

**Question of Time: Notes on Photography and the Idea of Civilization in
Nineteenth Century Argentina**

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The objective of this study is to analyze a handful of visual representations from the late 1870s and 1880s that express the dichotomy between the categories of ‘civilization’ and ‘barbarism’ as a culturally constructed narrative that emerges as a contingent response to a specific conjuncture. The goal is not to trace how this dichotomy was constructed, nor how it embodied the liberal claim of modernity—abundantly studied already¹—but to explore the particularity of a series of images that anchor their meaning in terms of the triumph of civilization through different temporal-spatial references. I will refer to temporal (or even temporal-spatial) questions inscribed in the photographs: a theatrical handling of a past; the future projected in the materialization of the camera’s shadow; the representation of Argentina marching to a global, universal rhythm. I will conclude by examining another time in these and other images: the one imposed by their material existence.

¹ See, in particular, Shumway, 1991. Shumway traces the development of this dichotomy and the way this idea, in liberal minds, urged Argentina to subordinate the countryside to the domination of the city of Buenos Aires. See also, de la Fuente, 2016.

1. On Universal Time

'Paris is the capital of the civilized world,' reads a phrase written on a classroom chalkboard in a photograph in the album produced by photographer Samuel Boote at the request of the Comisión Nacional de Educación (National Board of Education). The same album was also presented at the Universal Expo in Paris in 1889 [figure 1].



Figure 1. Samuel Boote, *Vistas de Escuelas Comunes. Consejo Nacional de Educación. Clase funcionando. 2° grado de una escuela de varones* (Views of Ordinary Schools. National Board of Education. Class underway. 2nd Grade in a boys' school), albumen print from collodion-on-glass negative, 1889. Biblioteca Manuel Gálvez, Buenos Aires.

Rather than being legible for the students, the chalkboard addresses the camera, showing the text to the viewers of the photograph attending the event that commemorated the French Revolution and provided the occasion for the construction of the Eiffel Tower. It was a moment in which eyes from across the globe directed their gaze to Paris and the Universal Expo. The attendees could momentarily leave the Parisian context behind, submerging themselves in the panoramas proposed in different nations' pavilions. In the case of Argentina's pavilion, the text on the chalkboard may have produced a rather strange effect: that of diverting the gaze focused *on* the object—Argentina—in order to look *along with* it, back again at Paris. In other words, it was Argentina setting its gaze on the French capital. This was clearly a gesture of admiration: Paris was a powerful model for the South American nation's oligarchy and middle class, especially in the city of Buenos Aires, which found in the French spirit a perfect source for the good taste and cosmopolitan air they so desired. It was often said that the civilized world had Paris as its center, and children attending Buenos Aires

schools were taught to admire it. Recognizing all this meant being a part of that civilized world, even more so if it was done in the context of a Universal Expo designed to measure each nation's degree of civilization².

As symbolic constructions, universal expositions had a hand in giving shape to the imagery associated with each nation, and they functioned within a framework that suggested the existence of continual, linear development. Although intertwined with other elements, national identity and progress were fundamental axes in the configuration of modern phantasmagoria. As Susan Buck-Morss states, following Walter Benjamin's *Passagen Werk*, "Progress became a religion in the nineteenth century, world expositions its holy shrines, commodities its cult objects, and Haussmann's 'new' Paris its Vatican City" (Buck Morss, 1989).

As the technical system and "objective" mechanism for producing these images all over the world, photography, while "render[ing] services to the mercantile economy,"³ and contributing to the formation of these national imageries on exhibit, became a means through which to measure a nation's degree of civilization. On the one hand, it presented a cross-section, a selection of the different realities that could be shown; a characteristic it shared with the expositions themselves. On the other hand, it produced universally intelligible forms,⁴ making possible comparisons between these realities in different places. Photography made these forms visible, placing them side by side in relation to others in a way that no other medium could. Ultimately, this was the kind of operation that the expositions themselves promoted. As they encouraged an imaginary reduction of world space, the fairs—the exhibits of which could be viewed in a couple of hours—demonstrated that time had become universal, or, more precisely, that the symbolic time of Western Europe was setting the pace of "progress" and "civilization" that peripheral countries were then obligated to follow⁵.

² For a specific study about the participation of Argentina in this exhibition, see Fernández Bravo, 2000.

³ I take this line from Benjamin's analysis of the way in which Disdéri utilized the photographic system to include objects that had, until then, been distanced from the circuits in which works of art circulated. (Benjamin, 1936).

⁴ When I say "universally intelligible forms," what I propose—in addition to opening debate regarding photographic codification—in this combination of terms is to give an account of the notions held at that time regarding photography as being a faithful reflection of reality, and in yet more concrete terms, the implications of the term "universal" in a framework like that of the expositions—a universality conceived of in central Europe, comprising a "universe" structured according to the transversal lines of the logic dictated by an international division of labor.

⁵ The question there is one of "time-coercion" where "backwardness" or "development" of peoples will be measured, to then be transformed into the projects for modernizing societies that are "out of synch" as Renato Ortiz terms it. On the other hand, in

Almost twenty years prior to the exhibition in Paris, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento himself had pointed out that the Expos were occasions for demonstrating that the nation was civilized. As President of the Republic (1868-1874), he had concluded his speech for the inauguration of the first National Exposition by affirming: “Let this practice be the precursor for new, more perfected manifestations of our culture, and may the 1871 Exposition open the series of exhibitions through which we will present ourselves to the world, claiming an honourable position among civilized nations.”⁶

Of course, the children in the 1899 schoolroom photograph had only recently been given access to a free, secular, and obligatory education. This was the result of a prolonged effort undertaken by Sarmiento the educator. The opposition between “civilization” and “barbarism” popularized by Sarmiento in his book *Facundo. O civilización y barbarie en las pampas argentinas* (1845),⁷ reached a symbolic resolution. Then, after the passing of the Common Education Law in 1884, the term “civilization” was written on the blackboard of a newly built school. This forward-looking law guaranteeing centralized, egalitarian education was of major importance in a country where the massive influx of immigrants arriving from different points of origin and speaking different languages constituted a challenge to the formation of Argentinean citizens.

2. *On Being Inscribed in History*

In captivity in Buenos Aires and posed in front of the camera, indigenous Chief Pincén could not possibly be considered a danger [figure 2].

The episode surrounding this photograph began with the Chief’s capture in the northwestern part of the province of La Pampa in December of 1878, and continued in efforts to show him to citizens as part of the propaganda for the campaign against indigenous populations that the government wanted to carry out the following year.

the framework of a unified world space, there is an attending need to standardize time in parallel. The establishment of time zones based on the Greenwich meridian was a topic of discussion during the 1880s and 1890s (Ortiz, 2000). Regarding the ways in which people’s experience of technological and cultural changes led to the creation new ways of conceiving and experiencing time and space, see Kern, 1983.

⁶ Speech reproduced in *El Nacional* (16 October 1871).

⁷ As many authors pointed out, the dichotomy between “civilization” and “barbarism” preceded Sarmiento’s *Facundo*, and served to express one of the central claims of national liberalism (See, in particular, Shumway, 1991, and de la Fuente, 2016).



Figure 2. Antonio Pozzo. *Cacique Pincén* (Chief Pincén), albumen print from collodion-on-glass negative, 1878. Private Collection.

Taken to Antonio Pozzo's⁸ studio for the photograph, Pincén's gaucho attire likely responded to specific instructions given by the scientist Francisco Moreno, who was present at the time the photograph was taken. Pozzo took up the spear that Moreno had brought with him for the occasion, posing with a nude torso "as if he had been found in the desert along with his fellow Indians." These were the explicit instructions given to him while posing for the photograph.⁹ The spear, a symbol of his culture and his bravura, was now part of a posed setup. A two-fold displacement takes place in this photo: from desert to studio, and from studio to simulation of the desert. It is worth

⁸ Antonio Pozzo (1829-1910) was a Daguerrotypist and photographer of Italian origin, established in his own studio in Buenos Aires in 1850. Before taking the photographs of Pincén and prior to his participation in the *Campaña del desierto*, he worked for the municipal government producing portraits and documentary images; he took photographs of the Ferrocarril del Oeste's (Western Railroad) machinery and installations in 1857; he made portraits of convicts that were published in *La Revista de Policía* (Police Magazine) in 1871 and he participated in public life and politics with unwavering support for leaders Adolfo Alsina and Julio Argentino Roca after him.

⁹ Pozzo took four photographs prior to the intervention by Moreno that I make reference to: one, where Pincén wears a chiripá and boots, and three others with his people: one, with four of his daughters, another with three of his wives and eight of their children and a third with a group of Indians.

noting, however, that this staged desert set—a spatial simulacrum—is also a temporal simulacrum: the person portrayed was a fearsome Pincén *from the past*.¹⁰ As discussed below, this photograph later made it onto postcards.

During the 1870s, Argentina's previously disparate policies for territorial expansion achieved new levels of systematic regularity. The expansion reached places further removed from the nation's political and economic center. The southern part of the province of Buenos Aires, Patagonia, and the region designated in general terms as Chaco were the primary objectives of military campaigns during the 1870s and 1880s. To be sure, the occupation of Patagonia was not a new goal for the central government. What the *Campaña del Desierto* had committed to in the late 1870s was the culmination of the plan to appropriate the territory and subjugate indigenous people by way of a coordinated, systematic attack, to finish what Juan Manuel de Rosas had initiated at the outset of the 1830s¹¹.

Expanding the country's internal boundaries and passing from purely nominal to effective sovereignty became an indispensable condition for consolidating the nation-state, which, although strengthened after the Paraguayan War (1864-1870), still needed to protect itself in the face of Chile's own aspirations of territorial expansion into the lands east of the Andes. The conquest of this space was also necessary to foment an economic plan centred on agricultural and livestock exploitation on a significant scale, which would position Argentina on a new level in the worldwide economic system.

In April of 1879, Julio Argentino Roca, head of the Ministry of War, began the *Campaña del Desierto*, or Desert Campaign, a misleading name for what was actually a conquest of inhabited territory. Together, these terms implied subduing the original occupants in favor of a production model run by the owners of large estates. Antonio Pozzo, the author of this image of Pincén, had requested permission to accompany the Army on its expedition into Rio Negro, joining one of its columns. Upon his return,

¹⁰ In this reenactment, as in other pictures of this campaign, Pincén's spear (or the goods of others *caciques* remaining at their original places and surrounded by their families), is not comparable with bourgeois objects at photographers studios. The general background is that propriety is changing of hands. In this *mises en scène*, spear is a symbol of a wider dis-possession (and neither the pictures Pincén or other Chiefs are posing for -nor its technique-will belong to them).

¹¹ It is fitting here to recall the words of Charles Darwin, whose voyage in the H.M.S. Beagle—initiated in late 1831—coincided with Rosas' military action in the South: "Everyone here is fully convinced that this is the most just war, because it is against barbarians. Who would believe in this age, in a Christian civilized country, that such atrocities were committed?" (Darwin, 1882).

the photographer produced a series of albums and individual images mounted on cardboard featuring very brief titles or captions and the dates of the campaign.¹²

One of these albums begins with the image of those responsible for the campaign. It is immediately followed by a photograph showing a tall swath of grasses in the foreground, covering the lower two thirds of the image [figure 3].



Figure 3. Antonio Pozzo, *Expedición al Río Negro. Abril a Julio 1879. Fortín Salado* (Rio Negro Expedition. April to July 1879. Fort Salado), albumen print from collodion-on-glass negative, 1879. Museo Roca-Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas.

The Fortín Salado fortress can be seen in the distance. A bit closer to the camera, there are six wagons, a couple of field tents, soldiers, and standing clergymen. Another image shows a similar distribution: in the upper third, the horizon line coincides almost exactly with the roof of the Fortín General Lavalle, in front of which soldiers and religious men are standing. To one side of the construction there are a large number of horses. On the other, more sparsely vegetated land. A number of Pozzo's photographs share a characteristic trait in which the expedition army is framed amply in the midst of an empty landscape. In these images, territory is constructed on the site of a "void," showing nature in a pure state, void of civilization and uninhabited by culture.

¹² For a detailed analysis of these albums and the photographs, see V. Tell, *El lado visible*; P. Cortés Rocca, *El tiempo de la máquina*; and M.I. Rodríguez and J.E. Vezub (eds.), *Patrimonios visuales patagónicos. Territorios y sociedades*.

In *Choele-Choel – Tedeum*, the framing is once again very ample, providing the context and containing the Army [figure 4].



Figure 4. Antonio Pozzo, *Expedición al Río Negro. Abril a Julio 1879. Choele-Choel. Gran Misa y Te Deum* (Rio Negro Expedition. April to July 1879. Choele-Choel. High Mass and Te Deum), albumen print from collodion-on-glass negative, 1879. Museo Roca-Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas.

This photo represents an event of great importance to the campaign, given that the column paced its march so that its arrival to Choele Choel island would coincide with the *Revolución de Mayo de 1810* (1810 May Revolution), allowing the soldiers to celebrate mass to commemorate the occasion. In doing so, the photograph represents a precise occasion, a *historical* moment in two senses. First, it is situated in a precisely dated moment in time—May 25th, the date of Argentina’s national celebration. Second, it marks a turning point, quite possibly in the histories of both cultures involved in the confrontation, but most certainly for the indigenous inhabitants, who would be dominated by and therefore included in the history of the territory’s new owners, who chronicled this conquest by taking photographs and registering dates.¹³ In this sense, we note that Pozzo’s glass plate negative carrying cases are displayed plainly in the image’s foreground. To the left, a small, cut off shadow appears that can be attributed

¹³ In *The Idea of Latin America*, Walter Mignolo analyzes the way that the concept of “history” has functioned as a metaphor to describe the epistemic differential of power between Europe and Latin America. According to this frame, history is a privilege of the European modernity, and to enter in history, one must accept, voluntary or not, to be colonized.

to the photographer and his camera. Similar shadows also appear in other photos included in the album.

There is one photograph in particular where the shadow is projected over the bare grounds of a barracks, where it is more visible and clearly defined. Diagonals converge in it, and further behind, the soldiers lined up in front of the forts make up a row almost perfectly perpendicular to the camera, converging with the horizon line [figure 5].



Figure 5. Antonio Pozzo, *Expedición al Río Negro. Abril a Julio 1879. Coraceros en el cuartel* (Rio Negro Expedition. April to July 1879. Cuirassiers' barracks), albumen print from collodion-on-glass negative, 1879. Museo Roca-Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Buenos Aires.

These shadows should not be dismissed as the result of carelessness on the part of the photographer, much less to the poor quality of the images. These are, after all, not single images, but images selected to make up albums. In another copy of the album, each photo bears a watermark with the name of the photography studio, 'Fotografía Alsina. Victoria 590. Bs. As.' In the photo of the Puan barracks, the watermark is placed, quite symptomatically, on the shadow of the camera and its operator: light on dark, the name stands out; it is the mark of the proprietor, a kind of signature [figure 6].

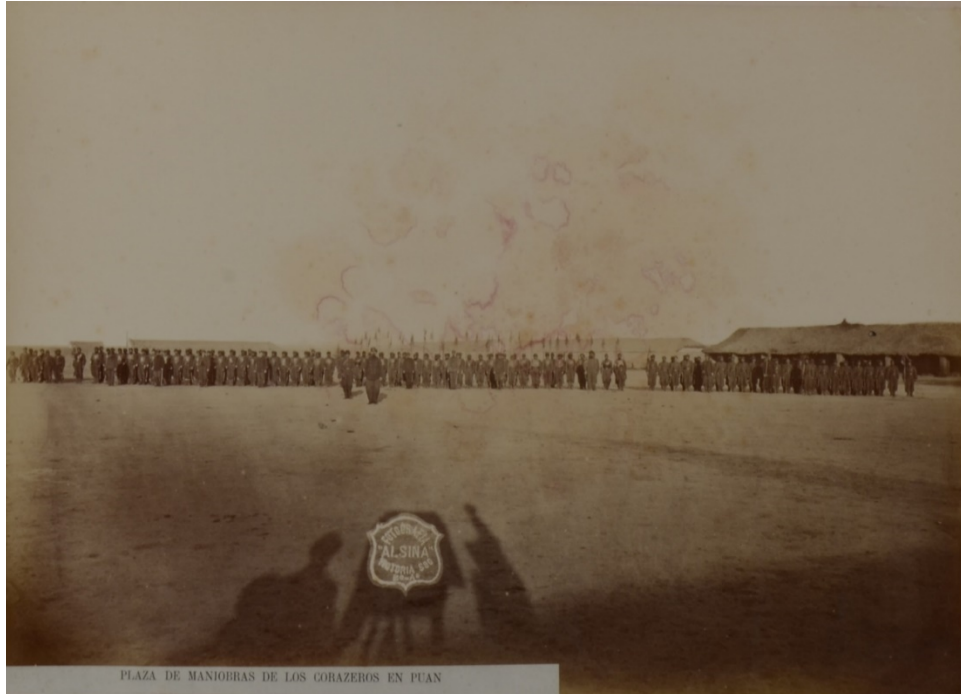


Figure 6. Antonio Pozzo, *Expedición al Río Negro. Abril á Julio 1879. Plaza de maniobras de los corazeros en Puan* (Rio Negro Expedition. April to July 1879. Area of manoeuvres for the Puan Cuirassiers), albumen print from collodion-on-glass negative, 1879. Museo del Bicentenario, Buenos Aires.



Figure 7. Antonio Pozzo, *Torre de Babel* (Tower of Babel), photomontage in albumen print, *portrait cabinet*, 1877. Centro de Documentación de Arquitectura Latinoamericana, Buenos Aires.

In Figure 6, the photographer had already written his name on the camera, in an image of a different type: in this case, a photo-montage from 1877—undoubtedly one of the first to have been produced in this country—in which caricature and photograph are combined in a satiric representation with political content [figure 7].

I will not analyze the message that unfolds in it here.¹⁴ I do, however, wish to indicate the manner in which Pozzo takes a stance as the author, with a representation of himself to the lower left, as the author who reveals a certain truth regarding the chaos present in the opposition party.

By making their production process manifest, Pozzo's images of the Campaña del Desierto challenge the myth of photography's transparency. Through the presence of shadows, he executes a sort of self-representation. On the one hand, he makes the situation in which this specific image was produced visible. On the other, he reveals the means by which photography in general is made possible as a medium and as a form of representation: in other words, its nature as 'writing with light'. A particular form of *mise en abîme*, or in-depth exploration occurs, where attention is focused on that which lies beyond the frame that makes the representation possible. How is this self-referential gesture—showing the medium of photography by way of photography—to be read, then, in the context of an album dedicated to military occupation and conquest? The shadow fuses the man and his camera into a single figure. Pure contour, it illustrates that both parts *are* the photographic device. This image gestures toward the photographic practice itself, contemplated, as Dubois suggests, in terms of a *trace*.¹⁵ However, an analysis of the individual's or author's inscription in these representations is surely of interest beyond the issue of confronting a presumed objectivity alone—a notion so closely tied to photography that it has often obscured thorough knowledge and analysis—to include further comprehension of the images' operational discourse. These shadows, visible and self-referential traces of the indexical instant, are parts

¹⁴ The number of photomontage copies is unknown, but we can imagine its impact given the fact that it was immediately mentioned and retaken by *El Mosquito* and *El Nacional*. An indepth study of this photomontage and its political and iconographic context may be found in my "Políticos en campaña, imágenes en acción: la disputa por los votos de Buenos Aires en 1877", *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana "Dr. Emilio Ravignani"*, N° 35/36 (2011 / 2012): 46-65. I analyze the use of this *portrait cabinet* photomontage and the lithographic caricatures by Henri Stein, published in *El Mosquito*, to establish a scathing dialogue. A comparison between both representational forms and techniques, and a study on their breadth in the political culture in Argentina can also be found there. For an exten analysis of the role played by Stein and *El Mosquito* in party politics, see Claudia Román, 2017.

¹⁵ Philippe Dubois suggests that the trace—marked by the relationship of a physical connection, a characteristic of Pierce's indexical reference—constitutes an essential moment, but only *one moment* within the photographic process as a whole (Dubois, 1983).

constituting a symbol. This is, then, a modern, civilized mode of representation, projecting its actions upon the newly conquered territories. In this way, photography as a medium appears as both a precursor to and an announcement of technology's arrival as an inaugural phase of civilization. Along with the Remington, the telegraph, or the railroad (called the 'sacred trinity' by David Viñas in 1982), photography is part of the arsenal employed in appropriating the "desert," in both real and symbolic terms.

Here I would like to point out a caricature attributed to Antonio Pozzo, dated one year later, when Roca became President of the Republic [figure 8].

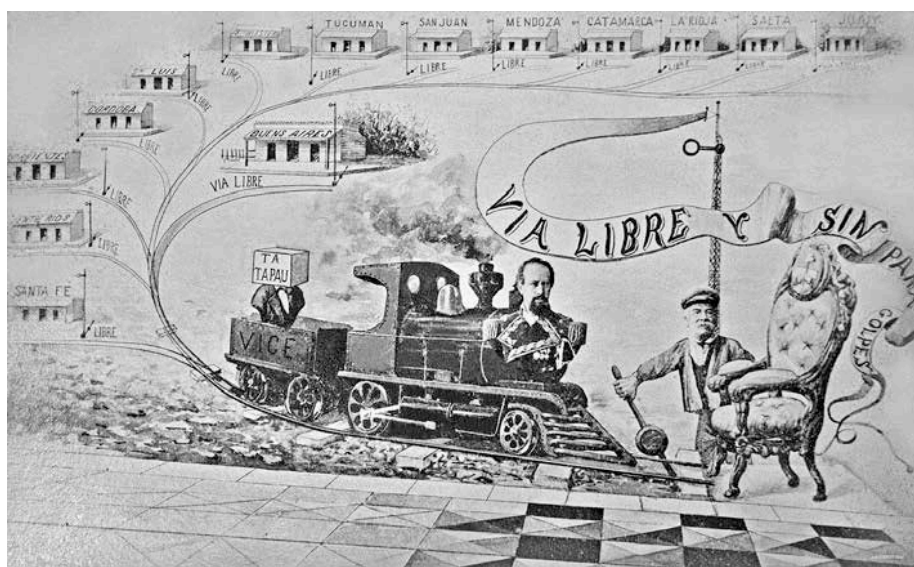


Figure 8. Antonio Pozzo (attributed), untitled, photomontage, ca. 1880. Biblioteca Manuel Gálvez, Buenos Aires.

In this photo-montage, the photographer represents himself as raising the gate and clearing the way for General Roca, now transmuted into a locomotive, advancing unhindered across all the provinces to reach the chair of the presidency. The fact that Pozzo would make a caricature of his own collaboration in Roca's success is telling, along with his use of the train as an emblem for Roca's political career, considering that in 1879, Roca did, in fact, set out on his final tour of the pampas by train. While the Army's initial advances and exploration were done on horseback, the definitive appropriation of these territories took place by way of a transformation in its physiognomy: two parallel lines in the earth—the railroad—along with the lines of the telegraph, several meters above the ground, marked out the space physically and symbolically.

3. *Times Superimposed*

Thus far I have made reference to temporal (or even temporal-spatial) questions inscribed in the images. The images make references to, or a theatrical handling of, a past in which the indigenous chief Pincén constituted a danger for whites' order and estate owners' productivity, where a civilizing future is projected in the materialization of the camera's shadow. To return to the classroom image, they show an Argentina marching to a global, universal rhythm, as represented in international expositions (a unique, uniform time of modernity, regulated from the metropolises of Europe). I would like to close by examining another time in these images: the time imposed by their material existence. Photographs crop a scene in time, in a sense confined by a concrete context. However, they are also objects with their own process of development in that they last, transcend their own time, and intersect with other timeframes.¹⁶

As mentioned above, a postcard was made decades later with Pozzo's photograph of indigenous chief Pincén [figure 9].



Figure 9. Fumagalli editions, Postcard, untitled, ca. 1911. Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Pensamiento Latinoamericano, Buenos Aires.

¹⁶ On the idea of temporality and photography, it is interesting to point to Ariella Zoulay's analysis defining it as an event subject to a unique form of temporality, made up of an infinite series of encounters: "The event of photography has two different modalities of eventness—the first occurs in relation to the camera or in relation to its hypothetical presence, while the second occurs in relation to the photographs or in relation to the latter's hypothetical existence" (Azoulay, 2012, 26).

In this sense, the photograph evolved to become a definitively domesticated, colored, softened, and sweetened multiple image.¹⁷ In accordance with the mission of the postcard, it circulated throughout the nation's territory and abroad as well. It was an example of a typical sort of consumer object that emerged in the very last years of the 19th century,¹⁸ and also of a particular iconography: that of the Indian, who, along with the Gaucho, was an emblematic figure for postcards, photographs, and diverse forms of printed material.

In line with the issues discussed above regarding the telegraph and the railroad, it must be pointed out that the establishment, expansion, and increase in strength of communications systems were essential to consolidating a nation-state and its physical and political integration. These infrastructural developments were understood to be indicators of progress in their day, signs of a strong, centralized bureaucratic apparatus. Within this framework, the postal network played an important role in terms of its organization and activity closely linked and governed by time (the time needed for processing, travel, distribution, etc.), as well as in terms of the selection and production of motifs reproduced on postcards and, naturally, those used for the stamps emitted by the national postal service.

In this regard, the stamp on this postcard of Pincén merits attention [figure 10].



Figure 10. *Labrador* (Labourer) postage stamp, 1911. Private Collection.

¹⁷ Edited by Fumagalli, the postcard is from around 1911. An analysis of this and other postcards representing Indians appears in Masotta 2011.

¹⁸ The country's first postcards with photographic views date back to 1897.

It is the image of a laborer who is seen in three-quarters view, almost with his back to the viewer, gazing upon the setting sun after a long day's work. He holds a tool of his labor in one hand. In the other, his hat, which he may have taken off in a gesture of recognition and thanks to the earth and the sun that make his sustenance possible. To the right, the furrows of the tilled earth contrast with the untouched land to the left (a remainder of the desert, perhaps?). The man portrayed is white, with fair hair—he is not a gaucho—and we can identify him with the European colonists who settled as farmers in the so-called 'pampa gringa' in the provinces of Santa Fe and Entre Rios (though it is hard to define the place, given that we see only a wide stretch of open territory reaching all the way to the horizon). The image is ambiguous enough, then, to represent a new social type without a specific geographic locality. The figure is anonymous, a symbol of the individual effort and productive labour that led the nation to be established as 'the world's breadbasket'.

This bucolic iconography of the laborer certainly says quite little about the system of agricultural and livestock production put into practice south of Rio Negro following the distribution of the land that had been indigenous territory, now turned into large estates in the hands of a few patrician families (and here we point out that support for the *Campaña del Desierto* came from the *Sociedad Rural Argentina* in order to secure their interests). As a type, however, the laborer speaks of self-improvement and overcoming frontier life, the end of Indian raids and immigrant waves and working in peace and prosperity.

Here, the campaign is no longer the site of backwardness and barbarism—if we think of Sarmiento's point of view, who juxtaposed it with the civilization typical of the city—but has been domesticated and civilized by workers' labor. Let us recall that in 1911, the date of this postage stamp, the places pertaining to civilization and barbarism had been disrupted, precisely because of the occupation and exploitation of lands for farming and livestock production on the one hand, and the enormous wave of immigrants piling up in the cities on the other. As David Viñas said, "any frustrated settler would turn into an urban anarchist" (Viñas, 1982).

Each of these two images—that of the postcard and that of the stamp, while duly noting the difference that the latter is controlled by a state institution while the former is not—came into being as the result of deliberate choices to deliver a clear statement. As such, they wind up bringing two central figures together: the desert and productive land, which are not necessarily two different, but rather successive, places. An unforeseen but certainly likely enough combination brought them together in a new

object, in a juxtaposition that underscores this historical narrative: the white, immigrant farmer is possible *because* the Indian was displaced.

Both the postcard and the stamp are made to communicate ideas or imagery on a previously unheard of scale—a global network regulated in all of its parts—and in this way they coincided to give rise to a new, complex representation. Sarmiento's dichotomy of *Civilización o barbarie* (Civilization or Barbarism) was being resolved in this new object, which had the potential to cross boundaries and circulate at the pace of a Eurocentric modernity. Finally, it is worth noting that the rural laborer motif was the only one to circulate on postage stamps between the centennial of the 1810 May Revolution and that of Argentina's independence, in 1816. The only exception was the commemorative stamp produced to celebrate the centennial of Sarmiento's birth in 1811.¹⁹

The persistence of objects undoubtedly gives them the capacity to inscribe new meanings, in the manner of geological layers, or, as in this case, to reaffirm those pertaining to their timeframe of origin. In this sense, I would like to make a final note regarding time, touching on the present day in this instance, which is that Argentina's current policies in regard to its indigenous peoples and their territorial claims represent a manifest continuity and updating of the 19th century ideologies and political policies referred to in this text.

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¹⁹ Farkas-Stämpfli, 2007.

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