The Jesuit-Guaraní Confraternity in the Spanish Missions of South America (1609–1767): A Global Religious Organization for the Colonial Integration of Amerindians

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Summary: *This article explores the vertical aspects of the Jesuit confraternity system in the thirty community towns under Spanish rule (1609–1767) designated as "Missions" or "Reductions" in the Río de la Plata region of South America. The principal documents analyzed are the* cartas anuas, *the annual reports of the Jesuits. The chronological analysis is carried out with a view to tracing the process of integrating the Guaraní Indians into the Spanish colonial regime by means of the religious congregation founded in each Mission town. As a supplementary issue, we deal with the significance of the Spanish word* policía *(civility) used as a criterion to ascertain the level of culture attained by the Amerindians. Normally the Jesuits considered members of indigenous confraternities to be endowed with* policía*, so they used confraternities to transplant Christian civility among the Guaraní Indians in the Spanish overseas colony.*

Even a casual visitor to Latin American countries is bound to be struck by the presence of vast numbers of Christian churches in both rural and urban areas. These are the result of the evangelization, or spiritual conquest forcefully promoted by the Spanish monarchy in return for papal approval of Spanish dominion over these newly "discovered" lands. The agreement between the Spanish crown and the papal see was deemed to be necessary for the expansion of the Spanish Empire.

The spiritual conquest of the new territories of the Spanish Empire was a passionate enterprise. Many have argued that this zeal was something that had originated in the wake of a variety of historical factors, such as the moral decadence of Christendom in medieval Europe, the birth of apocalyptic reasoning and belief in a future golden age of peace, justice, and prosperity that arose during the Renaissance, the pioneering "discovery" of the Americas by Christopher Columbus, and rising expectations for the global expansion of Catholicism.[1] Europeans in general believed

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[1] See Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium;* Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom*; Kobayashi, *La educación como conquista.*

that collaboration with the "naïve" Amerindians would lead to a revival of the primitive Christian community that had existed in the early years after Christ. Driven by these motivations, members of religious orders in particular embarked upon evangelical missions, voluntarily crossing the Atlantic and heading towards the heart of the Americas.

Missionary activities by the Franciscans and Dominicans were prominent in the early stages of the Spanish expansion in the Americas, but later the Jesuits followed with their own evangelical works. The Society of Jesus was a new religious institute officially approved by a papal bull in 1540. Having been blessed with many members, the Jesuits were willing to be dispatched worldwide for missionary activities. As a result, the Jesuits became an active agent in the promotion of early modern Catholicism on a global scale.[2]

The Jesuits made positive efforts to establish and promote a religious structure for the conversion of the Native Americans to Christianity. What they instituted were confraternities whose origins may be traced back to Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Originally confraternities were led by pious laymen and were constituted for the purpose of dedicating people to prayer and philanthropic or charitable works. In Spanish America, however, confraternities were introduced as top-down organizations by the missionaries in order to transplant European Christian culture and customs among the aboriginal peoples of the colony and thereby bring about their gradual integration into the Spanish colonial system.

In the first subsection of this article we shall discuss the significance of the Spanish word *policía*, with a view to understanding how the Spanish viewed the possibility of Christian culture and customs being transferred to the Amerindians. In this context we have a notable remark made by a Jesuit, namely that members of a confraternity were capable of becoming possessors of *policía cristiana* (Christian civility).[3] The second subsection presents a brief history of the origin and development of confraternities in medieval and early modern Europe, as well as their global expansion. Here we focus particularly on the gradual evolution of the Jesuit confraternity system, which finally functioned as a racially and culturally mixed sodality outside Europe, in order to integrate many diverse nations into a universal Christendom. In the third and final subsection, we will focus on a case study of the confraternity system in the thirty mission towns founded by the Jesuits in the Río de la Plata region of South America (1609–1767). Each town was generally referred to as a *misión* (mission) or *reducción* (reduction). By focusing mainly on the analysis of Jesuit annual reports (*cartas anuas*), we shall study the process of the integration of Guaraní

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[2] O'Malley, *Religious Culture in the Sixteenth Century*; O'Malley, *Trent and All That.*

[3] "Sírvense las misas y culto divino con mucha solemnidad y diestra música de instrumentos y voces y están los muchachos muy instrido en toda modestia y policía cristiana." Maeder (ed.), *Cartas anuas de la Provincia Jesuítica del Paraguay, 1632 a 1634*, 170.

Indians into the Spanish Empire through the confraternity system organized in entire mission towns.

1. *Policía*, A Key Concept for Evaluating the Degree of Civility

The Spanish monarchy in the age of "discovery" was enthusiastic about converting vast numbers of the indigenous peoples of the Americas to Christianity in accordance with the agreement whereby the pope approved Spanish sovereignty in these newly "discovered" lands in exchange for the conversion of their autochthonous populations. In order to promote such evangelization, Spanish missionaries and colonists keenly collected abundant information concerning the culture and customs of the natives.

What criteria did the Spanish employ in order to evaluate the Native Americans? One example is presented in the report by Vasco de Quiroga, the first bishop of Michoacán, Mexico, to the Spanish King Charles I (Emperor Charles V), dated 24 July 1537. In his report Quiroga pointed out that the typical Native Americans suffered from lack of *policía* and insisted that a number of problems linked to peace and happiness would be resolved if they adopted *policía*. Quiroga thus suggested that as ruler of those vast overseas colonies, Charles should make it his mission to introduce *policía* among Native Americans.[4]

Not only clerics such as Quiroga, but laymen, too, insisted that the natives in the Spanish territories lacked *policía*. Tomás López, a Spanish judge of the Royal Audiencia of Guatemala in Central America, has left us a letter that speaks of this same lack of *policía* and describes in detail the meaning of this term. What he asserted was that *policía* encompassed a variety of commonplace issues related to the manners that characterized the Spanish, such as their way of drinking, eating, wearing clothes, personal hygiene, attending to people, courtesy, conversation, and childcare.[5]

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[4] "Y pues Su Majestad, como Rey y Señor y Apóstol de este Nuevo Mundo, a cuyo cargo está el grande negocio de él en temporal y espiritual, por Dios y por el Sumo Pontífice a él concedido, […] los naturales […] padeciendo como padecen agravios y fuerzas grandes por falta esta buena policía que no tienen, y por el derramamiento y soledad en que viven, porque todo se ordenaría y remediaría y cesaría ordenándose ésta, y todo bien y descanso vendría juntamente con ella a todos"; Castañeda Delgado (ed.), *Don Vasco de Quiroga*, 151–152.

[5] "como entre estos naturales y en toda esta tierra […] tantos maestros tendrán para su conversión para ser alumbrados en las cosas de nuestra fe y para la policía de que (estos naturales) carecen, en las cosas mecánicas y en lo demás"; "el encomendero, el cacique, el clérigo, y el fraile todos vayan y vengan a sus pueblos (de los indios), hablen y conversen con ellos y españoles que entre ellos (estén), hablen siempre nuestra lengua (española) […] y de cada día entenderán (los indios) más con este ardid y con la continua conversación aprenderían nuestra policía de comer, de beber, de vestir, de limpiarnos y de tratar nuestras personas y nuestras cortesías y ceremonias en el hablar y nuestras crianzas y finalmente nuestra lengua que es lo que pretendemos." "Cartas de Tomás López, licenciado y oidor de la Audiencia de los Confines, 9 de junio de 1550 y 29 de marzo de 1551 en AGI, Audiencia de Guatemala, 1. 9."; cited in Mörner, "La difusión del castellano," 435–446, esp. 437.

Documents such as these point to the close links that existed between *policía* and the culture and customs of the Spanish. For Native Americans, acquiring *policía* was analogous to practicing Spanish etiquette in their daily lives, which in turn indicated their incorporation into the Spanish colonial system.

Both Quiroga and López met with a number of indigenous people in the Americas and stressed the adoption of *policía* among them. Their proposals underscored the principal Spanish colonial policy. On 7 June 1550, a royal decree was issued for the Viceroys of New Spain and Peru, as well as for the Provincials of each religious order, that encouraged Native Americans to adopt *policía* and the good customs of the Spanish.[6]

What are the historical origins of the word *policía*? What was its usage and connotation outside Spain? According to Jeremy Ravi Mumford, *policía* is a derivative of the Greek word *polis* (city). The word conveys the covert meaning of a Mediterranean urban lifestyle with well-organized space. Those who visit any of today's Latin American countries will easily notice that every city, town, and village has a similar physical structure, namely a square or rectangular plaza located at the centre, and streets laid out in a systematic grid pattern (fig. 1). In the early modern period Spaniards believed that this well-ordered living space was ideal for human beings and that the dwellers in such a space would naturally acquire *policía*.[7]

In regions of Europe where French and English were spoken, the word *policía* was also considered to be an equivalent to civility. An illustrative example here would be the elucidation given by Guillaume de La Perrière (1499 c.a.–1565), a French writer and acknowledged pioneer of the French Renaissance, who affirmed that we could express the connotations of *policía* using a variety of words such as civility, and that a government based on *policía* could be declared a commonwealth or civil society. La Perrière's work was first published in 1555 and translated into English in 1598, which meant that the use of the word civility as a rendition for *policía* became popular in English and French speaking areas.[8]

Europeans viewed themselves as embodiments of *policía* and, accordingly, despised as barbarians those who did not share their sophisticated culture. In the age of Enlightenment, the meaning of civility became closely associated with civilization. The Spanish in particular used this concept as part of their colonial policy; in order to justify their dominion

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[6] "Como una de las principales cosas que nos deseamos para el bien de esa tierra es la salvación e instrucción y conversión a nuestra Santa Fe Católica de los naturales de ella, y que también tomen nuestra policía y buenas costumbres." Konetzke (ed.), *Colección de documentos*, 272.

[7] Mumford, *Vertical Empire*. With reference to Polis, see Hansen, *Polis*.

[8] La Perrière, *Le Miroir politique*; La Perrière, *The Mirrovr of Policie*. See also Rowe, "Ethnography and Ethnology," 1–19, esp. 6–7.

over those vast newly "discovered" lands, they viewed the indigenous people as lacking *policía* and in need of Christian civilization.

In some cases, however, the Spanish considered certain Native Americans as already enjoying *policía*, specifically those Native Americans who were members of a confraternity. An anonymous Jesuit chronicle of 1600 informs us that in Cuzco, Peru, in 1597, Native Americans with links to religious congregations under the supervision of the Jesuits took care of patients suffering from infectious diseases, looked after the distribution of food and other essentials to them and urged them to make their confessions at the moment of death. The anonymous author concluded that these Amerindians were undoubtedly worthy possessors of *policía*.[9] We find a similar assessment in another Jesuit document, the annual report of 1637–1639 regarding Concepción, one of the Jesuit Mission towns founded in 1620 in the Río de la Plata region of South America. In this report, the Marian congregation's Amerindian members were described as undeniably possessing *policía*.[10] These documents indicate that confraternities worked as means to introduce *policía* among their members. Membership in such sodalities led to the acquisition of European-Christian culture and customs and soft integration into the Spanish colonial regime. In the following section we shall discuss how such confraternities played an important role in integrating the dominant Spanish culture into the life of Native Americans.

2. The Birth and Development of Confraternities in Medieval Europe and Their Global Expansion

Confraternities are pious associations normally administered by laymen, founded in order to promote devotion and altruistic activities based on Christian welfare thinking. Members gather to create a sort of horizontal philanthropic bond by observing common rules, regardless of gender, age, origin, social class, or any other cultural or biological distinction. It might perhaps be appropriate to regard this group as a sort of symbolic family. In this sense, Émile Durkheim paid great attention to this family based on the "commonality of interests [that] replaced ties of blood."[11] (figs. 2–3)

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[9] "Los cofrades e indios devotos ayudaron mucho en disponer los enfermos para confesarse bien y en llamar a los padres: repartieronse en sus parroquias para velar los más necesitados, señalando personas que acudiesen con cosas de comidas y regalos, haciendo poner imágenes, cruces y agua bendita, y así era mucho de considerar la policía que en muchas casas había en altares e imágenes y limpieza." Mateos (ed.), *Historia general de la compañía de Jesús en la Provincia del Perú*, 94. See especially chapter 12: "De cierta que hubo en el Cuzco el año de 1597 y de lo que en ella ayudaron los nuestros."

[10] "Mayor fervor todavía demuestra la congregación mariana. Y tienen los congregantes una severa policía entre sí, no permitiendo en sus filas escándalo ninguno." Maeder/Storni (eds.), *Cartas Anuas de la Provincia del Paraguay, 1637–1639,* 108.

[11] Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society,* 16.

The development of confraternities in the High Middle Ages was closely linked to urbanization. According to Anthony J. Black, the words fraternity and friendship "are frequently referred to in city documents," revealing that "these were popular sentiments in the early *communes*."[12] The growth of a *commune*, or city republic, in different cities of northern Italy from the end of the eleventh century and the beginning of the twelfth was a typical phenomenon.[13] The wide expansion of communes can be observed not only in Italy, but in the Netherlands, Catalonia, the Rhineland, the Baltic nations, and other places as well.[14]

Most of the people joining together who shared common interests as well as property, and who often had common values and beliefs, were members of the laity. Such ordinary laymen had a strong desire to follow the example of Jesus (*Imitatio Christi*), and to be involved in the liturgy in their daily lives.[15]

The written statutes that exist for various confraternities indicate that they enjoyed a degree of autonomy. Some members acquired the qualifications essential to celebrate the sacrament of Penance and preach sermons, and there were no enacting clauses to force anything legally binding via canon law. Ronald F. E. Weissman has argued that until the middle of the sixteenth century Italian confraternities had not been subject to any serious intervention by any ecclesiastical authority such as a bishop or priest.[16] The edicts of the Council of Trent (1545–1563), however, changed all that. In Italy in particular confraternities became subject to the local bishop and supervised by the clergy to the point that ecclesiastical interference gradually encroached upon the autonomy of the sodality.[17] The effort by ecclesiastical authorities to bring confraternities under their jurisdiction sprang from a desire to counter the expansion of Protestantism in sixteenth-century Europe. As a safeguard against the rapid growth of such an adversary, confraternities were viewed by the Church hierarchy as crucial venues for the control of a large number of believers. In order to defend the doctrine and culture of the Catholic Church, ecclesiastical authorities used the organizational framework of confraternities and their members to control and direct Catholic believers in general.[18]

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[12] Black, "The Commune in Political Theory," 99–112, esp. 102.

[13] For the political aspects with reference to the Italian commune, see Waley, *The Italian City-Republics*. For the religious aspects, see Banker, *Death in the Community*; Thompson, *Cities of God*.

[14] Black, "The Commune in Political Theory," 104.

[15] Constable, *Three Studies*. Particularly see the chapter 2 "The Ideal of the Imitation of Christ."

[16] Weissman, "From Brotherhood to Congregation," 77–94, esp. 78–79.

[17] Christopher Black, *Italian Confraternities*, 58–68, 75–78.

[18] Christopher Black, "Introduction," 13. Protestants in general took a critical stand against confraternities supported by Catholics. Martin Luther famously attacked them; see his "The

The Counter-Reformation effort to combat Protestantism touched not only Catholic Europe but also the newly "discovered" lands under Spanish and Portuguese rule. In the early modern period, a number of charitable activities were promoted in Portugal by certain well-organized religious congregations under the name *Misericórdias*; such organizations were subsequently exported to overseas Portuguese colonies, such as the Azores and Brazil. In colonial Brazil the racial composition of such confraternities was extremely diverse, owing to extensive interracial contacts that, in turn, resulted in mixed-race sodalities.[19] Such Portuguese charitable congregations typically enjoyed royal support. The reorganization of *Misericórdias* under King Manuel I (1495–1521) corresponded to a national enterprise that reached as far as Goa, Japan, Africa, and South America.[20]

In Spanish America confraternities provided a sort of psychological support to conquered Amerindians. Having been subjected to the trauma of Spanish colonialism, the Amerindian populations were able to find in confraternities a new, alternative social network.[21] We are aware of several cases where a number of confraternities of Native Americans developed along the lines of extended kin groups, as for example the *calpulli* in Mexico and *ayllu* in Peru.[22] Members of these indigenous confraternities were able to secretly maintain, to a certain extent, some of their traditional customs and practices, such as dance, music, periodical festivals, and the cult of local deities.[23] There were also some similarities in customary practices between the religious culture of Native Americans and the activities of European confraternities; for instance, traditional Mesoamerican religious activities such as ritual bloodletting and auto-sacrifice were transferred by aboriginal confraternity members into Christian public penitential processions.[24]

Blessed Sacrament," 45–73, esp. 67–73.

[19] Russell-Wood, "Black and Mulatto Brotherhoods in Colonial Brazil"; Scarano, "Black Brotherhoods"; Mulvey, "Black Brothers and Sisters."

[20] Guimarães Sá, *As Misericórdias portuguesas*. For the global expansion of *Misericórdias* toward Asia and Portuguese Africa and Brazil, see Ferreira Martins, *Historia da misericórdia de Goa*; Silva Gracias, *Beyond the Self*; Kawamura, *Making Christian Lay Communities*; Russell-Wood, *Fidalgos e Philanthropists*, 24–41.

[21] Sakurai, *Viviendo como los Mayas*, 67 (in Japanese).

[22] For a general description with reference to the *calpulli* and *ayllu*, see: Conrad/Demarest, *Religion and Empire*, 20–30, 96–110. For the close relationship between the *calpulli* and confraternities in southern Mexico, see: MacLeod, "Papel social y económico," esp. 71; Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*: 14–58, 218–229. For specific ethnological description concerning ayllu, see Bastien, *Mountain of the Condor*, 1–19.

[23] MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 328.

[24] For the traditional penance the Aztec and Inca Indians had used, see: Acosta, *The Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, 337–339.

Christian missionaries affiliated to religious orders were a dynamic force in promoting the global expansion of confraternities in the early modern period. Particularly prominent among them was the Society of Jesus.[25] The *Misericórdia* organization expanded on a global scale not merely thanks to Portuguese royal backing, but also due to the contribution made by the Jesuits, whose work can be seen in Asia and Latin America.

The actions of the Superior General of the Society of Jesus in defending Catholic doctrine during the Council of Trent was intimately associated with the global expansion of confraternities, in particular of Marian sodalities. The second Superior General, Diego Laínez (1512–1565) was esteemed as an erudite Spanish theologian and fervent promoter of Marian devotion.[26] Devotion to the Virgin Mary was popular in the Iberian peninsula, as it was in other European regions, so much so that a number of confraternities chose her as their patron. Laínez sought to expand this popular belief by using the confraternity system, whose members evoked her name in their organizations. In so doing, he hoped that all Catholic believers might be integrated in one well-organized Christian community under the protection of the Virgin Mary.

The active promotion of this Marian devotion among the Jesuits is apparent when we consider the first foundation of the religious congregation at the Roman College. In 1563, Jean Leunis (1532–1584) made a great contribution towards the institutionalization of the Congregation of the Annunciata. This congregation was also called the 'Prima Primaria Sodality,' due to the fact of its being the first Jesuit congregation within the Society.[27] The Annunciata was officially approved as 'Prima Primaria' by the papal bull *Omnipotentis Dei*, issued by Pope Gregory XIII on 5 December 1584. In this context, John W. O'Malley remarked, "the establishment of the Marian Congregation in 1563 surely signaled a new phase for the Jesuits."[28] According to him, by 1563 the Roman College worked as the international meeting place for Jesuits from different regions of Europe. Its custom of accepting young boys as members of the confraternity was adopted by other Jesuit institutions. Also, the affirmation of the primacy of the Marian Congregation in Rome by the papal bull of 1584 led to the idea that the other congregations might be sort of divisional offices

[25] Casanova and Banchoff (eds.), *The Jesuits and Globalization.*

[26] Poska, "Confessionalization and Social Discipline in the Iberian World," 308–319, esp. 309; Lynch, *Empire and Absolutism 1516–1598*, 258; Drivé, *María y la Compañía de Jesús.*

[27] Chatellier, *The Europe of the Devout*, 3–13; Maher, "How the Jesuits Used their Congregations," 75–95, esp. 81, note 27. For Leunis, see Wicki, *Le Père Jean-Leunis SJ (1532–1584)*; Martínez, *Juan Leunis.*

[28] O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 196. Concerning the papal bull of Gregory XVIII, see "Gregorii XIII: erectio primariae congregationis in ecclesia annuntiatae collegii romani societatis iesu, cum indulgentiis, et cum facultate aggregandi quasvis alias congregationes similes pro generali praeposito," in Jesuits (eds.), *Institutum*, vol. 1, *Bullarium et compendium privilegiorum*, 103–107.

of the head institution.[29] The Roman College thus played a key role in integrating hierarchically other colleges founded in different regions, within and without Europe, thus making the Marian congregation in Rome the 'primary' organization to which other congregations established in the different Jesuit colleges were subordinated.

3. The Confraternity System in the Jesuit-Guaraní Missions

3.i General Description of the Confraternity through an Analysis of Paraguayan Jesuit Chronicles

The rapid expansion of Marian congregations composed of young boys in Jesuit colleges in various regions of Europe is closely linked to the development of the confraternity system in the Jesuit-Guaraní Missions in the Río de la Plata region of South America. There, in 1609, the Jesuits founded their first Mission town, San Ignacio Guazú, and continued establishing towns following a similar grand design in different areas of the region. During the 1620s and 1630s, continuous attacks of Bandeirante, Portuguese settlers from São Paulo, destroyed a number of towns. The turning point was the Battle of Mbororé in 1641, when the Guaraní Indians under Jesuit command won a dramatic victory against the enemy, after which a prosperous period finally started for the Jesuit Missions. By the first half of the eighteenth century, thirty Missions had been established and the population had reached a peak of over 140,000.[30] (figs. 4–7)

In 1687, while the Mission was in a steady stage of growth, a chronicle dealing with Jesuit-Guaraní Mission history was published in Pamplona, Spain. The author was Francisco Jarque, an ex-Jesuit who shared his experiences as a missionary with the Guaraní Indians.[31]

According to Jarque, the general description of confraternities in the Missions was as follows.[32] There existed two congregations in each Mission

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[29] O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 198.

[30] For general history of Jesuit-Guaraní Missions, see: Armani, *Ciudad de dios y ciudad del sol*; Abou, *The Jesuit "Republic" of the Guaranís (1609–1768)*; Ganson, *The Guaraní Under Spanish Rule*; Sarreal, *The Guaraní and their Missions*; Wilde, *Religión y poder.*

[31] According to Ernesto J. A. Maeder, the actual author would be Diego Francisco Altamirano, Provincial of the Jesuit Province of Paraguay in the second half of seventeenth century; see Maeder, "Estudio Preliminar" in Jarque /Altamirano, *Las misiones jesuíticas en 1687*, 9–19, esp. 12–14.

[32] "En cada pueblo hay dos congregaciones; una en que entran muchachos de 12 a 30 años y suele estar debajo de la tute la de san Miguel; otra del resto del pueblo, con la advocación de alguna fiesta de la Santísima Virgen. En ambas se reciben también mujeres […] Son allí tan numerosas las dichas congregaciones, que en los pueblos mayores suelen llegar a 800 los congregantes con su prefecto, asistentes y otros oficios que cada año se eligen. […] Así estiman tanto el ser congregantes, que el papel de la obligación con que se ofrecen por esclavos de la Serenísima Reina del Cielo, cuando se incorporan, firmado del padre que cuida de la Congregación, le traen siempre consigo en la bolsa de reliquias, como una de las más

town, one being the congregation of Saint Michael and the other the Marian congregation. The first congregation was composed of relatively young Guaraní between the ages of 12 and 30 years, and the second of older Guaraní. Women were permitted to join both congregations. The number of members differed according to the scale of each Mission town, but the maximum number being approximately 800. Within each congregation there were certain special positions such as *prefecto* (Prefect) and *asistente* (Assistant), and every year elections were held to select responsible persons from among the membership to occupy these positions. Membership in these religious organizations was considered a cherished privilege. For the Marian congregation in particular, membership was viewed as comparable to being a 'slave of the Virgin Mary.' New members were enrolled into the congregation in a special ceremony in the presence of the Jesuits, and a relic within a pouch was handed over to the candidate as evidence of his admission. If the candidate happened in some way to fail in the performance of his or her duty, the Jesuits would take away the 'letter of a slave' (a sort of a certificate guaranteeing the high-ranking social status of the congregant) from the member, and delete his or her name from the membership list.

In the case of the Roman College, children and young adults were incorporated into the Marian congregation called Annunciata, while in the Jesuit-Guaraní Missions people of this age became members of the congregation of Saint Michael, and aging Guaraní were allowed to enter the Marian congregation with great piety, honour, and privileges. We may say that members of the congregation enjoyed a high social status in the Jesuit Missions. Pious Guaraní in particular were selected from among numerous inhabitants, and those selected with extra care could even be made responsible for certain special and vital tasks.[33]

Members of both congregations were considered privileged and exemplary figures by other Guaraní. This was a well-planned Jesuit strategy used to integrate pious indigenous people within the Spanish colonial regime. We find a typical case of how the Jesuits drew a clear distinction between members and non-members of the congregation. The book

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preciosas; y con igual sentimiento se aflige cualquiera cuando por no corresponder a sus obligaciones le quita el padre la dicha Carta de Esclavitud, y le borra de su Congregación"; Jarque/Altamirano, *Las misiones jesuíticas*, 87–88. For the scholarly research on the confraternity of Jesuit-Guarani Missions, see Leonhardt, *Bosquejo histórico de las congregaciones marianas*; Martini, "Las cofradías entre los indios."

[33] "Hállanse organizadas las Congregaciones del mismo modo que las que en casi todas las cass de la Compañía de Jesús hay erigidas y están divididas en varias clases. Una hay para los jóvenes desde los 12 a los 30 años, y está bajo la protección del Príncipe la milicia celestial; todas las demás están bajo la advocación de la Madre de Dios. En ellas no se recibe sino a los que se distinguen por su caridad para con el prójimo, su celo del buen orden y de la conversión de los infieles y su asiduidad en acercarse a los Santos Sacramentos." Charlevoix, *Historia del Paraguay*, 84.

Conquista espiritual (Spiritual Conquest) by Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, published in Madrid in 1639, recounts an interesting event. One night, a Guaraní Indian who had risen from the dead described to the inhabitants of the Mission towns of Loreto and San Ignacio Miní a spiritual experience she had had. While being dead, her spirit walked around different places guided by an angel and eventually arrived in hell where she saw some of her neighbours who had lived in the same Mission town being tortured by horrible demons. The Guaraní woman then declared that there was no congregant being tormented in hell.[34] This story clearly reveals the high esteem the Jesuits and the Indian population had for congregation members, and teaches a lesson to those who wished to become members of such a distinguished religious organization.

An analysis of the Jesuit chronicle allows us to understand better the workings and reputation of the Guaraní confraternity, but the information it provides is mostly a set of general descriptions; for more precise information we need to analyze additional types of documents.

3.ii Details of the Confraternity Through an Analysis of the Jesuit Annual Report

A chronological analysis of the Jesuit annual report entitled *Cartas Anuas* enables us to uncover further details concerning the social functions of the two confraternities in each Mission town. This is a hand-written periodical that informs colleagues and people in Europe about remarkable events, the political and economic situation in the Missions, and the evangelization process. The annual reports cover the period from 1609 to 1762, that is, approximately 150 years.[35]

The annual reports from 1609 to 1627 offer few descriptions of the confraternities. Those from 1632 to 1634, describing the Itapúa mission, point to similarities between the activities of congregants in Europe and those in the Mission towns. They reveal that at first there were questions as to whether the Guaraní congregants could be truly engaged in various religious exercises in an orderly and disciplined manner, but that subsequently congregation members proved to be helpful assistants to the Jesuits when they had to take care of numerous patients during bouts of epidemics. This description is reminiscent of the fraternal and benevolent

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[34] "Padre mío, yo pasé de esta vida esta noche; lo primero que vi fue una tropa de demonios muy fieros que me salieron al encuentro. […] Allí vi cómo aporreaban y atormentaban las ánimas que allí estaban, conocí entre ellas algunos que vivieron entre nosotros, pero ninguno de la Congregación." Ruiz de Montoya, *Conquista espiritual*, 183. This same episode was repeated in other Jesuit documents: "*Cartas Anuas* de 1635–1637," Leonhardt (ed.), *Cartas anuas, 1615–1637*, 747; "Estado de las reducciones del Parana y Uruguay y el fruto que por los religiosos de la Compañía de Jesús han conseguido sus avitadores, 1640," Jaime Cortesão (ed.), *Jesuítas e bandeirantes no Tape, 1615–1641*, 209.

[35] The publication of entire *Cartas Anuas* concerning the Jesuit Province of Paraguay is currently underway; at the present time, we can access only those from 1609 to 1700.

activities that were notable characteristics of confraternities in medieval and early modern Europe.[36]

While the Jesuit chronicle informs us of the coexistence of the two types of congregations, the annual reports for the period 1635–1637 refer to the case of San Ignacio Guazú, where the first Marian congregation was founded, which suggests that this congregation may have been established prior to the establishment of the confraternity of Saint Michael and that it was the only congregation existing during the first stage of the Jesuit-Guaraní Mission history. It also reveals that many Indians wished to join the confraternity and, according to one notable description, that the most severe punishment for the congregants was to have their names dropped from the membership list.[37] This was an undeniably compelling form of socio-psychological pressure. The first description of the congregation of Saint Michael comes from the annual report of 1663–1666 for Loreto, but we cannot determine when, exactly, this congregation was instituted.[38]

What was the relationship between the two confraternities? There is a thought-provoking passage in the annual report for 1672–1675, which explains that the general situation in each mission town was that the most 'distinguished' youths in the congregation of Saint Michael could later enter the Marian congregation.[39] This note points to the progression from an adolescent to an adult congregation. Admission to the congregation of Saint Michael was nothing less than a prerequisite for the future enhancement of the social status of the individual within the Jesuit-Guaraní Mission. One case from the Itapúa mission in the 1668 annual report indicates that Guaraní parents were anxious about the admission of their children to the congregation of Saint Michael.[40]

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[36] "pero tomando con mucho fervor a su cargo los esclavos de la Virgen que así se llaman los congregantes el componer los difuntos y darles sepulturas, se desterraron de todo el pueblo estos abusos y por su medio se han introducido otros ejercicios de piedad, de suerte que aunque al principio dudaron algunos si eran (los congregantes) capaces estos indios para reducirlos a la orden y disciplina de congregaciones." Maeder (ed.), *Cartas Anuas, 1632 a 1634*, 125–126.

[37] "Aquí se fundó la primera congregación que no decayó nunca de su primitivo fervor. Goza ella de tan general aceptación, que tienen por el favor más grande que se les pueda hacer, ser admitidos a ella, y por el castigo más grave, ser excluidos de la misma." Leonhardt (ed.), *Cartas anuas, 1615–1637*, 714.

[38] "Omito lo referente a las florecientes congregaciones de la Virgen y de San Miguel, porque no hay nada de particular sobre esto, con excepción de una hermosa capilla construida y bien provista, en honor de San Miguel." Salinas/Folkenand (eds.), *Cartas anuas, 1663–1666, 1667–1668, 1669–1672, 1672–1675*, 94–95.

[39] "Fuera de la congregación mariana existe otra, bajo la invocación de San Miguel Arcángel, para los niños y niñas. De esta se sacan los más distinguidos, más tarde, para la congregación mariana." Salinas/Folkenand (eds.), *Cartas anuas*, 204.

[40] "Tienen gran interés los habitantes en que se admita a sus hijos a la sodalidad angélica, y los llevan a ese fin en persona a los Padres." Salinas/Folkenand (eds.), *Cartas anuas,* 93.

The annual reports for 1720–1730 reiterate the fact that members of both congregations were carefully selected for their virtue and piety,[41] which was also proof of the confidence the Jesuits had in them. The following description in the 1658–1660 annual report is particularly notable: a Jesuit confessed that they could rely on confraternity members with regard to engagement in 'delicate matters' such as supervising the activities of neighbours or organizing military expeditions against rebellious indigenous groups categorized as *infieles* (infidels).[42]

Clearly, not all indigenous people were fully incorporated into the Mission system. The Jesuits usually described such non-incorporated Indians as infidels, with the insinuation that they could possibly be ruffians. One Jesuit in the second half of the eighteenth century used the word *hez* (garbage) to denote those who were antagonistic towards Christian missionaries.[43]

Another passage reveals how the confraternity members served as faithful assistants to the Jesuits. The following is an episode concerning the La Asunción de Bororé (today known as La Cruz) mission, in the 1659–1662 annual report. When an epidemic was rampant, the Guaraní Indians affiliated to the congregations were earnestly engaged in the medical treatment of patients and, on occasions of extreme urgency, could administer baptism to dying patients should a Jesuit not be present.[44]

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[41] "Existen en cada pueblo dos sodalidades; la una es la Congregación Mariana de hombres adultos, la otra es la Sociedad de San Miguel para los jóvenes. Las dos sodalidades tienen sus secciones para los distintos sexos. No se admite sino lo más escogido del pueblo. Para alcanzar la dicha de ser admitidos a la Congregación, se esmeran todos en adelantar en la virtud y piedad." *Cartas Anuas de la Provincia Jesuítica del Paraguay 1720–1730*, Instituto Anchietano de Pesquisas (hereafter IAP), São Leopoldo, RS, Brasil, 149–150. The IAP has a collection of *Cartas Anuas* not yet printed but in a redacted version by Arnaldo Bruxel.

[42] "La devoción a la Santísima Virgen está propagada, florece grandemente en los pueblos de los neófitos, mayormente por la fundación de las congregaciones marianas, generalizadas ya en todas partes, distinguiéndose los congregantes por la pureza de sus costumbres, y su fiel asistencia a los actos del culto. Tienen ellos por una honra muy grande, el ser apuntados en la congregación y se empeñan mucho hacerse dignos a ser recibidos en ella, y piden este favor con mucha instancia. Una vez recibidos, procuran ellos, así como superan a los demás por la dignidad de ser de la corte de María, superar a los demás por su buen comportamiento. Por lo tanto, están convencidos los Padres de que precisamente a ellos se les pueden encargar con toda confianza asuntos delicados como, por ejemplo el observar la conducta de una persona, o dirigir una expedición a los infieles, lo que el misionero no puede en persona, por estar amarrado en su pueblo por el servicio religioso." Salinas (ed.), *Cartas anuas, 1658–1660 y 1659–1662,* 49.

[43] "[…] esos huidos son los malos, son la hez del pueblo, […] son los que, por verse perseguidos de los alcaldes y celosos fiscales por sus flaquezas (que ésos suelen ser delitos) se huyen a vivir en las granjas, quintas y pastores de los españoles, por esos campos adonde ni alcanza la militar." Furlong (ed.), *José Cardiel y su carta relación (1747)*, 178.

[44] "Le asistieron fielmente los congregantes, a los cuales había enseñado el modo de bautizar." Salinas (ed.), *Cartas anuas, 1658–1660 y 1659–1662*, 134.

Our discussion has focused mainly on descriptions in the annual reports of the Paraguayan Jesuit Province redacted under the supervision of the individual in charge, who is referred to as the "Provincial," but there also exists a different type of report with a similar designation. The first type of annual report is referred to in the plural as *Cartas Anuas* and it indicates various events that occurred in the entire Paraguayan Jesuit Province, whereas the second type is described in the singular as *Carta Anua*, namely the report prepared in each mission town or in one of the two regions named Paraná or Uruguay. In some cases its contents were listed item by item.[45] This is an obvious sign that the *Cartas Anuas* (plural) was compiled using the many memoranda designated as *Carta Anua* (singular). The reverse is not true: descriptions in the *Carta Anua* (singular) make no reference to the *Cartas Anuas* (plural).

The *Cartas Anuas* (plural) refers to certain special positions in the confraternity such as that of Prefect and Assistant, but gives no detailed information. The *Carta Anua* (singular) of 1678 from the Paraná and Uruguay regions mentions the fact that the Prefect was the principal person in the confraternity and the one who assumed leadership over other ordinary members.[46] Another *Carta Anua* written in the Apóstoles mission in 1713 explains that the Assistant is the person in charge of observing the behaviour of other members of the confraternity and of informing the Jesuits of their unsuitable actions, if any.[47] In spite of the surveillance of the Assistant, the name of a committed delinquent was repeatedly excluded from the list of members. We find such examples in various annual reports written in each mission.[48] There were also cases when congregants

[45] Some examples of original Spanish titles for this singular *Carta Anua* are: "Carta annua de la reducción de San Miguel de 1675;" "Reducción de la Concepción, puntos para el annua de 1675;" "Carta Annua de las Doctrinas del Paraná y Uruguay de 1678." This big discovery of the difference between the *Cartas Anuas* and the *Carta Anua* is due to archival research in IAP during 2014–2015.

[46] "el prefecto de la congregación principal (i.e., María) junto con el de la San Miguel reparte y señala los que han de asistir de día y de noche." *Carta Anua de Paraná y Uruguay, 1678,* Coleção Pedro de Angelis in IAP, I–29–7–57, 3.

[47] "Cuidan los asistentes que los congregantes vivan bien, y a esta causa se tienen señaladas personas que atienden al modo de proceder de los congregantes, y sabiendo algún falto a su obligación, avisan al Padre para que lo hecho de la congregación, persuadidos que no merecen ser congregante quien a más de no cometer pecados mortales no se esmeran en los actos de piedad y misericordia; y sucede que preguntando el confesor si ha hecho tal o tal pecado? responden: Padre, soy congregante, y así no lo he hecho." *Carta Anua de Apóstoles, 1713,* Coleção Pedro de Angelis in IAP, I–29–7–90, 1.

[48] "Aunque los congregantes de Nuestra Señora acuden bien es gran de consuelo ver el fervor con que proceden los niños congregantes de San Miguel, tienen por muy grande afrenta cualquiera pequeño delito, que en algunos de ellos se halla, pidiendo luego que le borren de la congregación, y si es menester alguna obra de caridad o para el culto divino, ellos se tienen por obligados para ello, y suelen también traer alguna leña para los enfermos." *Carta Anua de Corpus, 1675*, Coleção Pedro de Angelis in IAP, I–29–7–55, 1; "Las congregaciones de la

who behaved badly were placed with other confraternity members for rehabilitation.[49]

Conclusion

In early modern Spain, *policía* served as a key criterion in judging Amerindian culture. This word was translated as civility in English-French speaking Europe, from which, in the age of Enlightenment, was derived the word civilization. Native Americans who became familiar with European Christian culture and customs were treated kindly because they were deemed to possess *policía*, while those deemed to lack it were considered unqualified and were labelled by the Spanish as barbarians.

Certain historical documents indicate that members of confraternities were deemed to possess *policía*. This suggests that confraternities functioned as a means to introduce the concept of *policía* among the Amerindians. Confraternities in medieval Europe were voluntary associations of laypeople who built a horizontally ordered social network to assist each other. In the early modern period, when European expansion advanced on a global scale, confraternities took on hierarchical characteristics that served the needs of Catholic global evangelization. Such a change was precipitated in part by the general resolutions at the Council of Trent and supported by assiduous missionary activities by different religious orders, such as the Society of Jesus. The Jesuit confraternity system had a strong hierarchical characteristic. The Marian congregation founded in the Roman College functioned as the head office while other Marian confraternities in different regions of Europe were considered to be branch offices. This vertical aspect is one of the typical characteristics of the Jesuit confraternity system.

The top-down character of the confraternity became noticeable particularly in the Jesuit mission field of the Spanish overseas territories. Our main discussion dealt with a case study of 30 Jesuit-Guaraní Missions of the Río de la Plata region. In each mission town the congregations of Saint Michael and the Virgin Mary were uniformly founded, and children and young adults belonging to the former congregation were promoted to the latter when they were considered to have become mature adults. Many Jesuit

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Virgen Santísima y de San Miguel, están en su vigor con notable concurso y fervor de los congregantes. Y algunos que viven con menor edificación, fueron apartados de la congregación, lo cual sirvió de estímulo para unos y de escarmiento para otros." *Carta Anua de Candelaria y San Cosme, 1702*, Coleção Pedro de Angelis in IAP, I–29–7–75, 1–2.

[49] "y si algún mozo liviano o mujer mala no se puede reducir a mejor vida por los medios ordinarios, el Padre se vale de los congregantes y pone los malos en sus casas con que se estorban grandes ofensas del Señor y se convierten los pecadores por el buen ejemplo que tienen siempre delante de si y por el miedo de que el congregante no de parte al Padre de los desórdenes de sus vidas. Esto es en pocos reglones lo que se ofrece ahora, muchísimas cosas de edificación se han dejado o por olvido, o por ser ya tan comunes, que apenas se repara en ellas." *Carta Anua de Paraná, 1695*, Coleção Pedro de Angelis in IAP, I–29–7–67, 12.

documents, namely the annual reports, described confraternity members as being "distinguished" and viewed them as different from the average inhabitants of the mission town. Confraternity members constituted a social elite in the Missions as possessors of *policía*. As such, they enjoyed the goodwill of the Jesuits. Various Jesuit documents show that a number of Guaraní parents desired that their children become members of a confraternity. The insubordinate Guaraní on the other hand were regarded as unfaithful, and were consequently despised by the Jesuits. In this sense, one might say that the confraternity integrated the civilized Guaraní into the Spanish colonial system, while others labeled as unfaithful were coldly excluded.

In introducing Christianity to the Amerindians, the Jesuits also introduced the Spanish concept of *policía* or discipline. Confraternity members were educated to be religious, self-disciplined and socially engaged while the confraternity itself became an important venue for personal social advancement in the community.

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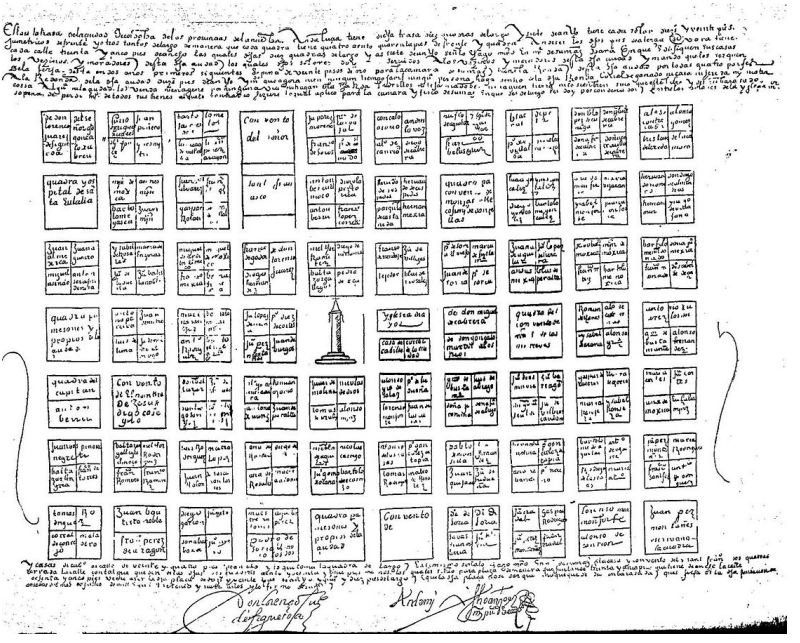

Figure 1. Lorenzo Suárez de Figueroa, City Plan for Córdoba, Argentina (1577). https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Primera_traza_de_C%C3%B3rdoba.jpg

Figure 2. Alfred Dehodencq, "A Confraternity in Procession along Calle Génova, Seville" (1851). https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/74/Alfred_Dehodencq_A_Confraternity_in_Procession_along_Calle_G%C3%A9nova.jpg

Figure 3. Palm Sunday Procession Organized by the Confraternity of the Entry of Jesus in Jerusalem, Astorga, Spain. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/87/Domingo_de_ramos_astorga.jpg

Figure 4. The Río de la Plata Basin in South America. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/13/Riodelaplatabasinmap.png

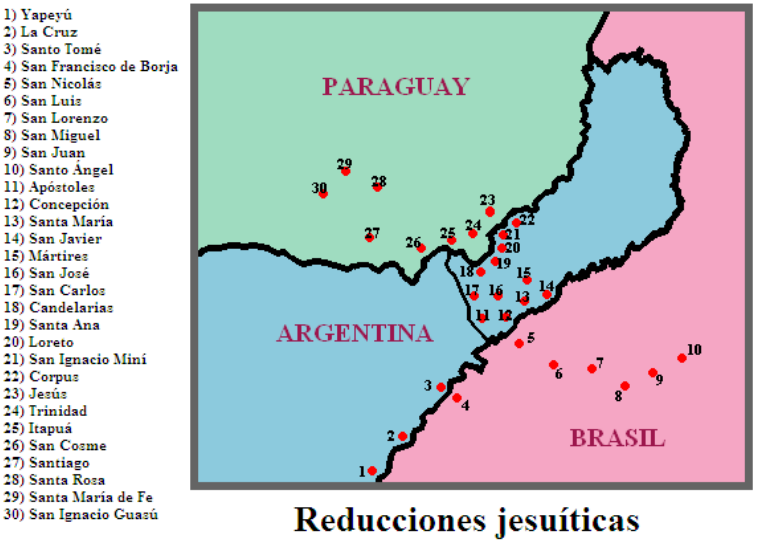

Figure 5. Location of the Jesuit-Guaraní Missions in the Río de la Plata Region. https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historia_de_las_misiones_de_la_provincia_jesu%C3%ADtica_del_Paraguay#/media/File:Reducciones.PNG

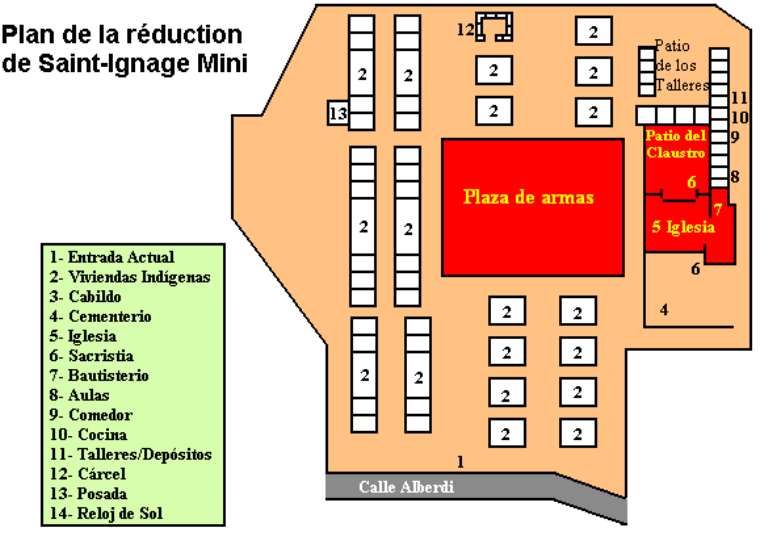

Figure 6. Map of the Jesuit Mission of San Ignacio Miní (Argentina). https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c9/Plan_de_la_reduction_saint_ignace.PNG

Figure 7. View of the Remains of Jesuit-Guaraní Mission of Trinidad (Paraguay). https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:General_view_-_Trinidad_(Paraguay).JPG?uselang=ja