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Modest Witnesses of Violence

Salvage Ethnography and the Capture of Aché Children

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During the heyday of salvage anthropology – the ethnographic study of supposedly vanishing "races" – practitioners often praised the moral integrity of their own work. In a preface to the 1939 book *Une Civilisation du Miel: Les Indiens Guayakis du Paraguay* (an exemplar of the salvage genre), the French anthropologist Paul Rivet applauded the objectivity of the book's author: the French naturalist Jehan Albert Vellard. Rivet described his compatriot as a "biologist at heart" with "extraordinary knowledge" of "tropical nature." He also marveled at how quickly Vellard adapted to the demands of anthropological fieldwork and praised Vellard's monograph for its firm basis in "observations made in direct contact with reality and not summary impressions." For Rivet, Vellard's rigorous observations stood in sharp contrast to those of amateur ethnographers who produced a "superficial and hasty literature[,] which the taste for exoticism and the age of communication have so annoyingly made fashionable." The clarity of Vellard's narrative was thus like a "documentary filmed on the spot, at the risk of his life" rather than a "fake film executed in a comfortable studio."[1] By championing Vellard's moral and scientific acumen, Rivet thus rendered him a quintessential "modest witness" – a type of observer that Donna Haraway classically described as an "authorized ventriloquist for the object world" with a "remarkable power to establish the [unadorned] facts."[2] By emphasizing Vellard's modesty and sacrifice, Rivet also implied that he was doing both the Aché and the anthropological community a favor by capturing the remnants of a disappearing people.

Rivet also revealed that Vellard's narrative went beyond mere representation. As another example of Vellard's virtue, Rivet highlighted one of *Une Civilisation du Miel's* most striking passages: the story of how, in 1932, the French biologist adopted a young Aché girl and named her Marie-Yvonne. "With what simplicity," Rivet mused, "J. Vellard reports the most moving episode of the beautiful

[1] Jehan Albert Vellard, *Une Civilisation du Miel: Les Indiens Guayakis du Paraguay* (Paris: Gallimard, 1939), 6.

[2] Donna J. Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. "FemaleMan_Meets_Onco Mouse": Feminism and Technoscience* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 24.

adventure he lived." Like many French anthropologists from the interwar period, Vellard's book represented a literary counterpart to the scientific monographs that emerged from his fieldwork.[3] With literary flair, Vellard's account of Marie-Yvonne's adoption framed the episode as a benevolent rescue mission. In his own telling, Vellard described how the "fugitive Indian guides" who assisted him during his fieldwork brought Marie-Yvonne to him when she was approximately two years old. The guides discovered the girl after they had fled from Vellard's group and stumbled upon an Aché camp with two women and a child. When the women fled, the guides seized the girl and brought her to Vellard who observed that she "had been badly abused and . . . was terrified." Once brought to Vellard, he claimed that Marie-Yvonne chose to stay with him and his family – "she came with us and has not left us since," wrote Vellard. By his own reckoning, Vellard assumed a benevolent paternal role that stood in stark contrast to his "fugitive" guides and the Aché women who supposedly abandoned Marie-Yvonne. Vellard thus presented himself as rescuing Marie-Yvonne from the clutches of his unruly guides and her neglectful family members.

Rivet, who was prominently involved in antifascist and antiracist struggles in interwar France, took Vellard's adoption story at face value and interpreted it as offering important correctives to scientific debates about race and heredity. Reflecting on these events several years later, Rivet noted that under the care of Vellard and his mother, Marie-Yvonne had grown into a charming, intelligent, and "pretty" ten- to eleven-year-old girl. Rivet also marveled at the fact that she spoke fluent Portuguese and French and had quickly adapted to an entirely new environment without "heredity" diverting her from the path of "civilized life." Had she not been adopted and cared for by Vellard, Rivet conjectured, Marie-Yvonne would likely have lived "the precarious and primitive life of which J. Vellard gives us a striking picture." In Rivet's estimation, her remarkable change in fortune offered a potent argument against racism – "I deliver [the facts of Marie-Yvonne's story] to the meditations of those who believe in the irreducible inequality of races and the imprescriptible laws of heredity." Marie-Yvonne's adoption story thus gave Vellard's "beautiful" book a "a human value, which should ensure the success it deserves in so many other ways."[4] From Rivet's perspective, Vellard's book and the adoption story it told did more than just preserve the fading remnants of a disappearing people, it provided ammunition for the international struggle against racism that he and other prominent anthropologists like Franz Boas had been involved with.[5]

[3] Vincent Debaene, *Far Afield: French Anthropology between Science and Literature*, trans. Justin Izzo (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

[4] Vellard, *Une Civilisation du Miel*, 7.

[5] Christine Laurière, "Anthropology and Politics, the Beginnings: The Relations between Franz Boas and Paul Rivet (1919–42)," *Histories of Anthropology Annual* 6, no. 1 (2010): 225–252.

In the following decades, Marie-Yvonne's adoption story was retold by scholars and journalists who built on Rivet's humanitarian and antiracist framing. Marie-Yvonne's story was retold in public-facing articles published by the *UNESCO Courier* in 1950 and *Reader's Digest* in 1960. These articles continued to celebrate her adoption as a golden opportunity to escape primitivism and join civilization. Yet this humanitarian framing ignored the violent circumstances and colonial structures surrounding Marie-Yvonne's adoption. In Paraguay, Marie-Yvonne's story corresponds to a period when the reigning Liberal government introduced Indigenous assimilation policies inspired by the Jesuit missions – the *reducciones*, or reductions – of the seventeenth century. These policies promised Native land to religious organizations and others who could successfully "reduce" Indigenous people and thus created the conditions for an intensification of violence and abuse toward Indigenous peoples with the grim manhunts of the Aché serving as a prime example.[6] Through publications like the *UNESCO Courier* and *Reader's Digest*, Marie-Yvonne's story also circulated in settler colonial states such as the United States, Canada, and Australia. From this global perspective, the circulation of Marie-Yvonne's story coincides with a period when settler colonial governments, notably Australia and Canada, encouraged the forced separation and removal of thousands of Indigenous children from their families as part of state assimilation policies. In a global historical context that scholars have retrospectively described as genocidal, how is it that Marie-Yvonne's story became framed in the redemptive terms of humanitarianism and antiracism?[7]

By examining the various retellings of Marie-Yvonne's story and the many stories of captured children that populate ethnographic studies of the Aché, this essay tracks how colonial violence against Indigenous peoples was repackaged within a powerful conceptual framework that challenged the biological basis of race. I argue that the transnational celebration of Indigenous assimilation at play in Marie-Yvonne's story relied on a set of epistemic, affective, and moral dispositions that were shared by human scientists, and which ultimately authorized the removal of children from their families and territories in the service of science and international struggles against racism. While the redemptive accounts of her story did important work by challenging biological determinism, they also concealed how the practices of mid-century human scientists ignored and at times enabled the forced removal of children from their families and the dispossession of Indigenous territory. In fact, as this chapter demonstrates, until the 1960s ethnographic studies of the Aché

[6] René Harder Horst, *The Stroessner Regime and Indigenous Resistance in Paraguay* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007).

[7] David B. MacDonald, "Canada's History Wars: Indigenous Genocide and Public Memory in the United States, Australia and Canada," *Journal of Genocide Research* 17, no. 4 (October 2, 2015): 411–431, https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2015.1096583.

were based primarily on children captured under violent circumstances and attest to an established practice and *economy* of buying and trading Aché children as servants. Although researchers who studied captured Aché children positioned themselves as civilized men of science, they did not condemn the trafficking of Aché children that they benefited from and instead presented it as a fait accompli that they could only observe as modest witnesses. Thus, although Marie-Yvonne's story indexes important epistemic shifts in the trajectory of race science, it also reveals how human scientists' ethical horizons were beholden to colonial structures that persist from the Iberian conquest of the sixteenth century.

Civilization and the Science of Children

Rivet and Vellard's redemptive framing of Marie-Yvonne's life bears the imprint of major trends in the human sciences from the first half to the twentieth century, which amounted to a rejection of biological determinism and fixed racial hierarchies in favor of cultural and environmental approaches to human diversity. Beginning in the interwar period and intensifying after World War II (WWII), human scientists in North America and Europe moved away from conceptualizing human diversity through the prism of static typological races and instead adopted frameworks that emphasized how human differences are transmitted through cultural and social practices.[8] As part of this shift, which scholars have called the retreat of scientific racism, many experts turned to children and child-rearing in order to observe how values, attitudes, habits, and practices persist from one generation to another.[9] For instance, in the United States, adherents of the cultural and personality school such as the anthropologists Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Otto Klineberg, Edward Sapir, and Ashley Montagu rejected biological explanations of human behavior in favor of cultural and linguistic studies that examined how specific groups transmit culture from one generation to the next through child-rearing practices and through language acquisition during infancy.[10] Through ethnographic studies of Indigenous groups in the South Pacific and the United States, culture and personality researchers turned child-rearing and children themselves into prized research objects that promised insights on

[8] Sebastián Gil-Riaño, *The Remnants of Race Science: UNESCO and Economic Development in the Global South* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023).

[9] Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[10] Joanne Meyerowitz, "'How Common Culture Shapes the Separate Lives': Sexuality, Race, and Mid-Twentieth-Century Social Constructionist Thought," *The Journal of American History* 96, no. 4 (2010): 1057–1084.

how environmental factors such as cultural patterns and socioeconomic opportunities mold the personalities and intellectual abilities of individual subjects.

Examples of this research in North America abound, and they had implications both for domestic and international policies and for applied social scientific research conducted elsewhere. In his landmark experimental study of "racial" differences in intelligence, the Canadian psychologist Otto Klineberg administered an array of intelligence tests to "Native American" and "Negro" children and concluded that their comparatively low performance was due to having been raised in cultures that prioritized accuracy over speed.[11] With longer test-times, Klineberg's analysis suggested, the observed differences between Black and Indigenous children and their white counterparts would disappear. After WWII, Klineberg gave expert testimony in the Brown vs. Board of Education trial that ended segregated schooling in the United States and played an important role in the development of UNESCO's race campaigns, which challenged scientific racism. In the context of this ostensibly nonracial domain of knowledge in North America, conceptions of "culture" thus offered alternative ways to theorize human variation that prioritized the role of nurture in producing difference and lent themselves to liberal projects of reform.[12] In applied social science projects, this emphasis on culture and nurture also often aligned itself with projects of assimilation that identified Indigenous and other non-European cultures as backward and used anthropological insights for the purposes of attempting to reengineer these cultures in conformity with Western modernity.[13] By framing Marie-Yvonne's story as one that disproved racist hereditarian theories, Rivet's preface to Vellard's book thus echoed these interwar trends in the human sciences of North America.

To understand Rivet and Vellard's descriptions of Marie-Yvonne, however, we must also examine the influence of intellectual trends from Europe and South America. In Southern Europe (especially France and Italy) and South America, eugenicists mostly rejected rigid Mendelian approaches to heredity

[11] Otto Klineberg, *An Experimental Study of Speed and Other Factors in "Racial" Differences* (New York: Columbia University, 1928); see also Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[12] However, as Peter Mandler's work on Margaret Mead shows, the culture and personality approach experienced considerable challenges when scholars attempted to scale up its conclusions to the level of international relations. See Peter Mandler, "One World, Many Cultures: Margaret Mead and the Limits to Cold War Anthropology," *History Workshop Journal* 68, no. 1 (October 1, 2009): 149–172.

[13] Daniel Morrow and Barbara Brookes, "The Politics of Knowledge: Anthropology and Maori Modernity in Mid-Twentieth-Century New Zealand," *History and Anthropology* 24, no. 4 (2013): 453–471.

in favor of a neo-Lamarckian approach to heredity that emphasized racial improvement through environmental and sanitary reform. This environmentalist approach was often tied to pro-natalist politics concerned with the nurture and care of life.[14] Yet unlike the North American context where this environmentalist framing emerged out of the social sciences and through a rejection of eugenics, in "Latin" countries this environmentalist approach was part and parcel of the eugenics movement and one that was adopted by a wide array of experts including physicians, public health officials, and human scientists. As scholars of Latin eugenics have argued, it was also a style of eugenics that meshed well with Catholic values concerning reproduction and, in some cases, with fascist politics.[15] In France, eugenics grew out of the medical discourse of *puericulture*, which was broadly concerned with a scientific approach to child-rearing. The term was coined in 1865 by a French physician named Alfred Caron who studied the health of newborns out of a concern with "improving the species" and taught courses on the education of young children. Though the term did not initially gain much traction, it was revived and popularized in the 1890s by Adolphe Pinard, the Chair of Clinical Obstetrics at the Paris Medical School. Pinard adopted the term "puericulture" to describe a program concerned with prenatal care for pregnant women.[16] The term gained widespread support in the pro-natalist context of fin-de-siècle France and was also quickly adopted in other Southern European countries and Latin America where legislators and medical professionals adopted French practices for infant well-being and maternal protection as benchmarks for their own societies. By the early 1900s, for instance, physicians from Uruguay, Argentina, Colombia, and other countries established milk stations called "gotas de leche" that were based on French institutions and served as community-based clinics for infant and child health.[17]

In the settler colonial states of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, government officials and experts also embraced environmentalist conceptions of culture and educability as part of an effort to assimilate Indigenous children

[14] Nancy Stepan, *"The Hour of Eugenics": Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); Marius Turda and Aaron Gillette, *Latin Eugenics in Comparative Perspective* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Sarah Walsh, *The Religion of Life: Eugenics, Race, and Catholicism in Chile* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2021).

[15] Walsh, *The Religion of Life*; Turda and Gillette, *Latin Eugenics*.

[16] Pinard adopted and began popularizing the term after he noticed a higher average birthweight for babies born to mothers who had stayed at the "Maison maternelle" – a refuge for homeless pregnant women – that he had founded with philanthropic support. William H. Schneider, "Puericulture, and the Style of French Eugenics," *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 8, no. 2 (1986): 265–277, 267.

[17] Anne-Emanuelle Birn, "Child Health in Latin America: Historiographic Perspectives and Challenges," *História, Ciências, Saúde-Manguinhos* 14, no. 3 (2007): 677–708, 688.

through forced reeducation. Policies of Indigenous assimilation in settler colonial societies were often informed by discourses of racial improvement that bore a similar logic to the arguments put forward by Rivet and Vellard. For instance, as Fiona Paisley has argued, at the beginning of the twentieth century, settler colonial states sought to replace Christian missionaries' concern with the spiritual salvation of Indigenous people with the "racial sciences of mind and body."[18] In Australia and Canada, educators, politicians, and church officials pushed this ideology to an extreme and created a system that forcibly removed Indigenous and mixed-descent children from their families and placed them in boarding schools and foster families, where they were often subject to neglect and abuse.[19] In Australia, this practice of taking Indigenous children from their parents – what are now referred to as the "stolen generations" – garnered strong support from late nineteenth and early twentieth-century anthropologists, physicians, and physiologists who viewed Australian Aboriginals as heading toward extinction and advocated for a policy of "racial absorption" that often targeted "half-caste" children.

Two of the most prominent ideologues of this system were the physician Cecil Cook, who served as chief medical officer and "chief protector of Aborigines" in Australia's Northern Territory, and the civil servant A. O. Neville, who also served as chief protector of Aborigines in Western Australia. Both men challenged policies of racial segregation and instead argued that the best hope for Australia's dark-skinned Aboriginals was full cultural and biological "absorption" into Australia's settler white community.[20] Their stances typified international approaches to Indigenous assimilation and modernization and bore similarities to questions that researchers were asking in Paraguay. Cook envisioned a path to absorption through a program of scientific breeding that targeted "half-caste" girls who he viewed as having inherited the best qualities of both white and Aboriginal "stock." Yet he also viewed aboriginal culture as exerting a negative influence on childhood development and advocated for the creation of a program offering domestic training for "half-caste" girls that would render them suitable housewives for white men in frontier regions. Neville similarly viewed Aboriginal families as incompetent and advocated for the creation of boarding institutions that

[18] Fiona Paisley, "Childhood and Race: Growing Up in the Empire," in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 240–259, 241.

[19] *Canada's Residential Schools: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, McGill-Queen's Native and Northern Series (Montreal: Published for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada by McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015); Peter Read, "The Stolen Generations," Occasional Paper No. l Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, 1982.

[20] For more on Cook and Neville's approach, see Warick Anderson, *Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health, and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006) and Paisley, "Childhood and Race."

would remove Aboriginal children from the supposed negative influence of their families and offer technical and industrial training.[21]

In these settler colonial contexts, race experts thus framed the removal of Indigenous children from their families as a benevolent and even humanitarian civilizing mission that was necessary for the future prosperity of the nation. Such practices thus exemplify Robert Van Krieken's thesis of the barbarism and violence that inheres in civilization discourse.[22]

Captured Children as Research Objects

Anthropological studies of the Aché exemplify the scholarly interest in children and acceptance of removal that featured so prominently in the human sciences of the first half of the twentieth century. While many Indigenous groups in Paraguay and especially the majority Guarani established economic and political relationships with Europeans following the Iberian conquest, the Aché refused to establish relations with both Europeans and neighboring Indigenous groups. The distance that they chose to maintain, stoked speculation about their supposedly barbaric practices and exotic appearance. And it also thwarted ethnographic accounts based on direct observation. Up until the 1960s, instead of direct ethnographic observation scholars relied on captured children as evidentiary sources.

Before the late nineteenth century, the only written account of the Aché came from an eighteenth-century source – a seven-page summary of their culture written by Pedro Lozano, a Jesuit missionary. Lozano based his account of Aché culture on a group of about thirty Aché who had been captured by small groups of *Guarani* who had been sent out by Jesuit priests hoping to settle the Aché in one of the Jesuit reductions.[23] Jesuit reductions were one of the Iberian empire's key instruments of colonization. By establishing settlements in Indigenous territories and enticing or capturing Indigenous populations to live with them in the missions, Jesuits sought to transform the Native inhabitants of the Americas into a productive and Christianized workforce. The reduction where Lozano observed the Aché was one populated primarily by Guarani, who represented the majoritarian Indigenous group in the region and who had historically waged a war of extermination against the Aché. In Lozano's reduction, Jesuit missionaries sent out small parties of Guarani hunters to capture Aché prisoners and bring

[21] Anderson, *Cultivation of Whiteness*; Paisley, "Childhood and Race."

[22] Robert Krieken, "The Barbarism of Civilization: Cultural Genocide and the 'Stolen Generations'," *The British Journal of Sociology* 50, no. 2 (June 1999): 297–315.

[23] Alfred Métraux and Herbert Baldus, "The Guayaki," in Julian H. Steward, *Handbook of South American Indians: Vol. 1* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1946).

them back to the settlements where they could be brought up as neophytes.[24] Lozano's description of Aché culture was thus based on observations of children and teenagers who were captured and raised by Jesuit missionaries.

Given their hostile relations with Guarani groups and Iberian settlers and two major wars in Paraguay, the Aché remained forest-bound throughout the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. They remained purposefully at a distance from the encroaching agricultural settlements and they were known to Mestizos and settlers through the campfires and other remains they left in their forest or through occasional raids of livestock and tools. In fact, in the period between Lozano's study in the late eighteenth-century reduction up until Vellard's visit, direct observations of the Aché were based primarily on captured children who were raised in Paraguayan *estancias*, or cattle ranches.

Kidnapping Aché Children for Science

The research conducted on an Aché girl named Damiana Kryygi in the last decade of the nineteenth century serves as an iconic example of how early researchers relied on captured children as sources. Damiana's story, like that of many other Aché children, also attests to the existence of an informal market for Aché children that encompassed Paraguayan ranchers, neighboring Guarani groups, and European anthropologists. After being captured at the age of two by Paraguayan settlers who killed her parents to avenge the killing of a horse, Damiana became an object of fascination for European anthropologists. During an ethnographic mission in 1896 to study the Aché on behalf of the Museo de la Plata in Argentina, the French anthropologist Charles de la Hitte and his Dutch colleague Herman Ten Kate conducted anthropometric measurements of Damiana's head and took photographs of her while she was in the care of her parent's murderers and described her as sad and sickly.[25] In 1898, Damiana was sent to live in San Vincente, an Argentinian town close to La Plata, where she was raised as a "maidservant" by the mother of Alejandro Korn, the director of the psychiatric hospital Melchor Romero in Buenos Aires. Korn's mother was a German immigrant and in this period Damiana learned to speak Spanish and some German. By the time she was approximately fourteen or fifteen years old, Korn arranged for the director of the Museo de La Plata, the German anthropologist Robert Lehmann-Nitsche, to observe Damiana on two separate occasions. During these visits, Lehmann-Nitsche took photographs of her naked body and conducted a series of anthropometric measurements. Lehmann-Nitsche observed that she had

[24] Ibid.

[25] Katrin Koel-Abt and Andreas Winkelmann, "The Identification and Restitution of Human Remains from an Aché Girl Named 'Damiana': An Interdisciplinary Approach," *Annals of Anatomy – Anatomischer Anzeiger* 195, no. 5 (2013): 393–400.

followed a path of "normal development" until she hit puberty at which point she developed a sexual libido so "alarming" that "all education and punishment on behalf of the family proved ineffective."[26]

Not ones to tolerate such insubordination, the family resolved to send her to Melchor Romero – the psychiatric hospital directed by Korn – where she was looked after by the nurses. Damiana died from tuberculosis shortly after arriving at the hospital and her remains were quickly snapped up for further scientific studies. Lehmann-Nitsche sent Damiana's head and brain as a gift to the German anatomist Hans Virchow, son of Rudolf Virchow, at the Charité hospital in Berlin. Virchow quickly incorporated Damiana's head into the anatomical collection of the Charité and performed a series of dissections on it as part of a comparative study on facial muscle attachments. After publishing a series of papers based on these dissections, Virchow then handed over Damiana's skull to the Charité collection in 1911, where it was kept for the next hundred years as part of its anthropological collection. Lehmann-Nitsche preserved the rest of Damiana's body as a skeleton at the Museo de La Plata, where it was stored away in a cabinet that was only recently rediscovered and identified in 2010. This prompted the museum to return the remains to the Aché who gave her a traditional burial in their ancestral homelands. In 2012, the Charité restituted Damiana's skull, which Aché leaders buried alongside Damiana's remains that had been buried in 2010.[27]

Vellard's Mission: French Ethnology and the Capture of Marie-Yvonne during the Chaco War

Damiana's mistreatment in the name of science was unfortunately not an isolated incident. In fact, abducted children like Damiana feature prominently in the early ethnographic literature on the Aché. In this early literature from the late nineteenth century to the interwar period, anthropologists viewed children like Damiana through the frame of race science and regarded their prospects for improvement as limited by an innate biological inferiority or "savagery."

By the early 1930s, however, when Marie-Yvonne's story begins to appear in the literature, anthropologists had begun to question the biological determinism at play in race science and instead began to adopt redemptive stories that cast Aché children as objects of improvement. This approach to Aché children exemplified a new style of anthropology that emerged in France during the

[26] Robert Lehmann-Nitsche, "Relevamiento antropológico de una india Guajaquí," *Revista del Museo de La Plata* 15 (1908): 92–110.

[27] In 2014, the filmmaker Alejandro Fernández Mouján released a documentary titled *Damiana Kryygi*, which tells Damiana's story and documents the process by which her remains were restituted to her Aché kin.

interwar period and whose adherents proclaimed to have broken with the discipline's racist past. One of the most important figureheads and institution builders within this new anthropology was the socialist Paul Rivet. A military physician by training, Rivet decided to devote himself to the study of anthropology after participating in a geodesic mission to Ecuador (1901–1906), which was a joint venture between French and Ecuadorean militaries and gave Rivet the opportunity to conduct ethnographic and anthropometric work on Indigenous groups in the Andes and Amazon. Dissatisfied by the centrality of physical anthropology and race science in French anthropology from this period, Rivet devoted himself to transforming and modernizing the discipline upon his return to France. Instead of the narrow approach of anthropometry that predominated in turn-of-the-century French anthropology, Rivet worked toward professionalizing the discipline by bringing it in line with the four-field approach that had been institutionalized in the United States and other North Atlantic nations and by raising the profile of ethnographic fieldwork. In collaboration with Marcel Mauss and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and with the financial and administrative support of the French colonial administration, Rivet created the Institut d'Ethnologie at the University of Paris in 1925. In the following years, Rivet, Mauss, and Lévy-Bruhl trained a new generation of anthropologists, including Alfred Métraux who was one of the Institut's first and most distinguished students, and taught them to combine the study of the "social facts" of non-Western cultures with museum work and physical anthropology.

During the interwar period, Rivet further established himself as a powerful figurehead of French anthropology by transforming the imperial nation's major ethnographic museum. In 1928, he was appointed Chair of the Trocadéro ethnographic museum and completely transformed it over the next decade and eventually converted it into the Musée de l'Homme, which opened its doors in 1938. As Alice Conklin has argued, Rivet and Mauss's ambition with the Musée de l'Homme was to create an institution with state-of-the-art research facilities that would gather all the branches of French anthropology under a single roof.[28] It was also meant to serve as an important civic institution that would teach the French public about the equality of all peoples and cultures and thus reflect Rivet and Mauss's socialist and antiracist commitments. Yet, like their previous endeavors, the Musée relied heavily on the financial and institutional backing of the French imperial nation-state and many of its collections came from colonial ethnographic missions like the Dakar to Djibouti mission, where anthropologists collected artifacts under dubious ethical circumstances.[29]

[28] Alice L. Conklin, *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850–1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

[29] See, for example, Phyllis Clarck-Taoua, "In Search of New Skin: Michel Leiris's L'Afrique Fantôme." *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 167, no. 3 (2002): 479–498.

It was in the context of this ambitious project to reform French anthropology and transform its institutions that Rivet developed the idea for an ethnographic mission to Paraguay. An "Americanist" – the term used then to refer to those who studied the Americas – Rivet was a prominent member of the Société des Américanistes de Paris and a regular participant of the yearly meeting of the International Congress of Americanists.[30] Thanks to the extensive South American contacts and correspondents he cultivated through these Americanist networks, Rivet obtained financial and political support from Argentinian, Brazilian, and Paraguayan authorities to conduct the ethnographic mission in Paraguay. Rivet's main goals for the mission were to conduct ethnographic and natural historical studies of Paraguay, especially the Gran Chaco region, and to cultivate closer ties between the scientific communities of Paraguay and France.[31]

At this point, thanks in part to the efforts of Alfred Métraux, the lowland plains of the Gran Chaco (which spanned parts of Paraguay, Bolivia, and Argentina) and its Indigenous peoples were emerging as promising research objects for European Americanists. With Rivet's help, Alfred Métraux became the founding director of the Institute of Ethnology at the University of Tucumán in northern Argentina in 1928. As director of this institute, Métraux sought to emulate Rivet's institution-building efforts in France by turning the Tucumán Institute into the leading center for ethnographic study in South America. To this end, Métraux led numerous expeditions to the Gran Chaco region, where he collected artifacts for an ethnographic museum in Tucumán. Describing the newly created institute at Tucumán and Métraux's efforts, Rivet wrote that "colonial questions" were becoming more and more pressing every day and would only be solved if approached with "a scientific spirit." According to Rivet, it was due to these colonial circumstances that ethnology experienced a dramatic development in France. With the creation of the Institute of Ethnology at Tucumán, he also prophesied that Argentina was now poised to find solutions to its "indigenous problems."[32]

In contrast to Argentina, Paraguay did not have well-developed ethnological institutions at this time, which likely spurred Rivet's interest in sending a mission there. To lead the Paraguay expedition, Rivet chose Jehan Albert Vellard – a physician by training who had spent most of the 1920s in Brazil and had become known to anthropologists in France through his studies of

[30] On Rivet's involvement with the Société des Américanistes, see Christine Laurière, "La Société des Américanistes de Paris: une société savante au service de l'américanisme," *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 95, no. 2 (2009): 93–115.

[31] Jehan Albert Vellard, "Une mission scientifique au Paraguay (15 juillet 1931–16 janvier 1933)," *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 25, no. 2 (1933): 293–334, 293.

[32] Paul Rivet, "L'institut dethnologie de l'Université de Tucumán," *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 25, no. 1 (1933): 188–189, 189.

spider poison, curare, and other Indigenous medicines in South America.[33] Vellard traveled to Paraguay in 1931 and spent two years there. His trip to Paraguay coincided with the Chaco War (1932–1935) – a conflict over the northern part of the region thought to be rich in oil that was fought between the landlocked countries of Bolivia and Paraguay. Many observers consider this war to be the bloodiest armed conflict in Latin America during the twentieth century. During his two years in Paraguay, Vellard made several ethnographic trips to the Gran Chaco, which followed Rivet's goals of gathering ethnographic and natural historical data and establishing links between French and Paraguayan scholars.[34] More narrowly, Vellard's missions had the purpose of conducting ethnographic studies on the "least known tribes" of Paraguay and gathering objects for the Trocadero Ethnographic Museum and for the Musée de l'Homme.[35] Vellard's missions thus advanced Rivet's agenda of updating France's ethnological institutions and were similar to missions that Rivet helped to organize in other colonies and regions where France exerted political influence. These missions include the Dakar to Djibouti mission in Africa and the Easter Island (Rapa Nui) mission in the South Pacific, which also enjoyed the patronage and support of Paul Rivet.[36]

During his fieldwork in Paraguay, due to the Chaco War, Vellard required guidance and help from Paraguay's president, the Minister of War, and various military officials and armed guides, who advised him on his itineraries and shepherded him through regions where armed conflict was erupting.[37] For his first trip to the Gran Chaco region, Vellard collaborated with the Russian general Juan Belaieff. Belaieff had been recruited by the Paraguayan minister of war and navy to conduct a reconnaissance mission and ethnographic census of the Chaco, which gave Paraguay a tactical advantage in its war with Bolivia. Belaieff had previously trained in military science and ethnography and had

[33] Readers of Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques* will recognize Vellard as the medical doctor who accompanied him in his ethnographic mission to the Nambikwara. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John Russel (New York: Criterion Books, 1961), https://archive.org/details/tristestropiques000177mbp/page/n363.

[34] Diego Villar, "Les Expéditions du Doctor Vellard," in *Les Années folles de l'ethnographie: Trocadéro 28–37*, eds. André Delpuech, Christine Laurière, and Carine Peltier-Caroff (París: Muséum national d'histoire naturelle, 2017), 536–579.

[35] Alice L. Conklin, *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850–1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013); Christine Laurière, *Paul Rivet, le savant & le politique* (Paris: Publications Scientifiques du Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, 2008).

[36] Christine Laurière, "Un lieu de synthèse de la science anthropologique: histoire du musée de l'Homme," in *Bérose – Encyclopédie internationale des histoires de l'anthropologie* (Paris, 2019) www.berose.fr/article1680.html?lang=fr.

[37] Vellard, "Une mission scientifique au Paraguay," 293–334.

conducted several ethnographic studies in the Caucasus of Russia.[38] When Vellard joined him in the Chaco region in 1931, Belaieff had already established relations with Indigenous groups in the region and when war broke out he advised Paraguayan soldiers to rely on Indigenous people from the regions as guides. With Belaieff's input, Vellard drew up a plan to study the least known Indigenous groups from the region. With the support of the military barracks built in the region and a Mestizo sergeant who served as his guide, he spent three and half months collecting as much anthropometric and linguistic data, and material artifacts, as he could.[39]

Vellard did not last long in the Gran Chaco. His report of the mission described the region as desolate and neglected and during the month or so that he stayed he encountered regions where the fighting between the Paraguayan and Brazilian militaries impeded fieldwork. His only notable ethnographic achievement during this time was a brief encounter with the Maká tribe whom he described as very hospitable. According to Vellard, the Maká were also eager to exchange goods with his crew and would demand "big gifts" in exchange for the smallest object "without having the slightest notion of the value of things."[40] Despite these differences, Vellard eagerly reported that he quickly gained the Maká's trust and was thus able to gather "a nice collection for the Trocadero."[41] Yet after traveling to the town of Nanawa at an ill-fated time when fighting between the Paraguayan and Bolivian armies had killed hundreds of civilians in the region, Vellard grew increasingly disillusioned with his Gran Chaco fieldwork. He was eventually arrested by the Paraguayan military for reasons unknown to him and, after having his firearms taken away, escorted back to Asunción where he plotted a second expedition to a less turbulent region.[42]

After his unrewarding fieldwork in the Gran Chaco, Vellard decided to travel to the region inhabited by the "Guayaki Indians" (the name formerly given to the Aché by anthropologists) whom Rivet had flagged as a group that was "little known" and "highly interesting" since they were difficult to access.[43] For this trip, Vellard secured the help of the wealthy Balanza family who owned a large estancia (ranch) situated at the entrance of the forest where the Aché roamed. The Balanza family consisted of the sons of a French botanist named Benjamin Balanza, who had made several collecting trips to Paraguay

[38] Bridget María Chesterton and Anatoly V. Isaenko, "A White Russian in the Green Hell: Military Science, Ethnography, and Nation Building," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 94, no. 4 (2014): 615–648.
[39] Vellard, "Une mission scientifique au Paraguay."
[40] Ibid., 303.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., 307.
[43] Ibid.

for the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in the late nineteenth century and bought property. His sons turned the terrain into an industrial farm.[44] To Vellard's good fortune, the Balanza brothers proved to be very generous hosts who supported his fieldwork in numerous ways. According to Vellard, they lent him horses to travel into the forest, helped him to recruit men who could serve as his guides, and shared all manner of useful information on the region. Thanks to their help, Vellard was able to settle in a small ranch even closer to Aché territory, which was owned by one of the Balanza brother's employees, and the brothers sent weekly provisions for Vellard and his guides.[45] The success of Vellard's fieldwork in Paraguay was thus dependent on the relations and exchanges he established with people who possessed knowledge of the region as well as material resources and social connections.

Though it proved more rewarding than his Gran Chaco fieldwork, Vellard's descriptions of his Aché research reveal a context similarly marked by violence. Through Rivet described Vellard's account of his Aché research as "beautiful," Vellard's narrative was often framed as a difficult "hunt" through the forest peppered with fleeting moments of violent contact.[46] Given his lack of experience with the territory, Vellard relied on a team of Paraguayan laborers from nearby ranches and Indigenous guides from a nearby mBwiha village that he described as "semi-civilized." At the time of Vellard's fieldwork, relations between the Aché, Paraguayan ranchers, and the mBwiha had grown tense due to a recent bout of Aché raids on neighboring ranches where they killed several cattle, horses, and sheep. Both the Paraguayan laborers and the mBwiha guides viewed the Aché with a combination of fear and hostility. As they pursued the Aché through the forest, Vellard and his crew thus resolved to always keep firearms and machetes on hand. Yet Vellard's crew found it incredibly difficult to observe the Aché in any meaningful way. The Aché were constantly foraging and hunting for food and incredibly skilled at concealing their tracks. Vellard and his crew thus found it nearly impossible to observe them directly or establish direct contact. Much of their time was spent searching aimlessly for signs of their presence while attempting to maintain their energy and morale.

After several failed attempts to establish "friendly relations," Vellard and his crew gave up on the idea of direct contact and instead resolved to observe the Aché camps from a safe distance and to raid them at opportune times. Yet the raids of the Aché camps did not always go as planned and even descended into

[44] Villar, "Les Expéditions du Doctor Vellard," 543.
[45] Vellard, "Une mission scientifique au Paraguay," 313.
[46] I have derived the following descriptions from Vellard's published accounts of this mission. See Vellard, *Civilization du Miel*, 41–67; Jehan Albert Vellard, "Exploration du Dr Vellard au Paraguay," *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 24, no. 1 (1932): 215–218; Vellard, "Une mission scientifique au Paraguay," 293–334.

violent skirmishes on two occasions. Although they failed to establish amicable relations with the Aché, Vellard and his crew used these violent encounters to collect material artifacts that were sent back to the Trocadero Museum in Paris and offered a small window into the Aché's way of life. And it was during these two violent encounters that Vellard and his crew adopted two Aché children – Marie-Yvonne as well as a young Aché boy who they named Luis.

Vellard described the team's first violent encounter, which led to his adoption of Marie-Yvonne, as a significant breakthrough in their journey. On this occasion, Vellard's team found "fresh evidence" pointing to the presence of an Aché group nearby. By following this trail of evidence, Vellard's team approached the Aché without being detected and found a hiding spot that they surmised was about 100 meters away from the Aché camp based on what they could hear in the distance. In the light of the next day, Vellard's team drew closer to the Aché camp and hid in the forest, which prompted their mBwiha guides to flee fearing a violent response from the Aché. Vellard's team was able to observe the Aché from a distance over the course of a day. When they attempted to get even closer the next day, they were spotted by Aché hunters who quickly fired a sea of arrows in their direction. Before "orders could be given," Vellard's men began to fire their guns in response to the Aché, thereby injuring one of their men and prompting the entire group to flee. Once the group had fled, Vellard and his crew quickly descended upon their camp and collected as many objects as they could. At this point, the Paraguayan laborers accompanying Vellard became increasingly difficult to control and spoke of "massacring the lot of them."[47] Eager to avoid "unnecessary violence," Vellard resolved to bring his team back to their main camp. Over the course of their return journey during the next two days, they were closely followed by Aché hunters who occasionally fired arrows at them, which Vellard's men returned with gunfire. When they finally arrived at the small house that they were using as their base, Vellard's men were joined once again by the three mBwiha guides who had previously fled. Vellard's three "fugitive guides" brought back their own spoils from a raid of another Aché camp, namely, a pot of honey, a coati, and a baby girl whose mouth they had stuffed with dead leaves after "tying her feet and hands together."[48] After some prodding from Vellard, the mBwiha confessed that the inhabitants of the camp they raided consisted of two women and the baby, and that they intended to rape the two women and instead captured the girl when the women fled, with the intention of selling her.[49]

Vellard and his crew captured Luis, an Aché boy, during similarly violent circumstances on what would be their last encounter with the nomadic group.

[47] Vellard, *Civilization du Miel*.
[48] Vellard, "Une mission scientifique au Paraguay."
[49] Ibid.

Vellard's crew encountered Luis after a botched raid on an Aché camp that led the camp's inhabitants to flee after Vellard's men resorted to gunfire and injured one of the Aché men. Luis was not able to flee with the rest of the camp and instead decided to follow Vellard and his men on their return journey to their ranch. According to Vellard, Luis did not demonstrate any desire to find his relatives, and he left him at the Balanza ranch under the care of the family. However, Vellard concluded that Luis was not as intellectually gifted as Marie-Yvonne. Although Luis helped him to produce a vocabulary of Aché words, Vellard noted that the boy's attention would tire very quickly. Vellard similarly noted that although the boy had a highly developed "visual memory," he did not seem to have great skill in retaining "strange words and sounds" and was slow to learn Spanish and French.

Having decided to keep Marie-Yvonne and leave her in the care of his mother, Vellard also had to decide what to do with Luis. While the decision to keep Marie-Yvonne seemed easy, Vellard struggled to figure out what to do with Luis. Though he left him in the care of the Balanza brothers, he also offered Luis to Rivet and asked for his advice as to what to do with him. Yet when he wrote to Rivet, it was not the boy's well-being that seemed to be Vellard's main concern but rather how he might best be incorporated into an ethnological research program. Indeed, Vellard reported to Rivet that he planned to study the boy by taking photographs and x-rays of him and, if possible, by measuring and weighing him. Yet he also asked Rivet if he had any recommendations for specific studies to conduct on the boy and wrote "or do you want him? Is there any interest in keeping him with me for studying his development?"[50]

Vellard normalized the capture of Marie-Yvonne and her adoption by explaining that many ranchers from the region had purchased Aché children in similar fashion and that they treated them "very well." Indeed, Vellard explained that Aché children could be bought for 200–300 Paraguayan pesos. In his book on the Aché and in one of the scientific articles he published, Vellard devoted an entire section to descriptions of Aché children who were raised on ranches.[51] Here Vellard noted that in addition to the well-documented case of Damiana, at least four other captured children had been observed by anthropologists; he had also learned of at least five other children in nearby regions who lived with Paraguayan settlers. Although most of these children adjusted well to their new surroundings and often learned multiple languages, Vellard noted that in some cases they developed "unstable personalities" later in life and were prone to disappearing for days to "vagabond in the forest."[52] On the basis of these observations, Vellard felt inclined to offer

[50] Quoted in Villar, "Les Expéditions du Doctor Vellard," 550.
[51] Vellard, *Civilization du Miel*, 131–139.
[52] Ibid., 134.

some general reflections on the "character" of Aché children raised in "more or less civilized environments."[53] In general, Vellard concluded, Aché children raised in these circumstances tend to be "soft, docile, affectionate, very fearful, generally intelligent (several speak two languages and frequent school)." Yet after puberty, in some instances, they become "volatile, restless, and inclined to take flight."[54]

From his earliest publications on the Aché, Vellard expressed a keen interest in studying Marie-Yvonne and Luis's physical and intellectual development and how they adjusted to their new environments. And like many human scientists from the interwar period, Vellard framed the observations and measurements he made on captured Aché as ones that offered insights on the nomadic group's distinctive racial type and immunological profile. In his first article on the Aché, Vellard explained that he was closely following Marie-Yvonne's development now that she was under his mother's care and that he was confident that this would yield some "valuable observations." He also mentioned that the Balanza brothers would keep him up to date on Luis's development and on his adaptation to "civilized life."[55] In another article, where he offered detailed notes on the physical type, character, and state of health of the captured Aché children, Vellard also summarized his observations and measurements of another Aché girl living on a ranch whom he called Fortunata. Based on the direct observations and measurements he made of Marie-Yvonne, Luis, and Fortunata as well as the facts he could glean from the accounts of previous researchers who had studied Aché children like Damiana, Vellard affirmed the prevailing orthodox view that the Aché represented a highly homogenous racial type. "Coloration of the skin, hair, and irises," were the only traits that Vellard discerned to be "highly variable."[56] After observing that Marie-Yvonne and Luis, like many other captured Aché children, quickly succumbed to various respiratory illnesses after encountering non-Aché, Vellard also confirmed the views of previous writers that the Aché were highly sensitive to "contact with civilized people." Yet in contrast to previous writers who speculated that such sudden onset in illness stemmed from dietary changes, Vellard insisted that it stemmed from a much "deeper cause," namely, ". . . the absolute lack of immunity against many germs, in particular the pneumococcus, against which the civilized have a great resistance."[57]

Decades later, Vellard returned to the observations he made on captured Aché children in an article on the "Biological Causes of the Disappearance of

[53] Ibid., 138.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Vellard, "Une mission scientifique au Paraguay," 139.
[56] Jehan Albert Vellard, "Les Indiens Guayakí," *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 26, no. 2 (1934): 223–292.
[57] Ibid., 276.

American Indians." In this article, Vellard argued that the demographic collapse of Indigenous populations in the Americas occurred primarily due to biological forces and that the use of systematic violence and cruelty by Iberian colonizers played a minimal role. According to Vellard, the disappearance of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas occurred due to a lack of immunity to European diseases that was itself a by-product of geographic and biological isolation. One of the key pieces of evidence that Vellard used in these accounts were the stories of the captured Aché children he had encountered and written about. As he looked back to his experience with Marie-Yvonne and Luis, Vellard framed the diverging trajectory of these two children as a sort of natural experiment. According to Vellard, Marie-Yvonne's fortune stood in stark contrast to those of other captured Aché children. Although Marie-Yvonne contracted pneumonia shortly after her capture, she was also vaccinated against tuberculosis and ever since enjoyed a normal and illness-free development even after traveling to major city centers. Marie-Yvonne's story thus demonstrated that if Indigenous children are "artificially" placed in civilized conditions and vaccinated for diseases then their development will be equivalent to those of civilized children. By contrast, Vellard described Luis's fate as a tragic one. Like Marie-Yvonne, Luis also contracted pneumonia a few days into his "life with civilized people" yet he did not receive a vaccine against tuberculosis. As a result, Luis suffered from poor health for the rest of his life and eventually ended up succumbing to tuberculosis.[58] For Vellard, the stories of Marie-Yvonne and other Aché children thus served as object lessons for how vaccination could reduce the biological distance between Indigenous and European populations who had acquired immunity through hereditary mechanisms, in other words the "biological shock of European conquest." Through these historical narratives, Vellard ultimately identified biological forces as the main causes of demographic collapse and thus minimized and denied the historical responsibility of European colonizers, an early version of what David Jones has aptly called "immunological determinism."[59]

Marie-Yvonne's Life as a "Lesson for Humanity"

For Vellard, Marie-Yvonne's story thus served as an object lesson for the immunological adaptation of Indigenous groups to modern civilization. By contrast, for Vellard's colleagues like Rivet and Métraux, who were plugged into internationalist antiracist networks to a much greater degree, and for

[58] Jehan Albert Vellard, "Causas biológicas de la desaparición de los indios americanos," *Boletín del Instituto Riva-Agüero* (Pontifica Universidad Católica del Perú) no. 2, 1956.

[59] David S. Jones, "Virgin Soils Revisited," *William and Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (October 1, 2003): 703.

American journalists, Marie-Yvonne's story was framed as a striking example of the benefits of cultural assimilation. While Vellard's narrative displaced European agency through immunological determinism, these contrasting accounts of Marie-Yvonne's story amplified European agency by casting European scientific experts and educators in the role of civilizers.

In the hands of Rivet and later in a UNESCO article, Marie-Yvonne's story stood in stark contrast to Damiana's. Unlike Damiana who was described as reverting to a state of "savagery" once puberty hit, Marie-Yvonne's story was one of permanent transformation. In the case of the UNESCO article, Marie-Yvonne's story was further couched in a language that suggested the influence of the individualized and psychologically oriented research program of the behavioral sciences. Within this ostensibly nonracial regime of truth Marie-Yvonne's story became a morality tale about how to escape the trappings of a culture doomed to poverty and stagnation. This redemptive framing of Marie-Yvonne's story can be most clearly observed in an article published in the *UNESCO Courier* in 1950, which was titled "An Indian Girl with a Lesson for Humanity." The article was penned by Alfred Métraux – one of Paul Rivet's most accomplished students – who directed UNESCO's campaign against scientific racism during the 1950s. In his article, Métraux argued that had she not been adopted at the age of two, Marie-Yvonne would have been condemned to a "primitive and rudimentary culture" that wanders "at large in the forest" hunting animals and gathering fruits and whose way of life is "very little different from that of the first bands of men who colonized the empty spaces of South America thousands of years ago."[60] Yet by virtue of being "brought up exactly as a white girl," Marie-Yvonne became "an attractive, intelligent girl of twenty and a typical product of the cultural environment in which she has lived for 18 years." For Métraux, Marie-Yvonne's story was precisely the kind of evidence that could be used to convince the "layperson" of the arguments put forward in the 1950 Statement on Race. Above all, Métraux argued, Marie-Yvonne's story proved one of its central arguments, namely, that ". . . given similar degrees of cultural opportunity to realize their potentialities, the average achievement of the members of each ethnic group is about the same."[61] Despite the violent circumstances described in Vellard's account, journalists, educators, and Métraux thus adapted the story of Marie-Yvonne's capture into a feel-good tale about bridging the temporal chasm between modern and primitive life.

This redemptive framing also persisted in other popular accounts of Marie-Yvonne's life. For instance, in 1960, *Reader's Digest* published a four-page story penned by the California journalist Reese Wolfe, which described Marie-

[60] Alfred Métraux, "An Indian Girl with a Lesson for Humanity," *UNESCO Courier* 3, no. 8 (1950): 8.
[61] Ibid.

Yvonne Vellard's life as "the remarkable story of a child who, born of Stone Age people, bridged a gap of 5,000 years to become a twentieth-century scholar."[62] Like Métraux in the *UNESCO Courier*, Wolfe's story relied on a framing that equated social, spatial, and temporal distance – an imperial trope that postcolonial theorist Anne Mclintock refers to as the production of "anachronistic space." Yet in a postwar context in which a booming US economy gave rise to the liberal ideal that everyone could prosper regardless of their race, Wolfe framed children as potent symbols of upward social mobility who had the ability to escape a damaging culture. For instance, Wolfe's story noted that "ethnologists" like Vellard knew that an "infant from a primitive environment, brought up as a modern child, readily adapts to civilization."[63] As such, Vellard's encounter with Marie-Yvonne offered an unprecedented chance to "witness this remarkable transformation" and Wolfe mused that when Vellard first saw her she was a rare "baby born into a tribe still living in the Stone Age!" Like Métraux, Wolfe also obfuscated the violent circumstances surrounding this encounter. Indeed, Wolfe's story did not mention Vellard's guides' hostility toward the Aché and instead implied that Marie-Yvonne had been rescued from tragic circumstances. "Her emaciated body, the tell-tale bloat of her belly, the long red weals on her coffee-brown skin, bore eloquent testimony to hunger and abuse," lamented Wolfe. By appealing to temporal tropes such as being born into the Stone Age and highlighting signs of ill-health, Wolfe, like Métraux, implied that Marie-Yvonne was destined to suffer if she were to remain with her birth family.

Wolfe's article also offered a much fuller portrait of Marie-Yvonne's intelligence and astonishing transformation into a "twentieth-century scholar." During her first few days in Asunción where she was looked after by Vellard's mother Amèlie Vellard, Marie-Yvonne was silent and fearful and "clung fiercely" to all of her possessions even while asleep. She also resisted Vellard and his mother's attempts to teach her French. Yet after weeks of effort, her adoptive grandmother noticed her repeating the same word in a low voice and then later burst into her room to "triumphantly" declare "Grandmère!" multiple times. From this point on, Marie-Yvonne quickly acquired more and more words and soon became fluent. She became a fixture in the Vellard family and stayed with them as they relocated first to Brazil, where she became fluent in Portuguese, and then Peru, where she learned Spanish. With her grandmother's support she learned to read and write at an early age and "adapted herself to numerous schools, never failing to receive high marks."

[62] Reese Wolfe, "The Girl from the Stone Age," in *Reader's Digest*, vol. 76 (August 1960), 43–48.
[63] Ibid., 45.

According to Wolfe, it was at the age of fourteen, when Marie-Yvonne accompanied Jehan Vellard on a field trip to study an Aymara community on the shores of Lake Titicaca that her transformation into a scientist began in earnest. During the first day of Vellard's mission, the Aymara community shunned the team and did little to make them feel welcome. "They stood in the doorways of their hovels in hard-eyed silence and watched their intruders," wrote Wolfe. Deflated by the poor reception, Jehan decided that they were best off camping for the night outside the village. Marie-Yvonne, on the other hand, "sensed the Indian's hidden pride and fears" and became determined not to be refused by them. She thus approached a group of "sullen-faced Aymaras" and told them in a mixture of Spanish and the few words of their language she had learned that "she came from an Indian tribe in the far-off jungles to the south" and that she had been adopted and raised by the "white man" who had come to study them.[64] According to Wolfe, after Marie-Yvonne's impassioned plea the "sullen" Aymaras "stirred uncertainly" until one of the women finally beckoned them to come in. Having established a rapport, Jehan and Marie-Yvonne then spent the summer living among "their new friends" and learning about "their daily lives, their fiestas, [and] their sacred ceremonies."[65] After this first taste of fieldwork, explained Wolfe, Marie-Yvonne became certain that ethnology was her calling. "She began to learn the painstaking art of scientific observation and note taking," wrote Wolfe. And she also quickly became adept at learning to communicate with "the tribes she studied." By the age of twenty-one, after four years of "distinguished work" at the Instituto Riva Agüero, a Peruvian research institution, Marie-Yvonne obtained a degree in ethnology. With her training complete, she continued traveling with her adoptive father on ethnographic trips that purportedly took her as "far afield" as Tierra del Fuego and "to Eskimo Villages near the Arctic circle."[66] And in the spring of 1959 Marie-Yvonne began her own series of independent studies, which took her to a remote village in the Peruvian Amazon where she told the Indigenous inhabitants that "their special ways of weaving, cooking and pottery-making would soon be lost if no one made a record of them."[67]

Territorial Confinement and the Golden Age of Aché Research

Almost a decade after Métraux published his story in the *UNESCO Courier*, a Paraguayan rancher named Manuel de Jesus Pereira succeeded in "pacifying"

[64] Ibid., 47.
[65] Ibid., 48.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

two Aché groups, who came to live on his ranch. Pereira captured the first group in 1959 and the second group in 1962, doing so with the help of neighboring settlers known for "hunting" the Aché. Pereira also persuaded the Aché who were living with him to track down and capture members from other forest-dwelling Aché groups and bring them back to his ranch where they were "pampered and then released to bring in the others of their group."[68] By 1963, Pereira had convinced the Aché from two major groups to live under his protection and was given a government post and salary to administer this newly created "reservation."

After these groups of Aché settled on Pereira's ranch, more than half of their population died from disease under Pereira's watch. Yet despite these violent circumstances, anthropological research on the Aché blossomed thanks to urgent appeals made by Alfred Métraux. From this moment forward, anthropologists and human biologists began to visit the Aché more regularly and for much longer periods. They no longer had to rely on captured children as sources of evidence. Despite this change in circumstances, subsequent experts continued to center children and the study of childhood in their research regimes. This is particularly evident in Carleton Gajdusek's genetic studies, which he conducted while serving as director of the "Study for Child Growth and Development and Disease Patterns in Primitive Cultures" at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Maryland.[69]

Perhaps not surprisingly, scientific research on the Aché spiked in the subsequent years. Upon the recommendation of Alfred Métraux, anthropologists Pierre Clastres, Helene Clastres, and Lucien Sebag – three of Claude Lévi-Strauss's most promising students – traveled to Pereira's reservation to conduct detailed ethnographies of the Aché. For Pierre Clastres, although he lamented that they were destined to disappear, the Aché became exemplars of societies "against the state" and the kernel for a new research program in "political anthropology" that would help transform French political thought after 1968.[70] In the period that the Clastres's and Sebag did their fieldwork on the Aché reservation, Métraux also met the human biologist and Kuru researcher Carleton Gajdusek and encouraged him to visit the Aché.[71] With the help of

[68] Kim Hill and H. Magdelena Hurtado, *Aché Life History: The Ecology and Demography of a Foraging People* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1996), 49.

[69] Daniel Carleton Gajdusek, *Paraguayan Indian Expeditions to the Guayaki and Chako Indians, August 25, 1963 to September 28, 1963* (Bethesda, MD: National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness, National Institutes of Health, 1963).

[70] Pierre Clastres, *Chronicle of the Guayaki Indians* (New York: Zone Books, 1998); Pierre Clastres, *Society against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology* (New York: Zone Books, 1987); Samuel Moyn, "Of Savagery and Civil Society: Pierre Clastres and the Transformation of French Political Thought," *Modern Intellectual History* 1, no. 1 (2004): 55–80, doi:10.1017/S1479244303000076.

[71] Gajdusek, *Paraguayan Indian Expeditions to the Guayaki and Chako Indians*.

the Clastres's and Sebag, Gajdusek collected numerous blood samples of Aché children and adults, which he later published as part of a larger study comparing the genetic markers of Indigenous groups throughout Paraguay.[72]

Yet as more researchers began to visit the Aché and spend longer stretches of time with them they also grew less passive in the face of violence. During the 1970s, the plight of the Aché began to attract international scrutiny when several anthropologists and legal scholars accused the Paraguayan government of promoting an intentional government policy of genocide against the Aché.[73] Although activists warned of their imminent demise, the Aché endured and began attracting a new set of US-based biological anthropologists in the 1980s, who were trained in human ecology and interested in understanding the fertility and mortality patterns of "hunter-gatherer" and other "unacculturated, technologically primitive" populations in an effort to understand the degree to which their demographic curves differ from those of "modern populations."[74] Since the early 2000s leading Aché specialists and human ecologists, Ana Magdalena Hurtado and Kim Hill, have played a prominent role in combating what they view as "antiscientific" attacks on anthropology (such as the controversies sparked by the publication of journalist Patrick Tierney's *Darkness in El Dorado*) by articulating more robust ethical guidelines for anthropological fieldwork on Indigenous communities. Yet their interventions have often been guided by the colonial narrative of Indigenous peoples as "vanishing" populations in need of salvage. A key component of their ethical strategy has been to question the self-determination framework adopted by many nations toward Indigenous peoples and to instead emphasize the need for greater "epidemiological surveillance" of Indigenous groups and "controlled contact" with "isolated" or "uncontacted groups." In advancing these proposals, Hill and Hurtado often cite the case of the Northern Aché as a model of "well-designed" and controlled contact led by missionaries, anthropologists, and physicians who were able to provide medicine and care to Aché members who became ill.

Conclusion

In August of 2008, at the height of the pink tide (leftist electoral victories) that swept through Latin America, a forty-seven-year-old Aché woman named

[72] Stephen M. Brown et al., "Genetic Studies in Paraguay: Blood Group, Red Cell, and Serum Genetic Patterns of the Guayaki and Ayore Indians, Mennonite Settlers, and Seven Other Indian Tribes of the Paraguayan Chaco," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 41, no. 2 (1974): 317–343.

[73] Richard Reed and John Renshaw, "The Aché and Guaraní: Thirty Years after Maybury-Lewis and Howe's Report on Genocide in Paraguay," *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 10, no. 1 (2012): 1–18.

[74] Hill and Hurtado, *Aché Life History*.

Margarita Mbywangi was appointed Minister of Indian Affairs by President Fernando Lugo. After her ministerial appointment, Mbywangi attracted, much like Marie-Yvonne, considerable international attention and her story was retold in a wide range of news outlets including the *Guardian*, the *Financial Times*, *El Pais Uruguay*, and *Indian Country Today*. She had also been abducted in childhood; unlike Marie-Yvonne, however, Mbywangi's circumstances gave her much greater control over her own narrative. Though there were certainly outlets that describe Margarita's life as a straightforward redemption story, she also gave extended interviews where she told her story with greater complexity. For instance, Margarita gave an interview published in the *Financial Times* magazine where her narrative struck a delicate balance between describing the damage she suffered at the hands of Paraguayan settlers and the desires that prompted her to eventually become a leader within her community and a national politician.

In her biographical interview with the *Financial Times*, parts of Mbywangi's story share some troubling similarities to the stories of captured children that populate the Aché ethnographic archive. At the age of five, she was captured by Paraguayan ranchers who sold her for 5,000 *guaraníes* to a family of ranchers with ten children, who adopted Margarita as their servant. With help from one of her adopted "sisters" who worked as a teacher, Margarita enrolled in school and attended until the fifth grade yet was unable to continue because she had no birth certificate. At the age of sixteen, Margarita escaped from her adopted family and began working as a domestic servant. In contrast to the stories of other Aché children, Margarita's account offers a revealing portrait of her attitude toward her adopted family, which is something we can only infer in Marie-Yvonne's story. In her narrative, Margarita strikingly describes her relationship to her adopted family in strictly transactional terms. "I called the lady who bought me 'Mum'," she explains in her interview "but I cleaned the house and looked after the grandchildren." Throughout her interview she refers to her adopted siblings in quotes – "I called them my 'brothers' and 'sisters'" – and she also points out that, unlike her, "none of them worked, they studied." Her narrative also describes a stark contrast in the affection she received compared to her adopted siblings. "I wore their hand-me-downs but I never had any presents and no one ever showed me love," she explained. "I was a servant."[75] From Margarita's perspective, a story that non-Indigenous actors like Vellard and Métraux might have framed through the benevolent terms of adoption and kin-making is revealed instead to be a harsh economic project of forced removal and servitude.

[75] "First Person: Margarita Mbywangi," *Financial Times*, July 3, 2009, www.ft.com/content/1f4e11f4-6475-11de-a13f-00144feabdc0.

Yet Mbywangi's account also departs from the stories of captured Aché children like Damiana and Marie-Yvonne insofar as it describes her escape from Paraguayan society. After fleeing her adopted family at the age of sixteen she found a job at a bar where she was eventually recognized by one of her "brothers" who then attempted to have her arrested. After this incident, Margarita returned to her adopted family but then escaped for good and spent the next two years tracking down her birth village with the help of a priest. She was then able to return to her village at the age of twenty. When she returned, one of her "real brothers" recognized her, but she was no longer able to speak Aché. She struggled to adapt to sleeping around a fire without blankets and questioned why she had come back. She "became an alcoholic." Yet she eventually re-learned her language and completed a nursing course. By the time she gave her interview she had proudly become the cacique (chief) of her community, Kuetuvy. Leading up to the 2008 elections, leaders of the Tekojoja movement that backed the leftist President Fernando Lugo asked her to run for the senate and although she did not win, Lugo asked her to become Minister of Indigenous Affairs. Yet she did not thrive in this position. "I consider myself a leader but I think politics is dirty," she explained "and it was hard being in an office all day." After a few months in office, she left her post yet continued working with the Tekojoja movement as well as with an association of Aché communities. Although she found it difficult to balance her political career with family life – she is the mother of three kids – she also believed that her service would pay future dividends for her community. "But this work gives me strength to give to others what I never had: love and a family."[76]

Mbywangi's trajectory thus marks an important departure from the stories of captured children that populate the Aché ethnographic archive. Whereas her political and personal desires feature prominently in her story, the prevailing assumption of most early ethnographic experts was that the Aché would be irrevocably damaged, or even destroyed, through contact with "Western" civilization. As this chapter has shown, the fact that Aché children were routinely captured and sold as domestic servants was one that ethnographers from the first half of the twentieth century described as matter of fact but did little to oppose. Such passivity in the face of violence, this chapter argued, factored prominently into the ways that ethnographic experts constructed their moral and professional duties. As modest witnesses, they framed their moral duty as one to observe, preserve, and collect the traces of what they presumed to be a vanishing people and thereby implied that there was little they could do to stop the Aché from disappearing let alone thriving. Such fatalistic narratives persisted well into the 1960s and can be observed in the

[76] Ibid., 2.

work of Pierre Clastres, who described how the Aché population had collapsed after his stay and was "eaten away by illness and tuberculosis, killed by a lack of proper care, by lack of everything." For Clastres, the dwindling of the Aché's population demonstrated that the "whole enterprise that began in the fifteenth century is now coming to an end" and that "an entire continent will soon be rid of its first inhabitants."[77] The example of Clastres, who was an anarchist, as well as his French predecessors such as Rivet and Métraux who were prominent antifascists and antiracists, demonstrates that such fatalistic damage narratives coexisted with progressive and internationalist politics. Mbywangi's personal narrative thus accentuates and renders visible the colonial ideologies that persisted within well-intentioned scientific discourses well through the latter half of the twentieth century.

[77] Pierre Clastres, *Chronicle of the Guayaki Indians. Translated by Paul Auster* (New York, Cambridge, MA: Zone Books; Distributed by MIT Press, 1998), p.96.