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Popular Religion, Death, and Nation in Paraguay

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Summary and Keywords

Like many topics in Paraguayan history, the subjects of popular religion and death are under-researched. And yet, if we can conclude anything about them, experiences involving popular religion and death, like many cultural aspects in Paraguay, have intersected with experiences of nationhood. We find many historical and present-day manifestations of this, most conspicuously in language, which inevitably also draws our attention to questions of syncretic religious legacies. Still today most Paraguayans speak Guaraní, a vernacular of indigenous origin. This language itself is a colonial product of the "spiritual conquest," whose subsequent role in galvanizing popular participation in two postcolonial wars has long been noted. In fact, perusing national monuments and local cemeteries today draws us to a specific time period when many formative links among syncretic experiences of religion, death, and nationhood were being constructed: the fateful López era (1840–1870) that culminated in the cataclysmic War of the Triple Alliance. Here we find how a modern nation-building project attempted to channel, rather than suppress, popular religious energies, and we encounter the many contradictory, and formative, consequences this project produced. A sampling of scholarly literature and primary sources from within a broader framework of Paraguayan history likewise reveals how links among popular religion, death, and state formation are indeed recurring themes for more research that needs to be done.

Keywords: religion, death, state formation, church and state, religion and politics, nation, language, sacred and profane

Popular Religion, Death, and Nation in Paraguay

In Paraguay, popular religiosity is bound to questions of political community and national identity; so too is death. There are no cemetery feasts and parades of skulls that demonstrate clear ties to pre-Colombian religious practices, as seen in Mexico and Peru. Paraguayans exercise a more subtle amalgamation of the native and the Catholic upon invoking spiritual and otherworldly affairs, and these fusions have shaped the historical experiences of Paraguayan nationhood.

Language figures conspicuously in this regard. Inhabitants of the territory have long spoken a vernacular of indigenous origin, Guaraní, rather than Spanish. The mental furniture of imperial Catholicism colonized this provincial language and filtered down to how everyday people even defined personhood and membership in a polity. For example, well into the 20th century, frontier realities made Swiss cheese of sovereign territorial claims of both colonial and postcolonial states in the province, and the incorporated Spanish term *cristiano* gained currency in spoken Paraguayan Guaraní as the referential shorthand for a “person” and subject of the state. This habit of speech tacitly distinguished those living in Hispanic-creole settlements from the conspicuously present unconquered indigenous peoples who continued to make surrounding hillsides and forests their haunts. And Paraguayans typically referred to these peoples, with whom they both traded and fought, as *ava*—“Indian,” “infidel,” or “savage,” in their conception. Ironically, in precolonial usage this term had implied “person” as well. A borrowed religious term in spoken Guaraní thus sketched the basic contours of political identity, belonging, and exclusion, and many speakers of this indigenous language rejected any association with a colonial religious-racial category of “savage Indian” conceptualized within the indigenous language itself.[1]

The spoken Guaraní of Paraguayans also has marked extraordinary moments of collective dying. It galvanized popular mobilization in two massive postcolonial conflicts that saw many peasants march to their death with alleged martyr-like commitment to the defense of the nation.[2] At least, such were the themes of eulogized depictions elaborated in patriotic prose and verse produced in Guaraní by official propaganda writers as well as by folk poet-singers during these conflicts. During the first war in the mid-19th century, priests exhorting sermons from the pulpit in Guaraní made explicit claims that dying for the nation on the battlefield meant Christian salvation in heaven, and the very term for nationhood that they employed—*ñane retã*—commanded a clear spiritual aura. Moreover, a Guaraní-language propaganda newspaper during the same conflict also made a

conquest-era indigenous chieftain its principal character and namesake and figuratively resurrected him from the grave to speak for the people and the spiritual soul of the republic. He was a real historical figure that nonetheless in his figurative resurrected state did not, as one might now expect, celebrate the memory of his initial resistance to the Spanish conquest. Rather, he celebrated his eventual submission and conversion to Christianity.[3] It proved an intriguing syncretic flourish at the culmination of a formative and cataclysmic time.

The Case of the López Period, 1840s–1860s

In fact, examining the mid-19th century leads us to the roots of much of the phenomenon involving popular religion and death in Paraguay. As with folk cults, pantheons, and oratories, the links between the profane social and political realities of nationhood and the lived religiosity of everyday people needed constructing, and the decades leading up to the first war—during the regimes of Carlos Antonio López and his son Francisco Solano López (1840–1870)—were precisely the period when both the state and popular actors were significantly constructing such bonds.

An examination of the López period reveals two aspects of this process. First, in the wake of a period of religious institutional decay such as occurred in Paraguay during the first four decades of the 19thcentury, currents of popular religiosity with heavy inflections of Catholic practice remained fervent. This observation is consistent with findings about currents of popular religiosity persisting in other areas of Latin America, especially Mexico during the 19th and early 20th centuries.[4] Quite simply, priests and churches were often important auxiliaries but not drivers of the spiritual lives of parishioners. Second, modernizing state builders in Paraguay, unlike in Mexico, sought to channel, rather than repress, these currents into their projects of nation-making and, to do so, launched a full-scale institutional revival of the church under the state’s control. Not everything went as planned, and currents of popular religiosity could surge push in uncontrollable directions when pressed, much like mud escaping between fingers when squeezed in the hand. Even as orthodox molds were being reset, syncretic mixtures of the sacred and profane grew as the flavor of everyday life.

Decline and Revival

As part of a colonial periphery, the provincial church in Paraguay was not a wealthy one and already by the late 1700s was showing signs of institutional decay. The expulsion of the Jesuits contributed to this.[5] Then came independence. The regime of Dr. Francia (r.

1814–1840) initially forged state domination over the institutional infrastructure of the provincial church. Francia secularized the clergy of all remaining religious orders in the territory, banning the institutions, and seized their wealth—extensive holdings in land as well as slaves. In fact, these seizures formed the basis of a network of state-owned estancias and slaves throughout the country. The Francia government then assumed administration of most church finances, paying clergy from state coffers while limiting parish priests' own personal accumulation of wealth. Francia had muscled control of the provincial diocese only to see to its institutional rot. He sealed off diplomatic contact with the Vatican, closed the Asunción seminary, and without regret watched the collection of foreign priests, who had dominated the local church during the late colonial period, grow old and die. There were few new ordinations, and dissident priests were thrown in jail. By the time of Francia's death in 1840, just some fifty clergy, many infirm and sickly, attempted to serve the spiritual needs of eighty-three parishes in the territory.[6]

Francia's successor, Carlos Antonio López, sought to reverse this decline. When he was consolidating his full control over the Paraguayan state by the mid-1840s, renovations of church buildings and ordinations of new priests were already well underway. He even nominated and secured the recognition of the Vatican for his brother, a cleric, Basilio López, as the new bishop of the diocese of Paraguay—the first Paraguayan-born cleric to head the bishopric.[7] It was an intriguing pivot. In many ways, the effort echoed the statecraft of colonial times seeking to reproduce the church-state monolith as a crucial medium in governance. But this effort also involved something new. It sought to fashion a robust nationalized diocese of the Catholic Church, now with native-born clergy, as a subordinate religious body overlapping and underpinning the temporal jurisdiction of a postcolonial state. But after decades of institutional decay, this process of institutional revival was going to take time.

Evidence of the decay persisted well into the 1850s. Many parishes remained without resident priests to serve them. But people also saw the crumbling, literally, in the parish churches. A pastoral visit by Bishop López in 1850 to parishes surrounding the capital reported various churches that made congregants suffer for their small dimensions, lack of shelter from sun and rain, and dust raised lifted up from the floor. Some temples lacked adequate bells, so necessary to call for prayers and Mass, and to mark people's knowledge of the time of day. One did not have any bells at all. Inside the churches, pieces of broken and ill-formed religious images littered the altars. In 1848, the parish church in Villa Rica was in such disrepair that the president ordered the temple closed until it could be fixed. Public cemeteries were haphazard places and often remained so. One cemetery was overflowing, with cadavers of poor folk buried on one top of another, and "emitting an unbearable stink."[8]

The complaints of authorities lamenting the unorthodox ways of parishioners reveal much about persistent currents of popular religiosity in this environment. The ignorance among parishioners regarding basic precepts of Catholic faith was a frequent object of complaint by Bishop López in his pastoral letters. But matters of dogma did not concern everyday people as much as partaking, in unruly ways, in the ritual life, which the remnants of the institutional church could still provide.[9] For example, in 1845 the president himself decreed an end to Holy Friday processions in Asunción that paraded a figurine of the crucified Christ in exaggerated manners, dramatizing his agony on the cross, along with sounds of hammers and screams produced by the parishioners who followed. The still flourishing baroque folkways of everyday people evidently violated Carlos Antonio López's own presumptions of rational religious observation.[10] In his pastoral visit of 1850, Bishop López observed in several churches the presence of "very indecent and inappropriate images that provoked more laughter than devotion." He ordered them removed. We can only imagine what such images actually looked like and how among parishioners they may have provoked both laughter and devotion. One 1860 pastoral letter admonished the tendency of church musicians to gather in churches after Mass for impromptu playing sessions and to strum festive melodies during funeral services. It also challenged, most likely in vain, the constant traffic of people entering and leaving the temple during the celebration of Mass itself.[11]

Some deviations from orthodox practices were more serious. An incident from 1854 indicated that residents of the old Indian pueblo of Atyra went about stealing consecrated hosts from the sanctuaries of nearby parish churches for "superstitious and sacrilegious uses." Both president and bishop signaled their disgust and called for priests to keep the hosts of holy sacrament under closer care.[12] Nonetheless, in 1851 even Bishop López had initially consented to a request from a parishioner of nearby Tobati to receive ecclesiastical burial rites while still alive and apparently in good health. The petitioner presumably wanted to guarantee a good funeral ceremony, which he could observe. Intriguingly, it was justified by noting that the measure had precedent in the countryside. The president found the entire notion ridiculous, nullified the request, and banned the request it from ever receiving official consideration again.[13] Even the more outlandish violations of orthodoxy reveal that Catholic-infused practices were holding strong among the populace, despite the recent history of ecclesiastical decline. Meanwhile the sanction and aura from institutional-religious authority was also still sought.

Popular Devotions and Spiritual Economies

The popular devotions and spiritual economies surrounding *imagenes* and other religious paraphernalia manifested similar dynamics even as the provincial church was coming

more fully back to life. When in 1864 a disgruntled housewife from Santa María alerted authorities to the diabolical-looking *imagen* that her husband kept in their home—"San Katu," painted red and white with large horns, to whom he allegedly lit candles and prayed before gambling—the rather mild reaction from both civil and religious officials suggests just how common such images that straddled the sacred and the profane in households and elsewhere were. Indeed, the woman herself seemed less concerned with enforcing heterodoxy than with landing an abusive husband in some legal trouble, and in that latter regard she was at least successful.[14] Niches with santos, Virgins, and crosses thus frequently adorned homes. They also filled the lateral altars of churches and commanded the centerpieces of privately built sanctuaries. They yielded prayers and candles and, crucially, material offerings like money and jewels. The offerings themselves might be valuable religious items, like a rosary plated in silver or gold, and the santo or cross might feature similar encasements.[15] And although not likely to have involved San Katu, these domestic saints could just as well become objects of community-wide devotion, especially if the santo remained safely within boundaries of accepted orthodoxy and effectively extended the field of offerings taken and favors granted.

The evidence suggests community-wide devotions often had developed organically, outside ecclesiastical initiative. By the 1850s, the popular cult surrounding the Virgin of Caacupe had long existed in this way. In fact, it is a history of the Virgin from the early 20th century written by the López-era priest, Fidel Maíz, which lends a glimpse into the florid undergrowth of semi-sanctioned popular devotions to community-level *imagenes* that persisted well into the mid-19th century and beyond. Incidentally, the mid-19th-century archival records of church and state make little mention of the flourishing cult devoted to the Caacupe Virgin. The institutional silence not only reveals that the popular cult had yet to reach national prominence (which it would by the 20th century) but speaks volumes about how much Catholic-infused religiosity occurred outside the auspices of officialdom. According to Maíz, by the 1840s, the Virgin had had its own permanent, if somewhat rustic, sanctuary for over seventy years on lands donated by one Doña Garcia in what was nonetheless a still informal, but growing, hamlet among the established Indian pueblos of the central cordillera. That is, the settlement of Caacupe emerged itself as an outgrowth of the cult, and only in the late 1840s under the government of Carlos Antonio López did it gain formal designation as a pueblo and parish with local civil authorities and, crucially, a resident parish priest. The priest who was serving there in 1851, José Mariano Quiñones, did so for the rest of the decade and oversaw an important expansion of the sanctuary and construction of a new central altar in 1857 after they had been damaged by lightning a few years earlier. His services were welcomed for official blessings and the feast-day celebration as well. But it remains unclear how involved he was in the actual administration of the sanctuary and the *imagenes* themselves. Crucially, Maíz hints that control of the money and jewels laid at

the Virgin's feet still remained in lay hands despite perhaps the envious grumblings of priests like Quiñones.[16]

The official sanction for popular devotions and general acceptance of it were unstable at best. The civil and ecclesiastical recognition of Caacupe suggests the López government's inclination to at least absorb the popular energies surrounding the *imagen* through more formal channels. Still, hers was one community-level popular devotion among many in the diocese, and it was hardly evident that her star would rise above others. The López government actually proved more inclined to propagate the Virgin of Asunción as a national-level devotion, especially when war came in the 1860s.[17] Maiz's history also sings the hyperbolic-patriotic praises of the intense cross-centered devotion of Nandejara Guasu in nearby Pirebebuy that prevailed at the same time, though record of official promotion of this *imagen* during the López period remains fleeting as well.[18] Meanwhile, other perhaps more minor popular devotions, like that of Virgin of Tacuacora in Ajos, were sometimes starved for the ecclesiastical attention that they otherwise had long made do without, and protests could be issued through civil officials when priests failed to show up for services commemorating them as promised.[19]

State officials, ecclesiastical and otherwise, were nonetheless privy to both the political energy and material wealth that could be mobilized from the persistent currents of popular religious folkways. In clear sight was the wealth. The 1852 lightning strike that damaged the sanctuary and partially burned the niche holding the Caacupe Virgin (but miraculously spared her) was drawn—Maíz was convinced—by the piles of precious-metal-laden jewels that surrounded the *imagen*. He estimated that over sixty thousand pesos worth of jewels and coins orbited around the Caacupe Virgin by the early 1860s, which attracted not only lightning bolts but also the interest of the López family to move the *imagen* and house her in a structure that they were having built near the Lake Ypacarai just below the cordillera.[20] This suggests that material offerings to santos and *imagenes* as well as other religious items constituted a substantial portion of privately held capital wealth circulating in the countryside, on which members of the political elite wanted to get their hands. In fact, when a slave woman in 1867 furtively seized rosaries and crosses encrusted with precious metals that lay below the *imagenes* adorning the capital city church of Encarnación—and defecated behind an altar upon doing so—she found a lively market in the surrounding pueblos for her stolen goods.[21] Amidst the desperation of war, the state followed her lead. It obligated women to donate their jewels in orchestrated public spectacles of patriotic devotion to the republic, and many of these donations came in the form of religious items, rosaries and crosses embedded with silver and gold, further diverting important sources of privately held wealth in the country to a flailing government.[22]

The López state had set the precedent for its incursion into the spiritual economies of the countryside well before such extraordinary expropriations became necessary. The fiscal mechanism employed to fund the institutional resurrection of the provincial church was the expanded imposition of the traditional *diezmo* tithe—a classic regressive tax on the agricultural production of peasant households. Civil officials and designees, rather than ecclesiastical authorities, oversaw the collection of this tax, and the proceeds flowed directly into government coffers. While the collections never became a primary source of state revenue, the tithe's tax-farming auctions produced lively speculative markets that could gross tens of thousands of pesos annually for the government. Substantial positive ledger balances in the account only accumulated throughout the 1850s and 1860s; the state rarely allowed even substantial ecclesiastical expenditures to exceed what it was taking in on the tax.[23] Meanwhile the state sustained the spiritual pretext for its collection. One prominent political-religious pamphlet that the government circulated during the early 1860s reminded parishioners that failing to pay the tithe was a sin and by doing so a person would risk "poverty, pestilence, and death," and, ultimately, damnation.[24] These messages had their effect. When the exigencies of foreign invasion came later in the decade, the tithe would become a crucial fiscal basis for sustaining the extraction of peasant agricultural production for the war effort—one, again, explicitly defined as a religious crusade.[25]

Magistrates of the Sacred and the State

Of course, by the time of the war, a self-reinforcing material and cultural hegemonic complex had been in place for over two decades. The substantial expenditures from the tithe that were made to resurrect the provincial church had clear aims to channel popular religious energies toward postcolonial political ends. Renovated and newly constructed churches now carried the iconography of the republic alongside religious imagery.[26] But most importantly, the flesh-and-blood arbiters of spiritual affairs on the community level—parish priests—once again populated the parishes of the countryside, now as native-born, paid functionaries of the postcolonial state. The López regimes oversaw the ordination of over sixty new priests between 1845 and 1860, and many more received their orders in subsequent years. They were almost entirely a postcolonial generation, born in the territory and after independence—men who in the process of their ordination still needed public affirmations of their *limpieza de sangre* while issuing formulaic declarations that announced their intentions to serve both God and Patria.[27] Many of the earliest ordained of this generation became fixtures in the parishes where they were assigned, much like Padre Quiñonez in Caacupe. They accordingly sung Masses, administered the sacraments, and produced and managed the records of baptism, marriage, and death that still determined a person's legal existence in the republic. They

thus remained a crucial lettered cadre within the legal infrastructure of the state, with a sanctified aura attached to their words, both spoken and written. By 1850 they even carried the official designation from the regime as parish-level ecclesiastical magistrates with a charge to arbitrate marriage disputes and supervise the moral integrity of households as well.[28] In the exercise of their office, then, parish priests under the López state could and did combine moral fulmination, sacred ritual, and lettered sanction soaked in the imperatives of nationhood to impact the religious expression of everyday parishioners.

The bursts of santimony thus politically soaked, came most often in prayers, sermons, and celebration. Upon conducting public prayers in regular Masses and special celebrations, parish priests had explicit charge from diocesan authorities to pray for the republic and its president.[29] A public act of prayer for the sake of rulers and the republic, insistently repeated, bore particular power with respect to domesticate concepts of nationhood among everyday people—a sort of liturgical capital, in the paraphrase of historian Terry Rugeley—whereby a barefoot mother or tired laborer, regardless of their level of literacy, could join in the spiritual endorsement and ritual articulation of the very collective identity being constructed.[30] Meanwhile, from the pulpit, the native-born clerics of the land cast their sermons in the vernacular Guaraní—the very tongue the priests themselves mostly used and grew up speaking—and expounded upon themes of pious citizenship and sacred nationhood. Here they circulated ideas of Tupã (God), *ñane retã* (our republic), and *ñande ruvichaguasu* (our president) as the pillars of faith.[31] By the time of Francisco Solano López's rise to the presidency, their calls for obedience to *ñande ru*, the country's collective father, as the divinely constituted and popularly elected authority of the republic, became incessant.

Such calls from the pulpit typically came in the Masses performed to celebrate the numerous civic-religious fiestas that by the early 1860s dotted the Paraguayan liturgical calendar. These included Solano López's namesake feast day on July 24, which had a clear nativist resonance upon celebrating Saint Francisco Solano, and Christmas Day, which now doubled as a Paraguayan independence celebration. They also included commemorations of congresses and elections and, in traditional Catholic guise, funeral rites recognizing the anniversary of the death of Carlos Antonio López in September. Masses were featured acts of these often multi-day celebrations. So were processionals, firework displays, bullfights, theatrical acts, games, serenades, ceremonial flag raisings, and popular *bailes*—events with clear popular appeal.[32] The 1863–1864 diocese-wide tour of the newly appointed bishop under Francisco Solano López, Manuel Antonio Palacios, produced similar fanfare, with almost papal-like reception in some interior pueblos. Ordained in the 1840s as part of the new postcolonial native-born generation of clerics, Palacios had served for fourteen years as the parish priest of Villeta before reaching the

career pinnacle of leading the diocese—a position only made possible for him by postcolonial political realities and the personal patronage of the president himself. He proved a crafty political operative for Solano López, alternating sanctimonious admonishments for wayward regional elites with distributions of largesse to soldiers and thunderous sermons in Guaraní from the pulpit. Under his direction, parish priests—through more religious pomp, prayer, sermon, and celebration—worked as critical operatives themselves for the general military conscription of the countryside during the buildup to war with Brazil and Argentina.[33]

It is tempting here to exaggerate the depiction of a disciplined priestly class easily manipulating the devout Masses for the profane and violent imperatives of nationhood. Indeed, parish priests of the López era registered their influence over parishioners who maintained fervent religious folkways and were often eager to receive the sacramental services that a cleric could provide. But in many ways theirs remained a rustic operation. Despite the many new ordinations, the chronic shortage of priests in the countryside was never resolved and kept diocesan authorities scrambling to plug the holes. Meanwhile, priests themselves were known to take a casual approach to the exercise of their office. Bishops complained that a tangle of gestures and words typified Masses raced through in under fifteen minutes.[34] Foreign visitors lampooned country clerics who hung urinals from church columns as receptacles for holy water and considered the provincial clergy as a whole seriously undereducated in both church doctrine and ritual. [35] Partaking in lovers and drink remained a feature of personal accusations against priests—likely the reflection of a common reality. Antagonistic relationships with other authorities, provincial elites, and common parishioners provoked such accusations.[36] There were thus clear limits to the command of priestly authority, as everyday parishioners shared folk stories of sly peasants fooling arrogant clerics as well.[37]

Priests and Parishioners

The arbitration of parish priests in the affairs of marriage and death specifically reveals the slippery application of a politically infused, dominant piety in the countryside. Quite simply, the unwritten and the pragmatic marked the give-and-take interactions of priests and parishioners alongside the sacramental and ceremonial. In matters of matrimony, as with other 19th-century Latin American states, the López regime made the ideal patriarchal household a metaphor for the proper exercise of republican citizenship and the maintenance of the social order. Thus its civil officials in the countryside had the explicit responsibility to police public morality, which included guarding against “illicit friendships”—the legal euphemism for out-of-wedlock cohabitation. Meanwhile parish priests preached the axiom that a “good Christian” made a “good citizen,” which implied

the proper submission to constituted political authority but also the fulfillment of patriarchal duties as fathers and husbands, wives and mothers. In this regard, clerics, as noted, also served as primary magistrates in marital disputes and thus also had the responsibility to oversee the fulfillment of such obligations in households. But persistent societal norms made a mockery of this official morality.[38] Informal unions remained endemic, as did illegitimate births. In fact, the patterns of premarital sex severely complicated the canonical legal standards for marriage, as country folk also tended to pursue amorous adventures with several members of the same family. If one of those relationships was to be formalized in marriage, an official dispensation from the diocesan bishop was required. Even within marriage, husbands and wives actively pursued lovers. Husbands also abandoned their wives for months at a time and regularly beat them.[39]

In this environment, parish priests preferred an expedient use of the magisterial pen. Priests did intervene in the marital squabbles of their parishioners, sometimes unbidden, often with the justification of guarding the "tranquility of the Republic," but they typically avoided documenting much when doing so. In the dozens of trimestral reports filed by priests indicating "nothing to report" about the activities of their magisterial offices, we can infer countless informal rulings and arrangements by clerics that protected their own local authority along with their acquiescence to popular norms.[40] Occasionally, parishioners put these ecclesiastical courts to unintended uses, as when unmarried women exploited them to wrench pecuniary compensation for alleged broken marriage promises from ex-lovers. Here the presumption of lost honor within the paradigm of the dominant Catholic morality paid off, and presiding priests obliged.[41] Most striking, however, was the growing insistence among parishioners that priests file written petitions for them to absolve legal marriage impediments, which often involved illicit cohabitation and sexual relations with siblings of intended spouses, and formalize their informal unions. The number of petitions for the pardon of marriage impediments surged significantly in the years of the diocesan revival under the López regimes, giving us a window into those persistent unorthodox sexual practices.[42] And when orders for penance came down from the bishop to absolve an impediment—typically calling for a given number of prayers to the Virgin—the parish priest was there to oversee the penance as well as the marriage.[43] If anything, the growing physical presence of priests in the countryside did allow for official morality to gain some traction among everyday people and impact their religious expression, even as the application remained a slippery affair.

Finally, in the sacred affairs of death, parish priests also imposed a brave new world loaded with profane political imperatives. The López regime mandated the creation of new public cemeteries separated from the traditional burial areas of church grounds. This shift away from generations of tradition nonetheless sustained the distinction of the new cemeteries as sacred grounds. Priests performed the ecclesiastical rites of burial

there, and they continued to collect fees for those rites that helped to sustain the material needs of local parishes.[44] Parishioners, in turn, clamored to have their dead interred in these holy spaces. This included many young children, as was consistent with a pre-industrial society, which saw high rates of infant mortality. In the absence of priests, parishioners invented baptismal ceremonies so dying infants could receive ecclesiastical burial, or they tried furtively to bury unbaptized babies in the public cemeteries themselves. On one occasion a parish priest boasted of disinterring the body of an infant from a cemetery who indeed had not received any baptismal rites. The bishop congratulated him as a defender of souls.[45] An 1861 pastoral letter still lamented that the burial ceremonies for poor folk proceeded in "such a defective manner" that, rather than preparing the deceased for redemption, "it appears that what is desired is to pile them away."[46]

Still, both parish priests and the state were prepared to defend the sacred integrity of these spaces. Mid-19th-century Paraguay likely experienced the normal rash of suicides of any contemporary agrarian society in Latin America. The López regime nonetheless developed a civil legal protocol around them to adjudicate whether victims should receive ecclesiastical burial in the public cemeteries. Crucially, local civil judges, not parish priests in their capacity as ecclesiastical magistrates, made the investigations into the states of mind and respective piety of suicide victims and formed tribunals to rule on the cases. Priests were subsequently notified of their decisions, which typically involved leaving a condemned body buried on profane grounds alone. But in those cases where victims were known to suffer from mental instabilities and their family members vouched for their sacramental piety with civil officials, priests oversaw the ecclesiastical burial of remains extracted from provisional graves. Here the rulings of civil judges, the sacramental acts of priests, and the physical spaces of public cemeteries combined to manifest the projection of state sovereignty over the fates of souls. Accordingly, as the clouds of war gathered, civil officials were also prone to interpret suicides not only as acts of sin but also as acts of treason against the republic and moved swiftly to condemn body and spirit. Meanwhile, under the mounting social and political pressures of the time period, numerous parishioners were also still inclined to risk such condemnation and went to the woods to hang themselves, perhaps knowing full well that their bodies would remain there in meager graves to rot, beyond the grace of God and Patria.[47]

In sum, fervent currents of popular Catholic folkways persisted in mid-19th-century Paraguay both in the wake of ecclesiastical decay and in the midst of its revival. These customs both followed and strained the expectations of orthodoxy and deliberately combined the sacred and the profane in ways that suggested ongoing pagan-indigenous influence. Faithful prayers of the rosary said each evening, the observance of feast days, the devotion to community-level *imagenes* and patron saints, and the veneration of

private images in makeshift shrines in homes, along the side of roads, or even deep in the woods—all were well-worn religious habits. Strings of rosary beads and crucifixes circulated as objects of sacred and monetary value. People pursued Catholic marriages after sustaining numerous sexual affairs with relatives of their betrothed. They recognized the importance of confession with parish priests and the utility of folk healers and village witches. They walked into the woods to commit suicide with rosaries in hand. Within this world, the Paraguayan state under the López regimes sought to revive a provincial church and channel currents of popular religiosity through the profane imperatives of nationhood. The execution often proved haphazard, but also formative, especially on the eve of a catastrophic war. The evidence from our own times suggests as much.

Syncretic Mixtures of the Sacred and Profane in Present-day Paraguay

Evidence of syncretic mixtures and their symbolic ties to nationhood persist everywhere in present-day Paraguay. The nation is still one of the most stridently Catholic countries of the region in terms of the proportion of the population who identifies with the church—close to 90 percent.[48] Accordingly, the pantheon of nationalized patron saints remains large. But the one that attracts the most intense popular devotion today is the Virgin of Caacupe. Like the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico, the Virgin of Caacupe has reached the status of preeminent patron saint of the republic, whose feast day (also in December) inspires pilgrimages, televised Masses, flag-waving, and national soul-searching centered on sermon and prayer. Many urbanite devotees also often pound beers and blast sexually charged lyrics of tropical dance music while making the all-night, thirty-mile pilgrimage from the capital city to the hilltop interior pueblo of Caacupe on the eve of the feast day. This typical mix of the profane and the sacred has its reflection in the origin story of the cherished *imagen*. In the tale, a recently converted Guaraní artisan of an early 17th-century Franciscan mission found himself trapped in the woods before an approaching war party of unconverted Mbyae Indians and whisked a prayerful petition to the Immaculate Virgin to save his life. He offered in return to sculpt a devotional of to her from the very tree that he was hiding behind. The war party passed miraculously without seeing him. The indigenous artisan got to work sawing and sculpting to repay the favor that might be owed to any pre-colonial animistic deity who would have done the same.[49] In a similar vein, even a drunken jaunt in honor of the Virgin today might earn in the devotee's mind forgiveness for a year full of transgressions while more pious displays and valuable offerings—a lit candle or, better yet, a deposit of money—could bring relief from

personal sickness and strife as well as potential salvation from those hardships afflicting the entire republic like poverty, corruption, and crime.

Syncretic mixtures of the sacred, the profane, and the political remain part of everyday life. Any Catholic cleric, known as *pa'i* in Guaraní, still commands the respect of parishioners in the countryside with florid sermons in the vernacular. Priests also often still serve as operatives for competing political factions, and keep lovers. One former bishop, Fernando Lugo, famously won the presidency of the republic in 2008 and was celebrated as the pious champion of the landless and the poor. He left office ingloriously four years later, ousted by a parliamentary coup orchestrated by the country's landed elite and trailed by accusations of his ineffectiveness and rumors of his sexual indiscretion.[50] Common Catholic parishioners still seek their parish priests for confessions, though. They also make jokes and tell stories in Guaraní demeaning priestly authority and visit neighborhood witchdoctors, the *paje*, to place hexes on rivals.[51] Meanwhile, household santos in humble wooden niches still receive prayers to protect the home and petitions for intercession that the national soccer team might win.

Death likewise remains a crucial theater through which to project profane social and political realities onto a spiritual plane. In the heart of old Asunción, along calle Palma, where the 19th-century autocrat president Francisco Solano López had built one of his lavish homes, stands the Panteon de Heroes (pantheon of heroes)—an oratory dedicated to the *imagen* of the Virgin of Asunción that also contains the alleged remains of an assortment of past presidents and war heroes, including those of Solano López and his father, Carlos Antonio López, who had ruled as president before him. With ceremonial soldiers standing guard at the door, an impressive altar to the Virgin wearing the tricolor sash of the republic overlooks these coffined of men exalted as the saintly heroes of the nation—men, including Solano López, who had also often made the wealth of the country and the lives of more humble compatriots their playthings. Only the coffin of Paraguay's symbolic unknown soldier joins them. He was presumably a commoner who faithfully served one of these "saints" of the republic in war and stays—by design—anonymous.[52]

Local burial grounds contain on a more intimate level such dynamics writ large on the scale of the republic. In fact, a couple hundred kilometers to the east, in the town cemetery of the interior pueblo of Caazapa, rests another one of Solano López's uncles, Francisco de Paula López, in a more modest state. Still, a large stone tablet set in the ground and surrounded by now rusted wrought-iron posts mark his plot in a public cemetery whose origins go back to when de Paula López's brother (Carlos Antonio) had consolidated their family's control over the young Paraguayan state during the 1840s and 1850s. Again, it was then that this state began regulating the burial of dead in public cemeteries well removed from the traditional necropolises of church floors and their surrounding grounds.[53] But de Paula López's grave in the Caazapa cemetery is one of the

few that survive there from the 19th century. The markers of his contemporaries are nowhere to be found, which raises the question: Where are they? At the time of his death in 1861, de Paula López was not only the brother of the president but also a major landowner who had assumed state administration of the communal holdings of the village, whose legal status as an Indian pueblo had been dissolved thirteen years earlier.[54] The longevity of his grave marker and fence suggests an impressive degree of accumulated wealth and stature, for the public cemeteries of interior pueblos served as consecrated reflections of the persistent material inequities of community life and the subsequent competition to retain a place in the memory of the living.

The competition continues today in Caazapa, as elsewhere. Families with money invest substantial wealth to erect their own pantheons to house their remains within cemetery plots, and these brick and concrete abodes—with elaborate roofs, sculptures, and porches and now even containing the tinted glass doors and windows that are all the rage in affluent Paraguayan homes—stand in stark contrast to meager grass-covered squares with simple crosses and tin markers where the poorer deceased lie below the ground. Whether the plots are lavish or humble, though, the understood obligation is for living family members to return to these spots, frequently and festively, have Masses said, light candles, clean the areas, care for the marking crosses, and pray for the souls of the departed.[55] And the understood expectation is that lavish familial pantheons might sustain pilgrimages and Masses for decades on end. In reality, even the more impressive structures from the first half of the 20th century show signs of neglect. The stone tablet of de Paula López itself has a large crack down the middle. But the resting places of the poor are subject to having their crosses tossed aside after just a few years, with plots resold to another patron and with the potential to have the pantheons of the rich built right over them.

This partly explains the absence of any markers of de Paula López's contemporaries in the Caazapa public cemetery. The majority of mid-19th-century parishioners lacked the means to lay down stone tablets and raise iron fences even if they reached the state-sanctioned grounds of holy burial. Recall the ecclesiastic reports that lamented the "piling away" of the corpses of poor parishioners in public cemeteries. The layers of brick, stone, and corpses piled over them by now are likely numerous.

Discussion of the Literature

Historiographical trends addressing popular religion and death in Paraguay remain underdeveloped due to the lack of sustained research on the topics. This situation is consistent with most topics of Paraguayan history. Still, this brief assessment of works—

historical and otherwise—addressing such themes will provide an approximation of how they intersect with questions of nationhood and state formation within a broader framework of Paraguayan history discussed so far. It will also identify potential avenues of new research, perhaps new questions to be raised, and potentially rich sources to be mined.

Relatively recent scholarly compilations produced in Paraguay on the subject of popular religion constitute just such a source. Although limited in their interpretative sophistication and methodological approach, they nonetheless supply rich catalogs of contemporary and historical popular religious practices that beckon further analysis. These include descriptions of Catholic folkways related to popular devotions, provincial music, and death. The tacit and explicit interpretive assumptions behind these collections are twofold: First, these customs constitute authentic cultural manifestations of Paraguayan peoplehood, if not plainly national identity. Second, although predominantly Catholic, they carry the hybrid flavor of indigenous influence.[56] Catalogs of popular folklore operate on similar premises. They typically highlight the indigenous contribution to the national cultural experience, such as a series of religious-mythological figures of alleged Guaraní origin.[57] But, if read closely, even these stories carry more than a trace of hybridity (sometimes from unexpected cultural sources), and when they are placed within the larger context of popular religious expression and regional folklore, we find that Paraguay is hardly alone in producing such cultural manifestations.[58] Again, accepting the interpretive premises of the collections at face value proves limiting, and we are thus left to uncover the tangled strands of hybridity and concocted formulas of national identity attached to such manifestations.

The historiography on the colonial period has done the most to advance our understandings of the sociocultural hybridities at work. The nature of the so-called spiritual conquest in Paraguay is at the heart of the matter. Academic treatments of a traditional ilk and nationalist-oriented histories are still prone to accepting the complete and harmonious Spanish-colonial evangelization of Guaraní peoples with token acknowledgements of indigenous cultural survivals in the form of language.[59] Pathbreaking ethnohistorical works since the 1980s have revealed the “spiritual conquest” in Paraguay to have been a much more tortured, incomplete, and violent process that extended over centuries. The missionizing projects of the Jesuits in the province have deservedly received the bulk of scholarly attention in this regard. Works by Melia, Ganson, and Wilde have not only found significant examples of native resistance to conversion along with Guaraní cultural imprints in the Catholicism practiced in the missions; they have also traced the emergence of written and vernacular forms of the Guaraní language within the province as hybrid colonial products themselves—crucial mediums, in fact, for the ongoing projects of evangelization.[60] Meanwhile, the

foundational studies of Susnik mark the religious adaptations of both reduced and unconquered indigenous peoples throughout the province as evidence for the persistence of Guaraní religious customs, particularly in the form of shamans, and the infiltration of Christian rites and concepts into those practices.[61] Furthermore, in his innovative look at the understudied Franciscan region, Austin encounters a relatively light missionary presence and an institution of encomienda molded around native Guaraní communal kinship practices. As a result, he also sees Guaraní domestications of imperial Catholic practice and belief within their still-intact native cosmological paradigms.[62] Finally, both Telesca and Austin highlight the previously unremembered African presence in the colony and leave open enticing avenues for future research of African contributions to the provincial religious-cultural amalgamations that were brewing.[63]

It is a telling feature of these amalgamations that most Africans brought to the province likely eventually adopted Guaraní as their new principle language and not Spanish. By the late colonial period, this creole linguistic hybrid remained the primary spoken medium of everyday people to express common notions of identity, polity, and God. It is here that many conventional studies continue to the find cultural foundations for the development of a distinct provincial—and soon-to-be national—identity.[64] Still, Telesca reminds us just how complex colonial identities likely were while documenting the majority of Guaraní-speaking provincial subjects adopting by the early 1800s the racial-religious category of *español/blanco*.[65] A perusal of published Guaraní-language archival documents from the late colonial and early national periods invites a more careful inquiry into the concepts of polity and identity embedded in sources that contain many florid expressions of Catholic piety.[66] Meanwhile, we know very well that late-colonial social and linguistic realities largely bled over into the early national period, and it remains a crucial focus of the scholarly literature to gauge what material, ideological, and cultural changes for everyday people independence actually brought.[67]

The bulk of the historical scholarship on postcolonial Paraguay has been less concerned with questions surrounding popular religion. In terms of religion, the pathbreaking social and political histories of Williams, Cooney, Heyn-Schupp, and Whigham provide essential accounts of how the early postcolonial Paraguayan state came to dominate the provincial church.[68] These works are nonetheless more concerned with institutional developments. In contrast, Potthast supplies a nuanced account of regime-sponsored Catholic morality campaigns dashing upon the shoals of unorthodox social norms.[69] Huner traces how state initiatives actually impacted the popular political and religious culture before and during the War of the Triple Alliance.[70] And among an emerging array of studies focusing on the Guaraní-language propaganda of the López regime during the conflict, his work also does the most to highlight the religious-political character of the writings.[71] Within the small number of studies on postwar Paraguayan society, the work of the nimble Telesca

outlines the efforts to rebuild the provincial church in the wake of the catastrophic conflict. Although mostly concerned with institutional developments, he also uncovers evidence of autonomous currents of popular religiosity surviving another period of ecclesiastical disarray intact.[72]

Snippets from primary sources depicting life in Paraguay between the wars indicate as much. For example, Maiz's history of the Virgin of Caacupe recounts how the *imagen*—rescued literally from the ashes of the Triple Alliance conflict—was by the end of the century attracting pilgrims in droves, performing miracles, and collecting material offerings in amounts that, once again, attracted the attention of ecclesiastical officials. The history itself contains evidence of the early 20th-century process of appropriating the Caacupe Virgin into an official nationalist icon, as Maíz's own praise for the *imagen* echoes the religiously infused republican discourse of a generation before.[73] Meanwhile, the literature of Augusto Roa Bastos captures the magical aura still attached to community-level popular religious devotions that could directly challenge local systems of authority.[74] In general, the social history of religion in Paraguay during the late 19th and early 20th centuries might contain the still-unwritten social history of the country for the period. The one place that holds thousands of untapped records for post-1870 developments in a centralized repository is the archive of the archdiocese in Asunción.

If popular religion is less of a concern for postcolonial historiography, in light of two nasty international conflicts that the country has fought, death registers its importance. The actual negative demographic impact of the War of the Triple Alliance was a point of sharp debate among North Atlantic–based scholars in the mid-1990s.[75] The rendering of the numbers has implications for understanding not only the conflict but its historical legacy. Was this conflict truly one of the more notorious and dramatic moments of collective dying in the 19th-century Western world? For Paraguay, at least, more recent studies on the social memory of the conflict leave little doubt that the meanings attached to the Triple Alliance War experience, however distorted, had profound implications for the shape of national politics and local communities well into the 20th century.[76] The work of Chesterton demonstrates that a popular heroic memory of the conflict likely inspired many soldiers to perform similar acts of martyrdom in the 1930s Chaco War with Bolivia, as "grandchildren of Solano López." And as other historical overviews of the mid-20th century also emphasize, it was the social and political upheaval tied to the end of the Chaco War that facilitated the emergence of nationalist-populist movements in the country, culminating in the eventual rise of the long-ruling right-wing Alfredo Stroessner regime in 1954.[77] A growing scholarly literature on the regime also establishes that it drew heavily on heroic memories of collective martyrdoms in both wars for the ideological justification to remain in power.[78]

Finally, upon exploring the complicated terrain that encompasses support, consent, and resistance to enduring dictatorial regimes, popular religion remains a fruitful analytical frontier. On the one hand, any number of contemporary Paraguayans who lived during the Stroessner regime will point toward the autocrat's close relationship with individual ecclesiastical officials. The national Catholic Church's role in sustaining active support and acceptance for the regime is a crucial issue yet to be explored. On the other hand, popular religious movements embodied in the Christian Agrarian Leagues were critical sources of popular resistance against the regime. Initial studies by Telesca and Horst provide excellent starting points for more sustained research into the theology, worldviews, and experiences of everyday participants that were still fundamentally expressed in the vernacular Guaraní.[79]

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Notes:

(1.) Bartomeu Meliá, *La lengua guaraní en el Paraguay colonial* (Asunción: CEPAG, 2003); Antonio Guasch, *Diccionario Castellano-Guaraní, Guaraní-Castellano, Sintáctico, Fraseológico, Ideológico* (Seville, Spain: n.p., 1961), 513, 570; and Domingo Aguilera Jiménez, *Mombe'u pyre, mombe'u pyrã: Káso ñemombe'u* (Asunción: Servilibro, 2012).

(2.) These two wars are the War of the Triple Alliance (1864–1870) and the Chaco War (1932–1935).

(3.) "Ñane retã," "Toicobe ñande retã," and "Lambaré he'i," *Cacique Lambaré* (Asunción), July 24, 1867; "Cabichuí," *Cacique Lambaré* (Asunción), August 22, 1867. For the 1930s Chaco War, see "*Chácore purahéi*—canciones de guerra: Literatura popular en guaraní e identidad nacional en el Paraguay," in *El espacio interior de América del Sur: Geografía, historia, política, cultura*, ed. Barbara Potthast, Karl Kohut, and Gerd Kohlhepp (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 1999).

(4.) Edward Wright-Rios, *Revolutions in Mexican Catholicism: Reform and Revelation in Oaxaca, 1887–1934* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); and Terry Rugeley, *Of Wonders and Wise Men: Religion and Popular Cultures in Southeast Mexico, 1800–1876* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001).

(5.) Ignacio Telesca, *Tras los expulsos: Cambios demográficos y territoriales en el Paraguay después de la expulsion de los jesuitas* (Asunción: CEADUC, 2009).

(6.) Carlos Heyn-Schupp, *Iglesia y estado en el Paraguay durante el gobierno del Carlos Antonio López, 1841–1862: Estudio jurido-canónico* (Asunción: Biblioteca de estudios paraguayos, 1982); John Hoyt Williams, "Dictatorship and the Church: Dr. Francia in Paraguay," *Journal of Church and State* 15.3 (Fall 1973): 421–436; Jerry Cooney "The Destruction of the Religious Orders in Paraguay, 1810–1824," *The Americas* 36.2 (October 1979): 177–198; and Jan Kleinpenning, *Paraguay 1515–1870: A Thematic Geography of Its Development*, vol. 1 (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2003), 787.

(7.) Jerry Cooney, "La reconstrucción de la iglesia paraguaya, 1841–1850," in *El Paraguay bajo los López: Algunos ensayos de historia social y política*, eds. Jerry Cooney and Thomas Whigham, (Asunción: Centro Paraguayo de Estudios Sociológicos, 1994).

(8.) Visitas pastorales a las parroquias de la Captial y la campaña por Obispo López, 1850, Archivo de la Arquidiócesis de Asunción (hereafter AAA), Archivo de la Iglesia, Carpeta: Decretos, Circulares y Cartas del Obispo López; Informe del Mayordomo de la Iglesia Francisco Antonio Doldan y el comandante Miguel Jose Rojas a Carlos Antonio López, November 1848, Correspondencia de Villa Rica, Archivo Nacional de Asunción-Sección Historia (hereafter ANA-SH) vol. 404.1, foja 471–473.

(9.) Carta pastoral, October 12, 1853, Libro parroquial de Caapucu, Borrador de cartas pastorales, 1852–64, AAA, Archivo de la Iglesia, Carpeta: Decretos, Circulares y Cartas del Obispo López; Carta pastoral, February 21, 1851, AAA, Archivo de la Iglesia, Decretos, Carpeta: Circulares y Cartas del Obispo López. Also see Acosta, *Carlos Antonio López*, 612–615.

(10.) Matthew D. O'Hara, "The Supple Whip: Innovation and Tradition in Mexican Catholicism," *The American Historical Review* 117.5 (December 2012): 1373–1401.

(11.) Juan F. Pérez Acosta, *Carlos Antonio López "Obrero máximo": Labor administriva y constructive* (Asunción: Editorial Guaraní, 1948), 630–631. See entries for Caraguatay and Altos, Visitas pastorales a las parroquias de la Captial y la campaña por Obispo López, 1850, AAA, Archivo de la Iglesia, Carpeta: Decretos, Circulares y Cartas del Obispo López; Carta pastoral, August 6, 1860, AAA, Archivo de la Iglesia, Carpeta: Obispo Juan Gregorio Urbieta.

(12.) Carta pastoral, June 28, 1854, AAA, Archivo de la Iglesia, Carpeta: Decretos, Circulares y Cartas del Obispo López.

(13.) Acosta, *Carlos Antonio López*, 626–627.

(14.) Proceso a Ezequiel Benítez por hechicería, Santa María, 1864–1867, Archivo Nacional de Asunción-Sección Civil y Judicial (hereafter ANA-SCJ) vol. 1525.4, foja 92–110.

(15.) Zacarías Martínez, "Normas de comportamiento popular en la religiosidad paraguaya," in *La religiosidad popular paraguaya* (Asunción: Ediciones Loyola, 1981), 51–72.

(16.) Fidel Maíz, *La Virgen de los milagros de Caacupe: Su origen, su santuario, y su pueblo* (Asunción: Talleres Nacionales de H. Kraus, 1898), 80–101.

(17.) Informe de Felix Domingo Barbosa y Francisco Espinoza, August 16, 1865, Correspondencia de San Pedro, ANA-SH vol. 400.1 (II), foja 347–348; and "La virgen de la Asunción, patrona de la República," *El Centinela* (Asunción), August 15, 1867.

(18.) Maíz, *La Virgen de Caacupe*, 101–114.

(19.) V. Centurión a Carlos Antonio López, Ajos, March 22, 1860; Cura Pedro Nolasco Aquino a V. Centurión, Carajao, July 22, 1860, in Caso contra Pedro Nolasco Aquino, ANA-SH vol. 330 (microfilm, University of Texas at Austin).

(20.) Maíz, *La Virgen de Caacupe*, 115–123.

(21.) Proceso a la esclava Magdalena por robo de la Iglesia de la Encarnación, Asunción, 1867, ANA-SCJ, vol. 1565.5, foja 128–203.

(22.) Recibos de donaciones de alhajas por las hijas de la patria, San Pedro, 1867, Archivo Nacional de Asunción-Sección Nueva Encuardanación (hereafter ANA-SNE) vol. 1740; and similar for Villa Occidental, ANA-SNE vol. 2427.

(23.) Almoneda de diezmo del verano: November 1853, ANA-SNE vol. 3155; November 1854, ANA-SNE vol. 3159; November 1855, November 1856, ANA-SNE vol. 3172; November 1857, ANA-SNE vol. 2163; November 1858, ANA-SNE vol. 1567; November 1859, ANA-SNE vol. 3189; November 1860, ANA-SNE vol. 2218; November 1861, ANA-SNE vol. 2225; November 1862, ANA-SNE vol. 2249; Expenditures and proceeds as compiled from the diezmo ledger, 185–255, Cuaderno del la caja de diezmos, ANA-SNE vol. 2997.

(24.) Margarita Durán Estragó, ed., *Catecismo de San Alberto*: *Adaptado para las escuelas del Paraguay, Gobierno de Francisco Solano López* (Asunción: Intercontinental editor, 2005), 60–67; and "Ley de diezmos," *El Semanario* (Asunción), January 30, 1864.

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(26.) Ricardo Pavetti, *La integración nacional del Paraguay, 1750–1850*, Biblioteca de Estudios Paraguayos 69 (Asunción: Universidad Católica Nuestra Señora de la Asunción, 2008), 445–449.

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(28.) Heyn-Schupp, *Iglesia y estado*, 151, 196–200.

(29.) Carta pastoral, May 6, 1863, Libro parroquial de Caapucu, Borrador de cartas pastorales, 1852–1864, AAA, Archivo de la Iglesia, Carpeta: Decretos, Circulares y Cartas del Obispo López; Varios informes jueces de paz a Carlos Antonio López, ANA-SH vol. 312.8, foja 34, 39–40, 52, 59.

(30.) Rugeley, *Of Wonders and Wise Men*, 233–240.

(31.) See “Ñande retã,” as well as “Tory Guazu” and “Ñande retã defendehape,” in *Cacique Lambaré*, (Asunción), July 24, 1867, for such formulations. Also see “Misa de gracia,” *Cacique Lambaré*, (Asunción), November 10, 1867.

(32.) See, for example, Informe de Pedro Vicente Ibañez a Francisco Solano López, December 26, 1862, Correspondencia de San Pedro, ANA-SH vol. 400.1 (I), foja 187–189; Informe de Hermogenes Cabral a Francisco Solano López, December 27, 1862, Correspondencia de Pilar, ANA-SH vol. 397.1 (II), foja 1878–1880.

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(36.) See, for example, Disputa en Salvador, 1859, ANA-SH vol. 328.1–26 (microfilm, University of Texas at Austin).

(37.) Aguilera Jiménez, *Mombe'u pyre, mombe'u pyrã*, 85–87.

(38.) Barbara Potthast-Jutkheit, *Paraíso de Mahoma' o "País de las mujeres"? El rol de la familia en la sociedad paraguaya del siglo XIX* (Asunción: Instituto Cultural Paraguayo-Alemán, 1996), 167–179, 366–367.

(39.) See, for example, the cases of Felipe Antonio Neyra, Carapegua, August 1852; Gregorio Nuñez, Itagua, April 1853; Felipe Antonio Ortellado, Pilar, March 1852; Casimiro Ortiz, Ita, June 1852; and Juan Esteban Oviedo, Asunción, September 1852, in AAA, Impedimentos Matrimoniales, Libro 1852; Demanda de divorcio de Doña Victoriana de Jésus Barbosa contra Don Pedro Juan Bogarin, 1858–1861, AAA, Demandas de Divorcio, Libro 1858–1874, foja 35–43.

(40.) AAA, Juzgado Eclesiastico, Libros 1844–1852; 1853–1855; 1856–1859; 1856–1864.

(41.) Itagua, September 30, 1851 (2 casos), Concepción, March 31, 1852, AAA, Juzgado Eclesiastico, Libro 1844–1852; Itagua, September 30, 1853; Capiata, June 30, 1854; Itagua, September 30, 1854, Concepción, March 31, 1852, AAA, Juzgado Eclesiastico, Libro 1853–1855.

(42.) Potthast, *"Paraíso de Mahoma" o "País de las mujeres*," 363–365.

(43.) In this regard also see the impediment petitions as filed in the Libros de Juzgado Eclesiatico, AAA, 1853–1855, 1856–1864.

(44.) See, again, Informes de mayordomos de iglesia, Villa Occidental, Paraguarí, and Capiata in ANA-SNE vol. 1696, as well as the 1857 ledger for burial payments for the parish of Laureles in ANA-SNE vol. 3161.

(45.) Arroyos, Informe del cura Pedro Nolasco Aquino, December 29, 1857, AAA.

(46.) Acosta, *Carlos Antonio López*, 635–637.

(47.) Michael Kenneth Huner, “How Pedro Quiñonez Lost His Soul: Suicide, Routine Violence, and State (Un-Re) Formation in Ninteenth-century Paraguay,” paper presented at the Reframing Latin America’s Nineteenth Century Conference at Yale University, February 27–28, 2015.

(48.) Jenny Barchfield, “Poll: Latin American Catholics Steadily Leave Faith,” *Press* (Sheboygan, WI), November 14, 2014.

(49.) Maíz, *La Virgen de Caacupe*, 29–32; Norman O. Brown, “My Pilgrimage to Caacupe,” in *The Paraguay Reader: History, Culture, and Politics*, eds. Peter Lambert and Andrew Nickson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 143–145.

(50.) Andrew Nickson, “Paraguay’s Presidential Coup: The Inside Story,” *Open Democracy*, July 10, 2012, accessed August 27, 2012; and Clyde Soto, “Lessons on Paternity from Lugo,” in Lambert and Nickson, *Paraguay Reader*, 357–361.

(51.) For examples of such jokes, see Domingo Adolfo Aguilera, *Pukarã: Chistes folclóricos paraguayos* (Asunción: CEPAG, 2006).

(52.) Benedict Anderson’s seminal text on nationalism, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), highlights the tombs of unknown soldiers as the exemplary manifestations of secular nationalism imitating the cultural system of religion that it allegedly replaced. In the case of Paraguay, we see both cultural systems at work in tandem.

(53.) Acosta, *Carlos Antonio López*, 586–587.

(54.) I visited the Caazapa cemetery on a research trip to Paraguay in the summer of 2014 and located de Paula López’s marker. Details about de Paula López’s position in the community came from a consultation with historian Margarita Duran Estragó, who wrote a history of the pueblo, *San José de Caazapa: Un modelo de redución franciscana* (Asunción: Editorial Don Bosco, 1992).

(55.) Mariano Celso Pedrozo, *La religiosidad popular paraguaya y la identidad nacional* (Asunción: Imprenta Salesiana, 2003), chapter 2.

(56.) Pedrozo, *La religiosidad popular paraguaya* (2003); and *La religiosidad popular paraguaya* (1981).

(57.) Dionisio M. Gonzalez Torres, *Folklore del Paraguay* (Asunción: Servilibro, 2003).

(58.) Rugeley, *Of Wonders and Wise Men*, chapter 2.

(59.) Efraím Cardozo, *El Paraguay colonial: Las raices de la nacionalidad* (Buenos Aires: Edicciones Nizza, 1959); and Margarita Durán Estragó, *Presencia franciscana en el Paraguay* (Asunción: Universidad Católica, 1987).

(60.) Guillermo Wilde, *Religion y poder en las misiones de Guaranies* (Buenos Aires: Editorial SB, 2009); Barbara Ganson, *The Guaraní Under Spanish Rule in the Rio de la Plata* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); and Meliá, *La lengua guaraní* and *El Guaraní conquistado y reducido: ensayos de etnohistoria* (Asunción: Centro de Estudios Antropológicos de la Universidad Católica, 1986).

(61.) Susnik's scholarly writings were prolific. See, for example, Branislava Susnik, *Los aborigenes del Paraguay: Etnohistoria de los guaranies, epoca colonial* (Asunción: Museo etnografico Andres Barbero, 1979), and "Religión y religiosidad en los antiguos pueblos guaraníes," in *La religiosidad popular paraguaya*, 143–150.

(62.) Shawn Michael Austin, "Beyond the Missions: Ethnogenesis in Colonial Paraguay, 1556–1700" (PhD Diss., University of New Mexico, 2014). Austin also highlights the work of Dorothy Jane Teur, "Tigers and Crosses: The Transcultural Dynamics of Spanish-Guaraní Relations in the Río de la Plata: 1516–1580" (PhD Diss., University of Toronto, 2011); and Louis Necker, *Indios Guaraníes y chamanes franciscanos: Las primeras reducciones del Paraguay, 1580–1800* (Asunción: Centro de Estudios Antropológicos, Universidad Católica, 1990).

(63.) Austin, "Beyond the Missions," chapter 4; and Ignacio Telesca, "Afrodescendientes: Esclavos y libres," *Historia del Paraguay*, ed. Ignacio Telesca (Asunción: Taurus, 2010), 337–355.

(64.) Roberto Romero, *Protagonismo histórico del idioma guaraní* (Asunción: Arte Final, 1998); and Sara Delicia Villagra-Batoux, *El guaraní paraguayo: De la oralidad a la lengua literaria*, trans. Anahí García (Asunción: Expolibro, 2002).

(65.) Telesca, *Tras los expulsos*.

(66.) Bartomeu Meliá, Margarita Duran Estragó, Norma Ibáñez de Yegros, eds., *Documentos en guaraní* (Asunción: Archivo Nacional de Asunción, 2006).

(67.) Bartomeu Meliá, ed., *Otras historias de la independencia* (Asunción: Taurus, 2011); and Ignacio Telesca, ed., *Paraguay 1813: La proclamación de la república* (Asunción: Taurus, 2013).

(68.) John Hoyt Williams, *The Rise and Fall of the Paraguayan Republic, 1800–1870* (Austin: Institute of Latin American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, 1979); Cooney, "Destruction of the Religious Orders in Paraguay" and "La reconstrucción de la iglesia paraguaya"; Heyn-Schupp, *Iglesia y estado*; and Thomas Whigham, *The Politics of the River Trade: Tradition and Development in the Upper Plata, 1780–1870* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991).

(69.) Potthast, *"Paraíso de Mahoma" o "País de las mujeres."*

(70.) Huner, "Sacred Cause, Divine Republic: A History of Nationhood, Religion, and War in Nineteenth-century Paraguay" (PhD Diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), 2011.

(71.) María Lucrecia Johansson, *Soldados de papel: La propaganda en la prensa paraguaya durante la guerra de la Triple Alianza, 1864–1870* (Cádiz, Spain: Fundación Municipal de Cultura, 2014); Heríb Caballero Campos y Cayetano Ferreira Segovia, "El periodismo de Guerra en el Paraguay (1864–1870)," *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* 6 (November 2006); and Thoma Whigham, "Building the Nation while Destroying the Land: Paraguayan Journalism during the Triple Alliance War," *Jarbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas: Anuario de Historîa de América Latina* (2012): 157–180.

(72.) Ignacio Telesca, *Pueblo, curas y Vaticano: La reorganización de la Iglesia paraguaya después de la Guerra contra la Triple Alianza, 1870–1880* (Asunción: Fondec, 2007).

(73.) Maíz, *La Virgen de Caacupe*, 101–114.

(74.) Augusto Roa Bastos, *Hijo del hombre* (New York: Penguin, 1996).

(75.) Thomas Whigham and Barbara Potthast, "The Paraguayan Rosetta Stone: New Insights into the Demographics of the Paraguayan War, 1864–1870," *Latin American Research Review* 34.1 (1999): 174–187, is the most accurate estimation. Vera Blinn Reber contends the casualty numbers were much lower than those suggested by Whigham and Potthast. See her "Comment on 'The Rosetta Stone,'" *Latin American Research Review* 37.3 (2002): 129–135; and Whigham and Potthast's consequent response, "Refining the Numbers: A Response to Reber and Kleinpenning," *Latin American Research Review* 37.3 (2002): 143–148.

(76.) Luc Capdevila, *Une guerre totale Paraguay, 1864–1870* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007); and Capucine Boidin Caravias, "Guerre et Métissage au Paraguay: Deux companies rurales de San Ignacio Guasú (Misiones 2001–1767)" (PhD Diss., Universite Paris X Nanterre, 2004).

(77.) Bridget María Chesterton, *The Grandchildren of Solano López: Frontier and Nation in Paraguay, 1904–1936* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013); and Carlos Gómez Florentin, *1954: El contexto histórico* (Asunción: El Lector, 2014).

(78.) Carlos Miranda, *The Stroessner Era: Authoritarian Rule in Paraguay* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990); Kregg Hetherington, *Guerrilla Auditors: The Politics of Transparency in Neoliberal Paraguay* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); and Capdevila, *Une guerre totale*.

(79.) René D. Harder Horst, *The Stroessner Regime and Indigenous Resistance in Paraguay* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007); and Ignacio Telesca, *Las ligas agrarias cristianas* (Asunción: El Lector, 2014).

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