

Following Their Children into Battle: Women at War in Paraguay, 1864-1870

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FOLLOWING THEIR CHILDREN INTO BATTLE:

WOMEN AT WAR IN PARAGUAY, 1864-1870.

*Ella impulsó a su hermano a la pelea,
ella siguió a sus hijos al combate. . .
En medio de la noche, su silueta
se destacó en el campo funerario de la
batalla, pues buscaba, inquieta
el cuerpo de su amor entre el osario.*

*E igual que con su esposo compartiera
el tálamo nupcial en la morada,
con su esposa cayó, fiel compañera, en el lecho mortal de la jornada.*

She encouraged her brother to fight
she followed her children into combat. . .
In middle of the night, her silhouette
stood out in the funeral battlefield
for she was restlessly searching for
the body of her love in the burial grounds.

And just as she had shared the nuptial bed
with her husband in the shelter of their home,
with her husband, she fell, faithful companion,
on the death bed of the day's journey.¹

From "La mujer paraguaya,"
written in 1899 by a
Paraguayan poet, Ignacio A. Pane.

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¹ Published in Olinda Massare de Kostianovsky, *La mujer paraguaya: su participación en la Guerra Grande* (Asunción: Talleres Gráficos de la Escuela Salesiano, 1970), 94. The translation of the poem from Spanish into English is my own.

Paraguayan women played a significant role in Latin America's most devastating conflict, the War of the Triple Alliance, also known as the Paraguayan War, 1864-1870. A number of Paraguayan women actively sought involvement in the struggle against the allied armies of the Triple Alliance, Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay. A much larger number of women, especially rural women of the lower classes, found themselves caught up in the struggle, and had no choice but to become involved, especially in the military campaigns, once the foreign troops had invaded their homeland. Still others, numbering in the thousands, and including women of every social class, were among the victims and casualties of that conflict. How did Paraguayan women respond to the challenge of war? Did the war lead to a significant change in the definition of a "women's work" in the country? To what extent were women able to build a sense of themselves as citizens of a "nation"?

Up to now, Olinda Massare de Kostianovsky's *La mujer paraguaya: su participación en la Guerra Grande*, (1970) is the most scholarly study on the subject of Paraguayan women's participation in the War of the Triple Alliance.² Based on extensive research in the Archivo Nacional de Asunción, she describes women's wartime contributions, military actions, and involvement in the first national assembly of women. Rather than distinguishing between women of different social and ethnic groups, however, Massare de Kostianovsky treats women as a fairly undifferentiated whole. This article will examine more carefully the differences between the different socio-economic and ethnic groups of women who lived in Paraguay during the mid-nineteenth century, to explain more fully women's behavior

² See note 1. The history of women has been a major theme in Paraguayan historiography. The first historical essays were written after Paraguayan women had made major contributions during the Chaco War against Bolivia (1932-1935) by serving as nurses and war godmothers (*madrinas de guerra*). Every Paraguayan soldier and officer had a war godmother, usually his wife, mother, or sister, to send him clothing and medical supplies. In 1939 Carlos R. Centurión wrote "La mujer paraguaya através de la historia," a brief account of the history of women from the conquest to the 1930s. In more recent decades, a number of prominent Paraguayan historians have made valuable contributions, including Idalia Flores de Zarza, Antonio Ramos, and Victor I. Franco. In the 1970s, a group of women historians founded the Instituto Feminino de Investigaciones Históricas which recovered from the Brazilian government the *Libro de Oro*, a gold album containing the names of the women who made donations to the Paraguayan government during the war, which fell into Brazilian hands after Paraguay's defeat. Much of the writing in Paraguay about women at war has been patriotic in nature. Luis Vittone's *La mujer paraguaya en la vida nacional* (Asunción: Imprenta Military, 1970) is an example. Although much has been written about the political, diplomatic, military, and economic history of the Triple Alliance War, historians still have neglected many of its social aspects. For one exception, see Vera Blinn Reber's recent excellent study of the demographic impact of the war. She presents new historical evidence that Paraguay lost only between 8.7 and 18.5 percent of its population, rather than fifty percent, as has been often suggested. "The Demographics of Paraguay: A Reinterpretation of the Great War, 1864-1870," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 68 (May 1988): 289-319.

during the conflict. It will also explore the hardships and traumas the women experienced during the course of the war to show how war has differential impacts, not just between men and women, but also between women of the upper and lower classes; between women in the capital and rural areas; between foreign women and women of different ethnic groups.³

Another issue to be considered is the suggestion by some historians that wars, particularly "total wars" provide new opportunities for women, especially in the workplace.⁴ The War of the Triple Alliance was a "total" war in which the vast majority of the Paraguayan population, both men and women, was mobilized by its government. On one side, the three allied nations of Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay, were completely victorious, while on the other, Paraguay, was utterly defeated. The evidence for this article, however, demonstrates that in the case of Paraguayan women, few new opportunities or "openings" in society were created for women, despite their active participation in a civilian and military capacity. Indeed, Paraguayan women held low status occupations during the war, suffered tremendous losses both materially and psychologically, and remained in traditional subordinate positions in society during the postwar years.

The social history of Paraguayan women in the Triple Alliance War also relates to the recent historical debate on the development of a national consciousness among the peasantry in Latin America. Florencia Mallon, in her comparative regional study of the departments of Junin and Cajamarca in the highlands of Peru during the War of the Pacific (1879-1883), contends

³ Sources for this research include selected manuscripts from the Archivo Nacional de Asunción, contemporary newspapers, foreign travelers' accounts, military officers' memoirs, a few women's letters, wills, censuses, parish registers, records of local justices of the peace, and diplomatic correspondence. It was not customary for Paraguayans to keep diaries or write autobiographies which would have revealed women's perceptions of themselves and men's attitudes toward women. Nor were there any female journalists or writers in Paraguay as there were in some nineteenth-century Latin American countries such as Mexico. Despite the variety of primary sources, little is still known about all the diverse aspects of women's lives, especially those of Indian women who left little trace for the historian.

⁴ For studies on the roles of women in the American Civil War refer to Anne F. Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Bonnet Brigades* (New York: Knopf, 1967); and James L. Abrahamson, *The American Home Front: Revolutionary War, Civil War, World War I, World War II* (Fort Lesley: National Defense University Press, 1983), 175. For a description of American women's work during the First World War, see Maurine Weiner Greenwald, *Women, War, and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980) and Philip S. Foner, "Women and the American Labor Movement: A Historical Perspective," in *Working Women: Past, Present, Future*, eds. Karen Shallcross Koziara, Michael H. Moskow, and Lucretia Dewey Tanner (Washington: The Bureau of National Affairs, Inc., 1987), 175-77. On the question of women and their changing status in American society during the Second World War see Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981).

that regional particulars of class, state, and warfare were more crucial to the development of an authentic national consciousness among peasants than a consolidated national market and a well-organized modernizing bourgeoisie. Although the areas and conflicts were quite distinct, evidence of the actions of women in the Paraguayan conflict as well as their speeches, songs, and manifestos also suggest that a powerful broadly-based nationalism was possible in a rural society with a subsistence economy.⁵

WOMEN'S ROLES BEFORE WAR

To understand women's wartime experiences, it is necessary to examine the societal patterns which shaped women's lives on the eve of the war. According to the census of 1846 in the rural district of Ybycuí [see figure 1], the sexual ratio was in balance before the war. Of the 5,444 inhabitants, 50.37 percent were males and 49.63 percent were females.⁶ Many women

⁵ Florencia E. Mallon, "Nationalist and Antistate Coalitions in the War of the Pacific: Junin and Cajamarca, 1879-1902," in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Consciousness in the Andean Peasant World: 18th to 20th Centuries*, ed. Steve J. Stern (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 219-32; Mallon, *The Defence of Community in Peru's Central Highlands: Peasant Struggle and Capitalist Transition, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 80-122. Bonilla questions whether a peasant "nationalism" existed in Peru without a consolidated national market and a bourgeoisie. Heraclio Bonilla, "The Indian Peasantry and Peru," in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Consciousness*, 213-19. There is a conceptual problem in writing about "nationalism." Historians have many different ideas about its meaning, which in part explains why there is debate on the subject. For the purpose of this paper, I am referring to a consciousness on the part of individuals or groups, of membership in a nation or state who have a devotion to, or advocate national unity and independence. By the term "state," I am simply referring to the government's political apparatus: the president of Paraguay, the vice president and government ministers, and local justices of the peace and military commanders in the countryside. To date, little has been written about the development of "nationalism" in Paraguay. John Hoyt Williams, however, has identified some of its salient features, which have helped create and heighten a consciousness of a separate identity in the region. He stresses the importance of race, geography, linguistic homogeneity, miscegenation, and threats from Indians, as well as from the Portuguese and the *porteños* in Buenos Aires, as the colonial basis for the development of Paraguayan nationalism in the nineteenth century. Williams believes a collective awareness of national uniqueness and identity emerged earlier in Paraguay than in most Latin American countries. John Hoyt Williams, "Race, Threat, and Geography - the Paraguayan Experience of Nationalism," *Canadian Review of Studies on Nationalism* 1 (Spring 1974): 173-91. Still, no historian, including the author, has carefully documented when this separate regional or national identity first emerges in Paraguay.

⁶ Archivo Nacional de Asunción, Serie Nueva Encuadernación, vol. 3291, "1846 Census of Ybycuí." Hereafter the Archivo Nacional de Asunción will be cited as "ANA." Portions of the Archivo Nacional de Asunción have been microfilmed by UNESCO, and are available at the Benson Latin American Collection of the University of Texas at Austin. Ybycuí and Atrá were selected randomly from a list of villages. To analyze these prewar censuses, I counted and categorized each inhabitant according to age, sex, and ethnic group. The results are not completely accurate, since I had to determine an individual's sex only by name, and the quality of the archival manuscripts was poor. The census of Ybycuí also appeared incomplete. Anneliese Kegler de Galeano states that Ybycuí had 5,372 inhabitants and 719 families in 1846. Anneliese Kegler de Galeano, "Alcance histórico-demográfico del censo de 1946," *Revista paraguaya de sociología* (January-April 1976): 91. Williams in contrast counted only 3,932 inhabitants in Ybycuí. Williams, "Observations on the Paraguayan Census of 1846," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 56 (August 1976): 424-37. See also Barbara Ganson de Rivas, "Las con-

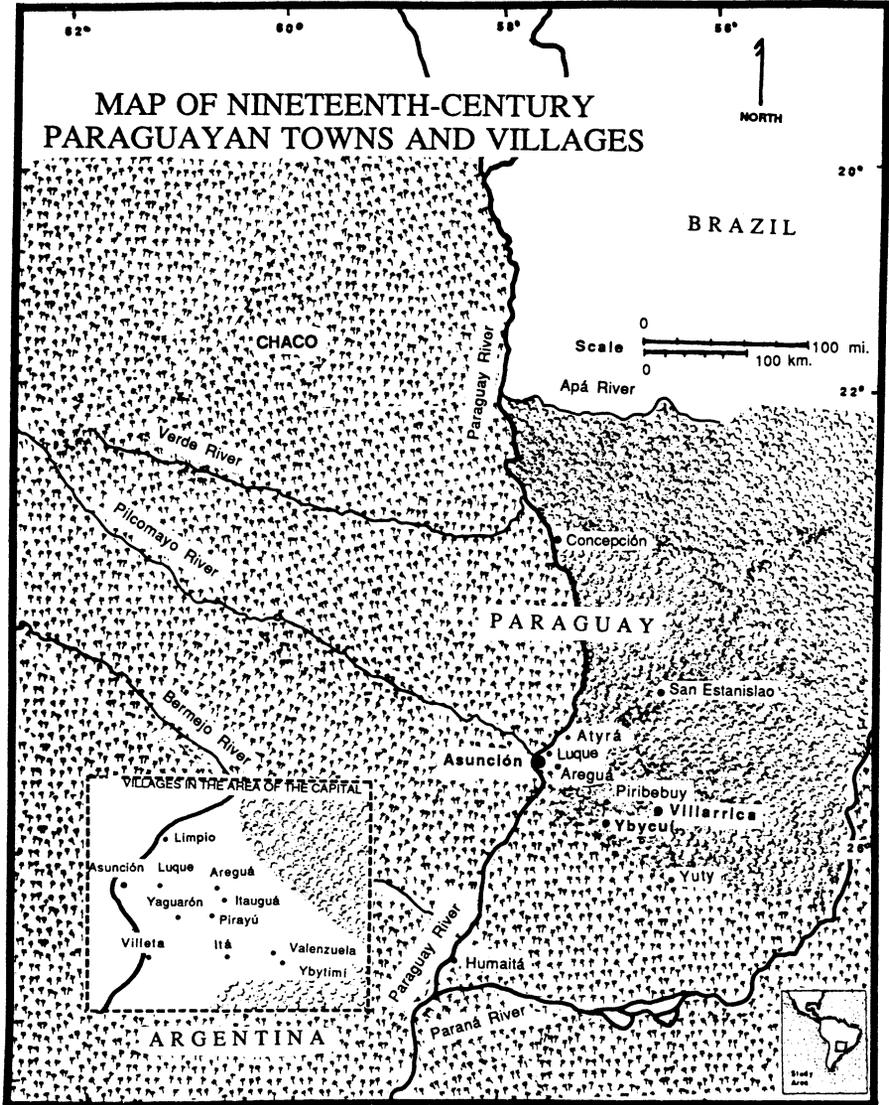


Figure 1. Map of Selected Paraguayan Towns and Villages.

were heads of households in this important rural district. Of the 683 households, 236 were headed by women, representing 34.55 percent. The majority of these women may have been widows, since only 10.59 percent of the female heads of households were under the age of thirty-five.

secuencias demográficas y sociales de la Guerra de la Triple Alianza," (Asunción: Instituto Paraguayo de Investigaciones Historicas, 1985) and "Paraguayan Lace to Lances: A History of Women in the Social and Economic Life of Paraguay, 1537-1900" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1984): 51-82.

In the smaller and less important rural district of Atyrá in 1849, 216 households were headed by women out of a total of 535 households, representing 40.37 percent of the community.⁷ Unlike the census of Ybycuí, the census takers in Atyrá indicated each woman's marital status. Of the 216 female heads of households, 108 (50%) claimed to be widows, ninety-eight (45.37%) were reported to be single women with illegitimate children, and ten women (4.62%) were heads of households in the absence of parents. A Paraguayan scholar, Anneliese Kegler de Galeano, also discovered that almost one-third of all rural families in the districts of Aguero, Iraes, Mitay, Villa Pytá, del Palmas, and Portrero Borja, were headed by women in 1846.⁸ Besides widowhood, the high incidence of female heads of households in these rural districts may be explained by the migratory nature of male employment. Census takers could have overlooked the adult males who were employed as peons on neighboring ranches and in the distant *yerbales* (*yerba maté* forests), as well as those who were common soldiers stationed in frontier outposts along the borders. Males may have also consciously avoided being enumerated in order to avoid military conscription. Spanish and Guaraní antecedents, in addition, appeared to have shaped peasant's lives. Free unions and concubinage had existed in medieval Spain, and were transferred to the New World.⁹ The early Spanish settlers in Paraguay had Indian wives and numerous concubines. Most of these Indian women probably lived in their own huts where they raised their children, and worked for the Spaniards, and thus, were heads of household. The data, however, is insufficient to determine the extent this phenomenon persisted into the late colonial and early national periods. In Guaraní indigenous societies, *caciques* (chiefs) could have more than one wife. Divorce was also especially easy for women. When an Indian woman no longer cared for her husband or because he abused her, she would simply say "Go wherever you want," and the couple would separate.¹⁰ Thus, some of the female heads of households were unmarried or "divorced" women with children.¹¹

⁷ ANA, Serie Nueva Encuadernación, vol. 3291, "1849 Census of Atyrá."

⁸ Kegler de Galeano, "Alcance histórico-demográfico," 91.

⁹ Woodrow Borah and Sherburne F. Cook, "Marriage and Legitimacy in Mexican Culture: Mexico and California," in *The Law of the Poor*, ed. Jacobus Tenbroek (Scranton, Pennsylvania: Chandler Publishing Company, 1966): 626.

¹⁰ Ignacio A. Pane, "La mujer guaraní," in *Ensayos paraguayos* (Buenos Aires: Colección Pan Americana, 1945), 104. Pane based his conclusion on the Jesuit missionary account of Nicolás del Techo, *Historia de la provincia del Paraguay y de la compañía de Jesús* (1703). Branislava Susnik, *El indio colonial del Paraguay* (Asunción: Museo Etnográfico Andrés Barbero, 1965) 1: 13, 38.

¹¹ Historians such as Alida C. Metcalf, Elizabeth Kuznesof, Donald Ramos and Anne Hagerman Johnson have noted a high proportion of female-headed households in other parts of Latin America during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, particularly in southeastern Brazil. Most

Whatever the reason, the fact that more than one-third of all households in rural areas were headed by women is quite significant, since it demonstrates that many women were in positions of responsibility and authority before the war. Besides administering their own properties, including farms and ranches, they formed the nucleus of the rural family. A few of these women even oversaw large extended households with as many as forty members, including a number of white and mulatto peons (*agregados blancos* and *agregados pardos*) as well as black and mulatto slaves. María Dorotea Aguero, the widow of a wealthy rancher in Aparipí, for example, owned more than eight hundred head of cattle, a house and a landed estate, a female slave and four slave children, furniture, linen, dishes, and clothing.¹²

Few rural couples were married in the Church before the war. According to the parish marriage records of San José de Ybycuí, for example, during the years 1840 to 1860, an average of sixteen marriages were celebrated annually. During some years no marriages were performed at all because traveling priests did not visit the parish. Of 323 marriages performed during this twenty year period, 271 married couples were categorized as being *blancos de linaje* (whites). In actuality, most of these "whites," were probably mestizos, descendants of Spaniards and Guaraní Indians. Of the remaining fifty-two marriages, there were thirty-five marriages between free

scholars would agree that one of the principal causes of the pattern appears to be related to the migratory nature of male employment on the frontier. Yet, it is still unclear why this phenomenon occurred in some regions and not others. No one has fully studied the process. Refer to Alida C. Metcalf, "Fathers and Sons: The Politics of Inheritance in a Colonial Brazilian Township," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 66 (August 1986): 455-484; Elizabeth Anne Kuznesof, *Household Economy and Urban Development: São Paulo, 1765-1836* (Boulder and London: Westview, 1986), 160-3, 169; Donald Ramos, "City and Country: The Family in Minas Gerais, 1804-1838," *Journal of Family History* 3 (Winter 1978): 361-76; Anne Hagerman Johnson, "The Impact of Market Agriculture on Family and Household Structure in Nineteenth-Century Chile," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 58 (1979): 625-48.

¹² "Testamento de María Dorotea Aguero," ANA, Serie Testamentos, vol. 501, no. 6, Año 1840. Testaments are of special interest for the study of women because a will, more than other notarial records, summarize the whole material and social outcome of an individual's lifetime. Wills can indicate a woman's civil status, class, and culture. They are also revealing sources for studying women's relationships and economic interests established or consolidated through marriage or just through normal living. Spanish wills are based on the cultural postulate that a person's spiritual and material interests may be separated. A woman's religious beliefs are explicitly stated. On the spiritual side, wills contain descriptions of the pious works requested by women, including bequests to religious institutions, the freeing of slaves, and donations to charitable institutions. On the material side, every will must manage the calling of material debts and credits, and the distribution of goods among survivors. Wills, in addition, provide clues to the behavior of women within the family and their many social roles. See Asunción Lavrin and Edith Couturier, "Dowries and Wills: A View of Women's Socioeconomic Role in Colonial Guadalajara and Puebla, 1640-1790," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 59 (1979): 280-304 and Frank Salomon, "Indian Women of Early Colonial Quito as Seen Through Their Testaments," *The Americas* 44 (January 1988): 329-30.

blacks (*pardos libres*), twelve mixed marriages between mulattos and whites, four slave marriages, and one Indian marriage. These patterns suggest that an individual's ethnicity and status as a freeman or slave were not major obstacles to marriage in Ybycuí, which had a higher concentration of mulattos than most rural areas in the country. However, "whites" who wanted to marry blacks and mulattos had to obtain special permission from President Carlos Antonio López himself. Anastacio Rodas, a "white" Paraguayan, for example, requested the president's permission to marry Asunción Morales, a free black, in 1858.¹³ Parish marriage records also show that illegitimate birth was not a social barrier to marriage, since those of "legitimate" birth did not always marry those of like birth. Rural marriage patterns could not be fully reconstructed because priests did not record the brides' and grooms' ages.

According to a contemporary, it was customary for most couples to live in free unions.¹⁴ The incidence of marriage was low because a church wedding may have represented a considerable expense which most rural couples could not afford. Under Dr. Francia (1811-1840), the state also established marriage bans which prohibited all Europeans from marrying "white Paraguayans" (*blancas paraguayas*) and as serving as godparent as part of the backlash against the Spanish colonial elite following independence. Since most Spaniards did not desire to marry black or Indian women, Dr. Francia's marriage bans probably led to a slight increase in the number of free unions in the country during the early national period.¹⁵ Unfortunately,

¹³ "Libro de matrimonios de la parroquia iglesia de San José de Ybycuí," vol. 2, Mss. for the years, 1835-1858. Civil marriage was not introduced into Paraguay until the 1890s. Paraguay, *Ley de matrimonio civil* (Asunción: Talleres Nacionales de H. Kraus, 1898).

¹⁴ Testimony of General Martin T. McMahon, U.S. Minister to Paraguay, U.S. House of Representatives, *Report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the Memorial of Porter C. Bliss and George F. Masterman in Relation to Their Imprisonment in Paraguay* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1870), 224. This document does not appear to be the best source to cite as evidence for this conclusion, yet, McMahon was a keen observer of the conditions in the Paraguayan countryside. Arthur H. Davis, *Martin T. McMahon: Un diplomático en el estridor de las armas* (Asunción: Instituto Paraguayo de Estudios Geoplíticos e Internacionales, 1985). Cohabitation outside marriage appears to be a common phenomenon in Latin America. María Angélica Marin Lira, for example, discovered that free unions in Central America today amounted to forty percent of all unions of women, except in Costa Rica, where the figure is lower. She stated that there is insufficient data to study this phenomenon in depth, but that its importance can be explained in terms of the economy, religion, and other factors. María Angélica Marin Lira, "Les unions consensuelles en Amérique Latine: L'Amérique Centrale," in *Marriage and Remarriage in Populations of the Past*, eds. J. Dupaquier, E. Hélin, P. Laslett, M. Livi-Bacci, and S. Sogner (London: Academic Press, 1981), 111-26.

¹⁵ Fulgencio Yegros, Consúl de la República, Sebastian Antonio Martínez Jean, Secretario, Paraguay, Supremo Gobierno de la República del Paraguay, "Acuerdo prohibiendo matrimonio entre ningún europeo y mujer americana conocida por española," Asunción, 10 July 1814. Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin, Gondra Manuscript Collection, (MG 2057u).

the number of free unions are impossible to document because of the lack of records inherent in the very nature of these less formal unions.

With a low incidence of marriage, illegitimacy rates were high in rural areas before the war. According to the church records of the Obispado of Villarrica, one of the most important parishes in the countryside, 63.9% of the children were illegitimate in 1860.¹⁶ Although illegitimacy rates in Latin America varied from region to region, high illegitimacy rates of over sixty percent were not uncommon during the nineteenth century or even today.¹⁷ The 1841 will and 1862 estate inventory of Doña María Catalina Azramendi of the village of Hiati near Villarrica reveal the life experiences and material outcome of a female head of household and woman rancher before the war. Doña María Catalina Azramendi made a will apparently because she was a widow whose only child had died in infancy, and therefore, had no direct heirs. She identified closely with the Catholic religion. In her will, she referred to herself “as a faithful Catholic,” who “donated her soul to God.”¹⁸ She requested a sung mass, a novena, and a vigil the day following her burial. When María Catalina Azramendi made out her will in 1841, she owned seventy-four head of cattle, a number of horses, a house with furniture, and three young slaves, ages seven, eleven, and fifteen. She bequeathed fifty head of cattle, her horses, and furniture to Juan Manuel Colman, whom she did not identify. She left twelve head of cattle to one of her sisters, María del Carmen Azramendi, and six head of cattle to another sister, María Josefa Azramendi. She freed her three slaves upon her death, each of them was to receive two head of cattle and clothes. At the time of her death twenty years later, both of Doña María Catalina Azramendi’s sisters had died, and her slaves were gone, either sold or freed. According to her estate inventory, her wealth as a rancher had diminished considerably, although for reasons unknown. In 1862 she owned only twenty-six

¹⁶ Parish Baptismal Records of the Obispado de Villarrica, 1858-1888. Many nineteenth-century parish records of Paraguay have been reproduced on microfilm by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah. Villa Rica was selected because after Asunción, it was one of the most important towns in Paraguay.

¹⁷ Illegitimacy rates in Latin America vary from 17.3% for Chile, 43.1% for Paraguay, to 69.5% for Panama from 1950 to 1970, the period for which data is available. High illegitimacy rates over sixty percent occur in most Central American countries. In a study of two hundred years of illegitimacy in Costa Rica, Héctor Pérez Brignoli found an increase in illegitimacy toward the end of the colonial era linked to *mestizaje*. Since the nineteenth century, he found that rates have been relatively low, except in border regions. He attributed the causes of this situation to the expansion of coffee exports throughout the nineteenth century. Héctor Pérez Brignoli, “Deux siècles d’illegitimité au Costa Rica, 1770-1974,” in *Marriage and Remarriage in Populations of the Past*, 481-95.

¹⁸ ANA, Serie Testamentos, 1841 and 1862.

TABLE I

FREQUENCY OF ILLEGITIMATE BIRTHS FOR VILLARRICA IN 1860, BASED ON THE BAPTISMAL RECORDS FROM THE IGLESIA MATRIZ DE VILLARRICA.

<i>Total Number of Children Baptized in 1860</i>	<i>Legitimate*</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Illegitimate**</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
335	128	36%	227	63.9%

Source: Parish Baptismal Records of the Obispado of Villarrica, Mss. Bautismos, 1858-1888, 1860-1878. With a population of 5,106 in 1846, Villarrica was one of the more important rural districts in the country.

* Includes two mulatto boys and one Indian.

** Includes eleven mulattos, eight free female mulattos, and one female slave.

head of cattle, six oxen, a table, a cooking pot listed in good condition, a used axe and plow, and two polished wooden doors.¹⁹

Although Paraguayan women could and did own property, they were like most nineteenth-century women, debarred from voting. According to the Constitution of 1844, only the two hundred members of the National Congress had the right to elect the president who served a ten year term. All members of Congress who served as advisors to the president on occasion had to be landowners. Women, on the other hand, were not completely politically powerless, since they still found a way to express and defend their interests through petitioning the government as Carmen Encina, for example, did, petitioning the government to open a public girls' school in Caácupé in 1856.²⁰

Through the national press, state officials encouraged women to be caring mothers. The editor of a government-controlled newspaper, *El Semanario de avisos y conocimientos útiles*, commented that "from the time a child is born, he receives his first impressions of the world from the face of his happy mother; she consoles him and directs his first steps. . . the word of a mother is a word of faith for these tender souls. . . In whatever stage of life, the word of mother is advice and doctrine. . . ." ²¹ Journalists, in addition, perceived women as the moral guardians of society. For them, women

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Luis Mariñas Otero, *Las constituciones del Paraguay* (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica del Centro Iberoamericano de Cooperación, 1978), 57-64, 129, 140. Chapter X, Article III of the Constitution guaranteed all inhabitants of the Republic the right to have their complaints heard before the government. Many Paraguayans, however, probably were reluctant to exercise this right freely. ANA, Serie Histórica, vol. 320, 1856. Hereafter "Serie Histórica" will be cited as "SH."

²¹ "La Educación," *El Semanario de avisos y conocimientos útiles* (Asunción) 12 March 1863.

represented the symbol of the “future and civilization upon which the betterment of society and morality depended. . . .”²² For a woman to remain single was considered a deplorable situation. A journalist remarked: “For a spinster to get old is the same as dying on the battlefield without fighting, ashamed, but if she marries, she makes an excellent wife because she is in debt to her husband for more than her life, she owes him her position.”²³ This quotation carries the thought that society, at least as expressed by this journalist, considered motherhood as good, while spinsterhood and infertility were considered bad.

Due to conflicting historical evidence, it is difficult to assess the level of women’s education on the eve of the war. Charles Mansfield, a British chemist and graduate of Cambridge University who visited Paraguay in the early 1850s, wrote that they were utterly devoid of education, beyond reading and writing, which meant that some women at least were literate.²⁴ On the other hand, George Masterman, a British pharmacist employed in the service of the López government, wrote in his account, *Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay* (1869), that it was rare to find women who were able to read and write.²⁵ Few women were employed as teachers before the war. According to a list of one hundred and fifty school teachers in 1863, only three names were recognizable as belonging to women. Although the native Guaraní, the predominant language of the country, united society, all courses were instructed in Spanish.²⁶

Women of the upper class did no manual labor, but instead had a number of servants and dependents to work for them. Upper class women dressed in the latest European fashions, and were great consumers of imported silk

²² *Ibid.*

²³ “La Solterona,” *El Semanario*, 27 December 1862.

²⁴ Charles Mansfield, *Paraguay, Brazil and the Plate: Letters Written in 1852-1853* (Cambridge: MacMillan, 1856; repr., New York: AMS Press, 1971), 392.

²⁵ George Masterman, *Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay: A Narrative of Personal Experience Amongst the Paraguayans* (London: Sampson, Low, Son and Marston, 1870), 42.

²⁶ ANA, SH, vols. 320, 336. The elementary school population of Paraguay was considerably high on the eve of the war. In 1861 Carlos Antonio López ordered all the justices of the peace to send to school all children between the ages of nine and ten who had no excuse for staying away. In 1862 there were 435 schools throughout the country with 24,524 pupils. Nevertheless, many rural children probably still did not attend school. Sir Richard Burton (1821-1890), the noted British explorer and author, who visited Paraguay in 1869, claimed no Paraguayan was allowed to be illiterate in contrast to England. Sir Richard Burton, *Letters from the Battlefields of Paraguay* (London: Tinsley Bros., 1870), 16-7. Carlos Antonio López sent sixteen teenage boys to Europe for advanced study in 1858. Masterman noted that nearly all men could read and write. Masterman, *Seven Eventful Years*, 42. Rafael Eladio Valázquez, *Breve historia de la cultural del Paraguay* (Asunción: Edicones, Novelty, 1970), 163-4. Charles Washburn, *A History of Paraguay with Notes of Personal Observations and Reminiscences of Diplomacy Under Difficulty* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1871), I:31.

cloth, hats, stockings, fine shoes, fans, handkerchiefs, French fashion magazines and perfumes. As a pastime well-to-do women did a kind of embroidery called *aó-poí* in a wide variety of colors and designs, and made a delicate lace called *ñandutí* (meaning “spider web” in Guaraní), as did women of all social groups. Traditionally, women wove *ñandutí* using only black and white thread. With the influx of European manufactures, however, they began using more colorful imported linen and silk. Experts with their needles, they made lace in native floral, insect, and animal designs created by Guaraní women. Well-to-do women in the capital gathered together to make lace, and converse about family matters or the day’s events. Dressed in their fancy gowns, they attended the theater, tea parties, and ballroom dances. At social functions, women of the upper class spoke in Spanish, and sometimes French. But at home, they would relax and speak in Guaraní like peasant women.²⁷ From the highest to the lowest groups in society, the native Guaraní was the preferred language of the vast majority of Paraguayans.²⁸

Peasant women, the bulk of the female population, provided most of the agricultural labor in the country. Indeed, before the war agriculture was

²⁷ Washburn, *A History of Paraguay*, 1:442, 2:99-100; “Resumen de importación en el mes de agosto,” *El Semanario*, 24 December 1853, 13 September 1862; Alfred Marbais de Graty, *La República del Paraguay*, trans. Carlos Calvo (Benzazón: Imp. de J. Jacquis, 1862), 352-7; Josefina Plá, *Las artesanías en el Paraguay* (Asunción: Ediciones Comunes, 1969) 38; Hugo Rodríguez Alcalá, *El Paraguay en marcha* (Asunción, 1907), 228-37.

²⁸ As could be expected, nineteenth-century censuses did not contain information on bilingualism in Paraguay. Washburn noted that Guaraní was seldom written, and even in the nineteenth century was so mixed with Spanish that it was no longer the same language it once was during the Jesuit missionary period (1609-1767). Washburn, *A History of Paraguay*, 1:31. Guaraní remained the dominant language of Paraguay due to special historical circumstances. During the colonial era, the province of Paraguay was a backwater region of the Spanish empire. Few Spaniards migrated to the colony, and thus, through intermarriage with Guaraní Indian women, Paraguayan mestizo children learned Guaraní from their Indian mothers. Missionaries also helped to preserve the language. Fray Luis de Bolaños, a Franciscan, translated Christian prayers into Guaraní. Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, a Jesuit missionary, wrote a dictionary, *Arte y Vocabulario de la lengua Guaraní*, and a grammar book, *Catecismo de la lengua Guaraní*. Susnik, *El indio colonial*, 1:10-11; Justo Pastor Benítez, “Guaraní Has a Word for It: Profile of a Language,” *Americas* (March-April 1962), 19. More importantly, the Guaraní language survived the conquest simply because of the vitality or expressiveness of the language itself. An eighteenth-century Franciscan missionary who worked among the Avá-Chiriguano Indians, a western Guaraní tribe in what is today southern Bolivia, wrote the following: “The Chiriguano speak Guaraní which is such a rich and energetic language that every word is an exact definition that explains the nature of things and makes things understandable. . . One would never imagine that in the center of barbarism there would be a language that is so noble and beautiful which is not at all inferior to the many languages spoken in Europe, but requires years to speak with perfection.” Gerónimo Guillen, “Informe hecho a Nro. Rmo. Padre Fray Manuel de la Vega Lector Jubilado. . . y comisario general de las Indias sobre el estado presente de las misiones.” Tarija, June 1, 1782. Gondra Collection, (MG 916).

considered to be women's work, rather than men's.²⁹ Women's agricultural roles date back to the pre-colonial traditions of Guaraní Indian society. In 1545 a Spanish cleric described how the Guaraní Indian women worked: "We find, *Señor*, in this land a very bad custom: that it is the women who sow and reap the crops."³⁰ Another Spanish colonist noted that "it was the custom of the land that the women work and produce the food in the fields. . ."³¹ Tracing this pattern into the early national period under the administration of Dr. Francia (1811-1840), it is evident that women still provided the bulk of the agricultural labor in Paraguay. A British traveler noted that women and children were employed in all the arts of husbandry, "without the labor of men."³² The few foreigners who visited the country probably did not have the opportunity of observing Paraguayan men actually working, since many men worked away from the home as peons or temporary laborers on cattle ranches or as gathers and curers of *yerba maté*.³³

²⁹ Burton observed that Paraguay's "rudimentary agriculture, in which a wooden plough is used to turn the loose soil, is limited to procuring subsistence, and even before the war began it was considered women's work rather than men's." Burton, *Letters from the Battlefields*, 30. John Parish Robertson commented that Paraguayan "women were remarkable for their industry as men were for their lazy and indolent habits." John Parish Robertson, *Francia's Reign of Terror* (London, 1839, repr., New York: Ams Press, 1970) 3: 168-9.

³⁰ Quoted in Elman R. Service, *Spanish-Guaraní Relations in Early Colonial Paraguay* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1954), 35.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 36. The status of Guaraní Indian women was very low in colonial society. Spanish colonists referred to Guaraní Indian women as "piezas" (objects) and considered them an important item of trade, especially in the immediate period after the conquest. Colonists bartered Indian women in exchange for horses and clothing. Although Indian women were in a subordinate position in colonial society, their labor was highly valued by *encomenderos*. They served the Spanish *encomenderos* as *hilanderas* (textile weavers), *brazos agrícolas* (farmers), and domestic servants. Susnik, *El indio colonial del Paraguay*, 1: 13, 38, 80. Guaraní Indians practiced the slash-and-burn agricultural method as did most of the tropical lowland Indians in South America. When not occupied in hunting or warfare, men cleared new tracts of forest and mixed ashes from the charred logs with the soil, thereby, adding to its fertilizing, for the growing of their most important crop, manioc, *manihot esculenta*. Women planted manioc by inserting stem cuttings into the ground in low mounds. Once the plant grew to a height of six to nine feet at least eight months later, they harvested the manioc tubers by pulling up the whole plant, and then processed them by scraping the husks and boiling the roots. Indian women later broke the leftover stems into cuttings, and replanted them sometimes in the same mounds.

³² John Parish Robertson, *Francia's Reign of Terror*, 3:168-9.

³³ Thomas J. Whigham, "The Politics of River Commerce in the Upper Plata, 1780-1865," (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1985), 225, 253. Cattle raising often kept the men away from their homes during most of the day and for longer periods during cattle drives. Herding cattle also was not labor intensive, and thus, peons could wander off from their herds into the village where they could enjoy their favorite beverages, *yerba maté* or *caña* (rum), and partake in more leisure activities such as sleeping in a hammock, gambling, cockfighting, and horse racing. Six months out of the year Indian men and peons from rural communities worked in the gathering and processing of *yerba maté* under harsh conditions. Washburn described the *yerba maté* labor process in detail. Washburn, *A History of Paraguay*, I:450-60.

Rural women also played a predominant economic role as vendors in the market place of Asunción and in the little towns of the interior. In the central market of the capital as many as four or five hundred women worked as vendors. Most were probably agricultural workers who commercialized their own products after the harvest. From villages from all over the country they brought their goods to market on foot, on burros, or on horseback, traveling as far as twenty miles to reach the market place of the capital. Peasant women wore a white dress called a *typoí* in Guaraní, which was cut low in the neck and had a deep border of embroidery in black or scarlet wool, loose lace sleeves, a skirt, and broad sash around the waist. Female vendors smoked little black cigars, and crowded the plaza to sell their goods and produce for a few cents at either a market stall or spread out on a cloth on the ground on the cobble stone streets or plaza. Dressed in gray clothing, not the traditional white *typoí*, Evueví Indian women sold exotic birds in the plaza.³⁴ All peasant and Indian women went bare-footed which meant they had to walk along the dirt roads, open fields, or cobble stones where their feet were exposed to the elements. Shoes were a major indicator of social class, since foreigners divided Paraguayan society between “*gente calzada*” (those who wore shoes), the upper class, and “*gente descalzada*,” (those who went barefooted), referring to those of the lower class.³⁵ Rural women, therefore, stepped on stones, sharp objects, thorny plants, and most likely suffered from *lombrice* (worms) which entered the body between the toes, especially when the ground was soaked by rain. As an outward display of their economic wealth, many peasant women of the lower class wore old-fashioned shell combs in their hair that were mounted with gold.³⁶ These were the *peinetas de oro* or *kyguá verá*, the “women of the golden combs” as they were called in Spanish and Guaraní. In Asunción, they constituted a large part of the female population. Some earned their living through prostitution.³⁷ Before the war, peasant women also worked as weavers, seamstresses, laundresses, domestics, *chiperas* (makers of *chipá*, a traditional type of bread made with manioc flour, cheese, eggs, and milk), shopkeepers, potters, midwives, and cigar-makers.³⁸

³⁴ Charles B. Mansfield, *Paraguay, Brazil and the Plate*, 379-80.

³⁵ Masterman, *Seven Eventful Years*, 39.

³⁶ George Thompson, a British military engineer who commanded Paraguayan troops during the war, wrote that Paraguayan “females from the highest to the lowest” possessed a large quantity of jewelry. George Thompson, *The War in Paraguay* (London: Longman’s, Green and Company, 1869), 200. Washburn also noted that women of all classes had an “incredible amount of jewelry, considering their general poverty.” Washburn, *A History of Paraguay*, II:172.

³⁷ Washburn, *A History of Paraguay*, II:98-9.

³⁸ Washburn, *A History of Paraguay*, 2:228, 446-9; Rodríguez Alcalá, *El Paraguay en marcha*, 228-37; Plá, *Las artesanías*, 53.

WOMEN AT WAR

Paraguayan women, primarily peasant women, played vital roles in the war effort in both a military and civilian capacity. Their participation in the war can be divided into two general stages: 1) During the first stage—which corresponded to the period of the formal war which began in 1864 with the Brazilian invasion of Uruguay, and ended with the Paraguayan evacuation of Asunción in February of 1868—Paraguayan women were the major producers of supplies for war; and 2) in the second stage—which corresponded to the period of the guerrilla war which began with the fall of the capital, and ended with the death of the Paraguayan President Francisco Solano López at Cerro Cora on March 1, 1870—women were among the casualties and victims of war.

Within months of the outbreak of war in 1864, agricultural production rested almost entirely in the hands of women, elderly men, and children. When their husbands and older sons went to fight with the army, many peasant women had to undertake some new farming tasks they had not performed before the war. These new chores included the yoking of oxen, serving as teamsters, taking the cattle to market, and butchering and selling of beef.³⁹ Imbued with a sense of urgency, they stepped up their work to the extent that the production of crops was maintained at rather high levels during the early years of the war.⁴⁰ Vice President Sánchez reported that during the first three months of 1866, some 6,805,695 *liños* (one *liño* is equal to one *cuerda* or .40 acres) of various crops, including manioc, corn, beans, rice, peanuts, tobacco, onions, watermelons, sugar cane, squash, and peas, as well as 215,000 fruit trees were planted. A year later, however, only 4,192,520 *liños* of foodstuffs and 135,757 fruit trees were planted during the first quarter.⁴¹ Martin T. McMahon, who arrived as the

³⁹ Washburn, *A History of Paraguay*, II:177; Washburn to Secretary of State, December 25, 1866, U. S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs, 1867*, vol. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1868; repr., New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1965), 705-6; Washburn to Britain's Minister Plenipotentiary in Argentina, September 24, 1868, U. S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs, 1868*, vol. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1869; repr., New York: Kraus Reprinting Corporation, 1965), 837; George Thompson, *The War in Paraguay*, 207.

⁴⁰ Thomas J. Hutchinson, *The Paraná with Incident of the Paraguayan War and South American Recollections from 1861 to 1868* (London: E. Stanford, 1868), 343; John Hoyt Williams, *The Rise and Fall of the Paraguayan Republic, 1800-1870* (Austin: University of Texas, 1979), 218.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 218-9. Williams obtained these figures from Efraim Cardozo's, *Hace cien años* (Asunción: Ediciones Emasa, 1961-1982) V:140, 287 and VI:132, and Olinda Massare de Kostianovsky's *El Vice-Presidente Domingo Francisco Sánchez* (Asunción, 1972), 89-96. As evidenced in the agricultural reports in the Archivo Nacional de Asunción, villages all over the countryside reported sizeable plantings of manioc, corn, cotton, beans, rice, tobacco, peanuts, barley, squash, watermelons, onions, and fruit trees which were reported to the national government on a monthly or quarterly basis. In

U.S. Minister to Paraguay in December of 1868, noted that there was great distress among the people in the interior because of the scarcity of food after the allied forces had overrun part of Paraguayan territory, but shortly after, the whole country seemed to be producing. At the time of his departure in 1869, he noted a “very promising harvest of maize, manioc, and vegetables of various kinds. . . .”⁴² McMahon testified that women did all of the agricultural work. Nevertheless, Paraguayan women, children, and the elderly, were not the only source of supply for the army. At the beginning of the war, the government itself owned large herds of cattle which were used to feed the army. According to a cattle census of the Ministry of Hacienda in 1864, the state owned 255,363 heads of beef, 70,971 horses, 24,122 sheep, 18,076 oxen, and 587 mules. Some Paraguayan soldiers also worked in the fields outside of their camps when not engaged in battle, and they even managed to capture supplies from allied forces on numerous occasions.⁴³

To encourage production, Vice President Domingo Francisco Sánchez

Ybucú, for example, in October 1866, 10,731 liños of manioc were planted. This figure dropped to 4,630 liños in August 1867, but then, increased to 12,872 liños in November 1867. In January 1868, only 760 liños of manioc were planted. Corn production followed a different pattern in this same district. In October 1866, 11,110 liños of corn were planted. Then corn production increased in August 1867 to 126,054 liños, but then declined to 11,311 liños in November 1867. Cotton production, in turn, increased steadily from 1,821 liños in October 1866 to 2,738 liños in August 1867 to 6,383 liños in November 1867. Growing seasons, of course, were not always the same for each crop. The government requested monthly or quarterly agricultural reports from their local justices of the peace in all the rural districts in 1863 in order “to obtain a general knowledge of agriculture in the country, and to improve this branch of the economy,” and apparently not for tax purposes. Thus, these sources may be more reliable than one could expect. “Tablas de agricultura,” *El Semanario*, 14 November 1863. It is difficult to obtain an accurate measurement of agricultural production during the war. Agricultural reports are available for some months and not others. There also appear to be no clues with regard to how these measurements were taken in the various districts. Agricultural measurements themselves, in addition, varied from country to country in Latin America during the nineteenth century. According to *El Semanario*, one liño was equal to the space of one *cuerda* or 83.3 *varas castellanas*. *Ibid.* This newspaper article, however, did not provide the dimensions of either a *cuerda* or a *vara castellana*. According to the *Comprehensive Technical Dictionary*, one *cuerda* in Puerto Rico is equal to .40 acres, one *vara* in Paraguay is 34 inches, and one *vara* in Spain in general is 33.4 inches. Lewis L. Sell, *Comprehensive Technical Dictionary; Spanish-English* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1949), 521, 1656. There is insufficient data to determine whether one *cuerda* in Puerto Rico was equal to one *cuerda* in Paraguay. Nevertheless, there is an abundance of agricultural reports in the Archivo Nacional de Asunción from the year 1863 until as late as 1869 in some rural districts from all over the country which still have not been studied in great depth. ANA, SH, vols. 350, 354-56.

⁴² U.S. House of Representatives, “The Paraguayan Investigation,” 223. Both Washburn and Burton also noted that peasant women tilled the ground and harvested the crops during the war. Washburn, *A History of Paraguay*, II:177; Burton, *Letters from the Battlefields*, 380. Juan F. Pérez Acosta, *Carlos Antonio López: Obrero Máximo; labor administrativa y constructiva* (Asunción: Editorial Guaranía, 1948), 78-9.

⁴³ Cardozo, *Hace cien años* II:264; ANA, SH, vol. 339, Cattle census of the Ministerio de Hacienda, January 1864, documents nos. 250-1.

issued orders to local officials in districts to ensure that “everyone worked in the fields without distinctions between the sexes or because of age.”⁴⁴ Government officials also encouraged women to plant crops no matter what the usual growing season was, and even to work at night under the light of the moon.⁴⁵ A few foreign observers, particularly those who were exposed to allied propaganda behind enemy lines, mentioned that the state coerced Paraguayan women to work in “labor gangs” during the war. Certainly, female slaves owned by the state might have been impressed into labor gangs, at least, until they became free when their spouses enrolled in the Paraguayan army.⁴⁶ But in the case of the bulk of the female population in the country, peasant women continued to work to feed themselves and their families, simply because they had always supplied a large portion of the agricultural labor in the country. In addition, most peasants appeared to have assisted the government by planting crops out of their attachment to López. McMahon who resided in the countryside during his seven month stay in Paraguay testified before U.S. Congressmen that: “There certainly exists among the people—and I think quite the majority of them—a most devoted attachment to López. . . . It is a devotion that surpasses anything I have ever witnessed before. . . .”⁴⁷ The Paraguayans had known no other form of government, except a paternalistic one which tended to look after their basic needs in times of emergency.⁴⁸

Cut off from European imports after the sinking of the Paraguayan fleet by the Brazilian navy in June 1865, Paraguayan women engaged in the manufacture of textiles to aid in supplying the uniforms, sheets, and cots needed by the army and military hospitals. The weaving of textiles was a traditional activity of Guaraní women, but due to wartime demands families were required by the government to produce so many dozen uniforms by a certain time for the army. Using natural fibers from coconut trees, caraguatá (a kind of wild pineapple), cotton and wool, women wove uniforms in villages and in converted workshops in the capital, such as the one established in the half-finished National Theater. To control production, Vice

⁴⁴ ANA, SH, vol. 348, Vice President Francisco Sánchez to Jefe de Milicias y Juez de Paz de Itauguá, 18 July 1866; ANA, SH, vol. 350, 16 June 1866.

⁴⁵ ANA, SH, vol. 351, Decree signed by Vice President Francisco Sánchez, Asunción 18 July 1866; ANA, SH, vol. 348, Sánchez to Jefe de Milicias y Juez de Paz de Itauguá, 18 June 1866.

⁴⁶ ANA, SH, vol. 348, Sánchez to Ciudadano Jefe de Milicias de Paraguari, Asunción, 9 September 1866.

⁴⁷ McMahon also mentioned that “There are others, and there are many I suppose, who have very opposite feelings.” U.S. House of Representatives, “Paraguayan Investigation,” 223.

⁴⁸ Under Dr. Francia (1811-1840), for example, state herds of cattle were used to feed the poor in the rural district of Villa Rica which was subject to frequent crop failures. Whigham, “The Politics of River Commerce,” 292, 308.

President Sánchez took on the role of coordinating women's activities by sending orders to local justices of the peace and military commanders in local districts. He standardized uniform sizes, encouraged residents to conduct experiments using natural fibers, and ordered local justices of the peace to inform him of the total number of households in their respective districts so that family quotas could be determined. Local justices were also required to send lists detailing the contributions sent to the Ministry of Hacienda in the capital. The kinds of uniforms women manufactured included *chiripás*, (billowing trousers), shirts, underwear, and ponchos. The uniforms of regular soldiers were white, made from cotton or coconut cloth. Officers' uniforms were dyed blue, yellow, and red using natural ingredients such as saffron.⁴⁹

Although total wartime textile production is unknown, women seem to have been able to supply the army adequately during the early stage of the war. Contributions were sent from districts throughout the country, including Paraguari, Trinidad, Piribebuy, San Lorenzo de Campo Grande, Mbuyapey, Acahay, Itauguá, Areguá, Yaguarón, Limpio, Atyrá, Villeta, Quiindy, Itacurubí, Yuty, and Valenzuela.⁵⁰ From Itauguá, for instance, 683 households manufactured 686 shirts, 686 pairs of underwear, nineteen *chiripás*, and fourteen ponchos in 1866.⁵¹ A contemporary described these domestic industries: "The manufacture of cloth and woolen cottons is multiplying in such a manner, that they can compete with foreign goods in price and quality."⁵² A few rural women rendered assistance to the Paraguayan army by baking *chipá* (manioc bread) using ingredients supplied by the government.⁵³ Others, in turn, sent their broken iron cooking pots and other useless iron objects to the iron factory near Ybycuí to be melted down into cannons, cannon balls, machetes, swords, lances, bullets, and other

⁴⁹ ANA, SH, vol. 348. Sánchez to Señor Comandante de Villa de Ygatimí, 9 July 1866; Sánchez to Juez de Paz of Concepción, 7 May 1866; Sánchez to Ciudadano Juez de Paz of Belén, 8 May 1866; Thompson, *War in Paraguay*, 206-7; Washburn, *History of Paraguay*, I:270; Juan F. Pérez de Acosta, *Carlos Antonio López: Obrero Máximo*, 69. Carpets from the ballrooms of the National Club and the railroad station in Asunción were also cut up into ponchos for soldiers. Thompson, *War in Paraguay*, 208. Thompson did not explicitly state that women cut up the carpets, but there is a good possibility that women did, as they were responsible for making most of the soldiers' uniforms.

⁵⁰ Pérez Acosta, *Carlos Antonio López*, 68-70.

⁵¹ ANA, SH, vol. 348, document signed by Félix Candia and Juan Manuel Benítez, Itauguá, 20 April 1866.

⁵² Hutchinson, *The Paraná with Incidents of the Paraguayan War*, 343.

⁵³ ANA, SH, vol. 348, document signed by Benjamin Urbietta, Juez de Paz de Paraguari, 9 November 1866. As a consequence of the allied blockade and in the absence of imported alcoholic beverages, peasant women from Caraguatay and other vilages developed a new kind of orange liqueur. *El Centinela*, 11 July 1867.

weapons.⁵⁴ Government officials secured women's cooperation by continuously commending their efforts in local newspapers. On one occasion, Paraguayan officials went so far as to describe Paraguayan women as "little angels who came down from heaven to help clothe the soldiers."⁵⁵ They also commended the "*bello sexo* (the fair sex) for their goodwill and dedication" in manufacturing shirts for the military hospitals.⁵⁶ It is important to mention, however, that women were not the only manufacturers of textiles in the country. On occasion, regular soldiers also wove cotton fibers to make their own uniforms.⁵⁷

Heads of households, both men and women, made voluntary donations to needy families of soldiers, war widows, and orphans whose lives were shattered by the war. A special commission was established for the purpose of receiving donations from the various districts in 1865 and 1866. Most of the donors were men. In San Estanislao, for example, out of a total of 344 contributors who donated a total of 143 pesos, 3 reales, only twenty-eight were women. In Capiatá 174 pesos, 3 reales were collected from 644 donors, 159 of whom were women. In 1866 one hundred and sixteen needy families in the parish of the capital, Encarnación, received an average of five pesos per household. Except for one blind man who had three sons in the army, all the heads of households of these numerous poor families were women. Eighty-two of them were either war widows or single women with sons in the service. Twenty-six other women had husbands and sons in the military. The other seven women had a relative in the army, either a brother, father, or nephew.⁵⁸ The long list of names of poor women from only one district of the capital suggests that the War of the Triple Alliance deeply touched the lives of Paraguayan women.

⁵⁴ ANA, SH, vol. 345, Francisco Bareiro to local justices of the peace and military commanders in Villa Rica and other districts in the country, Asunción, 16 June 1866. Paraguay's iron foundry, the first of its kind in Latin America, was constructed by the government in 1850 using Paraguayan government financing and British technology. See Pérez Acosta, *Carlos Antonio López*, 178-80, and Thomas J. Whigham, "The Iron Works of Ybycuí: Paraguayan Industrial Development in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *The Americas* 35 (1978): 201-18.

⁵⁵ "Actos recomendables," *El Semanario*, 8 July 1865.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 11 November 1865.

⁵⁷ ANA, SH, vol. 347, Francisco Barreiro to Señor Ministro de Guerra y Marina, Asunción, 8 February 1866? There are no clues indicating how many uniforms the regular soldiers produced.

⁵⁸ ANA, SH, vol. 346, List of contributors signed by Juan de la Cruz Pezoa, 22 February 1865; vol. 348, Sánchez to Jefe de Milicias y Juez de Paz de San Estanislao, 18 June 1866, vol. 351, Familias necesitadas del Barrio de la Encarnación. With remaining funds, the local justice of the peace of Encarnación donated two to five pesos to a number of insolvent women who could not afford to pay for the burials of their deceased children or because they had a number of children in uniform. In addition, funds were spent on catechism books for school children and teachers' salaries. Escolástico Garcete and Raymundo Ortiz, Asunción, 24 March 1866.

Impoverished women with sons in the military service frequently looked to the state for assistance. Patricia Acosta, a peasant woman from the village of Ybytimí, for example, traveled from her village to the capital to request aid from Vice President Sánchez. She lived alone but had six sons in the military, four of whom had already died by 1866 in the southern campaigns. She asked the Vice President for farm implements, a pair of oxen, and two milk cows to support herself and her sick mother. Vice President Sánchez ordered the local justice of the peace in Ybytimí to look after her needs. According to an official decree of 1866, a small part of the national treasury funds were sent to the districts for *mujeres desamparadas* (helpless women).⁵⁹ National Treasury funds, in addition, were used to aid poor families of soldiers or displaced families. In 1866 Vice President Sánchez sent three hundred pesos to the local justices of the peace in Itauguá and Yuti in order to help poor families of soldiers plant corn. The amount of aid given to the poor by the national government, however, was inadequate because numerous families became displaced and destitute during the war.⁶⁰

Both men and women were gravely concerned about health conditions throughout the war. Female and male nurses assisted the sick and wounded on the battlefields and in military hospitals. Women, however, were excluded from the first-hand battle experience of surgery.⁶¹ Without modern medicines, they had to rely on familiar medicinal herbs in order to cure the sick. Forty-one doctors, 340 female nurses and 146 male nurses cared for the sick and wounded in Asunción, where in the midst of the war the train station, military barracks, and private residences had to be converted into hospitals.⁶² Male doctors and nurse practitioners received commissions as officers in the Paraguayan army. Women nurses in contrast did not receive

⁵⁹ ANA, SH, vol. 351, letter from the local justice of the peace of Yhu to Vice President Sánchez, 14 July 1866.

⁶⁰ Vice President Sánchez advised the justices of the peace in several districts that "it is necessary to remind the poor that it was necessary for families around the world to work in order to live." ANA, SH, vol. 348. Official decrees sent by Sánchez to local justices of the peace in Itauguá and Yuty, June and July 1866.

⁶¹ William E. Barrett in his 1938 historical novel about Eliza Lynch, the Irish companion of Francisco Solano López, entitled *Woman on Horseback*, claimed that Lynch wore a colonel's uniform and operated on the wounded while the Paraguayan women only nursed. Barrett however was over-exaggerating Lynch's role in the war. Lynch herself stated that she cared for the wounded in the hospitals as well as the families that followed the Paraguayan army during the last phase of the war. Burton noted that she did her utmost to mitigate the miseries of allied prisoners. Eliza Lynch, *Exposición y protesta* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta Rural, 1875), 6-7; Burton, *Letters From the Battlefields*, 74; William E. Barrett, *Woman on Horseback* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1938), 157, 170, 264, 284.

⁶² Masterman, a British pharmacist turned-surgeon employed by the López government, was overly critical of Paraguayan female nurses he helped trained. In *Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay*, he claimed that women "only amused the wounded." Masterman, *Seven Eventful Years*, 126-7.

special commissions, but instead were paid three pesos per month with funds from the national treasury.⁶³ Nursing, however, did represent a new occupation for many of these women. In rural areas, elderly women nursed the ill who were taken to public school buildings which had been converted into temporary hospitals.⁶⁴ Nurses gave patients salt and vinegar baths twice a day and a herbal remedy made from barley and other ingredients for fevers resulting from the cholera epidemic. The government also distributed a vaccine made from the udder of cows among the populace, but generally there seemed to be a great scarcity of medicine in the country.⁶⁵ Among the civilian population of the country, untold numbers of Paraguayans suffered from epidemics of cholera, smallpox, and measles, which according to Vera Blinn Reber, may have reduced the population of the country by as much as seven percent by the end of the war.⁶⁶ Children were especially affected by the epidemics. Besides taking the lives of many, most of the rural schools were closed because of the measles epidemic of 1865.⁶⁷ Children were also kept home because their mothers had petitioned the local justices of the peace to allow them to remain at home in order to work with them in the fields. Many of the schools, in addition, lost enrollment because older children and teachers had been drafted into the army.⁶⁸

No new openings for women in education apparently came about during the early stage of the war. In the case of the districts of Belén and Itá, for instance, Vice President Sánchez recommended that elderly men, not women, replace the drafted school teachers in 1866.⁶⁹ However, one

⁶³ Massare de Kostianvosky, "El papel de la mujer en la epopeya," *La Tribuna* (Asunción) 1 February 1970; Victor J. Franco, "Médicos y practicantes en la sanidad militar, 1865-1870," *La Tribuna*, 14 January 1968.

⁶⁴ ANA, SH, vol. 347, Official government decree, "Instrucción para los empleados de Campaña sobre el regimen a observarse en la epidemia de la viruela" (Asunción: Imprenta Nacional), 22 October 1866.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 352, British Foreign Office, *Correspondence Respecting Hostilities in the River Plate (in continuation of the papers presented to Parliament, 20 March 1866)*. Mr. Thornton to Mr. Stanley, 30 November 1867, No. 13; Correspondence from Mr. Gould to Mr. Mathew, Paso Pucú, 10 September 1867. Victor J. Franco, *La sanidad en la Guerra contra la Triple Alianza* (Asunción: Circulo Paraguayo de Médicos, 1976), 66; Cardozo, *Hace cien años*, IV:15. The war newspaper, *Cabichú*, declared that women nurses "accompanied their brothers at the front." *Cabichú*, 19 December 1867.

⁶⁶ Vera Blinn Reber, "The Demographics of Paraguay," 318. Vera Blinn Reber presents a breakdown of the causes of mortality due to the war. Using minimum and maximum loss scenarios for her analysis, she claims that due to cholera, yellow fever, and other diseases Paraguay lost between 2.5 and seven percent of its total population.

⁶⁷ ANA, SH, vol. 346, Pedro Cano to Vice President Sánchez, Piribebuy, 30 December 1865.

⁶⁸ ANA, SH, vol. 346, Juan Manuel Benítez to Vice President Sánchez, Itauguá, 31 December 1865; Juan Bautista Quintana to Vice President Sánchez, partido de Pedro González, 31 December 1865; Juan Báez to Vice President Sánchez, Altos, 31 December 1865.

⁶⁹ ANA, SH, vol. 348, Sánchez to the Ciudadano Juez de Paz de Belén and Itá, Asunción, 16 March 1866.

woman educator, Asunción Escalada, succeeded in founding the Escuela Central de Niñas in the capital on November 7, 1869, after the fall of the capital into allied hands that year. The niece of a prominent teacher, Pedro Escalada, Asunción Escalada (1850-1894) had taught in a rural school in Altos.⁷⁰

From the beginning of the war rural women were attached to all divisions of the army as camp followers. Many went along as wives, mistresses, or companions of the common soldiers. Illustrations from issues of *Cabichuí* in 1867 and 1868 show several camp women accompanying the Paraguayan army. Four of the women were walking alongside soldiers and munitions wagons, carrying large bundles of supplies on their heads and dressed in the traditional *typoí*. The other camp woman was depicted as riding a donkey next to a munitions wagon.⁷¹ Camp women lived in their own barracks or row of huts far to the rear of the camps. They could go all over the camp, except in time of cholera, when they were obliged to keep to their own divisions. However, they could not leave the camp without a pass signed by the division commander, General Francisco Resquin.⁷² Although they were not an official part of the army, camp women named sergeants and captains among themselves who were responsible for all the women. As volunteers, they also received neither rations nor wages, but had to survive on what food soldiers could spare. Yet their role was crucial to the war effort, since they moved munition wagons, fed the soldiers, carried supplies, dug trenches, kept the camps in order, nursed the wounded, and buried the dead. Camp followers also served as messengers, since they were always coming and going from the military camps to the capital, carrying the latest news about what was happening at the front. Undoubtedly, their presence boosted the morale of the troops, discouraged desertions, and helped to maintain a semblance of family life in a period of change and disruption. In performing all of their duties, these women were exposed to the same dangers as the rest of the army.⁷³ Indeed, a few were taken prisoner by the

⁷⁰ Cardozo, *Hace cien años*, XIII:113.

⁷¹ *Cabichuí*, 19 December 1867 and 1 June 1868; U.S. Minister to Paraguay and Civil War hero, General Martin T. McMahon, drew many vivid illustrations of Paraguayan women which appeared in his two articles, "Paraguay and Her Enemies," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 40 (February 1870): 421-29 and "The War in Paraguay," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 40 (April 1870): 633-47.

⁷² Thompson, *War in Paraguay*, 206-07.

⁷³ *Ibid.*; Burton, *Letters from the Battlefields*, 318. Washburn, in his anti-López account, gives the impression that the López government compelled women to volunteer to join the army "under fear and compulsion." He claimed that except for women of the upper class in the capital, all women, including the daughters of the most wealthy and respectable citizens, as well as slaves and peons, between the ages of sixteen and forty were conscripted into the army to work as menial laborers. Washburn, *A History of Paraguay*, II:175-6. No other contemporary accounts, however, confirm that camp women were actually drafted into the army. On the other hand, camp women probably received orders from the military

Brazilian Army. The Brazilian commander, the Marquez de Caxias, for example, noted in his war diary in July of 1868, that among the 1,327 prisoners taken, there were ninety-nine officers and three women.⁷⁴

The description of one day in the life of a camp woman serves to illustrate these women's varied daily activities. At the light of dawn, a camp woman would light a fire in the kitchen of the soldiers' camp. If the weather was cool that morning, common soldiers would huddle before the fire to drink their morning *yerba maté*, Paraguayan tea, out of a gourd using a metal straw (*bombilla*). Then the camp woman pounded corn using a wooden mortar, striking it in rapid succession, preparing just enough for the day's consumption. The camp woman used the corn meal or manioc to make *chipá*. Afterward, she would help other camp women put the camp in order. Late in the morning, the camp woman prepared the noon meal which consisted usually of *puchero* (stew), a favorite dish, and boiled manioc, a substitute for potatoes and the mainstay of the Paraguayan diet. After the midday meal, the camp woman and soldiers smoked little black cigars. If the army was not engaged in battle that day, she would assist the wounded in the military hospitals or dig trenches. Later in the afternoon, the camp woman carried firewood from the forests to her hut to keep the fire going. She also carried water in a pitcher on her head to and from the natural springs or nearby rivers. A camp woman often washed uniforms alongside other women at the banks of the rivers. Another activity a camp woman might also engaged in was the rolling of cigars. A camp woman performed these various activities until nightfall. Then after an evening meal, followed by an occasional dance with soldiers, and a night's rest, the camp woman's activities would begin all over again the following morning.⁷⁵

Their presence in soldiers' camps was part of an acceptable social norm in the Río de la Plata. Brazilian female mulattos and Argentine *chinas* (women with Indian facial features) abounded behind the allied lines.⁷⁶ In the wars of independence Colombian women had accompanied the independence armies during the years 1810 to 1822.⁷⁷ Mexican women also ful-

officers and their superiors within their own ranks. When Washburn referred to "women" in his account, it is often unclear whether he was referring to the women who followed the army or those who remained to work in their respective rural districts. Washburn, unlike McMahon and other foreigners, never left Asunción to observe actual conditions in the countryside.

⁷⁴ Marquez de Caxias, *Diario do Exército, Campanha do Paraguay* (Rio de Janeiro: Tipografia Nacional, 1868), 86.

⁷⁵ Washburn described the daily routine of peasants in *A History of Paraguay*, I:446-8. He noted that music was played for several hours every day at or near the barracks at all times of the year. *Ibid.*, II:98.

⁷⁶ Burton, *Letters from the Battlefields*, 386.

⁷⁷ Evelyn Cherpak, "The Participation of Women in the Independence Movement of Gran Colombia, 1780-1830," in *Latin American Women: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Asunción Lavrin (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978): 220-26.

filled similar roles during the Mexican Revolution and the Cristero Rebellion.⁷⁸ While women in Colombia, Mexico, and other parts of Latin America largely were “forgotten heroines,” Paraguayan women received wide coverage in war newspapers. Newspapers portrayed women representing the main symbol of the nation, sustaining not only the “just cause” of Paraguay, but justice in all of South America.⁷⁹ Other war newspapers depict women as extremely assertive. According to *Cabichuí*, two rural women, Barbara Alen and Dolores Caballero, took on the responsibility of defending themselves and their families by warding off a jaguar attack, armed only with a knife and a stick.⁸⁰ An illustrated article in *Guaraní* also detailed the ordeal of Francisca Cabrera who defended her family against the allies armed with only a knife.⁸¹ Fighting against tremendous odds, government officials made use of an image of dedicated, assertive women, willing to make sacrifices for the good of the nation.

As evidenced in wartime newspapers, women’s actions, speeches, songs, and manifestoes, a nationalist consciousness appeared to have developed in Paraguay across wide groups in society during the early phase of the war. Nationalism expresses the reaction to a foreign challenge, be it cultural, economic or political, which is felt to threaten the native integrity or identity of a people. The salient features of nationalism among Paraguayan women were religious symbolism and a strong desire for “liberty” and political autonomy. The invocation of patriotic and religious themes served to bridge the chasm dividing elite women from their rural counterparts.⁸² Their nationalist consciousness developed at a moment in history when Paraguay was threatened by invasion by three foreign nations, while virtually cut off from the outside world. Women of upper class in the capital were responsible for initiating the nationalist movement. The “ladies of Asunción” held meetings in the exclusive National Club to plan their assemblies, offer their jewels to the government, and invite women from the

⁷⁸ Shirlene Soto, “The Mexican Woman: A Study of Her Participation in the Revolution, 1910-1940,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico, 1977), 3-4; Jean Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 129-37.

⁷⁹ *Cabichuí*, 16 December 1867.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, (San Fernando), 22 June 1866.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 10 October 1867.

⁸² The historical and religious themes in the patriotic rhetoric of Paraguayan women are reminiscent of those used during the Mexican insurgency movement in 1810. The figure of Our Lady of Guadalupe, an Indian Catholic saint, united both Indians and creoles. The Mexican clergy was responsible for writing manifestoes, as may have been the case in Paraguay during the Triple Alliance War. In Mexico, however, there seemed to be a greater exaltation of the indigenous past than in Paraguay. David Brading, *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism* (Cambridge: Centre of Latin American Studies, University of Cambridge, 1985), 3, 12, 23, 55.

countryside to join them in making contributions toward the expenses of the war.⁸³ One of the self-reference symbols women used was “*Conciudadanos*” (co-citizens), signifying that they thought of themselves as citizens of a nation.⁸⁴ To express their nationalist sentiments, they held general assemblies of women in the capital in 1867. At the general assembly of women in the main plaza of Asunción on February 24, for example, Teresa S. de Lamas declared:

I have lost my husband in this cruel war in which three nations are fighting against us; I have lost other loved ones and only my children and my jewelry are left in this disaster. The children are too small to offer. Today I come to deposit all of my jewels on the altar of the country to sustain the defense of the flag.⁸⁵

The Paraguayan newspaper, *El Semanario*, reported that “all classes of society attended because the cause is of all women and all women without an exception must defend the country.”⁸⁶ The *kyguá verá or peinetas de oro*, the “women of the golden combs,” also attended the assembly.⁸⁷ Nationalist feelings ran deep among wide groups in society.

The most important boost to the Paraguayans’ sense of nationalism was the terms of the secret Treaty of the Triple Alliance, which became widely known in the early months of 1866. Its most important provisions were: (1) The war was not against the people of Paraguay, but against the government of Francisco Solano López; (2) the allies would not cease war until the Paraguayan government was deposed, nor could they settle with López individually; (3) the independence of Paraguay was to be preserved, but Brazil and Argentina would be entitled to establish new territorial limits; and (4) Paraguay should pay the expenses of the war. In essence, to the

⁸³ For Francisco Solano López’s birthday on July 24, 1866, the upper class women in the capital had given him several presents, including a Paraguayan flag embroidered with gold, with diamonds and rubies, and a silver staff, as well as sword of honor with a sheath made a gold, and a crown of laurels with golden leaves. Washburn, *A History of Paraguay*, II:171. Thompson observed that the “patriotic movement was commenced at the proper instigation among the ladies, some of whom formed themselves into a committee in Asunción.” Thompson, *War in Paraguay*, 200. Burton also noted Paraguayan women’s nationalist sentiments, especially among the “ladies of Asunción.” Burton, *Letters from the Battlefields*, 380; Idalia Flores de Zarza, “La mujer en la epopeya nacional,” *Anuario del Instituto Feminino de Investigaciones Históricas* 1 (1970-1971): 31.

⁸⁴ ANA, SH, vol. 352, Undated letter to the Sección Quinta de la Comisión Directiva of the capital, a special committee established to collect donations for a golden sword to be given to President Francisco Solano López for his forty-first birthday in 1867, signed by Doña Inocencia Marique, Doña Joaquina de la Torre, members of the commission of the village in Itaugúa.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Massare de Kostianovsky, *La mujer paraguaya*, 25.

⁸⁶ *El Semanario*, 8 September 1867.

⁸⁷ Massare de Kostianovsky, *La mujer paraguaya*, 100.

Paraguayan people, the terms of the treaty meant the allies were determined to dispose of their government and usurp Paraguayan territory.⁸⁸

At the first assembly, women voted unanimously to approve a proclamation which in synthesis said: (1) Twelve women would represent them at a national assembly; (2) the women of the capital would accept the adherence of the women in the villages in the interior; (3) an album would be made which would contain the signatures of two hundred women from both the capital and the interior who donated their jewels to the government; and (4) a national assembly would be held in Asunción with women delegates from all over the country who would offer their jewels to the government and present the album to the president.⁸⁹

Women of different social groups closely identified themselves with the Paraguayan government's cause. Shortly after the first assembly of women, peasant women in the villages throughout the countryside held their own public meetings and wrote or had proclamations written which expressed ardent nationalist feelings and a fierce hatred for Paraguay's enemies. Offering their jewels for the "national cause," they called the allies "imbeciles who are infringing upon the sacred rights of our national government."⁹⁰ Women from the village of Quiindy referred to the countries of the Triple Alliance as "inhumane enemies which pretend sacrilegiously to violate the inalienable rights of our nation with the most consumed petulance."⁹¹ Usage of religious phrases, such as "the altar of the country," indicates that Paraguayan women strongly identified with Catholic beliefs which served to unify women of different social and ethnic groups. The role of the clergy is still unclear, but priests may have written the women's manifestoes.⁹²

⁸⁸ Thompson, *War in Paraguay*, 340-45; Gilbert Phelps, *Tragedy of Paraguay* (London: Charles Knight and Company, 1975), 101-02.

⁸⁹ Massare de Kostianovsky, *La mujer paraguaya*, 25.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 102-03.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁹² A study of the role of priests in the Triple Alliance War utilizing ecclesiastical records in Paraguay is greatly needed. Given the fact that many women were illiterate and that religion often served as the peasants' main ideology, one could expect that priests wrote most of the women's manifestoes. Washburn claimed that women's speeches in the capital were "usually written by priests, some men employed by the government, or foreigners." Washburn, *A History of Paraguay*, II:173. A bitter enemy of López, Washburn, in part, gave the impression that women had not acted of their own free will because they were conscripted in the rural areas to serve as camp women. On the other hand, he referred to women who were trained in the use of lances as "volunteers." The fact that there may have been some fears of reprisals does not necessarily mean that women's demonstrations of support were exclusively involuntary. Washburn, *A History of Paraguay*, II:175-6. Washburn was not a supporter of López and the Paraguayan cause apparently because he had spent long periods of time behind the allied lines, which raised Paraguayan suspicions of his actions, which accounts for some of the difficulties he experi-

Just as the movement to make donations to the poor families of soldiers became popular throughout the country, women from Asunción, and the towns of Villarrica, Ybytí, Itapé, Lambaré, and Pirayú began offering to fight alongside soldiers in 1867.⁹³ The women from the village of Areguá took one step further. They got their own lances, put on an uniform which was made up of a white dress (the traditional *typoí*) with red, white, and blue bands, and a kind of Scottish cap designed by Eliza Lynch, the Irish companion of Francisco Solano López, and began parading around the streets of Asunción singing patriotic songs.⁹⁴ Officers from the army, and lieutenants or ensigns who had been in the hospital and were convalescing, were assigned to the duty of training women how to use lances, but not firearms.⁹⁵ Women from the village of Luque also armed themselves with lances and paraded around the streets of the capital, singing the following song:

The daughters of Luque, oh great Marshall,
carry a lance for liberty.

For three years, the firing of canons have brought the sounds
of death. For three years, we have fought against the invaders.

Hundreds of blacks (referring to the Brazilians) want slavery.
The daughters of Luque say "Go Back."

"To die or to be conquered" is our motto. For this reason
we carry lances. Fighting gloriously in the struggle for
honor, we carry our flag.

enced in the country. U.S. Department of State, Secretary of State Seward to Mr. Washburn, No. 56, October 23, 1866, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1866) 2:612-3. Phelps said Washburn was lavishly entertained by the Brazilians and Argentines before his arrival to Paraguay. Phelps, *Tragedy of Paraguay*, 182-3. The accounts of McMahon, and even those of Thompson and Washburn, provide corroborating evidence that popular enthusiasm for López existed in Paraguay throughout the war. The remarkable number of captured soldiers who made their way back to their camp through enemy lines lends further evidence of the support López enjoyed among the Paraguayans. McMahon suggested in 1869 that Paraguay would have been subdued much earlier, except for the fact that a number of prisoners taken by the allies found their way back to López from the allied camps and Buenos Aires. U.S. House of Representatives, "Paraguayan Investigation," 228. Bias Campos Arrudão, "Ending the War of the Triple Alliance: Obstacles and Impetus," (M.A. thesis: University of Texas at Austin, 1981), 67.

⁹³ An illustration in *Cabichuí* portrayed ten women in the capital dressed in European style gowns asking Vice President Sánchez for arms. "Las hijas de la Patria, pidiendo armas para esgrimirlas contra el impio y cobarde invasor," *Cabichuí*, 9 December 1867. Since on other occasions, artists depicted peasant women in war newspapers, this illustration was probably accurate, and not an idealized view of women.

⁹⁴ Thompson, *War in Paraguay*, 201; Masterman, *Seven Eventful Years*, 189-90; *El Semanario*, 25 November 1867.

⁹⁵ Washburn, *A History of Paraguay*, 175-6.

We would go running to the battlefields to fight. And we all say "Long live the Marshall!" (President López)⁹⁶

Their songs had little literary merit, but do illustrate women's patriotic, propagandistic, sentimental, and racial feelings. In the opening verse of this song peasant women referred to themselves as the "daughters of Luque," which meant that they displayed a strong sense of loyalty for their community of Luque, and therefore, probably had local concerns in mind when defending their homeland against the invading armies. Many peasants, however, may have thought both in terms of their local interests as well as the good of the "nation," as symbolized in the national banners they carried, the tricolored dresses they wore, and their expressions of ardent support of López. However, it is extremely difficult or impossible to tell what exactly was in the minds of the peasants. In this song as well as in much of the Guaraní poetry published in war newspapers, Paraguayans referred to Brazilians as "blacks" or "*cambà*," a Guaraní word which means "black," but when applied to people, could be translated as "nigger." Many of the Brazilians were indeed black or mulatto, some promised their freedom from slavery for service in the war. United in their defense of their country, the Paraguayans chose racial terms to depict their enemies which served to reinforce their own sense of a separate national identity.⁹⁷

After the parade in the capital, a group of upper-class women in Asunción went to see Vice President Sánchez and demanded to be drafted into the army. Sánchez replied that there were sufficient men to overwhelm the army.⁹⁸ President Francisco Solano López responded: "What are one or two hours of combat in comparison to the arduous and heroic dedication of the daughters of the nation working in the fields to support themselves, their families, and even us."⁹⁹

In September of 1867, a national assembly of women was held in the capital, the first of its kind in the country, and perhaps all of Latin America. In a formal ceremony, thirty-two women delegates from villages all over the country offered their jewels to the government. The women delegates also presented President López with *El Libro de Oro*, an album with "covers of gold a quarter of inch thick," containing the names of those women who made donations to the government. An illustration of this event in *El Centinela* depicted aristocratic women dressed in elegant gowns

⁹⁶ Translated by the author into English from the Spanish version which appeared in Cardozo, *Hace cien años*, VIII:15, 26.

⁹⁷ Williams, "The Paraguayan Experience of Nationalism," 177-8.

⁹⁸ Cardozo, *Hace cien años*, VIII:52-3.

⁹⁹ *El Semanario*, 25 January 1868.

making this patriotic gesture, not peasant women wearing *typoís*.¹⁰⁰ López responded to the women's offer to donate their gold jewels by accepting only five percent which were minted into a coin honoring Paraguayan women. He stated on September 6, 1867:

The petition of the fair sex to wear national colors in place of their jewels is eminently patriotic; but I do not consider Paraguayan women need to make such an ostentatious demonstration of the colors they wear imprinted on their hearts, nor do I see any reason for them not to wear their jewels.¹⁰¹

President López related to the women in a paternalistic fashion, similar to how Paraguayan army officers related to common soldiers during the war. In an official decree, he referred to women as the “noble daughters of my country.”¹⁰² All Paraguayan officers referred to soldiers under their command as “their sons.”¹⁰³ Common soldiers in turn referred to their superiors as “their fathers.”¹⁰⁴ Both officers and soldiers referred to López as “*taitá guazú*” (“big father” in Guaraní).¹⁰⁵ With roots into Paraguay's Guaraní and Spanish multicultural heritage, paternalism seemed to operate very strongly at all levels of Paraguayan society, especially within the military. For both the Paraguayan soldiers and women, the usage of familiar terms clearly served as a reminder of their subordinate positions in society and obligations.

On September 12, López decreed that the thirty-two women delegates to the national assembly were to receive the Merit of Honor, which consisted of a tricolor band which the women were to wear in the same way as the officers of the order.¹⁰⁶ Unlike women in war in other countries, Paraguayan women received not only government recognition for their efforts,

¹⁰⁰ “La ofrecida del bello sexo del Paraguay de todos sus joyas y alahas para la defensa de la Patria en la Asunción a 8 de setiembre de 1867,” *El Centinela*, 12 September 1867.

¹⁰¹ *El Semanario*, 25 January 1868.

¹⁰² Cardozo, *Hace cien años*, VIII:66; ANA, SH, vol. 353, Francisco Solano López, Paso Pucú, 6 September 1867.

¹⁰³ Thompson, *War in Paraguay*, 57.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* Soldiers also referred to López as “mita morotí” (the white child), and “carañí” or “carañí guazú,” (the big gentleman).

¹⁰⁶ Idalia Flores de Zarza, “La mujer paraguaya en la epopeya nacional,” 13-4. Anti-López interpretations of the war emphasize that he had seized all of the women's jewels. López however was a very charismatic and popular leader among the Paraguayans, as evidenced especially in the work of Thompson, who himself was not a López supporter at the end of the war. Long lists of contributors to the army, military hospitals, and poor families of soldiers from villages all over the country also provide corroborating evidence of Paraguayans' support for the government's cause. On the other hand, these reports were published by the government in order to obtain further funding from the general populace and stir up support. McMahon, *Paraguayan Investigation*, 223. Paraguayans, *El Centinela*, 12 September 1867; Washburn, *A History of Paraguay*, 2:200; Thompson, *War in Paraguay*, 200-01.

but one of the highest military honors. Some feminist ideas also appeared in the national press. The editor of *El Centinela* remarked that Roman law had been unjust with regard to women's civil rights because women were not "looked upon as persons, but only as insignificant objects."¹⁰⁷ The government, however, never made any improvements in women's legal status during the war. López's attitude toward women suggests that men, particularly public officials, were willing to allow women to play more assertive, yet limited roles in war, as a temporary expedient.

Not all women were strong supporters of President Francisco Solano López. Leona Filiu and her servant, Andrea Lugo, of Itauguá, for example, were sent to the *calabozo* (prison) for what could be defined as rather minor offenses against the government. The two women were imprisoned in 1866 for having said that: "Our army has lost and the enemies are in Humaitá."¹⁰⁸ Humaitá was Paraguay's large fortress and center of defense which did not fall into allied hands until July of 1867. The length of their prison terms is unknown. Another woman, Elicia Rodríguez of Acahay, was imprisoned in 1865 for more than six months for having said denigrating words against the "National Press."¹⁰⁹ According to available sources, it is unclear what Elicia Rodríguez actually said or whether any of these women received a trial before their imprisonment. It is doubtful.

The *destinadas* (the destined ones) were a group of thirty Paraguayan and foreign women who were persecuted by the government because their relatives were implicated in the conspiracy of 1868 against President López. Under suspicion, the government exiled the *destinadas* to various villages in the countryside where they were put to work in the fields. Dorotea Duprat de Lassare, one *destinada*, learned that her father, brother, and French husband had all been executed at San Fernando for their complicity in the plot. These women suffered miseries of all kinds, including hunger, until they were freed in 1868 and 1869, when Brazilian and Argentine troops occupied Paraguayan territory.¹¹⁰ As the allied forces advanced toward the

¹⁰⁷ "La mujer," *El Centinela*, 18 July 1867.

¹⁰⁸ ANA, SH, vol. 351, Juan Manuel Benítez of Itauguá to Vice President Sánchez, 31 December 1866.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, Damase Florentino to Vice President Sánchez, Acahay, 30 June 1865. *Ibid.*, Partido de Itacurubí Villa del Rosario, 31 December 1866. Some women were victims of crime during the disorder caused by the war. A peasant woman who lived alone in the village of Piribebuy, for example, had all her personal belongings stolen from her home in 1866. An inventory of the stolen items reveals what a rural woman might own during the López era: seven scarves, three of them silk, two men's shirts, a straw hat, a white coat, a quilt, a gold rosary, a gold necklace, forty-eight to fifty *pesos* in paper money, two silver bridles, and a pair of silver spurs. *Ibid.*, Juan Antonio Ovelar, Piribebuy, 31 December 1866.

¹¹⁰ Dorotea Duprat de Lassare left a written account of her ordeal in an appendix of the Spanish version of Masterman's work, *Siete años de aventuras en el Paraguay* (Buenos Aires, 1911), 321-35.

capital in early 1868, women of all sectors in society endured great hardships during the final guerrilla phase of the war. Once the Brazilian naval squadron succeeded in running the batteries at Humaitá, women and their children were forced to abandon their homes in the capital. Without carts or other means of conveyance, most of the women had to carry bundles of clothing, food, and cooking utensils on their heads or in their arms to new locations in neighboring villages. Only about an estimated five thousand of the fifteen thousand refugees were able to find shelter. The other ten thousand camped out under trees or in the open air during a month of heavy rains. Many of the refugees, however, eventually were able to find accommodations in other districts.¹¹¹ According to the Brazilian commander, the Marquez de Caxias, many displaced families and women arrived at the Brazilian camps in December of 1868, where they were fed and sheltered.¹¹²

The women who chose to follow the Paraguayan army into the central mountainous region of the Cordillera became known as the “*Residentas*,” the “residents of the army.” Among them were the camp women, the auxiliary army corps.¹¹³ By this final stage of the war, the presence of women in so many activities became so evident that news spread abroad even to the United States. In July of 1868, the *New York Times* reported:

In all the interior the service of women do all the home work as tending flocks and cultivating the ground, and they fill all the petty offices of Government. Paraguay is the only country in the world where woman has a perfect equality with man. She holds office, fights, works on the farm, recruits soldiers, serves in the hospital, guards the house, tames horses, and in fine, she is free. Man has taken off the shackles and she is equal to the situation.¹¹⁴

Foreigners displayed no or little understanding that field work was the traditional preserve of Indian and peasant women. They tended to view women as temporary replacements doing “men’s work.” The *New York Times*’ report also distorted the facts, since there are no other contemporary accounts which suggest that women recruited soldiers or served in government offices.

At the battle of Avay in early December of 1868, the Brazilian Army found more than three hundred women and children on the battlefield fol-

¹¹¹ Harris Gaylord Warren, *Paraguay and the Triple Alliance: the Postwar Decade, 1869-1878* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 11; Washburn, *A History of Paraguay*, 2: 238-40; Burton, *Letters from the Battlefields*, 380; Masterman, *Seven Eventful Years*, 228.

¹¹² Marquez de Caxias, *Diario do Exército*, 62.

¹¹³ Beatriz Rodríguez Alcalá de González de Oddone, *Residenta? Reconstructora?* (Asunción: Casa América, 1974), 25-27.

¹¹⁴ *New York Times*, 14 July 1868, 5.

lowing the Paraguayan defeat.¹¹⁵ In the battle of Itá Ybaté (Lomas Valentinas) from December 21 through December 28, 1868, camp followers did all the burying of the dead, moved munitions wagons, besides nursing the wounded. The U.S. Minister McMahon observed “thousands of women at the front, many of whom were killed or wounded.”¹¹⁶ He vividly described how desperate the situation had become for the Paraguayans by the end of 1868:

The condition of things within Lopez’s lines that night and the following days were deplorable. There was no means of caring for the wounded in such numbers, nor could men be spared to bring them off the field or bury the dead. Many children, almost unnoticed were lying around under the corridors, grievously wounded, and silently waiting for death. Women were busy making lint from whatever material could be collected for that purpose. Garments of all descriptions were torn into bandages.¹¹⁷

Paraguayan women’s major contribution to the war effort seems to lie primarily behind the lines in support of the army in a civilian, rather than in a military capacity. Unfortunately there is no accurate way to assess the full extent of their military contribution, since women did not occupy a regular

¹¹⁵ Marquez do Caxias, *Diario do Exército*, 61.

¹¹⁶ U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C., Despatch from U.S. Minister to Paraguay, Martin T. McMahon, to Honorable William H. Seward, Secretary of State, Pykysry, 31 January 1969, Despatch no. 13, Despatches from United States Ministers to Paraguay and Uruguay, 1868, M 128 Record Group 59, vol. 3.

¹¹⁷ McMahon quoted in Washburn, *A History of Paraguay*, 2:564-65; see also Thompson, *War in Paraguay*, 304, 308-09. There was nothing unusual about women fighting to defend their homeland. For centuries women in Europe were known to have fought in battles. Ancient Greek women threw stones and roof tiles, and sent provisions to their defenders when the city they resided in was under siege. David Schaps, “The Women of Greece in Wartime,” *Classical Philology* 77 (July 1982): 193-213. During the Japanese invasion of Korea (1592-1598), Korean women participated in battles against Japanese invaders by carrying rocks from the field to the front line which was vital to the successful defense of a fortress. Mr. Don-Ho Kim, interview by the author, Austin, Texas, April, 1988. A few Argentine women defended Buenos Aires during the English invasions of 1806 and 1807. Sara Sabor Vila de Folatti Tornadu, “La mujer americana en las invasiones inglesas al Río de la Plata, 1806-1807,” *Universidad* (Universidad Nacional del Litoral, Santa fé) 34 (April 1957): 149-67. In the Revolution of 1848, German women fought at Berlin, Vienna, and Dresden. Stanley Zucker, “German Women and the Revolution of 1848,” *Central European History* 13 (September 1980): 237-8. Confederate women of the South in the United States during the American Civil War (1861-1865) donated their jewels to the government, organized patriotic committees, managed plantations, helped the wounded, founded soldiers’ aide committees, buried the dead, and made uniforms for the Confederate Army. A few Confederate women, donned in men’s uniforms, even took up arms. Some Paraguayans were aware of women’s participation in war in other countries during the López era. The government published an article in *El Semanario* about a twenty-three year old Mexican heroine who was “very skilled with sword,” and distinguished herself in the battle at Puebla during the French Intervention in 1863. “Heróína Méjicana,” *El Semanario*, 28 November 1863. The Paraguayan government also published an article in midst of the war about a French camp woman, Tereza Figneur, who followed Napoleon’s army. “Biografía de una mujer heróica,” *El Centinela*, 14 November 1867.

place within the army. The historical record also becomes extremely fragmentary during the last two years of the war. Nevertheless, there are some accounts which estimate the number of women who followed the Paraguayan army during the last stage of the war. General Francisco Resquin, for example, noted in his memoirs that the “glorious action” of six thousand women General Caballero freed from the Brazilians had cost 325 Triple Alliance lives.¹¹⁸ A modern estimate by a Paraguayan historian, Benigno Riquelme García, lists the names of more than 1,500 “*Residentes*” in his work, *El ejército de la epopeya*.¹¹⁹ Today, the names of at least fifteen women are remembered to have fought in the battle of Piribebuy in August of 1869.¹²⁰ According to contemporary Brazilian sources, some 1,500 Paraguayan women and children contended with 21,000 allied troops, mainly Brazilians.¹²¹ Without rifles the women militants fought with bottles, sand, glass, and any other objects they could get their hands on. Brazilian Sublieutenant Dionísio Cerqueira abhorred the thought that the allies were fighting against them. He was especially touched by the sight of a mother and her young son lying dead at the entrance of the church, apparently killed by the same bullet. Against tremendous odds, the Paraguayan defenders proved no match for the Brazilian infantry. Several hundred women and children died on the battlefields. Nimia Candía was one of these combatants. Having suffered wounds six months earlier at the battle of Itá Ybaté, she was lanced in the battle of Piribebuy, and later died in the local military hospital when it was burned down by the allies.¹²²

In search of food, shelter, and protection, hundreds of women and their families migrated into the Allied-occupied capital in the early months of 1869. Half-nude, in tattered clothes, and showing signs of great hunger and despair, a number of them still died of starvation and disease even after their arrival in the capital, since the allied armies were unprepared to aid the

¹¹⁸ General Francisco Resquin, *Datos históricos de la Guerra del Paraguay* (Buenos Aires: Campaña Sudamericana, 1896), 126. Resquin wrote his memoirs in 1876.

¹¹⁹ Benigno Riquelme García, *El ejército de la epopeya* (Asunción: Ediciones Cuadernos Republicanos, 1977), 2:317-48. The Marquez de Caxias himself noted in his war diary on 30 December 1868 that “a great number of women and children accompanied López’s force of 1,350 men.” Marquez de Caxias, *Diario do Exército*, 82.

¹²⁰ Mr. Alfredo Bernal, Director of the Museo Histórico de Piribebuy, interview by author, Piribebuy, Paraguay, April, 1985.

¹²¹ Charles Kolinski, *Independence or Death: The Story of the Paraguayan War* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1965), 178-80. For this figure of 1,500 Kolinski relied upon the Brazilian accounts of Alfredo d’Escragnonne Taunay, *A Retirada da Laguna* (São Paulo: Companhia melhoramentos de São Paulo, n.d.), *Diario do Exército* (Rio de Janeiro: Tipografia Nacional, 1870), and *Memórias do Visconde de Taunay* (São Paulo: Instituto Presso Editorial, 1948).

¹²² R. Luisa Ríos de Caldi, *Diccionario de la mujer guaraní* (Asunción: Editorial Siglo Veintiuno, 1977), 73.

hundreds of war refugees. A Brazilian officer noted quite vividly that some “skeleton children were too weak to suckle the welted breasts of their agonizing mothers with their naked bellies and ribs sticking out.”¹²³ With only a few indifferent allied military leaders in charge of about 30,000 soldiers, many of the women became “fair game” for the licentious armies. There were reports of “free love” in the streets, plazas, and other public meeting places. These allied soldiers celebrated the fall of Asunción by violating women, pillaging homes, and looting public buildings. Many women had to turn to prostitution in order to stay alive. The problem was rampant. For instance, the half-finished National Theater which had served as a women’s textile factory during the early years of the war, was turned into an immense brothel with more than four hundred prostitutes. In contrast other women, particularly those from more well-to-do families, were better able to cope with the allied occupation. They rebuilt and refurnished their homes, and opened stores, restaurants, schools, and artisan workshops in the capital.¹²⁴

WOMEN AFTER WAR

By March of 1870, when the war finally ended, Paraguay was a land of women, widows, invalids, and orphans. Based on the first official postwar census of Paraguay, the census of 1886, it is evident that there were three women for every man, and not the ten-to-one as is often suggested.¹²⁵ Nev-

¹²³ Dionisio Cerqueria, *Reminiscencias da campanha do Paraguai* (Rio de Janeiro: Gráfica Lalmert, n.d.), 367, 381, 391. Cardozo quoted Cerqueria in *Hace cien años*, XI:73, 90, 149 and XII:315, 346-7.

¹²⁴ Cardozo, *Hace cien años*, XI:23-26, 74 and XII:116-7; Warren, *Paraguay and the Triple Alliance*, 17, 20-5.

¹²⁵ Ganson de Rivas, *Las consecuencias demográficas y sociales*, 11; Oficina General de Estadística, *Anuario Estadístico de la República del Paraguay, Año 1886* (Asunción: Fischer and Quell, 1888). By constructing population pyramids based on the census data available in the *Anuario estadístico de la República del Paraguay, año 1886*, published by the Oficina General de Estadística, one can project back fifteen years to get a general idea of what the population of Paraguay might have been in 1870. Due to many irregularities in this first official postwar census, I had to use ten-year age groupings in order to construct the population pyramids. For sound reasons, historians have questioned the validity of this 1886 census. The director of the Oficina General de Estadística, José Jacquet, thought the census results were too low and arbitrarily raised the total first to ten percent, and then by 37 percent. E. Bourgade La Dardye, *Paraguay: The Land and the People, Natural Wealth and Commercial Capabilities* (London: George Philip and Sons, 1892), 103. Census takers did not record racial information, thus, it is impossible to examine the impact of the war on the different racial and ethnic groups in the country. Given the extremely poor means of communications in the country and the scattered nature of the population, including the numerous Indian tribes, the accuracy of the census is especially questionable. However, the figures for at least some of the rural districts do coincide with references to other postwar censuses. In the case of Arroyos y Esteros, for example, Father Maíz noted that according to a 1879 census, there were 1,557 inhabitants in this rural district, and more than two thousand in 1886. Father Fidel Maíz,

ertheless, the ratio of three-to-one is unprecedented in Latin American history and must have reinforced the central role of women in the family. Other societal patterns, however, were not drastically altered. Few couples married during the postwar years, and most probably lived together in free unions which already had been customary. Illegitimacy also remained at nearly the same high prewar level—sixty-four percent for the entire country in 1887 (62.7% for the district of Villarrica).¹²⁶ Information on the household structure of rural communities is unavailable, but the percentage of female heads of households must have been considerably high, as a consequence of the war. However, in view of the high ratio of female-headed families which already existed in the antebellum period, and women's important roles in the administration of property, in agriculture, in artisan industries, and as main suppliers and vendors in the local markets, and other areas of the economy, which continued into the war years, the impact of war on women's roles was not that drastic. Of course, women still suffered tremendously, both materially and psychologically. Many suffered from displacement, hunger, disease, poverty, as well as the loss of loved ones.

The women who managed to survive preserved many of the traditional customs of the country. As before the war, rural women wore their *typoís*, balanced ceramic water jugs on their heads, smoked little black cigars, and went bare-footed.¹²⁷ Most women continued to be employed in the same low status occupations, as farmers, vendors, weavers, laundresses, *chi-*

Pequeña geografía para los niños de la escuela de Arroyos y Esteros (Asunción: El Paraguayo, 1886), 76. The census takers of the Oficina General de Estadística reported that Arroyos y Esteros had 2,721 inhabitants in 1886. Oficina General de Estadística, *Anuario Estadístico*, 225-32. As in a number of Latin American countries during the nineteenth century, the social category of "Indian" disappeared from the first official census in Paraguay. Even if the figures are not fully reliable, the 1886 census is still valuable for the rich variety of information it contains, from the number of criminals and commercial houses in the capital to the occupational structure of each village over the age of fifteen. The ratio of three or four women to every man is considerably less than what some contemporary newspapers reported, and some historians have suggested. For instance, *La Regeneración*, a newspaper established in the allied-occupied capital, claimed there were fifty women for every man in the rural areas and three women for every man in the capital in 1869. Cardozo, *Hace cien años*, XIII:148-9.

¹²⁶ Oficina General de Estadístico, *Anuario estadístico*, 55-61; Marion Mulhall, *From Europe to Paraguay to Matto Grosso* (London: Edward Stanford, 1877), 63-4; Mulhall, *Ten Years of a Lady's Travels in the Pampas Gran Chaco Paraguay, and Matto Grosso* (London: E. Stanford, 1881), 221-2; Edwin Clark, *A Visit to South America: with notes and observations on the moral and physical features of the countries* (London: Dean and Sons, 1878), 291-2; Oficina General de Estadístico, *Anuario estadístico del República del Paraguay, año 1887* (Asunción: El Paraguayo, 1889), 2:79. Only 1,985 marriages were celebrated in all the country in 1887. Ganson de Rivas, *La consecuencias demográficas y sociales*, 24.

¹²⁷ A British traveler, Marion Mulhall, who visited the country during the 1870s, drew an illustration of Paraguayan peasant women. Marion Mulhall, *Ten Years of a Lady's Travels* (London: E. Stanford, 1881), 221.

peras, cigar-makers, seamstresses, and midwives.¹²⁸ According to the 1886 census, sixty-one percent of all farmers were women. Excluding children under the age of fifteen, there were 55,377 female agricultural laborers and 31,558 male agricultural laborers. Paraguayans tended to perceive women's work as inferior to men's and not as independent work. The rural codes of 1877 and 1884 both excluded any discussion of female agricultural labor, despite the fact that the majority of rural workers were women. Instead, they discussed the rights and obligations of male peons who were free wage laborers and subjected to many different kinds of social control imposed by large *estancieros*.¹²⁹

Notions of women's political equality or legal rights did not emerge as a result of women's demands to bear arms or by actually fighting in the war. The 1870 Constitution did not include any special provision allowing women to vote or hold political office, although all inhabitants still had the right to petition authorities. It did abolish slavery, which affected the lives of some women, but this had little impact overall, as slavery had never been an important institution in the country.¹³⁰

In the late 1880s and 1890s improvements in women's education did occur when a small group of women from wealthy or educated families obtained access to higher education. Among them were Celsa and Adela Speratti, two sisters who organized the first normal school in Paraguay and trained generations of teachers. More women did become teachers after the war. Primary school teaching, however, still remained a male-dominated profession in the country. According to the 1887 *Anuario estadístico de la República del Paraguay*, only 148 (33 percent) out of a total of 448 teachers in the country were women. On the other hand, in the capital some women became principals of elementary and secondary schools in the mid-1880s including Susana Dávalos, Teresa Villahoz, Joaquina Machain, Eldemira Iglesia, Antonia Escauriza, and Mercedes Leon.¹³¹ The advancements that these few women made, nevertheless, seemed to be part of a general trend which occurred all over Latin America, and were not directly related to the Triple Alliance War.

¹²⁸ Butchering of beef was the only new occupation women continued to exercise after the war. Two women in the village of Arroyos y Esteros identified themselves as butchers after the war. *Anuario estadístico*, 1886, 234.

¹²⁹ Paraguay, *Código rural de la República del Paraguay* (Asunción: El Paraguayo, 1887), 4-5, 22, 30-4; *Código rural de la República del Paraguay* (Asunción: Imprenta de "La Reforma," 1884), 3-4.

¹³⁰ Mariñas Otero, *Las constituciones del Paraguay*, 145-53. Jerry W. Cooney, "Abolition in the Republic of Paraguay, 1840-1870," *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft and Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas* 11 (1974): 164.

¹³¹ Oficina General de Estadística, *Anuario estadístico (1886)*, 260.

In summary, although the roles of women on the front and behind the lines were crucial to the defense and survival of Paraguay during the Triple Alliance War, they did not lead to a significant alteration in women's status in Paraguayan society. Despite opportunities for change and women's overwhelming participation, much of which was ordered paternalistically by the government, women held the lowest status occupations during the war, and afterward remained in subordinate positions in society. This paper highlights the roles of women in agricultural production but emphasizes that it did not occur completely because of the shortage of men, as is generally assumed, but was rather part of a continuing pattern in society whose roots can be traced back to Paraguay's Guaraní cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, in the course of the war, individually and in groups, Paraguayan women demonstrated great courage, resourcefulness, deep convictions, and a willingness to be actively involved in a cause they believed in. A broadly-based sense of nationalism appeared to have developed among them due to particular circumstances: the extended length of the "total" war; the paternalistic nature of the state and society; and the common bonds of language, religion, and multicultural Spanish and Guaraní heritage. Paraguayan women's wartime experiences were novel in that women of different socio-economic groups asserted their rights to participate in all responsibilities of citizenship by advocating the bearing of arms, and by forming regiments to be drilled and trained in the use of lances. In no other nineteenth-century Latin American countries have numbers of women put to question the appropriate role of women in society as did Paraguayan women during the War of the Triple Alliance War.

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