* (Ribalta: Tip. Haencke, 1895).

6. This is illustrated in the press. “Irrupción de bárbaros,” *La Democracia*, September 17, 1912; “La expedición contra los salvajes a catorce leguas de la ciudad. Siete guaridas destruidas,” *El Eco del Beni*, November 18, 1916; “En el cantón Loreto. Expedición contra los salvajes,” *El Eco del Beni*, May 5, 1917; “Para pacificar salvajes,” *El Deber*, July 15, 1929.

rising of the rivers in the region induced the movement of these nomadic groups to the population centers, from the 1920s.<sup>7</sup> In this new scenario, the ruling elites recognized the urgency of preventing them from returning to the woods. According to a governor of the department of Beni, the major district in the Amazon area, the “instinct to seek contact with the whites” should be used by the authorities “to reduce the savages and induce them to civilized life [so that they would] become also a factor of progress in the concert of our nationality.”<sup>8</sup> Not surprisingly, in the 1920s and 1930s, the phrase referring to the “reduction of savages” was emphasized in most of the reports addressed to the central government, attesting to the relevance of this issue for contemporaries.<sup>9</sup>

In the 1930s, the interest of these local elites in dominating those ethnic groups coincided with the Bolivian government’s belief in the role that education would play in the “enhancement of [the] Indian race.” For both the elite and the government, the solution to the ‘Indian question’ in the Amazon required the “integration” of the former into Bolivian society through educational—and assimilationist—projects. Along with the Catholic missions, the main civilizing device until then, other pedagogical models were promoted to allow the state to intervene within these societies. At the same time, the concern of the ruling elites for the preservation of territorial integrity following the Chaco War (1932–35) spurred the Bolivian rulers to promote the connections between the high plateau with the lowlands.<sup>10</sup> This was an action in which schools acquired an unprecedented relevance. The aim was to create a system of schools in the most remote areas of the country that would act as both seats of national sovereignty in the borderlands and educational instruments—that is, as instruments of “civilization” and “modernization” to turn those so-called “wild tribes” into a factor of progress for the nation.<sup>11</sup>

7. Hernán Velarde Rojas, *Informe del prefecto y comandante general del Departamento del Beni, 1926–1927* (Trinidad: Tipografía de La Democracia, 1927), 63, 77; *Departamento del Beni. Informe anual 1927–1928* (Trinidad: n.p., 1928), 76, 123; Lucas Saucedo Sevilla, *Informe prefectural. Departamento del Beni* (Trinidad: Talleres Renacimiento, 1929), 5, 10–11.

8. Velarde Rojas, *Informe del prefecto*, 62–63; *Departamento del Beni*, 123.

9. In addition to the above-mentioned reports of Velarde Rojas and Saucedo Sevilla, see José Samuel Ugarte, *Informe prefectural* (Trinidad: n.p., 1932), 92; Carlos E. Garrett, *Informe anual. Prefectura y Superintendencia de Hacienda del Depto. del Beni* (Trinidad: Tip. La Voz del Pueblo, 1933–1934), 61–63; and Pablo Saucedo Barbery, *Informe anual elevado a la consideración del Sr. Ministro de Gobierno por el Prefecto y Superintendente de Hacienda del Departamento del Beni* (Trinidad: n.p., 1934–1935), 73–74.

10. Between 1932 and 1935, the Boreal Chaco was the theatre of a bloody conflict between Bolivia and Paraguay for control of the territory and, particularly, of its natural resources. The war resulted in the death of most of the Bolivian army and the transfer of almost all the Chaco territory to Paraguayan hands. The defeat had a strong effect on Bolivian politics. The government’s mismanagement of the conflict discredited the traditional political class, allowing the military, with the support of leftist groups and unions, to gain access to political power, overturning the existing oligarchic model. For these new groups in power, in Laura Gotkowitz’s words, “the loss to Paraguay symbolized the failings of Bolivian society, and it created an urgent need to forge a more cohesive nation,” both socially and territorially. See Gotkowitz, *A Revolution for Our Rights: Indigenous Struggles for Land and Justice in Bolivia, 1880–1952* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2007), 102, [doi.org/10.1215/9780822390121](https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822390121).

11. Marten W. Brien, “The Clamor for Schools: Indigenous Communities, the State, and the Development of Indigenous Education in Bolivia, 1900–1952” (PhD diss.: Amsterdam Universiteit, 2011), 216–217, 222–223.

The ideas of modernity, progress, and civilization that spread through the Americas in the late nineteenth century led governments to take action over the following decades to redefine the place that indigenous peoples occupied in the project of nation-building. The solution to the ‘Indian question’ generated a debate that transcended national borders, eventually giving rise to *indigenismo*, a trend of thought outlined and defined in the 1910s and 1920s by politicians, intellectuals, lawyers, and educators from Mexico, Peru, Brazil, and Bolivia, among others. Among the so-called indigenistas there was a great diversity of political positions and ways of thinking, leading to the adoption of different and even contradictory strategies and policies. Some advocated establishing close links with indigenous movements, some wanted a tutelary approach that aimed to keep these movements under state control, others promoted a cultural mestizaje, and finally there were those who came to defend all positions. *Indigenismo* goals were to solve the problems faced by indigenous populations—concerning welfare, hygiene, agricultural techniques, land issues, and education—and to bring them to value their ‘own elements’ such as culture, traditions, language, and institutions.

The larger project, which education and cultural valuation was to serve, was to seek indigenous peoples’ definitive inclusion in the capitalist model and the project of the nation.<sup>12</sup> The governments wanted schools to serve as one of the instruments for their transformation by improving their intellectual, moral, and physical conditions. Each country implemented diverse rural education programs that—despite their differences—aimed toward the same goals. Those goals were to turn the ‘Indians’ into a useful social factor, ensuring their modernization as full members of society, the strengthening of the nation, and the progress of the homeland.<sup>13</sup>

This study is interested in the first experience of socialization of ‘non-subjected’ societies executed by the Bolivian Ministry of Education with no involvement of religious institutions of any kind. Despite being well known and even recognized abroad at the time, this experience has not received much attention in historiography to date.<sup>14</sup> The following pages examine the originality, scope,

12. Recent perspectives on *indigenismo* in the Americas can be found in the compilations of Laura Giraudo and Stephen E. Lewis, “Rethinking Indigenismo on the American Continent,” *Latin American Perspectives* 39:5 (September 2012): 3–115, doi.org/10.1177/0094582X12448059; and Óscar Calavia Sáez and Juan Martín Sánchez, “Dossîe Atores e trajetórias do campo indigenista na Américas,” *Estudos Ibero-Americanos* 43:1 (2017): 3–134, doi.org/10.15448/1980-864X.2017.1.26523.

13. Laura Giraudo, “De la ciudad ‘mestiza’ al campo ‘indigenista’: internados indígenas en el México posrevolucionario y en Bolivia,” *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 67:2 (2010): 519–547, doi.org/10.3989/acamer.2010.v67.i2.518.

14. While the main promoter and ideologue of Bolivian education policy in the 1930s devoted numerous pages to the “diffusion to the jungle” of indigenous education, a Mexican teacher praised the educational work developed among the Indians, including those who were “utterly savages.” See, respectively, Elizardo Pérez, *Warisata. La escuela-ayllu* (La

and limitations of the education and the “civilizing” project developed in those schools operating in the Amazon Basin.<sup>15</sup> I will first address briefly the Bolivian education policy designed to resolve the ‘Indian question’ during the first half of the twentieth century. Second, I will outline the education plan designed for the inhabitants of the Amazon, inspired by both the postulates of *indigenismo* and the premises of positivist thought. With that basis, I will characterize the most significant aspects of the implementation of this pedagogical project in the Casarabe and Moré centers. And finally, I will address the factors that led to the end of this project.

I argue that this project was part of an innovative indigenous education policy conducted in the 1930s that aimed to give birth to a “new Indian,” committed to the future of the nation. The categories adopted and the practices carried out in this project were inscribed in an evolutionary positivism due to the alleged “wild nature” and “savagery” of the groups with whom the school would interact. The study aims to contribute to the debate on the ‘Indian question’ in the Americas by highlighting the contradictions faced by educators and politicians when designing projects for the “integration” of otherness into the nation. The otherness subsumed in Bolivia in the term ‘Indian’ encompassed a multiplicity of ethnic groups from the lowlands whose social, cultural, and historical differences forced a rethinking of the policies on the ‘Indian question,’ beyond the Andean perspective.

## BOLIVIAN EDUCATION POLICY AND THE ‘INDIAN QUESTION’

In the Bolivia of the early 1900s, politicians and intellectuals expressed an unconditional faith in the power of education to transform society and guide it to a new era of progress. At the time, most Bolivians did not have access to schooling, a situation particularly acute in rural areas predominantly inhabited by indigenous people. To ensure schooling for the entire population, educational authorities advocated the implementation of a system aimed at the professionalization of the teaching staff and the extension of education for

---

Paz: Ministerio de Educación, Colección Pedagógica Plurinacional, 2013 [1962]), 251–277, 384–385, 409–411; and Adolfo Velasco, *La Escuela Indígenal de Wárisata, Bolivia* (Mexico City: Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas, 1940), 87–91.

15. Primary sources are dispersed in several Bolivian repositories, most of them at Carlos Loaiza Beltrán’s private archive [hereafter ACLB], La Paz. The pedagogical essays, personal correspondence, and reports of activities prepared by this teacher, as well as photographs and newspaper clippings collected by him, provide rich and valuable information on the history of these schools and the project conducted there. Correspondence between the teaching staff and the educational authorities of the Ministry of Education is preserved in the Archivo Histórico de La Paz [hereafter ALP]. Other documentation can be found in Luis Leigue Castedo’s private archive [hereafter ALLC], Santa Cruz de la Sierra, as well as the Archivo de la Casa de la Cultura del Beni [hereafter ACCB], and the Documentation Centre for the Development of Beni [hereafter CIDDEBENI], both located in Trinidad.

indigenous people. An educational system inherently tied to positivist thought had attained national roots in the previous decades and would be in force throughout the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, Bolivian education policy was based on a relationship of domination in which white-mestizo society identified itself as responsible for resolving the ‘Indian question’.

In the 1910s and 1920s, Bolivian teachers were trained according to a new pedagogy—the so-called ‘new school.’ Its aim was to offer a comprehensive education that would prepare the students for modern life. This required intellectual and moral education, as well as physical education—with handicrafts, sports, and gymnastics—that would stimulate students’ abilities and discipline their bodies and minds.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, the idea that the state should educate everyone—but not in the same way—was firmly established. Hence, education for indigenous people was differentiated from education for the rest of the country’s population. While a standardized syllabus was to be taught in all schools, the syllabus for indigenous education would emphasize literacy in Spanish and moral and civic values—understood to be universal—and modern practices. In addition, this education was to be undertaken in the students’ natural, rural environment to stimulate their abilities, which were perceived as innate. Hence, indigenous education was more practical, focused on agriculture and manual work, and adapted to the customs and geographical specificities of the school’s location.<sup>18</sup> Its goal was to turn Indians into useful members of the Bolivian community, that is, into farmers or craftsmen whose work force would ensure national progress.

One of the first state efforts to provide instruction to indigenous people was the creation of ambulant schools across the Andes. These schools were run by single teachers assigned to several communities separated by few miles, teaching for a time in one location and then continuing on to the next. This type of school, however, had little success, partly due to a shortage of qualified teachers willing to leave the comforts of urban life and partly due to opposition from landowners.<sup>19</sup> Its place was taken by the rural normal schools. These were

16. Françoise Martinez, “*Régénérer la race*”: *Politique éducative en Bolivie (1898–1920)* (Paris: Éditions de l’IHEAL, 2010), 61–89, 101–105, 145, 196, [doi.org/10.4000/books.iheal.356](https://doi.org/10.4000/books.iheal.356); María Luisa Talavera Simoni, *Formaciones y transformaciones. Educación pública y culturas magisteriales en Bolivia. 1899–2010* (La Paz: CIDES, UMSA, PIEB, 2011), 33, 43, 54–56; Marten W. Brien, “The Clamor for Schools,” 55–81, 91–95.

17. Martinez, “*Régénérer la race*,” 268–273; Talavera Simoni, *Formaciones*, 64–67.

18. Brooke Larson, “Forging the Unlettered Indian: The Pedagogy of Race in the Bolivian Andes,” in *Histories of Race and Racism: The Andes and Mesoamerica from Colonial Times to the Present*, Laura Gotkowitz, ed. (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2011), 141–142, [doi.org/10.1215/9780822394334-006](https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822394334-006); Talavera Simoni, *Formaciones*, 63, 72–73.

19. Françoise Martinez, “La création des ‘escuelas ambulantes’ en Bolivie (1905): instruction, éducation, ou déculturation des masses indigènes?,” in *Relations entre identités culturelles dans l’espace ibérique et ibéro-américain. II*.



training centers for future Indian teachers focusing—in addition to theory—on agricultural expertise, new methods of land use, and new craft techniques. It was expected that rural teachers would spread this knowledge back to their communities.<sup>20</sup> This ambition, however, did not succeed: most of the graduates later taught in urban schools. As a result, the rural normal schools were all closed in early 1920s.<sup>21</sup> In a parallel process, Andean communities deprived of schooling due to the collapse of the ambulant school system began the establishment of their own schools. This practice intensified when the rural normal schools were closed, resulting in a system of schools run, financed, and maintained by the communities themselves.<sup>22</sup>

In the early 1930s, the collected experience of all these types of schools was expressed in new educational legislation, which consolidated the differential guidance of the national public education. The legislation recognized three types of schools: elementary schools, in which “indispensable notions for civilized life” including Spanish and manual skills would be taught; labor schools, in which Indians’ capacity for work would be stimulated, “turning them into a factor of progress and collective wealth”; and training schools that would graduate indigenous elementary school teachers.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, Bolivian educators adopted an educational policy closer to the ideals of Peruvian *indigenismo* and addressed the ‘Indian question’ from a new perspective: the insertion of the educational experience into the very heart of the community.<sup>24</sup> It was no longer the eradication of native culture and traditions, but rather their modification, that constituted a substantial change in Bolivian educators and intellectuals’ mentalities.<sup>25</sup>

---

*Élites et masses*, Augustine Redondo, ed. (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1997), 161–171; Brienen, “The Clamor for Schools,” 95–98.

20. Roberto Choque and Cristina Quisbert, *Educación indigenal en Bolivia. Un siglo de ensayos educativos y resistencias patronales* (La Paz: Aruwiñiri, 2006), 97–110; Martínez, “*Régénérer la race*,” 317–319, 323–329.

21. Roberto Choque, “La problemática de la educación indigenal,” *DATA: Revista del Instituto de Estudios Andinos y Amazónicos* 5 (1994): 16.

22. Roberto Choque, Vitaliano Soria, Humberto Mamani, Esteban Ticona, and Ramón Conde Mamani, *Educación indigena: ¿ciudadanía o colonización?* (La Paz: Ediciones Aruwiñiri, 1992), 22–29, 59–75; Ramón Conde, “Lucha por la educación indígena, 1900–1945,” *DATA: Revista del Instituto de Estudios Andinos y Amazónicos* 5 (1994): 30–33; Larson, “Forging the Unlettered Indian,” 143–145; Brienen, “The Clamor for Schools,” 114, 121–126.

23. Talavera Simoni, *Formaciones*, 82.

24. On the proposals of Peruvian *indigenismo*—especially, in Cuzco—see Marisol de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos: The Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, Peru 1919–1991* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), doi.org/10.1215/9780822397021; Jorge Coronado, *The Andes Imagined: Indigenismo, Society, and Modernity* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt5hjt16; and Manuel Andrés García, *Indigenismo, izquierda, indio. Perú, 1900–1930* (Seville: Universidad Internacional de Andalucía, 2010). For its expression in the Bolivian indigenist program of 1930s, see Pérez, *Warisata*.

25. Brienen, “The Clamor for Schools,” 164.

The first school center in following these ideals was organized among the Aymara population of the village of Warisata, in the Bolivian highlands. It was promoted by Elizardo Pérez, former head teacher of the Miraflores indigenous normal school in La Paz, and Avelino Siñani, an Aymara who ran a private school there. Warisata was envisioned as an experimental center for the education of the Andean natives and aimed to break with social practices of colonial origin by complementing Western technique and knowledge with the indigenous cooperative and reciprocal forms of interaction.<sup>26</sup> The attainment of this vision required the application of the new school doctrine and the distribution of students into the three types of schools provided for in the new public education regulations. Along with the studies that were standard for all schools, education at Warisata included training in agriculture, bricklaying, and craft trades.<sup>27</sup> Its originality lay in the combination of labor and study and the adaptation of native institutions to the experience of the school. It advocated the direct involvement of indigenous families in the cooperative work and the decisions concerning the execution of the school project. Giving voice to the community and considering their traditions and organization, the schools were expected to foster socioeconomic emancipation and active contribution to the development of the country, as peasants, as producers, as labor force.<sup>28</sup>

Social and political acceptance of the educational model implemented in Warisata led to the foundation of similar schools throughout the country. The process accelerated under the reformist military regimes of presidents David Toro (1936–37) and Germán Busch (1937–39), who envisioned education as the cornerstone for turning the Indian into a factor of the long-desired national progress.<sup>29</sup> The promulgation of a new regulation for public education and Elizardo Pérez's appointment as chairman of the Board of Indigenous Education resulted in the institutionalization of Warisata's pedagogical

26. Warisata is often perceived as a milestone in the history of Bolivian education. Its reputation is due primarily to the abrupt abandonment of the project by the Bolivian regimes of the 1940s, which led its promoters, Elizardo Pérez and Carlos Salazar to quickly portray Warisata as a socialist utopia for being organized on the basis of Andean social unity (the *ayllu*) and having the active collaboration of the indigenous population. Later, starting in the 1980s, a new generation of historians placed Warisata as another element of resistance in the context of the fights of the indigenous communities of the highlands for access to land, education, justice, and law. Such studies, however, as Marten Brienens notes, often seem to forget that Warisata was an essential part of the state's strategy to address the 'Indian question.' See, among others, the following studies: Karen Claire, *Las escuelas indígenas: otra forma de resistencia comunitaria* (La Paz: HISBOL, 1989); Choque, Soria, Mamani, Ticona, and Conde, *Educación indígena*; Eve-Marie Fell, "Warisata y la irradiación del núcleo escolar campesino en los Andes (1930–1960)," in *Educación rural e indígena en Iberoamérica*, Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, coord. (Mexico City: El Colegio de México; UNED, 1996), 209–223; Brooke Larson, "Capturing Indian Bodies, Hearts, and Minds: The Gendered Politics of Rural School Reform in Bolivia, 1920–1940s," in *Making Nation: Gender, Indigeneity, and the State in the Andes*, Andrew Canessa, ed. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005), 32–59; and Brooke Larson, "Warisata. A Historical Footnote," *ReVista: Harvard Review of Latin America* 11:1 (2011), 65–67.

27. Talavera Simoni, *Formaciones*, 92–93.

28. Choque, Soria, Mamani, Ticona, and Conde, *Educación indígena*, 57.

29. Gotkowitz, *A Revolution for Our Rights*, 113.



experience. In the second half of the 1930s, the unification of indigenous education under a single system was promoted, with the creation of a system of school centers across the national territory.<sup>30</sup> Most of these centers were established on the high plateau and in sub-Andean valleys. Nevertheless, there were also experiences in the lowlands, particularly in the Amazon Basin. The ethnic characteristics of that region's inhabitants were quite different from those of the Andean populations with whom the Bolivian Ministry of Education had interacted up to then, compelling the design of an educational model tailored both to the region's particularities and to the national interest.

### VARIATIONS OF THE WARISATEÑO MODEL FOR THE BOLIVIAN AMAZON

The pedagogical project rehearsed at Warisata—and later spread all over the country—sought the cultural “improvement” of indigenous people. The principles of what I call the Warisateño model were the end of the illiteracy of the ‘Indians’ with bilingual alphabetization—in Spanish and in students’ mother tongue—and their education in the rules of work, discipline, and order, as well as moral and civic values. Both adults and children would be trained in modern agricultural techniques and artisan trades, in accordance with their skills and vocations and without relinquishing the forms of collective production based on the principle of reciprocity, which were distinctive of the Andean indigenous cultures. The community’s cooperation in the construction and maintenance of the school center through land, production, and labor was also expected. It was not in vain that Warisateño pedagogy appealed to work and effort.<sup>31</sup>

Warisata championed an education geared towards the autonomous economic productivity of the indigenous people. For its ideologues, the betterment of the latter inevitably meant the suppression of the plight of deprivation, oppression, and servitude in which they lived, subjugated to the power and interests of the landowners. This meant an education that would lead to the restoration of their personal dignity and group fulfillment.<sup>32</sup> Its ultimate goal was the instruction of indigenous teachers among members of the community and the organization of their authorities in a government body, a sort of council that would eventually be capable of taking charge of the administration of the

30. República de Bolivia, *Seis meses de labor educacional* (La Paz: Ministerio de Educación y Asuntos Indígenales, 1936); República de Bolivia, *Estatuto orgánico de educación indígenal y campesina* (La Paz: Ministerio de Educación y Asuntos Indígenales, 1937).

31. Pérez, *Warisata*, 93, 99, 142–161.

32. Pérez, *Warisata*, 95–97, 172–182.

center without the participation of the educators.<sup>33</sup> This educational project aimed to resolve the ‘Indian question’ by providing indigenous peoples the necessary tools for their mental, social, economic, and labor emancipation while remaining closely connected to their sociocultural, economic and geographical environment.

The ideal pursued by the Warisateño model was the formation of an Indo-American culture, which would be born of Western progress and indigenous peoples’ own traditions and culture.<sup>34</sup> This ideal, however, collided with prejudices, stereotypes, categories, and practices that were deeply internalized by the different segments of Bolivian society, including the educators who promoted the model itself. That is, the persistence of hierarchical relations and mechanisms of domination articulated in different ways, with a long-term colonial horizon—what has been called “internal colonialism.”<sup>35</sup> Despite considering themselves as defenders of the Indian cause, the intellectuals who devised this model of education placed themselves on a higher level than the groups they would interact with. Although their “beneficial” intentions aspired to the improvement and emancipation of indigenous people, the intellectuals approached them from a discourse of domination.<sup>36</sup>

Characteristics of domination became more evident with the spread of the school centers throughout the country from 1936 onward. Thenceforth, contrary to prior experience, official education policy also considered the societies still living in what the Bolivian elite viewed as a wild state. The interest of Bolivian elites in intervening in these Amazonian groups would give rise to a new category of centers. From then on, there would be two types of schools: *núcleos escolares campesinos*, school centers for peasants who would work in the high plateau and valleys; and *núcleos escolares selvícolas*, school centers dedicated specifically to the *selvícolas* of the Amazon Basin. It should be noted that ‘*selvícola*’ included two inseparable meanings to people of those times. A simple reading could be interpreted as the designation of those who lived in the rainforest, in the middle of nature itself. However, in terms of positivist thought, the assimilation of nature into culture favored the understanding that the wilder the nature was, the wilder the culture of its inhabitants would be. Thus, the concept of *selvícola* refers to individuals who are in “the stage of savagery” because “the forest itself lives in them, as it is their natural environment.”<sup>37</sup>

33. Brienén, “The Clamor for Schools,” 179–192; Pérez, *Warisata*, 93, 105, 126–132, 170–171.

34. Pérez, *Warisata*, 37.

35. Silvia Rivera, *Violencias (re)encubiertas en Bolivia* (La Paz: Editorial Piedra Rota, 2010).

36. Salmón, *El espejo indígena*, 16, 20, 25.

37. Main characteristics of the Sirionó, undated, ACLB, no doc. code. The terms *salvaje* (savage) and *selvícola* are used interchangeably in the sources, the former being the most frequently mentioned. To avoid any confusion, hereafter in

Indeed, the culture of these 'non-subjected' societies of the Amazon, conceptualized as primitive and wild by their contemporaries, compelled the design of an education plan that was substantially different from the one implemented by Pérez and Siñani on the high plateau. This task was entrusted to educator Carlos Loaiza Beltrán. A native of the high plateau, he had been appointed a teacher in a rural school in the Andean foothills. There he came into contact with indigenous peoples of the area (Yuracaré, Chimane, Mojeño) and learned about the "wildest" ones living in the hinterlands, the Sirionó. In 1936, the Ministry of Education commissioned him to organize the first school center in the Amazon area, as a reward for "his pedagogical skills." Loaiza Beltrán's knowledge of the ethnic reality of the region led him to devise an ambitious plan to introduce education to those populations not yet controlled by the state. This plan would lead to the formation of the first núcleo escolar selvícola in the country, at the department of Beni. Loaiza was later joined by Luis Leigue Castedo, who was chosen by Elizardo Pérez himself to carry out his interest in the expansion of the selvícola variation of the Warisateño model to the borderlands. Leigue had been trained as a teacher under the ideals of the new school and had concerns regarding the education of the indigenous peoples of the region.<sup>38</sup> While Loaiza was the mastermind behind the plan, both professors were responsible for implementing it.

The aim of this novel education plan was the "recovery" for society of the so-called "savages" to ensure their full insertion into the nation, that is, their "civilization" and "modernization," as well as the acquisition of the same cultural references as the rest of Bolivians. In accordance with the new law on indigenous education, and following as far as possible the ideals of the Warisateño model, this plan would take shape from the late 1930s to the early 1940s, from experience gained in the rainforest over the years. The concept and general organization of this educational plan were an integral part of Bolivia's indigenous education policy under reformist military regimes.<sup>39</sup>

The intention was to provide education to those who the state now designated *selvícolas*, with no interference from any private individual or religious institution. According to the advocates of this plan, the former thought only of

---

this article the term "savage" appears as the English translation of the original *salvaje*, and the term *selvícola* is maintained in Spanish.

38. José Natusch, *Forjadores del Beni, ayer y hoy* (Trinidad: Maestros Inolvidables, 1982), 353, 382–383; Rodolfo Pinto Parada, *Rumbo al Beni* (La Paz: CAE 2001 [1978]), 41–49, 68–87, 182–183; Pérez, *Warisata*, 252–257; Luis Leigue Castedo "Núcleos indígenas del Beni y la labor del Supremo Gobierno," *Renovación*, October 23, 1937; Memorandum from the Ministry of Education, October 6, 1936, ACLB, no doc. code.

39. Indigenous education plan, November 23, 1936; and Law Project for organizing *núcleos selvícolas* in the Bolivian lowlands, May 7, 1947, ACLB, no doc. code. See also articles 70 to 89 of the 1939 Indigenous Education Regulation in Pérez, *Warisata*, 477–480.

the economic benefits that this free labor could offer them, while the latter restricted themselves to winning souls for service to God.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, the lack of an educational tradition for and with these societies resulted in a pedagogy that mixed *indigenismo* and the newest educational trends with the methods employed by Catholic missionaries. The educator was referred to as a “converting” or “catechist teacher” and was envisioned as “the first link between the civilized society and the society to be reduced by civilization.”

The effort was also directed at getting indigenous students to abandon what the educators called “savagery,” and that required some actions that were carefully outlined. The distribution of food and iron tools would transform these groups “from rebellious to submissive, from rough to soft, and from adventurous to quiet.” The clothing supply was intended to hide their nakedness and remove the vegetable rags they used, since “the savage clad in breeches and covered with a jacket is already an Indian close to civilization and an aspirant of it.” The building of “solid and non-transportable houses” was intended to “attract them to the land” and lead them to renounce their nomadic practices. This new lifestyle was expected to provide “spiritual order,” an essential base for generating “culture.”<sup>41</sup>

This “culture” would be the result of the holistic formation of individuals through intellectual, moral, and physical education on the Western pattern. Educators held a clear consciousness of cultural superiority and inferiority in terms of law, order, morality, government, and labor that led them to attribute most native practices “savagery.” In this vein, indigenous peoples should reject their customs and traditions to embrace “modernity” and “civilization.” The acquisition of basic knowledge and civic habits would allow the internalization of the norms and rules guiding the broader society. The training in manual activities—using modern and “civilized” techniques—and the provision of workshops, crops, and cattle in the school centers would “teach creative and fruitful work to the savages.” All of this would be brought together through literacy in Spanish: to “establish the indestructible bond of language between them and us, the civilized ones.” The Spanish language would provide “the spiritual vehicle par excellence and the element of social union and affinity.” Also to be integrated into this educational plan was the Catholic religion—deviating here from the laicism of the Warisateño model—under the notion that only by indoctrination could these societies be interested “in the transformation of their destiny.”

40. Education for *sebricolos*, circa 1939, ACLB, no doc. code, 1-2; Principles, orientation, and purposes of indigenous education in Bolivia, circa 1945, ACLB, no doc. code, 38-42.

41. Education for *sebricolos*, circa 1939, ACLB, no doc. code, 5-6; Principles, orientation, and purposes of indigenous education in Bolivia, circa 1945, ACLB, no doc. code, 46-47.

abandoning the wild and embracing social life.<sup>42</sup> In essence, this cultural enhancement pursued the transformation of the “useless savage of yesterday” into a “man of great qualities.”<sup>43</sup> That is, it would be the forge of new individuals who would feel part of the nation, identify with its interests, and work for its progress.

The last ambition of the educators was to create a new type of Indian who would build a new future for America. According to Loaiza Beltrán, that future could exist in Bolivia only on the basis of real coexistence of the white-mestizo society and its other, that is, the coexistence of populations that in greater or lesser degree participated in the national life, and, especially, the societies that had hitherto avoided involvement in it. These “new Indians” would acquire autonomy and dignity through the work carried out in the schools. They would thus contribute actively and voluntarily to the economy as producers and could insert themselves more positively into society and modern life.<sup>44</sup>

In summary, the education designed for the Amazonian societies aimed to combine within the Warisateño pedagogy the interests of the Bolivian elites with the aspirations of *indigenismo*. However, the allegedly wild nature of the individuals with whom it was to be conducted forced its promoters to reconcile emancipatory ideals with “civilizing” actions towards their socialization.

## THE SCHOOL CENTERS OF CASARABE AND MORÉ

The ‘Indian question’ in the Amazon was centered on those ethnic groups that still refused any dealing with republican society, the most worrisome to regional elites and the statesmen being the Sirionó and the Moré.<sup>45</sup> The Sirionó, members of the Guaraní linguistic family, were well known and had been dreaded in the region since colonial times. The identity of the Moré was submerged in some degree of haze from the beginning of the republican era, and it would be only in the first decades of the twentieth century that they were recognized as such, belonging to the Chapacura linguistic family.<sup>46</sup> From the 1930s onward, anthropologists concurred in seeing both groups as archetypes of the ‘wild man.’ According to

42. Education for *selvícolas*, circa 1939, ACLB, no doc. code, 7–8, 20; Principles, orientation, and purposes of indigenous education in Bolivia,” circa 1945, ACLB, no doc. code, 49–51.

43. Report of school activities to the Ministry of Education, December 25, 1937, ACLB, no doc. code.

44. Education for *selvícolas*, circa 1939, ACLB, no doc. code, 8–9; Principles, orientation, and purposes of indigenous education in Bolivia, circa 1945, ACLB, no doc. code, 37, 43, 55.

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

46. Alcide d’Orbigny, *L’Homme américain (de l’Amérique méridionale) considéré sous ses rapports physiologiques et moraux*, Tome 2 (Paris: Pitois-Levrault et Cie., 1839), 258–261, 342–344; Emil H. Snethlage, *Atiko y. Meine Erlebnis bei den Indiann des Guaporé* (Berlin: Klinckschmidt & Biermann Verlag, 1939).

them, this was evidenced by their fondness for nudity and body ornamentation, their complete adaptation to the rainforest they inhabited, the importance of hunting, fishing, and gathering in their occupations, and the development of incipient agriculture. Hence, in general terms, their culture was conceptualized as ‘primitive,’ because members used only rudimentary technology (wood weapons and tools, utensils made of palm leaves) and had a very basic form of social organization, formed by bands or extensive kinship groups.<sup>47</sup> The concern of their Bolivian contemporaries with their lack of control over these populations, and the adoption of the school centers system as the official educational policy of Bolivia from 1936 onward, favored creating such centers among them.

Establishing the centers was not an easy task. The dispersion of the groups to be ‘educated’ meant that there was neither an obvious location to build them, nor existing schools that could be turned into centers, as was the case in the high plateau.<sup>48</sup> In May 1937, Carlos Loaiza Beltrán founded the center of Casarabe in the Sirionó area of influence. It was located nearly 50 miles from Trinidad, the capital of the department of Beni, and near the road from Beni to the department of Santa Cruz. It was an elevated site, isolated in the savannah and surrounded by lush forests and several lagoons, yet relatively far from the main rivers that flow through the region. Months later, at the beginning of 1938, the center of Moré was constructed on the left bank of the Iténez River, on the border with Brazil, with Luis Leigue Castedo as the teacher responsible for its organization. The chosen site was on the main waterway of the region, with fertile land and a great variety of wild fruits, at a great distance from the few urban centers of the northern Amazon. Reaching the Moré center took about five hours of steam navigation from the confluence of the Iténez River with the Mamoré River; over the years, it came to be reachable by light aircraft.<sup>49</sup>

In fact, both schools operated in the heart of the wilderness. However, while Casarabe was in a relatively accessible area of interest to cattle ranchers, the inaccessibility of Moré kept it in almost perpetual isolation (see [Figure 1](#)).

In these two school centers, both teachers implemented the education plan devoted to “ethnic restoration,” that is, to the transformation of the Sirionó

47. See the studies of Richard N. Wegner, *Zum Sonnentor durch Altes Indianerland* (Darmstadt: Wittich Verlag, 1936); Emil H. Snethlage, *Die Guaporé Expedition (1933–1935). Ein Forschungstagebuch* (Köln; Weimar-Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2016), 139–345, [doi.org/10.7788/9783412218591](https://doi.org/10.7788/9783412218591); Stig Rydén, *A Study of the Siriono Indians* (Göteborg: Elander, 1941); “Notes on the Moré Indians, Rio Guaporé, Bolivia,” *Ethnos* 7:2–3 (1942): 84–124, [doi.org/10.1080/00141844.1942.9980604](https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.1942.9980604); Wanda Hanke, “Los indios sirionó de la Bolivia oriental,” *Arquivos do Museo Paranense* 2 (1942): 87–96; and Allan R. Holmberg, *Nomads of the Long Bow: The Siriono of Eastern Bolivia* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1950).

48. Brienen, “The Clamor for Schools,” 224–225.

49. “Para los que no saben qué es Casarabe,” *Revista Casarabe*, July 1943; “Núcleo indígenal ‘Moré’ de la Provincia del Iténez,” *Renovación*, March 18–April 1, 1938.



FIGURE 1  
Locations of Casarabe and Moré



Source: Author's elaboration.

and Moré into Bolivians who would live peacefully with the rest of the members of society.<sup>50</sup> This action began with the tasks of “penetration” and “conquest”—

50. The *núcleos escolares selvícolas* were designed to operate exclusively with the ‘non-subjected’ societies of the Amazon Basin. There were several attempts by private individuals to organize centers among other ethnic groups, besides the Sirionó and Moré, but none succeeded. The central government expressed regret that all the proposals responded to the vested interests of local actors who sought to gain access to this labor force. See for example

following the terminology used by both teachers—which consisted in establishing a relationship with each band or family, contacting them through gifting beads, food, or tools. The team of educators sought to gain their trust, learn their language, come to know their customs, and, finally, to persuade their leaders of the convenience of moving to the school center. This approximation policy was followed by a set of measures that, according to the plan, aimed to promote their sedentariness. Initially, the Sirionó and the Moré received baptism and first notions of catechesis; not incidentally, they were also vaccinated. The use of clothing and a haircut ‘appropriate’ to their sex—short for males, long for females—was also emphasized. Spanish (and Catholic) names were given to them, transforming the vernacular names into surnames.<sup>51</sup>

At the same time, trees, brush, and weeds were cleared. Once this task was finished, the buildings of the center were constructed, and an area was set up in the surrounding lands for carrying out agricultural and livestock activities.<sup>52</sup> The goal was to create a “civilized” space in the place now occupied by “savagery.” This process is depicted in Figure 2, which shows “recently recovered” individuals of different ages, some dressed and others naked, on either side of a “catechist teacher” (Loaiza Beltrán’s wife), with men and children on the left and women and infants on the right. They stand in a forest clearing in front of one of their traditional dwellings—“authentically wild, where the Indians lived in their nomadic state”—according to Casarabe’s head teacher, who took the photograph. Figure 2 also illustrates the “condition” that all of them would begin to abandon by taking part (as shown in Figure 3) in the construction of “non-transportable” buildings that would be used for teaching, healing, and shelter—all aspects associated with the “civilization” to which they would be introduced by the teaching staff.

---

Correspondence with the central government, January 2, 1943, ALP, Ministerio de Educación, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1943, no. 953. Other centers operating in the lowlands were labeled *núcleos escolares campesinos* and worked with groups that had been in contact with the national society for some time. Examples are the center of Chapare in the department of Cochabamba and the center of San Antonio del Parapetí in the department of Santa Cruz. On the educational processes in the southeastern Andes, see Bret Gustafson, *New Languages of the State: Indigenous Resurgence and the Politics of Knowledge in Bolivia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 33–60. doi.org/10.1215/9780822391173.

51. Indigenous education plan for Casarabe, February 20, 1937, ACLB, no doc. code; Report on the activities of the school center of Casarabe to the Ministry of Education, 1938, ACLB, no doc. code; General summary of students of Casarabe, November 21, 1938, ACLB, no doc. code; Report on the activities of the school center of Moré to the Ministry of Education, May 10, 1942, ALP, Ministerio de Educación, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1942, no. 950; Report on the activities of the school center of Casarabe to the Ministry of Education, April 5, 1944, ALP, Ministerio de Educación, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1944, no. 955; Report on the activities of the school center of Moré to the Ministry of Education, June 10, 1944, ALP, Ministerio de Educación, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1944, no. 955; Photo album of Moré, undated, ALLC, no doc. code, sheets 1, 3, 5, 15; Luis Leigue Castedo, *El Iténez salvaje* (La Paz: Ministerio de Educación y Bellas Artes, 1957), 36–42, 183–186.

52. Reports on the activities of the school center of Casarabe to the Ministry of Education, January 3 and July 27, 1938, ACLB, no doc. code.

FIGURE 2  
Founders of Casarabe



Source: Photo album of Casarabe, ACCB, no doc. code, sheet 9.

The 'creation' of a new place to live was not a novelty for the Sirionó and Moré. However, the dimensions of that task they acquired in the school centers certainly was. While the students' house-rooms measured about 25 square meters, the buildings used for the school's activities (school classrooms, boarding school, workshops, teachers' houses, chapel, kitchen, warehouses) ranged from 50 to 200 square meters, all distributed around a large central plaza. The exact extent of the urbanized space is unclear, but it is known that in Casarabe the cultivated lands reached 20 hectares (nearly 50 acres), and a little more than 150 heads of cattle grazed on the ranch in the mid 1940s.<sup>53</sup> No wonder the centers were destined to become villages once the "civilizing" work among their inhabitants was over.

Once settled in their respective centers, the Moré and the Sirionó were socialized through an educational strategy whose purpose, as already outlined, was

53. Comprehensive inventory of Casarabe, April 3, 1944, ACCB, no doc. code; Report on the activities of the school center of Casarabe to the Ministry of Education, August 16, 1947, ACLB, no doc. code.

FIGURE 3  
Constructing the School Building at Casarabe



Source: Photo album of Casarabe, ACCB, no doc. code, sheet 9

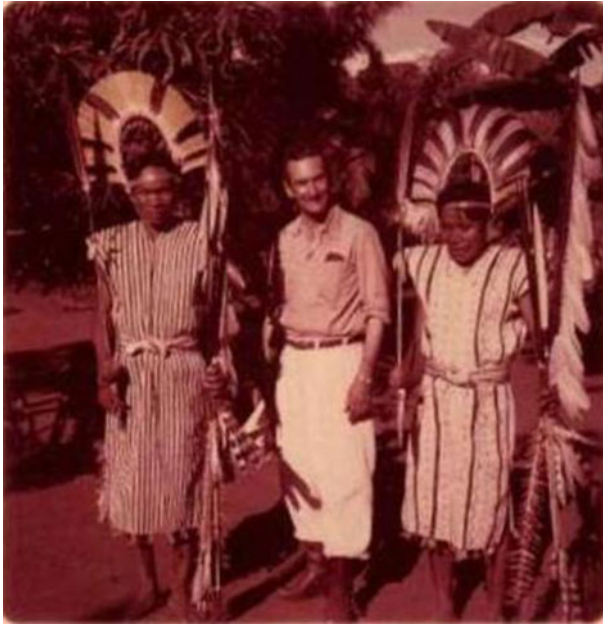
threefold: emancipatory, economic and civic. First, a sociopolitical structure was organized with the indigenous chiefs playing a relevant role within the centers. Among the Moré, an existing conflict between family groups was appeased, and an attempt was made to maintain the existing native leadership by distinguishing two of the family leaders. Among the Sirionó, a kind of school council was formed, comprising the most prominent adult men and women from all the reduced bands. For both the Moré and the Sirionó, the new leaders were chosen from among those individuals willing to collaborate with the center's educational project and who also had influence over a significant number of families.

This is the case of Tontau and Utíp in Moré, and Butamingue and Taicundo in Casarabe, the only chiefs who were identified and photographed alongside educational authorities (see [Figures 4](#) and [5](#)). Both images are intended to depict the transition toward “civilization” made by these leaders under the beneficial effects of the school: they pose with their bows and arrows or feather



FIGURE 4

Marcos Tontau y Samuel Utíp, Leaders of Moré, Next to the Head Teacher



Source: Photo album of Moré, ALLC, no doc. code, sheet 3.

ornaments, but in shirts and pants in the case of the Sirionó and short hair in the case of the Moré. Furthermore, the photographs highlight the fact that the chiefs' leadership was always exerted alongside the teaching authorities. These leaders were the mediators between school staff and the rest of the community, dealing with conflict resolution and the equitable distribution of work and products.<sup>54</sup>

Ideally, this incipient governing body was to provide the elements necessary for self-government (within national interests) and enable their groups "within their wise laws of respect," to become autonomous "with legal representation and rights of their own." Ultimately, they would emancipate themselves from state tutelage and participate in republican life as the rest of Bolivians were doing.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, the real role played by these leaders in the development of the educational project is unknown. According to the information from the sources, it seems that their role was not very significant but rather

54. Report on the activities of the school center of Casarabe to the Ministry of Education, 1941, ACLB, no doc. code; Photo album of Casarabe, ACLB, no doc. code, sheet 4; Leigue, *El Iténez salvaje*, 11, 37–39, 106–107, 132.

55. Report of the inspector of the school centers in the lowlands, August 27, 1947, ACLB, no doc. code.

FIGURE 5  
Butamingue and Taicundo, Founding Leaders of Casarabe, with a Mexican teacher



Source: Photo album of Casarabe, ACCB, no doc. code, sheet 10.

testimonial.<sup>56</sup> The chiefs, along with the rest of the community, were conceived as subjects under the tutelage of the teaching staff, who dictated the steps to be followed for running the center.

Second, such participation required the transmission of work habits that were pursued by the educational policy of the time. These work habits were intended to make them productive, socially and economically organized people. In the case of men, this required apprenticeship in artisan trades such as carpentry, blacksmithing, pottery, leatherwork, and shoemaking; for women, the requirement was for cooking, sewing, and tailoring; and children were to learn to make pottery and to cultivate and harvest plants, according to their age and regardless of their sex. Other tasks were cooperation in the maintenance of the buildings, the clearing of roads, and the construction of docks.

56. Unfortunately, there are no written or oral testimonies of these chiefs, nor of their descendants, that shed light on this aspect of native leadership within the centers.



FIGURE 6  
First Harvest at Casarabe



Source: Photo album of Casarabe, ACCB, no doc. code, sheet 17.

Raising livestock on nearby ranches was an important task in Casarabe, while the exploitation of tropical products (rubber, Brazil nuts) found in the surrounding forests was essential in Moré. In both centers, a core activity was the care of fruit trees and the cultivation of various crops (rice, manioc, sugarcane, bananas). The gathering of the harvest and its transport to the warehouses is illustrated in [Figure 6](#), which shows the students learning these working habits, as well as their progressive transformation into peasants.

Also, through such images, the headteachers sought to emphasize the economic success of these centers. All of the fields of work mentioned above included the use of modern techniques and mechanized equipment, such as motorized saws, fumigators, sewing machines, lighting equipment, and water pumps. The production that resulted from this work supplied each of the centers, and the surplus was sold to regional and Brazilian merchants in exchange for goods that could not be produced at the centers, such as salt.<sup>57</sup> It is also worth mentioning

57. Report on the activities of the school center of Casarabe to the Ministry of Education, January 3, 1938, February 20, 1939, 1941, ACLB, no doc. code; Report on the activities of the school center of Moré to the Ministry of Education, July 15, 1942, ALP; Ministerio de Educación, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1942, no. 950; Report on the activities of the school center of Moré to the Ministry of Education, December 12, 1942, ALP; Ministerio de

that Western gender discrimination in some of these activities made changes to the ‘traditional’ labor division among these ethnic groups.<sup>58</sup>

Third, the ‘social’ work efforts of the center sought the entry of the Sirionó and Moré into a republican civility. This socialization demanded the acquisition of Western cultural elements through instruction with textbooks (prepared in situ by the teachers); civic education; and physical education that included music, dance, games, and combined exercises. Catechesis was also included.<sup>59</sup> Friendship with white-mestizo people was promoted, since that was presumed to mean the end of the violence that had characterized the encounters of these groups in the past. Moreover, such friendships evidenced not only the abandonment of “savagery” but also the transition to belonging to the Bolivian nation. For this reason, ethnologists, clergy, educators, politicians, and members of the military spent days, and even weeks, visiting each of the school centers on several occasions.<sup>60</sup> In addition, indigenous children attended school along with teachers’ children—and, in Casarabe, children of the neighboring settlers who lived in the vicinity of the center—“to erase class differences,” as was expected in the Warisateño model.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, mixed marriages between Moré and the white-mestizo population were encouraged in Moré.<sup>62</sup>

Adult students were distributed according to sex, “date of recovery” from the woods, and “state of catechization.” They received literacy classes early in the morning and again in late afternoon, once they had completed their work training. Children were organized in courses according to their age. They received literacy education, were instructed in work habits, hygiene, morals and civility, and were introduced to agriculture and manual work, as previously mentioned.<sup>63</sup> Likewise, the strict schedule that regulated these activities was intended to teach order and discipline. These activities were led by teaching staff composed of the head teacher, teachers with handicraft and other manual skills, and teacher-explorers, whose mission was to locate groups interned in

---

Educación, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1942, no. 950; Report on the activities of the school center of Moré to the Ministry of Education, November 20, 1944, ALP, Ministerio de Educación, 1944, no. 954.

58. According to Pawel Chyc, Moré women had been in charge of pottery work (personal communication).

59. Photo album of Casarabe, ACLB, no doc. code, sheets 10, 22, 26.

60. See “Los núcleos indígenas de Casarabe y Moré vistos por un científico extranjero,” *La Patria*, April 18, 1939; “Las autoridades educacionales viajan a Casarabe,” *La Patria*, October 10, 1940; “5 estudiantes viajaron al núcleo indígenal Moré,” *La Patria*, October 10, 1940.

61. “Informe sobre la escuela indígenal de Casarabe,” *El Ideal*, January 26, 1939.

62. Pawel Chyc, personal communication.

63. Report on the activities of the school center of Casarabe to the Ministry of Education, January 3, 1938, and December 1941, ACLB, no. doc. code; List of students of the school center of Casarabe, November 21, 1938, July 1941, and April 4, 1944, ACLB, no doc. code.

the rainforest and persuade them to relocate. There was also a health worker and a cook.<sup>64</sup>

The final Warisata goal for the socializing of the Sirionó and the Moré was their nationalization. The head teachers of both centers encouraged participation in the various activities organized to commemorate civic celebrations such as the *Fiesta Nacional* or *Día del Indio*, which were also attended by political and educational authorities.<sup>65</sup> On these dates, a civic program was prepared, which included the hoisting of the national flag, singing of the national anthem, participation in civic parades and processions, and recitation of patriotic and indigenist poems in front of the national altar.

Figures 7 and 8 show groups of children fully dressed, smiling, and standing at attention before the national emblems (flag and coat-of-arms) in front of the head teacher's office (Casarabe), and across the Brazilian border on the banks of the Iténez River (Moré). On these occasions, there were also athletic demonstrations (races, gymnastics, football or basketball games) and artistic representations where plays and "civilized" dances (waltzes) were combined with the performance of native dances and traditional songs, with the students' traditional adornments and clothing exhibited as an ancestral sociocultural value.<sup>66</sup> These acts, along with the pictures taken during their celebration, were meant to demonstrate the conversion of these stateless "savage" peoples into individuals who felt part of the nation by showing their knowledge of the Spanish language, their interiorization of the value of patriotic symbols, and their assumption of national interests—that is, economic progress—as well as the safeguarding of sovereignty at the frontiers.

Many of these school policies were reminiscent of those employed by Jesuit missionaries in colonial Mojos and Chiquitos, as well as the Franciscans in Cordillera and Guarayos in republican times. This is shown by the transformation of the "wild" space into an ordered one with the implementation of crops, huts, schoolhouse, and workshops; the indoctrination of the Catholic religion; the discipline of a schedule that controlled school activities; and the "recovery" of new individuals by the neophytes already gathered in the center. Moreover, these practices included terms that clearly constituted a secular

64. See budgets for the school centers of Casarabe and Moré for the years 1940, 1942, and 1944, ACCB, Public Treasury, no doc. code.

65. The supreme decree of August 2, 1937 declared that day as *Día del Indio*, commemorating the founding date of the Warisata school six years earlier.

66. Celebration programs include *Homenaje al Día del Indio* (Casarabe: Tip. La Patria, August 2, 1942); *Programa de festejos en conmemoración del 117 aniversario de la Independencia Nacional* (Casarabe: Tip. La Patria, August 5, 1942), ALP, Ministerio de Educación, Vocalía del Indio Rural, no. 950; and Transcript of the general celebration program of the school center of Moré, August 6, 1944, ALP, Ministerio de Educación, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1944, no. 954.

FIGURE 7  
Sirionó Children in Front of the Altar to the Nation



Source: Photo album of Casarabe, ACCB, no doc. code, sheet 24.

version of those used by the clergy in their projects: “catechist teacher” or “catechizing team” or the use of the terms “conquest” or “reduction” to refer to the recruitment of Sirionós and Moré. Hence, the pedagogical model applied to *selvícolas* blended the “modern spirit of education and social organization” with missionary methods of attraction and settlement.<sup>67</sup>

Under the direction of founding teachers, up to 360 Sirionó gathered in Casarabe and around 150 Moré settled in Moré.<sup>68</sup> If any violence or coercion was used in

67. Education for *selvícolas*, circa 1939, ACLB, no doc. code, 2; Principles, orientation, and purposes of indigenous education in Bolivia, circa 1945, ACLB, no doc. code, 40. See the parallels between school and mission policies in García Jordán, “Yo soy libre,” 269–385; and Langer, *Expecting Pears*, 79–100, 126–186.

68. “Haciendo historia,” *La Patria*, May 2, 1944; Report on the activities of the school center of Moré to the Ministry of Education, October 20, 1944, ALP, Ministerio de Educación, Vocalía del Indio Rural, no. 954.

FIGURE 8  
Moré Honoring the National Flag



Source: Photo album of Moré, ALLC, no doc. code, sheet 12.

this process, it was not recorded in the reports submitted to the central government. However, the existence of firearms was registered. They were requested to cope with life in the middle of the rainforest, and they proved to be useful in retaining in the center the neophytes who—in teachers' words—were “reluctant to civilize” and only gave in “to a strong and very controlling influence.”<sup>69</sup> In any case, this did not prevent fleeing to the woods from being a common event. Some went hunting and returned after several weeks; others never came back, either because they had joined (voluntarily or forcibly) neighboring properties or because they went back to their nomadic life and their own practices.<sup>70</sup> Most, however, remained in the centers. There are no

69. Indigenous education plan for Casarabe, February 20, 1937, ACLB, no doc. code; Telegram from the headmaster of a school center in Casarabe to the Ministry of Education, April 6, 1937, ALP; Ministerio de Educación, Telegramas de Trinidad, 1929–1942, no. 903, fol. 425–426; Legalized copy of the report of the former chairman of the Board of Indigenous Education, December 14–21, 1940, CIDDEBENI, Sirionó box, B4.03.02; Moré's budget for supplies, August 30, 1945, ACCB, Public Treasury, no doc. code.

70. Report on the activities of the school center of Casarabe to the Ministry of Education, April 7, 1938, ACLB, no doc. code; List of runaway students from the school center of Casarabe, November 21, 1938, ACLB, no doc. code; Report



testimonies from the people who lived this process, and those collected years later intermingle with events that occurred afterward.<sup>71</sup> The protection the school centers offered against famine, epidemics, and hunting and capture by local landowners appears to have been the main factor that led the Sirionó and Moré to continue living in them.<sup>72</sup>

The families that formed each of the two centers came from different and distant locations—several hours' distance in the case of the Moré, and days' to weeks' distance in the case of the Sirionó. In Casarabe, some families were brought in by the school center staff, such as those under the leadership of Eremasindo, Mañareca, or Ricareo; others arrived there of their own will, as was the case of the Tural and Silvestre bands. In Moré, several families moved to the school after constant pressure and, finally, the persuasion of the family chiefs, including the above-mentioned Utíp and Tontau, as well as Carinto or Maram-maram-assím, among others. The data collected by both teachers give us their arrival dates, places of origin, and the bands or extended families to which they belonged.

The data also allows a characterization of the people who participated in the educational project on a more or less long-term basis.<sup>73</sup> Sources show that several of them continued practicing some of their “wild habits” (smoking a pipe, drinking *chicha*, hunting for several days at a time).<sup>74</sup> Apparently, these activities were allowed in exchange for the abandonment of polygyny, submission to the authority exercised by the teachers, learning Spanish, and participating in the economic activities of the center. Some men and women showed such “adaptation to civilization” that they were selected to be trained either as advisers to the teacher, taking advantage of their knowledge of the environment and their own culture—or as teachers themselves, due to their

---

on the activities of the school center of Moré to the Ministry of Education, January 19–22, 1942, ALP, Ministerio de Educación, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1941, no. 945.

71. See the accounts of harassment, mistreatment, and abuse of the Sirionó in Allyn MacLean Stearman, *No Longer Nomads: The Sirionó revisited* (Lanham, MD; New York; London: Hamilton Press, 1987), 5–6; and Zulema Lehm, *Bolivia: estrategias, problemas y desafíos en la gestión del territorio indígena sirionó* (Copenhagen, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2004), 19. See also the accounts for the Moré in Plácido Semo, *Diagnóstico socioeconómico del pueblo Moré* (La Paz: CIDDEBENI, 1995), 10; and Ramiro Gutiérrez, *El núcleo educativo como una instancia clave para la gestión y construcción de una pedagogía étnica en Bolivia* (La Paz: n.p., 2006), 14–15.

72. It is worth remembering that, at the time, regional authorities urged landowners to care for families threatened from starvation and death. Many local individuals took advantage of the desperation of the children and adults by forcing them to work in their establishments in exchange for the food and housing provided, which eventually evolved into violence and exploitation. See Velarde Rojas, *Informe del prefecto*, 62–63; Saucedo Sevilla, *Informe prefectural*, 11; and Ugarte, *Informe prefectural*, 91–93.

73. Leigue, *El Iténez salvaje*, 19–22, 36–39; Guiteras Mombiola, *Warisata en la selva. El núcleo escolar selvícola de Casarabe entre los sirionó, 1937–1948* (Barcelona: Edicions de la UB-ILAMIS, 2020).

74. Chicha is a lightly fermented maize beer.



learning and communication skills and their influence among the members of each ethnic group.

Such is the case of the Sirionó Eoque Erubaiti, Eresaqui, and Siray Güete, who assisted in teaching the crafts of carpentry, farming, and weaving, respectively. Or, Justita Ato-ritam, raised in Moré since childhood and who, to quote the head teacher, gave “edifying social lectures” to girls and young women, praising motherhood and the chores considered proper to their sex. Moreover, in Casarabe, some of the most skilled, trustworthy, and long-standing students also served as “Indian catechists,” that is, men and women willing to join the exploratory commissions sent into the forest in pursuit of new bands and encourage their members to settle at the school. All of these catechists had taken part in the activities of both centers almost since their organization, which might indicate their willing conformity with the education project carried out by the two founding teachers.<sup>75</sup>

In short, the teachers of Casarabe and Moré developed hierarchical—although somewhat reciprocal—relationships with their students as a result of their interaction in the daily activities of field preparation, building construction, economic and productive adaptation to the environment, and dissemination of knowledge, all aimed at ensuring the triad of qualities—rootedness, usefulness, civilization—desired by the Bolivian leading groups, and with which they hoped the future new Bolivian society would be constituted.

## THE RUPTURE WITH THE WARISATEÑO MODEL

The conservative military regimes that followed the governments of David Toro and Germán Busch made some adjustments to the orientation of the indigenous educational policy developed to date. The National Education Council prepared a detailed report on the state of indigenous education throughout the country. The document denounced the lack of curricula and work programs, the lack of a defined and scientific educational organization, and the shortage of qualified personnel among the teaching staff.<sup>76</sup> While the Warisateño model was being replicated in different parts of the country and celebrated on the international stage, the Ministry of Education began to advocate for an education for

75. List of students of the school center of Casarabe, July 1941, ACLB, no doc. code; Report on the activities of the school center of Casarabe to the Ministry of Education, July 27, 1938, February 20, 1939, and December 1941, ACLB, no doc. code; Photo album of Casarabe, ACLB, no doc. code; Photo album of Moré, ALLC, no doc. code sheets 13, 15.

76. Vicente Donoso, *El estado actual de la educación indígena en Bolivia* (La Paz: Consejo Nacional de Educación, 1940).

indigenous people based on “inclusive” principles but dissociated from their own cultural practices.<sup>77</sup> The result was the abandonment of Warisata’s ideals.

From the 1940s onward, the new educational authorities maintained the school center system but opted to return to an education program focused on simple literacy, the adoption of hygienic values, and training in agricultural work.<sup>78</sup> The goal was now the emergence of a “peasant Indian,” to be attained by stimulating students’ skills and knowledge in agricultural and handicraft techniques and guiding them toward the market and notions of personal and private property—that is, the assimilation of the indigenous people into a project of economic progress, social control, and cultural *mestizaje*.<sup>79</sup> This idea would be strengthened in the following decades with the spreading of integrationist and homogenizing notions, according to which indigenous Bolivians were bound to disappear with “modernization,” basing their survival on complete “integration” into the nation. The centers founded in the Amazon area were not exempt from such reordering, nor from the political change that had caused it.

From its very inception, the educational activity developed in the centers had not been free of detractors. However, the controversy escalated in the early 1940s. According to the Indigenous Education Code, recruitment of non-subjected indigenous people was “the private and primary function of the State, through the School for *selvícolas*,” and other institutions and individuals were forbidden from doing so.<sup>80</sup> The will to enforce this rule—or hinder its implementation—generated unease among the different actors involved. On one hand, there was the distrust of local economic agents—farmers, ranchers, rubber traders—who saw their free access to the indigenous workforce for their properties limited overnight. On the other hand, there was resentment of those individuals who had demonstrated their lack of commitment to the project by conniving with local entrepreneurs to provide them with Sirionó and Moré workers.

Another factor was the school centers’ rivalry for control of the Sirionó with the evangelical mission of Ibiato, located a few leagues from Casarabe, which had

77. Giraud, “De la ciudad ‘mestiza,’” 541–542. This is illustrated by the visits to Bolivia by Mexican teachers in 1939 to familiarize themselves with this indigenous education policy, the outstanding participation of Warisata’s teaching staff in the first Inter-American Indigenist Congress, held in Pátzcuaro (Mexico) in 1940, and the implementation of its model and techniques by the Ecuadorian, Peruvian, and Guatemalan education systems. A personal view of Warisata’s impact on the Americas is in Pérez, *Warisata*, 321–367.

78. Larson, “Capturing Indian Bodies,” 47–50.

79. Larson, “Capturing Indian Bodies,” 40–41; Talavera Simoni, *Formaciones*, 96–99, 111–114; Brien, “The Clamor for Schools,” 284–285.

80. Pérez, *Warisata*, 478.

obtained permission to seek out 'non-subjected' groups in the area in 1932.<sup>81</sup> Local agents connected to the mission launched a smear campaign against the school centers, and their head teachers in particular. The latter were accused of misappropriation of wealth, abusing authority, exceeding the limits of their functions, and neglecting their pedagogical duties with the indigenous people to take advantage of their work.<sup>82</sup>

These accusations resulted in the dismissal of Casarabe's headteacher, Carlos Loaiza Beltrán, in 1944.<sup>83</sup> The new management oriented the activities of the center toward greater production, more in accordance with the educational policy of the moment. The new teaching staff held agreements with the Administration of the department of Beni and local businessmen, the fulfilment of which intensified the Sirionós' work. This meant that their dedication to the production of manufactured articles and the harvesting of the center's different crops—as well as those of its white-mestizo neighbors—was increased, and it was at this time that the exploitation of the resinous trees growing in the surroundings began.<sup>84</sup> The objective was to "place this indigenous center at a higher level of industrialization" so that it would end up "becoming a true work center of great proportions."

This rearrangement of the activities of the school was to the detriment of the social goals of education promoted by its founder in the spirit of the Warisateño model. As a result, adult literacy classes aimed at promoting the Sirionós' autonomy and citizenship participation were interrupted. Also, indigenous leaders were undermined in their influence and authority.<sup>85</sup> In December 1947, Loaiza Beltrán, now inspector of the school centers in the lowlands, received the visit of several infuriated Sirionó. After escaping from Casarabe because of the punishments unjustly inflicted by the personnel in charge, they threatened the educational authorities with leaving the school and "going back to the

81. Report on the activities of the school center of Casarabe to the Ministry of Education, April 7, 1938; 1941; August 23, 1943; September 21, 1943; and February 13, 1944, ACLB, no doc. code; Reports of the teaching staff to the headmaster of the school center of Casarabe, June 24, 1941, December 20, 1943, ACLB, no doc. code; Reports on the evangelical mission of Ibiato, December 25, 1937; March 4, 1943, ACLB, no doc. code.

82. Letter from the governor of Beni to the chief of the school district, February 7, 1944, ALP, Ministerio de Educación, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1944, no. 955; Letter from the headmaster of the school center of Casarabe to the governor of Beni, February 16, 1944, ALP, Ministerio de Educación, Vocalía del Indio Rural, 1944, no. 954; "El asunto de Casarabe," *La Flecha*, June 28, 1944.

83. Report to the chief of the school district, February 26 and 28, 1944, ACCB, Records Copier, 1944, no doc. code.

84. Report on the activities of the school center of Casarabe to the Ministry of Education, April 14, 1944, ACLB, no doc. code; Report on the activities of the school center of Casarabe to the Ministry of Education, November 15, 1944, ALP, Ministerio de Educación, Vocalía del Indio Rural, no. 954.

85. Report on the activities of the school center of Casarabe to the Ministry of Education, April 14, 1944 and August 16, 1947, ACLB, no doc. code.

forest.”<sup>86</sup> This was no small thing. The escapes from the centers had multiplied under the new management: many students did return to the forest, where they were captured by neighboring landowners; others went to the mission of Ibiato.<sup>87</sup> By then, only 64 Sirionó remained, and when the inquiry committee sent by Loaiza Beltrán arrived, there were none left.<sup>88</sup>

Educational authorities decided to definitively end the center’s operations since “the authentic sense of recovery of the indigenous people, who in the past had fulfilled their social function of incorporating land and men into the national heritage, had disappeared.”<sup>89</sup> In 1948, Casarabe became an agricultural settlement inhabited only by white-mestizo settlers, and the Sirionó were transferred to the Ibiato mission, which operated under the management of the Ministry of Education.<sup>90</sup>

In Moré, none of the accusations of using indigenous labor for headteacher benefit, regardless of the interests of the nation were successful.<sup>91</sup> The center functioned during its entire existence under the direction of Leigue Castedo, who left office only once, temporarily, due to the political changes that the 1952 National Revolution entailed.<sup>92</sup> Under his management, the adherence of the teaching staff to the new education policy started in the 1940s meant that productive aspects became more important in the following decades.<sup>93</sup> The management of Moré encouraged the expansion of activities to move towards

86. Report from the inspector of the school centers in the lowlands, December 22, 1947, ACLB, no doc. code.

87. Report on the activities of the school center of Casarabe to the Ministry of Education, January 3, 1938, April 7, 1938, and April 14, 1944, ACLB, no doc. code; Report to the chief of the School District, December 11, 1944, ACCB, Records Copier, 1944, fol. 754; Government Authorization, May 15, 1945, ACCB, Records Copier, 1945, fol. 573. On the violence, kidnapping, and enslavement exercised on these groups by private hands during the following decades, see François-Xavier Beghin, “Exacciones a las poblaciones indias de Amazonía,” in *El etnocidio a través de las Américas*, Robert Jaulin, ed. (Mexico City: Siglo XX, 1976), 127–167; and Wanda Hanke, “Correspondencia de Wanda Hanke,” in *Wanda Hanke en la etnografía boliviana*, Eduardo Ocampo, ed. (La Paz: Juventud, 1982 [1953–1958]).

88. Report of the inspector of the school centers in the lowlands, December 22, 1947, ACLB, no doc. code; “Acta suscrita en el núcleo Casarabe [August 21, 1948],” *La Patria*, 1948.

89. Report of the inspector of the school centers in the lowlands, December 22, 1947; Principles that gravitate around the work of the centers, undated, ACLB, no doc. code.

90. “Se destruyó la obra de Casarabe,” *El Eco del Beni*, September 9, 1948; “El núcleo Casarabe se convierte en escuela granja,” *La Unión Beniense*, September 25, 1950; Note from the chief of the school district to the governor of Beni, September 16, 1948, ACCB, Records Copiers, 1948, no doc. code; Note from the Governor of Beni to the headmaster of Ibiato mission, July 5, 1950, ACCB, Records Copier, 1950, no doc. code.

91. This would have corresponded to the remoteness of Moré from the immediate interests of “all political influence, and from the pernicious environment” of the power groups of Trinidad. Report of the inspector of the school centers in the lowlands, March 20, 1949, ACLB, no doc. code.

92. Note to the comptroller’s office, June 5 and 26, 1952), ACCB, Public Treasury, 1951, no doc. code. The increase in social conflict in the 1940s strengthened trade unions in mining, manufacturing, and handicrafts, while the middle classes promoted a socialist and strongly nationalist trend as an alternative path for Bolivia. This gave rise to a new political party, the National Revolutionary Movement, which advocated for a reformist and nationalist policy and took the government of the country in 1952. Among the measures taken during its time in office are the approval of universal suffrage, the agrarian reform (which modified the structure of property), the nationalization of the mines, and—in the matter of interest here—the universalization of education by extending it to all of society.

93. Pérez, *Warisata*, 385.

“super-production.” They also encouraged the mechanization and industrialization of the school, so Moré could become an economically autonomous urban center. At the same time, along with the agrarian reform of 1953, notions of patrimony and individual property, along with work, became fundamental principles to be transmitted to the Moré to ensure their transformation into peasant or laborer.<sup>94</sup>

The school center system for “peasant Indians” was maintained well into the 1960s, despite the profound social changes that occurred after the 1952 National Revolution. A new education code, enacted in 1955, reinforced the belief that indigenous people should receive an education appropriate to their environment, in addition to instruction in the fundamentals of their local rural industries and handicrafts and the love of national traditions and folklore. The native practices and customs that the Warisateño model wanted to re-value and bring forward were no longer even mentioned. What mattered now was *campesinación*, that is, to make the inhabitants of the countryside productive. To this end, the integration into national life of the “wandering tribes of the forest through the *núcleo selvícola*” was entrusted to “missionary-type institutions” with prior authorization and under the control of the state.<sup>95</sup> That same year, the Bolivian government signed an agreement with evangelical missionaries of the Summer Institute of Linguistics to initiate linguistic studies, evangelize and, ultimately, convert these populations into productive citizens.<sup>96</sup> This meant the definitive rupture with the Warisateño model implemented in the Amazon, which advocated an education exclusively provided by state bodies, through a national teaching staff.

In 1963, the teachers declared their educational work finished and left the school center of Moré. The following year, the missionary of Ibiato also retired from his functions.<sup>97</sup> With the departure of its administrators, Moré was composed of indigenous and mixed families, and Ibiato became a community inhabited exclusively by indigenous people. Casarabe was now nothing more—and nothing less—than a mestizo village.

94. Leigue, *El Iténez salvaje*, 187. This book was first published in 1957. Its second edition is dated to that same year, undoubtedly a typographical error, given that the second edition includes information for the years 1962 and 1963.

95. See Chapter XI (arts. 118–113) of the Bolivian Education Code of January 20, 1955, in <https://www.lexivox.org/norms/BO-DL-19550120.xhtml> (accessed November 4, 2021).

96. Luis Enrique López, *De resquicios a boquerones: la educación intercultural bilingüe en Bolivia* (La Paz, Plural-PROEIB Andes, 2005), 86–93. A synthesis of the work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics [Instituto Lingüístico de Verano] in Bolivia is in María Dolores Castro Mantilla, *La viva voz de las tribus: el trabajo del ILV en Bolivia 1954–1980* (La Paz: Viceministerio de Asuntos Indígenas y Pueblos Originarios, 1997).

97. Leigue, *El Iténez salvaje*, 187; Lehm, *Bolivia*, 18.

## CONCLUSION

Having concluded the pedagogical activities developed in the school centers of Casarabe and Moré, their respective founders prepared two photograph albums with which they wanted to reflect the “indigenist task” carried out under their management.<sup>98</sup> Both in the albums and in their correspondence with the Ministry of Education, the two teachers expressed their adherence to the strategy developed by Bolivian *indigenismo* of the 1930s to solve the ‘Indian question.’ In addition, they vindicated the originality of their educational project, conceived within the framework of the Warisateño model and its final objective: the authentic inclusion of the indigenous peoples of the lowlands into the nation, in order to give rise to a new Bolivia.

It can be said that Warisata practices aimed to shape social change and social organization to ensure the formation of a “new Indian” with a real, positive, and autonomous participation in national unity. This project was, however, conducted from the national level under conditions of asymmetry. The ideologues of the Warisateño model placed themselves in a position of authority—resulting from their alleged possession of culture, and thus “civilization”—and adopted a patronizing or paternalistic attitude toward the indigenous people with whom they collaborated. It should not be overlooked that Warisata, considered as a set of diverse and sometimes conflicting pedagogical models and implemented from the beginning of the twentieth century, had a single purpose: the modification of indigenous cultural and socioeconomic structures through progressive “de-Indianization” to foster the “regeneration” of the nation.

Conservative governments of the 1940s revealed the strong persistence of “internal colonialism” in the Bolivian elites’ perception of society and beliefs about what the nation should be.<sup>99</sup> Educational policy advocated the transformation of the Indian into a useful social factor as its sole objective, that is, to make them “peasants.” The peak of this process was the 1952 National Revolution, particularly the approval of the agrarian reform of 1953, whose text addressed “peasants” and only occasionally “indigenous people of communities,” and the latter only in regard to their traditional access to land.

98. Analysis of the textual and visual narration of both albums is in Anna Guiteras Mombiola and Pilar García Jordán, “El ‘otro’ sirionó objeto de la misión ‘civilizadora’ del Núcleo Escolar Selvícola de Casarabe,” in *La reinvención de América, siglos XIX-XX*, Pilar García Jordán, ed. (Barcelona: Edicions de la UB, 2017), 45–80; and Anna Guiteras Mombiola, “Reflejos de una ‘labor indigenista’. Estrategias civilizatorias del núcleo escolar selvícola Moré en los confines de la Amazonía boliviana (1937–1963),” in *Relatos del proyecto civilizatorio en América*, Pilar García Jordán, ed. (Barcelona: Edicions de la UB, 2019), 201–227.

99. Rivera, *Violencias*.



Nevertheless, such recognition essentially involved Bolivia's Andean peoples. In the same text, the inhabitants of the tropical and subtropical lands were named '*selvícolas*' due to their "wild state" and their "primitive organization."<sup>100</sup>

In the Amazon, it was inconceivable for the local actors to give those indigenous groups who threatened their lives and businesses any other treatment than that of subordination. The very same thought weighed heavily in the minds of intellectuals and politicians. Since colonial times, 'Indian'/selvícola culture had been associated with untamed nature, so that Amazonian societies were placed at the bottom of the social scale. Thus, the 'Indian question' in the lowlands was the "recovery" of those societies for Bolivian society. The actions developed in the *núcleos escolares selvícolas* were influenced by both indigenist and evolutionist principles, and the individuals among whom action was to be taken were assumed to be "savages" and "primitive." In this framework, the ideal of conviviality, as imagined by the adherents of the Warisateño pedagogical project, could be realized only if it were preceded by civilizing actions, such as social life, rules and discipline, use of time, and instruction, among others.

These actions sought to socialize the Sirionó and the Moré. Only then would their emancipation be possible, with the understanding that after abandoning their ancestral "savagery" they would cease to be perceived as subjects of tutelage and eventually become citizens in the same way as any other Bolivian. As a result, the lifestyles of the Sirionó and the Moré who were enrolled in the school centers experienced substantial changes: their diet diversified, leadership became stronger than before, monogamy became the norm, Christianity was embraced, the nomadic life was abandoned, and urban planning and animal husbandry were fully adopted.

Likewise, the folkloric value conferred on certain native customs and beliefs favored the persistence of traditional songs and dances, as well as part of indigenous mythical narrative. It is undeniable that the actions carried out in the Casarabe and Moré schools affected the very existence of both groups, disrupting their forms of organization, their ways of interacting with the environment, and their conception of the world around them.<sup>101</sup> It should not be forgotten that in contrast with the Andean communities, which had long

100. The law is available at <https://www.lexivox.org/norms/BO-DL-19530802.xhtml> (accessed November 4, 2021).

101. On the present situation of the Moré and the Sirionó of Ibiato, see respectively Zulema Lehm, *Identificación preliminar del territorio indígena Moré. Informe final* (Moré-Trinidad: CIDDEBENI, 1997); Semo, *Diagnóstico*; Gutiérrez, *El núcleo*; and Mario Califano, *Los indios sirionó de Bolivia Oriental* (Buenos Aires: Ciudad Argentina, 1999 [1975]); Stearman, *No Longer Nomads*; and Lehm, *Bolivia*.

yearned for access to education, such desire did not exist among those ethnic groups from the lowlands on whom education was ultimately imposed.

Casarabe and Moré were, in short, one more of the many projects developed in the Americas from the ‘integrationist,’ homogenizing, and paternalistic vision that impregnated *indigenismo* in the first half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, in the end, neither the Moré nor the Sirionó disappeared when their culture was diluted by contact with “civilization,” nor did they insert themselves completely, actively, and positively into the national society as both educators and Bolivian public authorities aspired. They were never passive subjects. They took part in the educational project in those circumstances where it was useful for them to do so. And they refused to remain in contact with the white-mestizos—teacher, businessman, or missionary—when the model of conviviality articulated by the teachers of Moré and Casarabe (and later Ibiato) did not correspond to their own concept of conviviality and negotiation with difference, represented in this case and from their perspective by white-mestizo Bolivian society.<sup>102</sup>

*Universitat de Barcelona*  
*Barcelona, Spain*

[aguiterasmo@ub.edu](mailto:aguiterasmo@ub.edu) / [anna.guiteras@gmail.com](mailto:anna.guiteras@gmail.com)

ANNA GUITERAS MOMBIOLA 

102. Joanna Orving and Alan Passer, eds. *The Anthropology of Love and Anger: The Aesthetics of Conviviality in Native Amazonia* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000).