

From devil's concubines to devout churchgoers: women and conduct in transformation (Jesuit-Guarani reductions in the 17th Century)

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes an analysis of how native Guarani were represented, based on the records of missionaries who, from their cultural and social condition and through colonization and conversion projects, defined certain stereotypes and suggested an evolutionary standard for the conduct of native women. From their initial representation as devils' helpers, inciters of prurient carnality, these women came to be portrayed as those who, throughout the Jesuit-Guarani reductions, disseminated Christian moral values through their exemplary behavior.

Keywords: Women; chroniclers; representations.

Introduction

Despite the lack of extensive discourse on gender and native ethnicities, authors such as Tzvetan Todorov,¹ Blanca López de Mariscal² and Ronald Raminelli³ address first impressions of native women in Hispanic and Portuguese America using the reports of colonists, travelers and missionaries. Among the significant works on native women of the Andean region, Ana Maria Lorandi's and Mercedes Del Rio's⁴ work deserves special mention, as do Bartomeu Melià,⁵ Ana Díaz de Guerra⁶ and Beatriz dos Santos Landa,⁷ studies of Guarani women,

¹ TODOROV, 1999.

² MARISCAL, 1997.

³ RAMINELLI, 1997.

⁴ LORANDI e DEL RIO, 1992.

⁵ MELIÀ, 1988a.

⁶ GUERRA, 1991.

⁷ LANDA, 1995.

discussing both the role women played in society and the changes brought about the advent of colonization and evangelization.

The first impressions of the Guarani⁸ women from the old Province of Paraguay⁹ come from the 20th century travelers Cabeza de Vaca (1555) and Ulrich Schmidl (1567) who emphasize their participation in the reception of visitors: "...they arrived at a Guarani Indian site where they were met by the chief and even the women and children who showed great pleasure in receiving them".¹⁰

Perceiving the native women's charm, the travelers highlighted their beauty and sexual freedom, while displaying incomprehension at the social standards of the Guarani: "the women are beautiful in their way and go about completely naked. They transgress. [...] These women are very beautiful, great lovers, affectionate and with ardent bodies, it seems to me".¹¹

Observations and recriminations with respect to polygamy¹² gradually gave way to the exploitation of the native women by the Spanish, with little thought for conscience or moral quibbling. Fr. Francisco González Paniagua appeared to be scandalized when he chastized the Spanish of Paraguay for outdoing Islamic customs: "Mohammad and the Koran allow up to seven women and here there are some with up to seventy, since the Christian who is happy with four Indians is so because he couldn't have eight and he who has eight because he couldn't have sixteen and so on upwards".¹³

Of the native practices polygamy was without doubt the one which required the most attention from the missionaries sent to the Americas, in the sense that it was the one practice which the chiefs were adamant would not be halted given its importance in terms of power and prestige. When the Jesuit missionaries implanted the reduction project,¹⁴ they confronted this

⁸ The first ethnographical reports relating to the Guarani date from 1528 and consist of Luis Ramires' Letter which identifies them as cannibals and warriors.

⁹ The Province of Paraguay occupied a far greater area in colonial times than the current republic of Paraguay. Named after the river that runs through it, it stretched between Brazil and Peru, until the Rio da Prata and the Atlantic Ocean.

¹⁰ Alvar Núñez CABEZA DE VACA, 1984, p. 165-166.

¹¹ Ulrich SCHIMDL e Nikolaus FERDERMANN, 1986, p. 154.

¹² It is noteworthy that in Christianity the sexual act is associated with evil, with sin, with lapse and death, hence its defense of monogamous marriage and sex purely for procreation. It is worth remembering that Christianity imposes wide reaching codes regarding the locations, partners and gestures permitted or prohibited. Rigorous abstinence, permanent chastity and virginity also possess a high moral and spiritual value.

¹³ Apud Efraim Cardozo, 1989, p. 80. As Bartomeu Melia already highlighted "the image of the Guarani which comes from some clerics who were at the Paraguay conquest reproduce, in part, the very vision of the conqueror, but also differ from it, through the specific intention these priests have with regard to the natives and their conversion" (Meliá 1987, p. 23).

¹⁴ The term reduction was employed in three manners in America: in some cases, for the process of congregating Indians in settlements and also in the assembly of villages based on geographical or missionary motives. In this article, the term reduction will be understood in a wider sense, designating Guarani Indian villages in the process of conversion or already converted. It is worth remembering that the reductions were not limited to the concentration of Indians in villages but also to submitting them to "political and human life", leading them to abandon certain behavior contrary to Christian religious morality, such as cannibalism, polygamy and nudity.

custom; in spite of recognizing its centrality to the Guarani culture, they were firm in their insistence that only one wife was permissible.

The 'Companhia de Jesus' obtained a license from the 'Conselho de Indias' to work in the Hispanic dominions in 1566, but approval to send missionaries came only in 1588. In 1593, the year the Jesuit Province of Paraguay separated from the Province of Peru, four priests and two brother helpers arrived. Their stay was short, given both the practical difficulties encountered and the extension of the Province. The directives for the Jesuit missionary work with the Guarani were defined in the 1st 'Concílio do Rio da Prata' (Counsel), in 1603 and in the 1609 and 1610 Instructions of Fr. Diego de Torres Bollo. The historiography of the reduction experience¹⁵ in the Jesuit Province of Paraguay reveals stereotypical visions of Guarani natives, in so far as "researchers limit themselves in general to the repetition and commentary of the chroniclers of the era".¹⁶ Using Jesuit documentation, especially the *Cartas Ânua*s (annual reports sent to the General Priest of the 'Companhia de Jesus' by the Provincial Priests) and Fr. Antonio Ruiz de Montoya's¹⁷ work entitled *Conquista espiritual* (Spiritual Conquest) in 1639 we can glean valuable information regarding the first contact between the Jesuits and the Guarani and get a picture of the roles the Guarani women had both initially in Guarani society and later within the reductions.

Relevant to this reconstitution is the definition and diffusion of certain stereotypes with regard to the women in so far as they come to be viewed as devout and exemplary churchgoers rather than the devils' concubine helpers and inciters of lasciviousness and carnality.

Based on missionary records, the present article proposes an unveiling of the discursive strategies that Jesuit priests employed to obtain and value the transformation of Guarani conduct, especially that of women, and to highlight key representations¹⁸ in Jesuit documentation.

¹⁵ The Jesuit reductions constituted in one single period, an occupation strategy of determined border territories over which the Spanish crown planned control, the implementation of taxes and a strategy of civilization and conversion through the 'Companhia de Jesus'.

¹⁶ Bartomeu MELIÀ and Liane Maria NAGEL, 1995, p. 107.

¹⁷ The principal work of this missionary is a paper published in Madrid in 1639 which recounts his mission activities among the Guarani of Guairá. It was written to be delivered to the King of Spain and included in the case against the Paulista pioneers responsible for the destruction of Jesuit reductions in the valleys of Rio Paranapanema and environs. It provides us with valuable information for the study of this first stage of Jesuit installation in the regions of Meridional Brazil and Rio da Prata. It is worth stressing that the work is characterized for its valorization of the "extraordinary successes"- by the divine intervention and action of the devil- such as those referring to dreams, visions, premonitions, cures and divine punishments. The Jesuit missionaries that wrote about the Guarani were acting existentially and ideologically in a procession, meaning that the ethnographic discourse should not be read outside this context (MELIÀ, 1986, p. 97).

¹⁸ For Roger Chartier the representations are "determined by the interests of the group that forms them" and by the social position of those who enunciate, being diversely learnt, manipulated and understood. In this perspective the discursive practices should be taken as "producers of ordainment, affirmation of distances and of divisions" (CHARTIER, 1990, p. 17 and 28).

Women who incite sin - moral condemnation

The Guarani woman, being brought up to carry out tasks to ensure good social relations, “not just for her but her parents, family, future mother and father-in-law, brothers-in-law”, was also the “basket carrier, wild fruit collector and harvester of the farm’s produce”.¹⁹

With respect to the relevance of the social and religious roles performed by the Guarani women the practice of polygamy is a recurring theme, leading Antonio Ruiz de Montoya to state that “there is wide evidence to suggest that the Guarani didn’t have the “perpetual woman”²⁰ and that the “virtue of virginity, chastity and celibacy were ignored to the extent that they were viewed as something unfortunate or undesirable”²¹.

The missionaries like the other travelers before them, attest to the involvement of the Guarani women in anthropophagic rituals, in singing to welcome visitors and in manifestations of grief.

On the occasion of a husband’s death the women “throw themselves from a height sometimes injuring themselves seriously or even dying as a result”,²² yet welcome visitors and those returning from travels with demonstrations of happiness and song, “and surrounding the guest, without having said a word, begin their lament for their loved ones, their deaths, deeds and exploits performed during their lifetimes, the good fortune and bad luck that had passed”.²³

According to Montoya as soon as the captured prisoner arrived at the Indian village “they fed him, giving him freedom to choose the food and women he desired”.²⁴ The provision of women to the prisoner was in compliance with the Guarani social code and lent a prompt and grandiose dimension to the anthropophagical ritual, which also consisted of a moment of name giving, a ceremony akin to baptism in which “the women give their children a bit of porridge from the breast and then give them their name, it is a very popular festival carried out with great ceremony”.²⁵

The Jesuit also relates the difficulties encountered in maintaining chastity vows in the face of the common native practice of offering women as a reaffirmation or reestablishment of friendship or alliance ties when stating that

... the demon tempted our purity...., the chiefs offering us their women while asserting their feeling that men carrying out domestic chores such as cleaning, sweeping and so on went against nature.²⁶

So as to avoid the pitfalls arising from their proximity to the women of the villages²⁷ the Jesuits took measures to enclose their living quarters

¹⁹ MELIÁ, 1988 A, p. 80.

²⁰ MONTOYA, 1989, p. 52.

²¹ MONTOYA, 1985, p. 87.

²² MONTOYA, 1989, p. 78

²³ MONTOYA, According to the anthropologist Bratislava Susnik, in times of war, “the women sing bellicose anthems, promoting victory, the betrayal of captives bringing adverse results for the enemy”. (SUSNIK, 1990, p. 44)

²⁴ MONTOYA, 1989, p. 77.

²⁵ MONTOYA, 1989, p. 78.

²⁶ MONTOYA, 1985, p. 56.

²⁷ Supported by scholasticism the missionaries considered the feminine form an abominable drapery of the soul, a dangerous territory, a place of temptation, a receptacle for sins. For women all that left was the atonement of their sins through contemplation, continence and through the domestication of their desires. Considering them dangerous

[...] to impede the entry of women in our house: a measure which drew shock and admiration. But, being barbarian, they did not consider it honorable since they prided themselves on having many women and offspring: which has become a not uncommon occurrence among the gentiles.²⁸

Maintaining this custom demanded more emphatic preaching on monogamous marriage, which provoked a reaction from part of the natives: "...we honor the way of life of our predecessors and have had enough of these priests so we can enjoy our women and our freedom"²⁹

Refusing to be baptized or Christian marriage, many fled the reductions or adopted the strategy of hiding their concubines and children, while living apparently normal lives in the reduction in accordance with Christian norms. Montoya relates the case of Chief Miguel who caused a great scandal among the converted natives because he refused to give up his concubine. Eventhough he kept her hidden everyone in the reduction knew it. The warning given to the chief led him to affirm that he would kill the priests and abandon- "overcome with his vile affection" - his people and his true female companion to live in the forest with she who, according to Montoya, was responsible "for the loss of his soul". The manner in which she was viewed changed only when, after Miguel's death she returned to the reduction where she did penance and "achieved a happy death".³⁰

With the fleeing of polygamous husbands and the abandonment of their first partners, generally older, there came to be a number of abandoned women who were sent to the "cotiguazu", a special retirement place in each reduction where the women dedicated themselves to the production of cotton fabric.

Preoccupied with the question of the procedures to adopt for the celebration of weddings, the Jesuits consulted Breve Romani Pontificis de Pio V (1571), who established that an Indian could marry the woman with whom he was baptized whether or not she was his first wife. Some Jesuits however opted to respect Bula de Paulo III (1537), obliging the Indians to marry their first wife.

Overall there were no general rules established in relation to the subject and it is known that the freedom afforded the chief in his choice of wife facilitated the evangelization process. The wedding was celebrated when the chief allowed his ex-concubines to unite with other partners from the village, which added sincerity to his proposal. Montoya recounts that one of the chiefs, struck down by the word of God, had brought him six concubines saying he could put them wherever he wanted as they "would never set foot in his house again". Another, who had various women, sought out Montoya to tell him of a dream in which he was injured in the back

Fr. Diogo de Torres Bollo suggested that, in the reductions, bells should be installed to avoid women entering their living quarters without an audible warning (Arthur RABUSKE, 1978, p. 27).

²⁸ MONTOYA, 1985, p. 56.

²⁹ MONTOYA, 1989, p. 83. It is worth remembering that, as was the case for baptism, the natives misinterpreted the sacrament of marriage, associating it with death. This led to their fear of it.

³⁰ MONTOYA, 1985, p. 81- 82

and ordered to marry immediately. The priest married them and “they lived many years with the guarantee of salvation and leaving three children as the heirs of their virtues”.³¹

To guarantee the practice of monogamous marriages the Jesuits made use of the threats of divine punishments in the event of the Indians returning to polygamy or illicit relations. Despite being unaware of the Western principle of moral responsibility and what were considered to be the implications of sinful conduct, the Guarani came to fear divine retribution if they broke the rules for good living in the reductions. The threat of hell and demons, in the majority of cases, produced surprising results in terms of conversion, as evidenced in this passage from the Fr. Montoya’s 1628 ‘Carta Ânua’:

Another similar case tells of an Indian being close to death when a demon came to torment her about her sins and the threat of going to hell. Because the demon continued to torment her for several days, she responded that she had heard the priest say that the sin of infidelity could be forgiven through baptism because the demon continued to torment her for some days. The priest advised her to persevere with her faith and to use it to defend herself if the demon returned.³²

In relation to the non-observance of the sacrament of marriage, the 1637-39 ‘Ânua’ makes reference to the divine retribution that befell an adulterer: “A certain Christian, who was legitimately married, abandoned his wife for another and went back to his native village with the illegitimate partner.

On the journey, while they were sleeping, there came a tiger that administered justice by killing the man, as the more guilty party, and forcing the woman to convert”.³³

The control of the Indians’ sexuality through the threat of divine punishment is also mentioned in the 1644 ‘Ânua’: “There was a good but very libertine lad who in one day had sinned five times; but divine punishment arrived that very day when he fell seriously ill...his genitals became inflamed”.³⁴

Sensuality, especially feminine, was presented by the missionaries as endangering salvation. The ‘Cartas Ânuas’ linked the women to the condition of immoral sinners as in these entries for the ‘Ânua’ of years 1637 and 1639 where they are described as “old and tied to the past ways, manipulating the others, as witches would. They appear in public with unkempt hair, throw themselves to the ground facing upwards, bite the ground, moan and howl”³⁵ emphasizing that “the women of this land are....drunkards, with their faces painted horribly they dance quite abominably”.³⁶

³¹ MONTOYA, 1985, p.68

³² 32 MANUSCRITOS DA COLEÇÃO DE ANGELIS (M. C. A. I.), 1951, p. 275.

³³ 33 M.C.A. I, 1951, p. 134-135

³⁴ Carlos LEONHARDT, 1927, p. 92.

³⁵ DOCUMENTOS PARA LA HISTORIA ARGENTINA (D.H.A.), 1927, P. 497.

³⁶ Cartas Ânuas from the Paraguay Province, 1637-1639 (Ernesto MAEDER, 1984, p. 170). In Guarani culture the songs and dances constitute inseparable manifestations, in that they invoke prayers. The missionaries however describe them in the following manner:...repeating certain movements indefinitely dispelling the limit of individuality, and many in trance and communicating with the supernatural, it isn’t rare that the eyes....they sing and dance- and let out shouts and jump like lunatics and become agitated like epileptics” (Daisy RÍPODAS ARDANAZ, 1987, p. 249).The justification for moderating emotions comes from this perception as does the normalization of actions, the elimination of inconvenient conduct and the valorization of new bodily posture codes, such as bowing in front of a saint in a sign of respect, walking in a certain form in a procession, among others.

The natives of the reduction are not described as sinners just for having illicit relations but also for inciting others to sin:

There was a virtuous and open Indian lad...who found his bed invaded by one of these women and who with his sanity and Christian values, jumped as if bitten by a snake when he discovered it. The demon, irked at being beaten, asked for the heart of another going from one reduction to another and with the promise of food for the trip set up a situation where a young lad in a deserted isolated house had to flee attempts at his purity leaving behind the insolent lass, confused and fooled.³⁷

Emerging from the constant and determined action of the missionaries, in their attempts to combat polygamy, came an observation of what constituted suitable conduct for the Indians themselves, as in this passage which shows us not only divine intervention but also the control, exercised by another person and the reinforcement of self control:³⁸

...the poor Indian, on his way out of his house fell dead at the door much to the shock of all and lesson to many. ...The old mother of these Indians, aware of the punishment God had sent to her young lad, brought her daughters together to scold them but knowing her other daughter was having an affair with her brother in law went to her son-in-law's house and with a stick proceeded to beat her two daughters. After coming through the village to find her other daughter in the Indian's house, she also beat her so much she lay injured while her mother said: Now you won't be a concubine anymore. The Indian quickly came to the priest to excuse himself saying he didn't know what his parents' customs were but that knowing it was wrong he didn't want to keep them on and in so doing he rid himself of the women and all was remedied.³⁹

The efficacy of the strategies led Fr. Montoya to affirm that “these Indians recognize the good that has come from their acceptance of faith and civilization and, as in other reductions, have rid themselves of the common shackles of women”.⁴⁰

The reports also stress situations in which the native women showed “extraordinary resistance to the sin of dishonesty”⁴¹ or have opted to abandon “a repetitive sin that held them”⁴² and through confession they banished sin and followed in virtue. The phrases “strength of character of the men” and “decency of the women” are recurrent, leading to the affirmation that the “characteristic vices of the Indians: the fighting, incest, concubines” had been eliminated⁴³

³⁷ Carta Ânua of 1632-1634 (MAEDER, 1990, p. 106).

³⁸ Arno Alvarez Kern emphasizes that within the family the parents were the ones responsible for the chastity and morals of all its members. In the collective spaces, it was public militia guards who patrolled the roads and houses at night, keeping watch over the more secluded areas, such as the fountains and trails (KERN, 1982, p. 261-279).

³⁹ M. C. A. I., 1951, p. 268.

⁴⁰ MONTROYA, 1985, p. 188.

⁴¹ MONTROYA, 1985, p. 180.

⁴² MONTROYA, 1985, p. 178.

⁴³ LEONHARDT, 1927, p. 12 and 14.

The Fourteenth 'Carta Ânua', referring to the period 1635 to 1637, emphasizes the employment of bodily mortifications by both women and men with the objective of purging sins: "Bodily mortifications were used to preserve blessed purity.[...] Even the girls are so taken with penitence that on arriving home from their labors, they hide to whip themselves in private".⁴⁴

The 1637-1639 'Ânu' makes another reference to the women's virtue who "before letting themselves be taken by sin ...seek to dominate their passion with bodily flagellations".⁴⁵ The active participation of the women in the processions through the mournful choruses and the practice of flagellation is also referred to:

With mournful voices the women and children invoke God's mercy, responding mutually in chorus.....The men go out and the women come in...disciplining themselves with no less feeling than the men".⁴⁶ The control of the body and its sensations was viewed by the missionaries as a sign of virtuous living and the defeat of the devil's noxious acts. Above all the natives who made up the religious congregations⁴⁷ needed to behave in an exemplary manner, not only in relation to everyday obligations but also in their moral virtues. Chosen for their virtues they were given greater responsibilities, enjoyed privileges and were an example of moral conduct and self control to be observed in the reductions since they "say the rosary everyday, whip themselves and use the cilice all week, talk to the women with their eyes lowered, as the Jesuits do, and go to confession regularly. They are also the most diligent of spies for the sins of others: reprehending the guilty party and making a report to the missionaries".⁴⁸ The 1637-1639 Ânu recorded the expulsion of a congregant for morally deviant behavior which led to a profound melancholy and to his suicide, followed by the ripping apart of his body by beasts, a fact attributed to divine justice: "A horrible example of divine justice, which left everyone shocked and promoted the careful conservation of good customs".⁴⁹

In this sense the congregations played an important part, both in the control of the libido and the exaltation of virtuous Indians, "by means of the Virgin Congregation fruit was borne in the form of the many and illustrious victories of its congregants over the devil and sin and some Indians have let themselves be dragged and bloodied with blows and strikes so as to avoid staining their souls with vileness of sin".⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Carta Ânua of 1635-1637 (D. H. A., 1927, p. 719).

⁴⁵ Carta Ânua of 1637-1639 (MAEDER, 1984, p. 106)

⁴⁶ Carta Ânua 1635-1637 (D. H. A., 1927, p. 702-703).

⁴⁷ The religious congregations were lay organizations of the faithful founded around the image of a saint, whose task was to promote devotion and to organize festivities and processions. Chosen for their virtues the members of the congregations were graced with the privilege of occupying the first rows in the churches and central position in the processions, as well as a more elaborate funeral and a separated place for their burial. Their members were, above all, to stimulate pious and exemplary behavior and to strengthen moral virtues.

⁴⁸ Maxime HAUBERT, 1990, p. 181-182.

⁴⁹ Carta Ânua of 1637-1639 (MAEDER, 1984, p. 109).

⁵⁰ Carta Ânua of 1632-1634 (MAEDER, 1990, p. 123).

In the São Carlos Reduction there occurred a paradigmatic example, where a pious Indian keen on showing his love of chastity understood that “the head of hair let loose in the wind could serve to trip up another and so cut it which, given how much the women admired it, was no mean feat [...]”.⁵¹ Attitudes as radical as this would be used as examples to the others in the reductions.

Sometimes the internalization of this conduct question reached exaggerated heights, as in this case where the congregant suggested chastity to his recently married bride:

If you would like to collaborate with my determination, I will know that you love me and that you must choose me as your husband. Do not ignore this as it is my wish to keep my body clean so that my soul remains pure. I have never known a woman in that way and I don't want to lose this jewel. If it pleases you we may live as brother and sister until the end of our lives, this for me would be the greatest proof you could give me that you really love me. You have already heard what the priests tell us about purity, its beauty and reward. The way they talk about the ugliness of this vice, that drags down those it affects making them crazy. Consider it well because our time in this life is short and the other is eternal; extremely short is the sin and infinite its penalty. And even though matrimony is good and right, it is better, as the priests, say to live in purity.⁵²

According to another missionary, the fear of death without having been baptized had the effect of provoking people, especially women, to seek out the sacrament: “Women began to come out of the mountains, running to the church and the old women of 70, 80 and even 100 years...aware now of the life of the soul urged me: Father, baptize us, make us daughters of God since we may die”.⁵³

This report has a special significance as it represents a fundamental change from the previously cited Fourteenth ‘Carta Anua’ (1635-1737) in which the older women were seen as instigators, as those who set a bad example: “It is the old women tenacious in their clinging to the old ways that are a bad influence, acting like real witches”.⁵⁴

Women who dream and preach- the example of virtue

Within Jesuit documentation, what draws special attention are the records that tell of near death situations and of the occurrence of visions and dreams linked as much to “dreamt deaths” and “apparent resurrections”, as well as “miracle cures”, through which conduct and

⁵¹ Carta Anua of 1641-1643 (MAEDER, 1996, p. 32)

⁵² MONTOYA, 1985, p. 180-181.

⁵³ Apud Pablo PASTELLS, 1912, p. 166.

⁵⁴ Carta Anua of 1635-1637 (MAEDER, 1924, p. 622).

behavior were altered, not only in the women who had the experience but also in the other natives of the reduction.⁵⁵

Indians reporting of these dreams evoked in the missionaries memories of their own theological learning- oriented to a large extent to mystical sensorial meditative experiences- which contributed to an approximation of the languages and interpretations of these experiences.⁵⁶ The recording of the dreams was, however, marked by a new language and symbology, in so far as some were selected and were imbued with meanings conducive to the project of conversion to Christianity.

In Guarani society, the power and prestige of a Guarani prophet came from the value attributed to his capacity for dreaming and verbalizing his dreams. In the Jesuit-Guarani reductions, the value placed on this capacity persisted and was subjected to reinterpretations, as evidenced by this passage from *Conquista espiritual* in which Fr. Montoya records the preaching that follows the apparent resurrection of a woman:⁵⁷

This good woman went about the place calling on the people of the village to be more loving and charitable, telling them to always go to mass, carry out good deeds, help the poor and comply with God's teachings. [...] She spoke marvelously of the ugliness of sin, of the merits of virtue, the horror of hell, the fear of judgment as well as what God wanted and the beauty of his glory.⁵⁸

Fr. Montoya emphasizes the effects of these “successes” or “edification things”, describing them as “spectacle of total devotion”, in which “a young woman...who had become a preacher and apostle of her people...spoke for ten hours: which provoked in me a definite admiration in knowing and seeing the continuous preaching and proclaiming of the Kingdom of God”.⁵⁹

A recurring aspect of these ‘resurrections’- and which pervades the Jesuit documentation of the period analyzed- is the solemnity observed while dreams were being verbalized and disclosed. The record we selected comes from the *Ânu* of 1641 to 1643, and emphasizes the receptivity of the Indians in relation to a woman presented as a new preacher:

⁵⁵ The Guarani showed enormous attachment to visions which for them were the embodiment of the authority and prestige of their bearer. The recounting of dreams was a common activity, the dream narratives being elaborated from a recognized symbolic ‘corpus’ for the interpretation of determined occurrences.

⁵⁶ The fact that the Guarani attached so much importance to their dreams led them to socialize their oneiric experiences, creating social situations for their dreams to be told, as well as providing social roles for those who listened to and interpreted them. Susnik, in an article on native culture and its social organization within the Jesuit missions, observes that the music, the religious and symbolic dances, and the prayers sung made the occasions suited to psycho-emotional release on individual and collective levels. Furthermore, since the new emotional standard was based on purely striking and audiovisual factors, these expressions were a pleasant task (SUSNIK, 1984, p. 16).

⁵⁷ The missionaries were aware of the importance of sermons so that “the Indians wait to see and hear the demons, even if the curiosity incited them to see them” (MONTROYA, 1985, p. 73). The “very convenient public demonstration” occupied an important place in reduction liturgy. The sermons lasted hours and made use of images and passionate rhetoric, with the objective of impressing the listeners. The magician’s preaching was described as a “great harangue, in elevated voice” (MONTROYA, 1985, p. 50)

⁵⁸ MONTROYA, 1985, p. 151.

⁵⁹ MONTROYA, 1985, p. 156. It is interesting to observe that in Jesuit discourse, women assume functions previously reserved exclusively for male prophets and shamens, preserving attributes of a rhetoric and performance specific to the masculine world of Guarani society.

“among the many who died in the reduction as a result of pestilence there was an Indian who was left for dead by the disease for some eight hours; once these hours had passed she recovered...the congregants, and others gathered around to hear what the new preacher had to say and became so moved that the churches began to fill up everyday as in time of celebrations with confessions as numerous as in Jubilee time.⁶⁰

In another entry, a missionary makes clear the important role played by dreams in the examination of conscience and of the spiritual purification through the confession of sins:

A certain immoral Indian was so obstinate that she avoided confession. God had mercy on her without her giving him reason. She saw, as she later told, a beautiful boy who took her by way of some precipices to a deep and terrible well from which came sad moaning and horrible howls. She saw black monsters that turned around dense clouds and fire that were producing sparks in the abyss. The boy then said to the Indian: that's where they'll throw you if you don't repent for your dirty sins and confess. The boy disappears and the Indian awoke. The following morning she went straight to the church, told what she had seen and, with great pain in her soul, confessed her sins.⁶¹

Hell is presented in such a vivid and terrible form that it seems to constitute an unchallenged explanation not only for confession but the internalization of the permanent threat leading Indians to experience it in a concrete fashion.⁶²

Reports of resurrections impress, not just for their frequency but also for the discourse which, through representations of Heaven and Hell, unfolds in references to practices of devotion and respect for Christian teachings, as registered by Fr. Montoya in the 1628 'Carta Ânua':

Another similar case tells of an Indian being close to death when a demon came to torment her about her sins and that she would have to go to hell. She responded that she had heard the priest say that the sin of infidelity could be forgiven through baptism because the demon continued to torment her for some days. The priest advised her to persevere with her faith and to use it to defend herself if the demon returned.⁶³

There is another record of a young woman who, presumed dead for three hours previously, 'began to show signs of life'. When relating her experience she described a vision of "a troop of ugly demons" who had come to meet her, "armed with some kind of prongs" with

⁶⁰ Carta Ânua of 1637-1639 (MAEDER, 1984, p. 96). MONTOYA, 1985, p. 156.

⁶¹ Carta Ânua of 1637-1639 (MAEDER, 1984, p. 96).

⁶² The Spiritual Exercises recommend: "It is very convenient that we enter Hell and feel in our very senses what he who resides there suffers for impurity"; "touching Hell's fire I will seek the sensation of the flames roasting souls" (apud Alexandrino MONTEIRO, 1950, p. 71-78). In the face of the procedures involved in this Spiritual Exercise of Meditation one can understand the mysticism which played a part in the Jesuits work in the Province of Paraguay, as well as the repercussions for the natives. To die a sinner meant to go to Hell, where the soul would suffer eternal torment. To die without mortal sin aided in the soul's salvation.

which they wanted catch her, "but a beautiful Angel" had defended her and "with a sword of fire set the demons alight".⁶⁴

The record continues with references full of images that the resurrected woman used in her report, such as fire, dogs, serpents and demons, characteristic of the western, Christian imagination that she had internalized: "This Angel guided me to hell, so that I could see the shocking fire that the condemned had to suffer. ...there I heard dogs howl, bulls snort and snakes hiss, introducing the demons [...]"⁶⁵

In contrast with the demons, the apparition of the saints and angels always seeks to transmit the idea of tranquility, beauty and harmony, being associated with the absolution of sins, the cure realized or the guarantee of a good death, as this report of a supposedly resuscitated native suggests:

Around midnight they saw that the departed began to show signs of life.... As soon as I left this life I was taken to hell where I saw an horrendous fire that burns and doesn't give light, causing great fear. I saw some of those who died but who had been among us and whom we all knew. They suffered a lot of pain. ... soon after they brought me to heaven, where I saw Our Lady, so beautiful, resplendent, and beautiful, so adored and served by all and in her company were innumerable beautiful and beaming Saints ... There everything is beautiful and rich [...].⁶⁶

The apparition of saints to native sinners is also a recurrent and effective strategy for the admission of guilt, leading to confession and repentance:

A certain woman wanted to be admitted but examining her conscience to purify it with a general confession...she fell asleep and, in the dreams, the Virgin appeared to her reprimanding her over her sins....with this she awoke and thought the warning correct. Remorseful, happy and grateful to the Virgin, she confessed her sins⁶⁷

Visions of God and the angels and stories claiming that the converted natives deceased were already in heaven, where they enjoyed great glory, promoted the kind of conduct the missionaries were seeking to instill.

From there ... the Angel showed me a vision of the glory of the blessed. I saw God himself in his splendid throne, surrounded by infinite blessed ones. [...]. There was one shone infinitely more than the fire, but without burning... I was able to recognize many people from the reductions among whom were the three priests who died in Guairá in their great glory. [...]. Father, do not tire of showing the way to heaven.... Oh, do not sin! Oh, love God with all your heart! Oh, stay

⁶³ M. C. A. I., 1951, p. 275.

⁶⁴ MONTOYA, 1985, p. 154.

⁶⁵ MONTOYA, 1985, p. 154.

⁶⁶ MONTOYA, 1985, p. 151.

⁶⁷ MONTOYA, 1985, p. 178.

true to the commandments! So you will be content at the hour of your death!⁶⁸

The dissemination of dreams and visions attributed to the recently cured or revived and the mystical atmosphere which pervaded the reports during the masses were resources which were widely used by the missionaries in achieving and maintaining the Guarani spiritual and behavioral model.⁶⁹

The missionaries, clearly impressed, provided proof of the natives' adoption of recommendations made by visionaries and those resuscitated: "at night the repenters came through the streets and even in front of the church whipped and lashed themselves. It was overall a great stimulant for everyone, principally for the congregants [...]"⁷⁰

Fundamental for the construction of this particular religious sensibility in the Jesuit-Guarani reductions, the testimonies of the visionaries and resuscitated, with women and children standing out, not only stimulated practices- such as fasting, penance and repentance- but also determined the enthusiastic participation of the natives in masses, religious festivals and processions.

Final considerations

In Montoya's first reference to the women in his work *Conquista espiritual* the missionary establishes an association between woman and demon, when reporting that a "chief, magician, enchantress and relation of the devil" were helped by "four of the dearest concubines".⁷¹ In his first reference to devout women of pristine body and pious conduct he makes mention of a native who gave her body and soul in devotion to the Virgin.

There followed more accounts of women resisting masculine assaults, women who resuscitated and who did not die without receiving confession. *Conquista espiritual* records the "civilization of conduct and of the affections" that was ongoing among the Guarani in the reductions. The *Ânuia* of the same period, penned by Francisco Lupércio de Zurbano, not only highlighted that "the devout women bravely resisted all provocation" but that the impure, provocative women were discouraged in their conduct by men who jealously guarded their chastity. This aspect can be observed in this episode in which a native remembers: "Don't forget to pray each day to Our Father: Do not let us fall into temptation".

A similar entry is made in the Provincial in 1643, in reference to the San Ignacio de Paraná Reduction, that "there was no shortage of those who when propositioned by impure men travelling between Asunción and Corrientes resisted firmly saying that they had received the Blessed Sacrament and could not betray their Lord[...]".⁷²

⁶⁸ MONTOYA, 1985, p. 154.

⁶⁹ The reports accentuate the emotional tension, the tragic atmosphere and the charismatic ardor that enveloped these situations. Despite being the result of a process of "meaning construction" by the natives, in the Jesuit discourses the shows of devotion are presented as indices of an adhesion to Christian values and as a public expression of the interiorization and assimilation of the "civilization of the attachments and conduct" intended by the missionaries.

⁷⁰ MONTOYA, 1985, p. 156 For the Jesuits the spirit was imprisoned in the body, therefore the necessity to control and restrict the physical action, the senses, desires and wishes so that the soul is allowed develop in a suitable manner.

⁷¹ MONTOYA, 1985, p. 49. With respect to the association between woman and demon, Jean Delumeau develops an interesting study of the demonization of women (see DELUMEAU, 1996, p. 310-349).

⁷² Carta *Ânuia* of 1641-1643 (MAEDER, 1996, p. 79).

On the Santa Maria la Mayor Reduction, the missionary affirmed that “ many women from this reduction have defended their purity, to their cost, from bad men, keeping God and thorns between them and the lilies”⁷³ and moreover, that the blessed power of the women is great, in that they would prefer any martyrdom to being tarnished with sin [...]”⁷⁴

Such conduct was valued and exalted by the priests as a norm to be followed by all the women, as evidenced by the tributes made to one native who was killed while resisting sexual assault, in the Apostolos Reduction:

The priest came to hear of the case and sent for the body which was dug up... and brought it to the village where everyone gathered in the church where the body was placed in a coffin specially made for this purpose, carried by the main caciques and captains with organ music and chorus ..she was buried in the bigger altar beside the Evangelical with great solemnity and the next day being the festival for the Apostles San Pedro and San Pablo added more importance to the deed of the good Indian and after when I arrived at this reduction I gave a solemn mass in the name of this Indian so that the others could see the estimation we held for the virtue and constancy of this good Indian.⁷⁵

After these considerations the Provincial declared his satisfaction- and also his amazement- in meeting a woman “who yesterday had been unfaithful, yet let herself be killed in the defense of her chastity”.⁷⁶ It was noted that the enthusiasm and the images in praise of the variety of cases of this nature differ greatly from the manner the missionaries appraised the non-Christianized.

This situation indicates the valorization of chastity and sexual continence while also showing that preaching and public eulogy were not sufficient to impede initiatives that strayed from the established. While there were women who performed physical mortifications to purge their physical needs, there were also men and women who disobeyed these teachings. Despite the terrifying sermons, physical hardships and "divine punishments" which were launched at those who strayed from what the missionaries had established, Jesuit documentation reveals that deviant conduct continued.

An illustration of this kind of behavior and of the pressures sinful women went through- to the point of abandonment/death of newborns born out of wedlock- is of an Indian "...who covered the mouth of her infant with dry clay so it could not cry, then threw it in the bushes to be eaten by tigers. She being more savage than the tigers”.⁷⁷ Another who “had had her child against the commandments of God” abandoned the infant in the field where she had hidden to give birth.⁷⁸

It is interesting to observe that as the documentary references to the success of the Jesuit project intensify, the women gradually assume another function, with new representations.

⁷³ Carta Ânua of 1641-1643 (MAEDER, 1996, p. 94).

⁷⁴ Carta Ânua of 1637-1639 (MAEDER, 1984, p. 170).

⁷⁵ Carta Ânua of 1641-1643 (MAEDER, 1996, p. 106).

⁷⁶ Carta Ânua of 1641-1643 (MAEDER, 1996, p. 120).

⁷⁷ Carta Ânua of 1637-1639 (MAEDER, 1984, p. 170).

⁷⁸ Carta Ânua of 1641-1643 (MAEDER, 1996, p. 118).

From their previous position as devils' helpers, inciters of prurient carnality, the women come to be represented as those who express their repentance, through their example, disseminating Christian moral values. The female face becomes associated with references to civilized conduct, devoted participation in ceremonies and Christian practices:

Another Indian was going to church to hear a sermon. On the way the spirit of filth assaulted her with ugly imaginings, making propositions of consent and intention....the Indian went before a portrait of the pure Virgin to pray ... she then came to see her wrongdoings and, full of remorse at the mercy given her, cried burning tears that washed away her guilt so that she could then confess herself.⁷⁹

More than faces lost among the masses, processions and religious festivals, the women expressed their adherence to life in the reduction through their pious bodies, encouraging- to the satisfaction of the missionaries- the reproduction of their conduct among the other Indians.

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⁷⁹ Carta Ânua of 1632-1634 (MAEDER, 1990, p. 63).

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