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Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, Apostle of the Guaraní

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Abstract

This essay highlights the accomplishments of one of the foremost Jesuit missionaries in seventeenth-century Paraguay, Antonio Ruiz de Montoya. Born in Lima, Montoya distinguished himself as a chronicler of the first encounters between the Jesuits and the Guaraní Indians of South America. He defended Indian rights by speaking out against Indian slavery. Montoya spent approximately twenty-five years among the Guaraní indigenous peoples who influenced his worldview and sense of spirituality, which are reflected in his 1636 first account of the Jesuit *reducciones* in Paraguay, *Conquista espiritual hecha por los religiosos de la Compañía de Jesús en las provincias del Paraguay, Paraná, Uruguay, y Tapé*.

Keywords

Guaraní – Spanish missions – ethnohistory – hybridity – Apostle St. Thomas – cannibalism – Indian slavery – Paraguay – *reducciones* – Antonio Ruiz de Montoya

Introduction

In 1636, the Peruvian Jesuit Antonio Ruiz de Montoya published in Madrid his *Conquista espiritual hecha por los religiosos de la Compañía de Jesús en las provincias del Paraguay, Paraná, Uruguay, y Tapé*. This is a detailed account of his missionary experiences as a Jesuit and later superior of the Jesuit missions in an area known as Guayrá, which today is in southern Brazil (see Map 1), and then along the Paraná and Uruguay rivers of the Río de la Plata and Brazil between 1612 and 1637 in what became the most celebrated missions in the New World. Father Montoya became deeply immersed in the work of evangelization of the Guaraní during most of his adult life, experiences that shaped



MAP 1 Paraquaria vulgo Paraguay cum adjacentibus. From *Joannes Blaeu, Atlas Maior* (Amsterdam: Blaeu, 1662).

the man he became. Montoya became a classic “go-between,” moving between different cultures and serving as an intermediary, working tirelessly on behalf of the Guaraní indigenous peoples both in South America and across the Atlantic, as a representative of the Jesuit order.¹ Between 1610 and 1628, the early Jesuits succeeded in baptizing some 94,990 Guaraní.² Montoya was a key participant in the initial encounters with Guaraní shamans, a founder of *reducciones* (settlements or Indian towns), and later as a negotiator in diplomatic meetings with Spanish and Portuguese officials, including Philip IV, king of Spain and Portugal, at the court in Madrid. Following in the tradition of Spanish Dominican priest Antonio de Montesinos (c.1475–1545), who protested Indian

1 For a discussion of three different types of go-betweens see Alida Metcalf, *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500–1600* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 1–15.

2 Jurandir Coronado Aguilar, *Conquista espiritual: A história da evangelização na província Guairá na obra de Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, S.J. (1585–1562)* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2002), 213; Robert H. Jackson, *Demographic Change and Ethnic Survival Among the Sedentary Populations on the Jesuit Mission Frontiers of Spanish South America, 1609–1803: The Formation and Persistence of Mission Communities in a Comparative Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 13.

servitude at Santo Domingo in 1511, and other theologians, Antonio Ruiz de Montoya spoke out against injustice and Indian slavery in Brazil and the Río de la Plata during the 1620s and 1630s. His was a lonely voice, along with those of other Jesuits in the region who questioned the justness and legality of Indian slavery during the period when the two kingdoms of Spain and Portugal were joined into one (1580–1640). In British North America, where Indian slavery also existed, there was no similar apostle of the native peoples. Montoya was a product of his time in how he evaluated and related to native peoples through his own sensibilities, social categories of thought, and background.

One of Montoya's Jesuit contemporaries who served in the Guaraní missions during the mid-seventeenth century, Dr. Francisco Jarque (1609–91), recognized the words and deeds of this remarkable Peruvian Jesuit. In 1661, Dr. Francisco Jarque became Montoya's first biographer, but his four volumes of *Ruiz de Montoya en Indias* were not published in Madrid until 1900.³ We learn from his works that Antonio Ruiz de Montoya (1585–1652) was born in Lima in 1585. Although he was an illegitimate child of Cristóbal Ruiz de Montoya, a Spaniard from Seville who left Spain to seek his fortune in Peru, and Ana de Vargas, a creole woman of Lima, that status did not prevent him from entering the priesthood.⁴ Following the loss of his mother, five-year-old Montoya traveled with his father to Spain but when he fell ill in Panama, both returned to Lima. Then, following the death of his father, the eight-year-old, orphaned Montoya entered the Jesuit Seminario de San Martín in Lima. At seventeen, Montoya abandoned his studies, preferring to live independently. Two years later, he became a soldier and joined an expedition to combat the non-sedentary Araucanians (Mapuche) in Chile, where he was wounded four times.⁵ Returning to Lima and the same Jesuit school, he finished his studies and toyed with the idea of becoming a Franciscan. At age twenty-one, having completed the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola, he experienced a spiritual awakening. Montoya may have recognized that perhaps he could convert and enlighten native peoples through spirituality, rather than violence. He entered the novitiate in 1606, and completed his training in Cordoba, Argentina, before being ordained in Santiago del Estero in 1611.⁶

3 Francisco Jarque, S.J., *Ruiz de Montoya en Indias*, 4 vols. (Madrid: Victoriano Suárez, 1900).

4 A "creole" in this historical context was a white son or daughter born in the Americas claiming Spanish status.

5 Robert Charles Padden, "Cultural Adaptation and Militant Autonomy Among the Araucanians of Chile," in *The Indian in Latin American History: Resistance, Resilience, and Acculturation*, ed. John E. Kicza (Oxford: SR Books, 2000), 71–92.

6 José Luis Rouillon Arrospeide, S.J., has also published details on his life more recently. See also John E. Groh, "Antonio Ruiz de Montoya and the Early Reductions in the Jesuit Province of

Montoya was one of the first Jesuits assigned to preach among the semi-sedentary Guaraní in 1612 in Guayrá, where he joined two other Italian Jesuits, Giuseppe Cataldini (1571–1653) and Simone Mascetta (1577–1658) who had arrived there in 1610. Early Jesuit missionaries sought to evangelize native peoples by following the policies of Viceroy Francisco de Toledo that originated in Peru in the 1570s, which required the resettlement of native peoples into *reducciones* where they could be more easily converted. The Guaraní constructed huts using wood, palm leaves, and straw, similar to their traditional longhouses, only smaller. Montoya was instrumental in founding thirteen *reducciones* in the region.⁷

Of all the Catholic missions in the Americas, from New France to California to Chile, the Guaraní missions established in Paraguay under the Jesuits have been considered the most successful in terms of the size of their native population, the level of economic prosperity, and the extent of religious conversion of the Indians, at least from the perspective of Europeans. The Guaraní were highly receptive to the teachings of the Jesuits, largely due to their need for intermediaries to help them survive in southern South America, where Indian slavery had become prevalent. Beginning in the 1570s, *bandeirantes* (Portuguese settlers and their descendants who explored the interior of colonial Brazil) rounded up native peoples and forced them to march to the coast, carrying away as many as sixty thousand Guaraní between the years 1628 and 1631, often initiated by burning down their villages. Spaniards also sold the Guaraní into slavery in Paraguay, as well as Peru.⁸ A list of Guaraní captives in the year 1615 reveals that approximately seventy percent were women and children. This preference for Guaraní women reflects the sexual division of labor in agriculture in which women were predominant in the planting and harvesting of crops.⁹ Women could also serve as concubines and domestic servants. Forging

Paraguay," *Catholic Historical Review* 56 (1970): 501–33; Clement J. McNaspy, S.J., "Introduction," in Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, *The Spiritual Conquest Accomplished by the Religious of the Society of Jesus in the Province of Paraguay, Paraná, Uruguay, and Tapé*, trans. Clement J. McNaspy, S.J., John R. Leonard, S.J., and Martin E. Palmer (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1993).

7 Montoya, *Spiritual Conquest*, 29.

8 "Ydea del Estado antiguo y modern de la América Meridional," Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional (hereafter AHN), "Cartas y documentos sobre los tratados de límites de América entre España y Portugal y sucesos," Sección jesuitas, legajo 120, doc. 7; "Representación que hace al Rey N.S. en su Real Consejo de las Indias al P. Provincial de la Comp. de Jesús en la Provincia del Paraguay," Buenos Aires, April 23, 1752, AHN, Sección jesuitas, Legajo 120, doc. 38; Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix, *The History of Paraguay*, vol. 1 (Boston: John Adams Library, 1761), 372; Metcalf, *Go-Betweens*, 154, 171, 188.

9 John M. Monteiro, "From Indian to Slave: Forced Native Labour and Colonial Society in São Paulo during the Seventeenth Century," *Slavery and Abolition* 9 (1988): 105–27.

a military alliance between the Guaraní and Jesuits proved to be advantageous for both parties. The Guaraní needed a more effective way to prevent them from being enslaved even in greater numbers.

Jesuit missionaries brought with them vital skills, knowledge of the Catholic faith, science and technology, architecture, and material culture. Indigenous peoples benefited from Jesuit knowledge and readily adopted new technologies and material goods for their own use. In exchange, the Jesuits acquired knowledge of the natural environment that the Native Americans had acquired over the course of centuries on the basis of trial and error. The Guaraní, however, still relied on their traditional subsistence patterns. They hunted; gathered wild fruits, berries, and seeds; fished; and planted a wide variety of crops, including corn, manioc, squash, beans, peanuts, sweet potatoes, and other crops. Initially the Jesuits attempted to convert the Indians through preaching to them in their villages, accompanied only by an interpreter or several loyal native peoples. They then established settlements or Indian towns of their own, called *reducciones*. Although initially unstable, the Jesuit *reducciones* offered native peoples some measure of protection and refuge from enslavement, although the relocation from Indian villages of native peoples into the Jesuit-run Indian towns exposed the Guaraní to ongoing attacks by slave raiders, because their populations were more concentrated in a single location. Music and song greatly facilitated their conversion efforts, and served as a recruitment tool to attract native peoples to these early settlements. The Jesuits founded schools for male children to learn to read and write in their native Guaraní language, and occasionally in Latin. The Guaraní adapted to life in the Jesuit missions and responded to the missionaries in diverse ways. Native elites received honorific titles and exemptions from providing communal labor. Indian commoners worked both on their own plots of land and on that belonging to the community. The Guaraní refashioned their environment so as to meet their material, political, economic, religious, and cultural needs while in the missions. Through the Jesuits' influence, the Guaraní built new identities by adopting Christian first names. The Guaraní became vassals of the king by swearing allegiance to the crown. The formation of militias renewed the adult male Indians' sense of independence, power, self-worth, and warrior traditions. Indeed the term "Guaraní" means warrior in their language. Guaraní men readily volunteered to enhance their sense of mobility, and because bravery and courage were traditional social values among the Guaraní—as Montoya recorded in his dictionary that "abá eté" meant a "courageous man," in the native language. At the same time, native peoples retained and preserved many of their own cultural traditions and language, often through the assistance of Jesuit missionaries who served them as their political advisors,

physicians, and teachers. As laborers and recipients of European material goods and technology, the Guaraní built more than twenty *reducciones*. According to the 1647 census, the first official census of the missions, the twenty *reducciones* had a total population of 28,714.¹⁰

Montoya's *Conquista espiritual* is one of the great Jesuit eyewitness accounts of the seventeenth century. The works of other Jesuits about the celebrated Paraguayan missions, such as those of Nicolás de Techo (Nicolás du Toict, 1611–80), José Cardiel (b.1704), José Sánchez Labrador (1717–98), and the collected works of Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix (1682–1761) are also valuable in providing an understanding of the Jesuits' activities, native customs and practices, as well as the flora and fauna of the region, but in certain respects their accounts were already surpassed by Montoya's earlier work. Montoya worked and lived among the Guaraní, and was the first observer after the foundation of the *reducciones* to write and publish an account. It is the richness of Montoya's observations of the first contact and of the spiritual politics of the encounter that sets Montoya's account apart from all the others. The *Conquista espiritual* covers what was essentially a period of great upheaval, cultural shock, and crisis for the Guaraní, as these native peoples faced the impacts of slave-raiding, intolerable conditions of hunger and fatigue during their relocation, epidemic disease, and ethnic-soldiering, meaning the use of diverse ethnic groups to carry out colonial military actions, under the Jesuits. Much of our knowledge of early Guaraní culture, politics, economy, and society has been derived from Montoya's account. It is the essential story of the early Guaraní *reducciones* during the beginning stage of Christianity's expansion into remote areas of the Río de la Plata and Brazil. Readers can gauge the challenges the Jesuits faced at the time when several Catholic missionaries died at the hands of powerful shamans. Readers can also glean insights into understanding how the Guaraní may have felt about the arrival of these early Catholic missionaries, with their distinctive black robes, language, religion, customs, technology, and material culture. Montoya's work has enduring appeal as one of the early ethnographies and natural histories of this region in South America. It provides insights into the complex relationships between the Society of Jesus and indigenous peoples, as well as the processes of subordination and the impacts of Spanish and Portuguese colonialism.

Life for these early missionaries on the frontier was full of hardship; living among native peoples was precarious and risky. Several Jesuits had their heads bashed with clubs by the followers of those shamans who opposed their

10 Ernesto J. Maeder and Alfredo S.C. Bolsi, "La población guaraní de las misiones jesuíticas: Evolución y características, 1671–1767," *Cuadernos de geohistoria regional* 4 (1980): 1–45.

intrusion into their territory. Epidemics spread. Early Jesuits had few resources to live on, often wore tattered robes or went without a shirt on their backs, lived in huts like the Guaraní, sleeping on cowhides because they had given their mattresses to the sick. They lacked beef, bread, and wine (except for use in the celebration of the Mass). Montoya and his fellow Jesuits had to rely on Guaraní knowledge of agriculture for their sustenance. The missionaries survived by eating manioc pancakes (*mbeyú*), roots, herbs, beans, squashes, potatoes, and the offerings of fish and game and other local fruits and vegetables the Guaraní provided them. In this remote location, Montoya was obliged to use the Guaraní language almost exclusively. Because of his knowledge of Guaraní and Spanish, he became a powerful informant or a representational “go-between,” who shared his knowledge with Europeans and other creole missionaries who came to evangelize these native peoples.

By 1622, Montoya took on an administrative role as superior of the *reducciones* in Guayrá, and then as superior of those of all the Guaraní *reducciones* on the Paraná, Uruguay, and Tapé rivers. His duties required an annual visit to each mission, when he could observe the missionaries’ interactions with the Guaraní. We learn from Montoya’s *Conquista espiritual* how Jesuit missionaries directed the process of cultural adaptation by providing the Guaraní with clothing, fishing hooks, scissors, sewing needles, metal knives, axes, and other new products of European technology. Through their instruction, the Guaraní learned new technical skills. Montoya found the Guaraní to be highly capable in mechanical matters, and served as excellent carpenters, ironworkers, tailors, weavers, and shoemakers. He also found them “remarkably attached to the music in which the Fathers instructed the caciques’ children, along with reading and writing.”¹¹ In certain respects, by favorably describing some of accomplishments of the Guaraní, Montoya was ahead of his time.

Yet Montoya’s *Conquista espiritual* reveals much about the mentality of a seventeenth-century Jesuit who had a strong tendency to demonize aspects of Guaraní culture. Satan was no mere metaphor for Montoya but a true antagonist. However, Montoya generally viewed the Guaraní as Satan’s victims, rather than as his familiar acquaintances. Montoya regarded shamans to be in all respects primary agents of the devil.¹² Jesuits, whether they were missionaries in Paraguay or Canada, sought to displace the shamans from their positions of authority and to appear as the new interpreters of the divine. In Latin America, there was an intense spiritual struggle between the Jesuits and the native

11 Montoya, *Spiritual Conquest*, 132.

12 Daniel T. Reff, *Plagues, Priests, Demons: Sacred Narratives and the Rise of Christianity in the Old World and the New* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 239.

priests during the seventeenth century. After killing a Jesuit, one powerful Guaraní shaman challenged the missionaries by putting on the fallen Jesuit's clothing, as though assuming the missionaries' power. Another Guaraní shaman, Nezá, unbaptized the Guaraní by washing the person's entire body, scraping their tongues, and rubbing off any holy oils applied by the Jesuits.¹³

Montoya viewed a few of the shamans more benevolently, though they still resembled the devil. One was named Zaguacari, which meant "handsome little fellow"—contrary to his appearance in Montoya's eyes. He described him as "quite short, his head was fixed to his shoulders in such a way that to turn his face he had to turn his whole body; his fingers and toes were curved downwards much like those of birds; his shins were all that be seen of his legs; his hands and feet had little or no strength."¹⁴ Montoya thought he displayed "intelligence and exceptional eloquence—he possessed a natural rhetoric that kept his hearers spellbound."¹⁵ Some Guaraní thought of him as god, as he pretended to bring rain, good weather, and crops. The Jesuits treated him well and urged him not to hesitate to visit them often. The missionaries were mostly concerned about how the Guaraní felt that without his presence, there would be a loss of their livelihood, or whether their own Indian charges would become fearful.

Montoya's *Conquista espiritual* reveals details about how the Guaraní had difficulty understanding the value of monogamy and Jesuit celibacy. The Guaraní could not understand why the Jesuits sought to take away their "good customs and the way our ancestors lived," by requiring them to be married to only one woman. The Guaraní term for priest, "abaré," meant "a man without sex," or "distinct men" or men different from other men," referring to their celibacy. The Guaraní "marveled at our doing so; however, being barbarians, they did not find it admirable since among them it was a matter of honor and prestige to have numerous wives and serving women."¹⁶ Montoya explained that the Jesuits' "first concern" was to "enclose a small area around our house with a stake fence to keep women from entering our house." Montoya noted how the Jesuits made efforts to get the Guaraní to marry early, before "sin can anticipate them."¹⁷ The Jesuits were undoubtedly uncomfortable with Guaraní sexuality. We do not know how the Guaraní men and women felt about the nature of their sexual relationships. Montoya evaluated them based on his cultural norms and values, and not those of the Guaraní. He did capture

13 Montoya, *Spiritual Conquest*, 153, 175.

14 *Ibid.*, 114.

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*, 52.

17 *Ibid.*, 132.

some voices of the Guaraní, especially those of shamans, which adds much to the value of his work. But he undoubtedly missed important elements of Guaraní culture.

During his tenure as superior, *bandeirantes* or *paulistas* (marauders from the region of São Paulo) attacked the *reducciones* and engaged in intense slave raiding. Beginning in 1628, the *bandeirantes* never ceased warring on the Guaraní, taking them prisoner and selling them as slaves and concubines. Montoya was certainly empathetic to the natives, recognizing their humanity and willing to sacrifice himself in their defense, even baring his breast so the musket ball would enter more easily when a *bandeirante* aimed at his chest.¹⁸ Montoya shaped the policy by which the Jesuits sought to further remove the Guaraní from Portuguese and Spanish influence. He oversaw the exodus of more than twelve thousand Guaraní who relocated to new settlements along the Paraná River in 1631. While many Guaraní deserted along the way, others died of starvation or disease. Approximately one third survived the journey in rafts and on foot. Those Guaraní who successfully relocated still suffered enormous hardships. Epidemics of typhus, measles, and dysentery broke out for three consecutive years. Between 1634 and 1636, as many as 5,536 mission Indians perished. Another 4,600 died of disease and famine. To make matters worse, *bandeirantes* captured several thousand Guaraní, who were driven in chains to São Paulo, while others were slain or fled back into the forests.¹⁹

In response, in 1637, Montoya traveled to Madrid with another cleric as a *procurador* (business agent, trade representative, or an individual who promoted the interests of an organization) to seek support from King Philip IV for those indigenous peoples who had been enslaved in the Spanish and Portuguese territories. He asked the crown to free all those Indians who were held captive. He also requested that bishops excommunicate those who refused to free their Indian slaves. Additionally, he requested that those Indians who no longer had a village to return to be allowed to settle in Indian villages outside Río de Janeiro, and that others be taken to Buenos Aires so that the Jesuits could return them to their own villages. Montoya succeeded in winning royal protection for the *reducciones*, in that new royal cédulas were issued in an attempt to put an end to Indian slavery. Yet slave traders simply found loopholes in the original 1611 law or ignored these attempts to end Indian enslavements.²⁰ Nevertheless, Montoya secured the Jesuits' right to arm the Guaraní, which

18 Ibid., 103

19 Barbara Ganson, *The Guaraní Under Spanish Rule in the Rio de la Plata* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 45–46.

20 Ibid., 38–39; McNaspy, "Introduction," 17–18.

took effect in 1649 when the Guaraní officially became vassals of the crown.²¹ In the Americas, the arming of indigenous peoples was unheard of and generally banned. Montoya also sent two Jesuit subordinates to see the Portuguese governor general at Salvador, Bahia, the colonial capital of Brazil, to protest the cruel treatment and enslavement of the Guaraní. It was a matter of fait accompli. Even before the royal approval took effect in the Río de la Plata, Jesuits had armed some of the Guaraní, in time for a major confrontation with 1,500 *bandeirantes* in 1641. A Guaraní militia force of three thousand defeated some four hundred *bandeirantes* and 2,700 Tupí auxiliaries in the battle of Mbororé, which lasted three days. In 1642, Guaraní militias under the command of the Jesuits put an end to the slave raiding in the region through a second major campaign against the *bandeirantes*.²²

It was during his six years in Spain contesting this abuse that Montoya published his *Conquista espiritual* (1639). Montoya's account draws our attention to the dedication of a Jesuit apostle who was adventurous and devoted much of his life to study of Guaraní language and culture. His observations of Guaraní culture in the *Conquista espiritual* were intended for the benefit of other missionaries who would leave behind the comforts of living in great colonial cities like Lima or as educators in Europe to reside among those whom Europeans would consider barbarians. Montoya, for example, described the anthropophagic practices of the Guaraní. These he encountered firsthand: for example, after having eaten a porridge of meat and corn offered to him, he learned that at the bottom of the vessel were the head and hands of a Guaraní boy who had served with him as an assistant on the altar.²³ Montoya did not attempt to understand cannibalistic behavior among the Guaraní from the native perspective—the belief that the Guaraní incorporated the souls of fallen captives through consuming human flesh during religious rituals. Either the Guaraní were trying to gain the symbolic or magical powers of captives who fell in battle, or it was a matter of intimidating the relatives and associates of those eaten.²⁴ In an era when Europeans and their descendants came to dominate

21 Charlevoix, *History of Paraguay*, 1:396.

22 Ganson, *The Guaraní*, 45–46. Estimates of the number of soldiers do vary. See Arno Alvarez Kern “Missoes e o mundo colonial no Rio da Prata,” in Arno Alvarez Kern and Robert Jackson, *Missões ibéricas coloniais: Da Califórnia ao Prata* (Porto Alegre: Palier, 2006), 90.

23 Montoya, *Spiritual Conquest*, 96.

24 Cannibalism was not an issue of starvation or any type of protein deficiency, contrary to the assertion by Paraguayan anthropologist Miguel Chase Sardi. There was an obvious abundance of protein sources, including fish, deer, capybara, birds, monkeys, wild boar, insects, nuts, and other plants and animals in the region. Miguel Chase Sardi, “Avaporu,”

and destroy the cultures of native peoples, however, Montoya was unusual in giving some weight to aspects of Guaraní culture.

Montoya became one of the foremost Jesuit linguists of the seventeenth century, mastering the Guaraní language and grammar to produce several texts for its study, which served to facilitate the transformation of Guaraní culture and religion by members of the Society of Jesus. He wrote an extensive dictionary, grammars, sermons, and vocabularies for those who would follow in his footsteps. Montoya's works were not intended for a broad audience—he did not translated into multiple languages, like the eighteenth-century volumes of the French Jesuit Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix. His linguistic texts were based on the works of José de Anchieta, S.J. (1534–97), who published a grammar of the Tupí language in Coimbra in 1595, and those of the Franciscan missionary Luis de Bolaños (1549–1629), who wrote the first Guaraní grammar, vocabulary, and catechism in Paraguay (approved in Lima in 1583). Montoya also relied on the intensive use of Guaraní informants for the writing of his works. He mentions his use of informants in *Conquista espiritual* when he relates how he “carefully inquired about its origins of *yerba mate* [Paraguayan tea] from Indians who were eighty to a hundred years old.”²⁵ While in Madrid, he also published *Tesoro de la lengua Guaraní* (1639), *Arte y vocabulario de la lengua Guaraní* (1640), and *Catechismo en lengua Guaraní* (1640). His works, *Vocabulario de la lengua Guaraní* and *Arte de la lengua Guaraní*, with notes by Father Restivo, were later published using printing presses at the Guaraní missions of Santa María la Mayor and San Francisco Xavier in 1722. This account has been translated into modern Portuguese, Spanish, and English.²⁶ A new modern English translation of the *Conquista espiritual*, guided by the hands of an ethnohistorian and a linguist and based on the original 1639 account, would represent a valuable edition to the historical literature. Such an edition could incorporate new ideas from recent studies from the anthropological and historical literature of the past twenty years so as to provide further explanations of Montoya's original work.

Revista del Ateneo Paraguayo 3 (1964): 16–66. It was a way of demoralizing one's enemies to instill fear in them; not only would one be killed but actually eaten. It was intended to keep one's enemies out of their territory.

25 Montoya, *Spiritual Conquest*, 42.

26 Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, *Conquista espiritual hecha por los religiosos de la Compañía de Jesús en las provincias de Paraguay, Paraná, Uruguay y Tape* (Bilbao: Imprenta del Corazón de Jesús, 1892); Ruiz de Montoya, *Conquista espiritual: Feita pelos religiosos da Companhia de Jesus nas províncias do Paraguai, Paraná, Uruguai e Tape* (Porto Alegre: Martins Livreiro, 1985).

As in other parts of the Americas, Jesuits in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries concentrated on describing the local fauna and flora, including medicinal plants. Montoya noticed how the Guaraní observed wildlife, such as that of a local bird known as a *macagua*, to discover an herbal remedy for snakebites, headaches, fevers, constipation, and other complaints.²⁷ Montoya nonetheless viewed the use of *yerba mate* as demonic. He claimed that he had looked carefully into the origins of its use and learned that this herb's infusion was not consumed except by a "great witch man or sorcerer who had communicated with the devil, who showed it to him, saying that whenever the sorcerer wished to consult him, he should drink from that herb."²⁸ Montoya also recognized some of the benefits of *yerba mate*: how with its use, the Indians could row a raft all day without any sustenance; it purged their stomachs of phlegm; and it made the senses alert.²⁹ Montoya deplored how the collection of this herb in the wild consumed the lives of many thousands of Indians.³⁰ He testified "to having seen in those woods huge piles of their bones."³¹ Another plant called *ygau* (sea parsley) served as a remedy against dysentery, Montoya noted.³² For the most part, early Jesuits like Montoya carried on relentless attacks on native beliefs and medicinal practices, initially by denying that the Guaraní possessed any valuable knowledge of medicinal plants or of any science in general. Only in the eighteenth century, when traditional remedies were detached from their original contexts to be included in illustrated herbals published in Europe, were herbal remedies considered actual medicine.³³ As might be expected, what Montoya wrote about contained what he found interesting and acceptable by his own standards, and not necessarily how the indigenous peoples may have envisioned the origins of their discovery of their use of plants to be. Heavy politics were obviously involved, depending on the presentation of medicinal plants by the Guaraní. Montoya found certain medicinal herbs acceptable if not utilized by defiant shamans who rejected his Catholic program. He included the knowledge of beneficial herbs by those Guaraní who went along with his teachings. Montoya thus distorted certain aspects of Guaraní culture according to the circumstances and the spiritual politics.

27 Andrés Prieto, *Missionary Scientists: Jesuit Science in Spanish South America, 1570–1810* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011), 65–66.

28 Montoya, *Spiritual Conquest*, 9.

29 *Ibid.*, 43.

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*, 112.

33 Prieto, *Missionary Scientists*, 81.

Montoya associated early Christian beliefs about the global travels of Saint Thomas the Apostle with the origins of the native South American plant manioc (cassava). Rather than recognize native peoples' accomplishments, Catholic missionaries confiscated anything they found good, such as manioc, and reinterpreted it as a European discovery. Most interestingly, Montoya's *Conquista espiritual* included details of Catholic missionaries' beliefs in the presence of Apostle St. Thomas among the Guaraní immediately after the death of Christ. His footprints were said to appear on rocks in Paraguay, Brazil, and Peru. He reinterpreted native beliefs of the presence of a holy man, called Pay Zumé in Paraguay and Pay Tumí in Peru, who came from far away and traveled far to preach to them, with Saint Thomas. In other parts of Latin America, a white bearded man was also said to have preached a doctrine similar to the Gospel.³⁴ Montoya referred to Saint Thomas as the apostle of the "indios and negros," not meaning the Native Americans or black slaves in the New World, but the Indians in India and the Ethiopians in Africa. Franciscan missionaries circulated similar interpretations of the travels of Saint Thomas in India. Good portions of humankind undoubtedly could not have been neglected and excluded from the teachings of the original Christians. The legend of Saint Thomas has been traced back by one scholar as early as 1493, even before the conquest of Mexico and Peru. Missionaries looked for common ground that would facilitate the conversion of Amerindians. The legend of Saint Thomas the Apostle in South America and Mexico thus became the foundation for the introduction of Christianity in the New World.³⁵

According to Montoya, the term for the true God in Guaraní, *Tupá* ("Manhit" or "Thunder") originated with the Guaraní and possibly came from Apostle Saint Thomas. Montoya surmised that the adoption of this destructor of the universe, a divinity the native peoples feared, to represent their Christian God was beneficial because the Indians thought this individual was someone great, saying in amazement as they heard of his marvels.³⁶ Translation was one of the great difficulties missionaries faced when teaching native peoples important aspects of Christianity. How this divine figure may have affected the acceptance of the Catholic program is unclear. But some Guaraní, Montoya claimed, became excellent Christians.³⁷

34 Louis Andres Vigneras, "Saint Thomas, Apostle of America," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 57 (1977): 82–90.

35 Ganson, *The Guaraní*, 37; Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl y Guadalupe: la formación de la conciencia nacional en México* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1977).

36 Montoya, *Spiritual Conquest*, 81; See Helene Clastres, *La terre sans mal: Le prophetisme tupí-guaraní* (Paris: Seuil, 1975).

37 Clastres, *La terre sans mal*, 97.

Undoubtedly, Montoya was a man of notable intellectual depth and a mystic, who became influenced by the Guaraní whom he served. While Montoya was a force of change of Guaraní society and an effective tool of European colonialism, he was also a man of great conscience, a progressive, forward thinking, and inquisitive individual. In the course of the subjugation of the Guaraní, his extended contact had an effect on him. Interestingly, Ignacio Piraci, a Guaraní elder, had inspired Montoya during his twenty-five year residence in the *reducciones* to produce the iconographic work *Silex del divino amor* before his final years in Lima.³⁸ It was intended to help a single Jesuit, Francisco de Castillo, with contemplation and prayer.³⁹ Around 1643, Montoya returned to Lima, where he died in 1652. Upon his death, Montoya's request to have his bones returned to Mission Loreto in Paraguay is a distinctive example of cultural hybridity or transculturation, the complex processes by which peoples selected and invented new cultural traditions from another dominant culture. Montoya clearly preferred certain Guaraní burial rites, in that he embraced an aspect of the Guaranís' ancestral bone cult and infused native traditions with his own Christian burial practices. Traditionally, the Guaraní had worshipped the bones of their renowned deceased shamans, which were hung in hammocks or nets decorated with feathers and other ornaments at sacred sites on hilltops. It became customary among the Guaraní in the *reducciones* to pay reverence to the bones of missionaries who had replaced shamans as their spiritual leaders. Although it is unclear exactly where Montoya's bones exactly came to rest at Mission Loreto, we do have evidence that the Guaraní kept the bones of one of their missionaries in an urn on top of a statue of the Holy Virgin on the altar of one Franciscan mission in Paraguay. This practice thus became a two-way street by which missionaries adapted themselves to living in the New World through adopting an important element of native culture.

Even though Father Montoya viewed native peoples through the fog of his own cultural biases in his *Conquista espiritual*, this Peruvian Jesuit lifted a corner of a veil on Guaraní culture, and gave us a small glimpse of what laid beneath, and for that we are truly grateful.

38 Andrew Reynolds, "Image, Text, Memory: Two Iconographical Folios from a Colonial Peruvian Mystical Guidebook," *Confluencia* (2009): 78–92.

39 Montoya, *Spiritual Conquest*, 86. Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, *Silex del divino amor* (Lima: Fondo Editorial PUCP, 1991); Carlos A. González, "Silex del Divino Amor de Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, el testimonio de un misionero entre los guaraníes," *Teología* (Argentina) 75 (2000): 29–73.