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# Beyond linguistic description: territorialisation. Guarani language in the missions of Paraguay (17th-19th centuries)

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► **To cite this version:**

Capucine Boidin. Beyond linguistic description: territorialisation. Guarani language in the missions of Paraguay (17th-19th centuries). Linda A. Newson. Cultural Worlds of the Jesuits in Colonial Latin America, London University Press. Institute of Latin American Studies, pp.127-145, 2020. halshs-03601871

**HAL Id: halshs-03601871**

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Submitted on 8 Mar 2022

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Chapter Title: Beyond linguistic description: territorialisation. Guarani language in the missions of Paraguay (17th–19th centuries)

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Book Title: Cultural Worlds of the Jesuits in Colonial Latin America

Book Editor(s): Linda A. Newson

Published by: University of London Press, Institute of Latin American Studies. (2020)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvwrm4h1.11>

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## 6. Beyond linguistic description: territorialisation. Guarani language in the missions of Paraguay (17th–19th centuries)

Capucine Boidin

*Na kuatia reta mongeta rebe ave ruguái  
aguyjei ereiko ne  
imongeta katupyry rebe katu.  
(1759)<sup>1</sup>*

*No el mucho leer  
harta y satisfice la vida,  
sino más el leer bien.<sup>2</sup>*

*For it is not reading much  
but reading well  
that contents and satisfy the soul*

The Jesuits are known for their contribution to the linguistic description of many Amerindian languages, among them the *lingua brasílica* on the coast of Brazil, today known as Tupí, and Guaraní, spoken in the

- 1 J. Insaurralde, *Ara poru aguyjei háva*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Joaquín Ibarra, 1759–60). The quotation is from vol. 1, p. 80 and taken from a digital copy in the Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid. All quotations in Guaraní are transliterated and follow the orthography of the Paraguayan Academy of Guaraní. Palaeographic versions are provided at <http://www.langas.cnrs.fr>, a site created during the project LANGAS (2011–16), funded by the Agence Nationale de la Recherche and coordinated by this author with the help of C. Itier. Our website and database provide access to palaeography, transliterations and translations of texts in Guaraní, Quechua and Tupí, those Amerindian languages which were considered ‘general languages’ by the Spanish and Portuguese; and they feature a sophisticated tool for lexical searches.
- 2 Translation into Spanish by L. Cerno and C. Boidin in 2018. The text in Guaraní reworks the second annotation of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius of Loyola: ‘For it is not knowing much but realising and relishing things interiorly that contents and satisfy the soul’. *Kuatia mongeta* – literally: ‘paper’s talk’ – is the historical equivalent for ‘reading’ and *aguyjei ereiko* – ‘you live perfectly’ – the equivalent for ‘holy life’. We use ( ) for literal translation and ‘ ‘ for historical translation. A discussion on translation can be found in C. Boidin, ‘Mots guarani du pouvoir, pouvoir des mots guarani. Essai d’anthropologie historique et linguistique (XIX–XVI et XVI–XIX siècles)’ (Habilitation à diriger des recherches, University of the Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris 3, 2017).

C. Boidin, ‘Beyond linguistic description: territorialisation. Guaraní language in the missions of Paraguay (17th–19th centuries)’, in L.A. Newson (ed.), *Cultural Worlds of the Jesuits in Colonial Latin America* (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2020), pp. 127–45. License: CC-BY-NC-ND 2.0.

province of Paraguay. When José de Anchieta wrote a Tupí grammar (1556) and Antonio Ruiz de Montoya a Guaraní grammar (1640), they shared the same approach (Humanist philology) as their counterparts in Europe to the vulgar languages there.<sup>3</sup> The grammatisation of European and Amerindian languages was carried out at the same time, using similar methodologies and references.<sup>4</sup> In the case of Amerindian languages it was an exo-grammatisation, an analysis from outside. In a European dictionary, the ideal speaker – the one from whom normative examples are derived – is an urban, educated man, just like the authors of the dictionaries themselves. However, in an Amerindian vocabulary, the model, the mouth from which the author constructs his authority, is the ‘other’, the neophyte Indian.<sup>5</sup> Europeans only gave ‘voice’ to the Indians at a phonetic and semantic level, not at an epistemological level. Those linguistic descriptions uncovered an Amerindian philosophy of language, yet were based on careful listening to Indian words.<sup>6</sup> The Jesuit grammars which were reprinted at the end of the 19th century in Germany contributed to the development of modern comparative linguistics.<sup>7</sup> Their descriptions are – in the eyes of modern linguists – still accurate in many aspects.<sup>8</sup>

However, those grammars were not only intellectual events, darker or lighter. To print a grammar was, and still is, a political act. For instance, when Antonio Ruiz de Montoya published his Guaraní-Spanish dictionaries, grammars and doctrines in Madrid in 1639 and 1640, he obtained, at the same time, two significant benefits for ‘his’ Guaraní missions in Paraguay: the right of the Indians to use firearms and to pay tribute directly to the king, thereby escaping the *encomienda*. When the Jesuits signified to the king their linguistic mastery in Guaraní, they thus negotiated direct control over specific Indians and their territories.<sup>9</sup>

3 P. Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). It presents a very useful chronology of first books, grammars and dictionaries printed in European languages (1450–1794), pp. X–XIII.

4 S. Auroux, *La révolution technologique de la grammatisation: introduction à l'histoire des sciences du langage* (Paris: Mardaga, 1994).

5 C. Rodríguez-Alcala, ‘L'exemple dans les grammaires jésuitiques du guaraní’, *Langages*, 166 (2007): 112–26.

6 W. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, & Colonization* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

7 It seems that those Amerindian grammars did not circulate much in Europe before the 19th century (F. Simon, ongoing investigations and personal communication).

8 B. Pottier, ‘La gramática del Padre Ioseph de Anchieta’, *Suplemento Antropológico*, 32 (1998): 155–76. The grammars produced by the Jesuits were oriented towards the translation of the Christian message and this pragmatic issue helped them to be aware of some specific and effective rules of the language. As they needed to invent neologisms they paid great attention to the logic of agglutination (prefixes and suffixes) (B. Melià, *La lengua Guaraní en el Paraguay colonial que contiene la creación de un lenguaje cristiano en las reducciones de los Guaraníes en el Paraguay* (Asunción: CEPAG, 2003), pp. 187–8).

9 My thanks to J.C. Estensoro for helping me to take this point into account.

However, grammars and dictionaries were not only imperial policy arguments. Such texts contributed to the expansion of a unified linguistic variant over a vast territory.<sup>10</sup> They were structured and structuring artefacts. They were shaped in local linguistic exchanges and thereby shaped future linguistic communities. This social, semantic and territorial history is complex to relate. In brief, we aim to understand what the Jesuits and their missions did to Tupí-Guaraní languages. How did the missionaries listen, learn, talk and write Guaraní? Who did they listen to, where and when? How did some Jesuits manage to elaborate their catechetical texts in Tupí or Guaraní? What impact did their texts have on oral interactions? On the other hand, how did the Indians listen to these new ideas in their own language? How did they learn to read and write in their newly transformed language?

To answer these questions, we rely on the new perspectives of the Guaraní Corpora. The identified Guaraní corpus amounts to approximately 8,460 original pages, hand-copied or printed between 1628 and 1832, which we can classify as follows:

- 35 per cent constitute metalinguistic works (dictionaries and grammars). These are manuscripts or edited, bilingual volumes, constantly reprinted to this day;
- 50 per cent constitute evangelical works (sermons, catechisms, devotional works). These monolingual manuscripts or printed volumes are usually produced in translation;
- 15 per cent constitute profane documents (narratives, labour dialogues, pharmacopoeia manuals). They are monolingual, only in manuscript form, sometimes produced in translation. H. Thun and his team recently highlighted the importance of these documents and promoted their translation.<sup>11</sup>
- 5 per cent constitute diplomatic correspondence and administrative documents (memorials, testimonies, notes, correspondence) written by traditional and municipal indigenous authorities. In the archives, fewer than half those manuscripts appear with a translation into Spanish. Their historical analysis enabled Eduardo Neumann to demonstrate the existence of a literate, native elite.<sup>12</sup>

Since 2009 it has been easier to gather digital copies from many institutions all over the world. Libraries hold online full digital copies of manuscripts which

10 See J.C. Estenssoro and C. Itier, <sup>4</sup>

11 H. Thun, L. Cerno and F. Obermeier, 'El proyecto Kuatia Ymaguare (PEKY) – "Libros del Pasado"', *Estudios Históricos*, 7 (14) (July 2015): no pag.

12 E. Santos Neumann, 'Práticas letradas Guaranis: produção e usos da escrita indígena – séculos XVII e XVIII. Tese de Doutorado' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2005), <http://objdig.ufrj.br/34/teses/EduardoSantosNeumann.pdf> [accessed 4 Sept. 2019].

have only recently been found.<sup>13</sup> It is also easier than ever before to enter the transliterations of them into computer databases and to create an international community of researchers, sharing discoveries day by day. These improvements enhance the identified *corpora* and broaden our knowledge. Even if we are only at the beginning, we know perhaps a little better the extent to and purpose for which Guaraní was written and read within the missions, not only by Jesuits but also by native elites.

### Guaraní/Tupí: two languages, two territories

When Jesuits arrived on the coast of Brazil in 1548 the linguistic panorama was complex. They did not find homogeneous, circumscribed languages, or monolingual, monocultural ‘groups’ of people which they could understand as a whole in order to convert them.<sup>14</sup> More probably they found continuous variations between multiple ways of speaking. They probably were not as surprised as might be expected since linguistic variation and multilingualism also prevailed in Europe at that time.

The Jesuits heard that the Portuguese used a vehicular, autochthonous language with multilingual Indians. This language did not have a glossonym nor was it attached to a specific, unique ethnic group. As the title of Anchieta’s grammar indicates, it was ‘the most used language on the Brazilian coast’.<sup>15</sup> The encompassing language, called ‘lingoa do Brasil’ in the first chapter, was linked to many groups located in a vast geographical zone: from the ‘Pitiguates do Paraíba’ to the ‘Tamôyos do Rio de Janeiro’ through Tupís de Sam Vicente. Since it was useful in order to communicate, survive and build missions, the Jesuits learned it, tried to find its internal logic and to fix a more or less standard grammar. They compiled lists of words and started to translate prayers and to write *doctrinas* (see also chapter 9).

13 The use of computers to study the humanities goes back to the Jesuit R. Busa in 1940, but the expression ‘digital humanities’ and the spread of shared protocols (interoperability) by libraries, publishers and researchers started between 2008 and 2010. In France we prefer to use the expression ‘humanités numériques’. The dedicated structure in CNRS, ADONIS, was launched in 2009 and transformed into HUMA-NUM in 2015.

14 The idea that languages are eternal, homogeneous, monads also has a history: S. Auroux (ed.), *Histoire des idées linguistiques*, vol. 1, *La naissance des métalangages en Orient et en Occident* (Liège: Mardaga, 1989); S. Auroux (ed.), *Histoire des idées linguistiques*, vol. 2, *Le développement de la grammaire occidentale* (Liège: Mardaga, 1992); J. Andresen and D. Baggioni, *Histoire des idées linguistiques*, vol. 3, *L’hégémonie du comparatisme*, ed. by S. Auroux (Brussels: Mardaga, 2000). See also the insightful anthropological and historical work of J. Fabian, *Language and Colonial Power: The Appropriation of Swahili in the Former Belgian Congo 1880–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

15 J. de Anchieta, *Arte de grammatica da lingoa mais vsada na costa do Brasil. Feyta pelo padre Joseph de Anchieta da Cōpanhia de IESV. Com licenca do Ordinario & do Preposito geral da Companhia de IESV* (Coimbra: Antonio de Mariz, 1595). Anchieta would have finished his grammar in 1556 but it was only published in 1595 in order to legitimise Jesuits patronage over Indians (C. De Castelnuovo L’Etoile, ‘En raison des conquêtes, de la religion et du commerce’).

When the Jesuits – and other religious orders – managed to establish settlements, they used this peculiar variant in order to convert Indians coming from remote and different areas. They did not learn as many variants or languages as they heard, nor did they impose Portuguese. They adopted one Amerindian language as the medium for their evangelical labour, the one they had already learned and systematised. Hence they contributed with greater or lesser efficiency to the emergence and consolidation of a supra-ethnic Tupí.<sup>16</sup> However, C. Barros has observed that some missionaries reported that many Indians did not understand this standardised, fixed language.<sup>17</sup> This variant was called *lingua brasílica* during the 17th century, *lingua geral* in the 18th century and Tupí at the very end of the 19th century.<sup>18</sup> Another name, *nbeengatu* [the good language] has also been in use since the end of the 19th century to refer to a supra-ethnic variety of Tupí in the Amazonian region and specifically in the Rio Negro region today.<sup>19</sup>

What happened when some Jesuits coming from Brazil arrived in the city of Asunción in 1588 in order to continue their evangelical task? They took their manuscripts in the *lingua geral* with them. They could be useful, as some colonial conquerors stated, because this language was widely understood in the region of Paraguay. In fact, statements about the languages prevalent at the time were contradictory. Some list a great number of distinct languages; others affirm that only one language was spoken. How could they differ so greatly in their observations? It could depend on what type of reality they wanted to portray: diversity (which would underline the difficulties of any mission project) or unity (suggesting hope). In any case, history tells us that these Jesuits lost their manuscripts during their trip from Brazil.<sup>20</sup> They ended up reconstructing the language by building upon the work of the Franciscans, the previous missionaries in the region, namely Fray Luis de Bolaños.<sup>21</sup>

- 16 M.C. Barros Drumond Mendes, 'O intérprete Jesuíta na constituição de um Tupí supraétnico', *Papía*, 3 (1994): 18–25.
- 17 M.C. Barros Drumond Mendes, 'A relação entre manuscritos e impressos em tupi como forma de estudo da política linguística jesuíta do século XVIII na Amazonia', *Revista letras*, 61 (2003): 125–52.
- 18 M.C. Barros Drumond Mendes, 'Em razão das conquistas, religião, commercio. Notas sobre o conceito de língua geral na colonização portuguesa da Amazônia nos séculos XVII–XVIII', *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez*, 45 (1) (2015): 99–112.
- 19 J. Ribamar Bessa Freire, *Rio babel: a história das línguas na Amazônia* (Rio de Janeiro: Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro; Atlântica Editora, 2004); J. Ribamar Bessa Freire and M.C. Rosa (eds.), *Línguas gerais: política linguística e catequese na América do Sul no período colonial* (Rio de Janeiro: Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 2003).
- 20 C.A. Page, 'Los primeros misioneros Jesuitas entre Guaraníes y la experiencia de las aldeas de Brasil', *Historia Unisinos*, 20 (2016): 26–38 (32).
- 21 A. Otazú Melgarejo, *Práctica y semántica en la evangelización de los Guaraníes del Paraguay (S. XVI–XVIII)* (Asunción: Centro de Estudios Paraguayos 'Antonio Guasch', 2006). By comparing the Brazilian and the Paraguayan versions, the authors could provide evidence for the continuities.

In Paraguay the language chosen by the Franciscans already had a specific name: Guaraní. Here the Jesuits adopted and cultivated this glossonym and 'language'. As many observers stated, Guaraní was not very different from the *lingua brasílica*. Nevertheless, with the double colonisation from Spain and Portugal, the colonial frontier divided the territory of the Company of Jesus and the continuum of linguistic variations into two unconnected, differentiated spaces: the Portuguese *aldeias* on the one side and the Spanish *reducciones* on the other. Hence the same religious order operating with the same Amerindian linguistic stratum at the same period (1545–1757 in Brazil and 1588–1767 in Paraguay) built up two different linguistic, orthographic and textual traditions. Indeed, Brazilian Jesuits always refer to Anchietá's grammar; meanwhile, in Paraguay during the same period they refer to the founding fathers, Bolaños and Montoya. Each system became auto-referential and intertextual.

In contemporary history, the Paraguayan war (1864–70) would definitively associate Guaraní with a Paraguayan identity and Tupí with a Brazilian one. Until recently, a specialist in the Tupí corpus and missions usually knew little about the Guaraní corpus and missions and vice versa. The great divide is not easy to deconstruct. Moreover, this colonial and national history explains the origins of the linguistic branches which linguists are accustomed to draw within the 'Tupian languages'. They usually divide the 'Tupian family' into eight branches. Six are located in the state of Rondônia in Brazil. Another, the eighth branch, namely Tupí-Guaraní, covers a huge region from the Amazon river to the Andean foothills. Could this Tupí-Guaraní 'unity' be the outcome of a common mission history and this dichotomy (Tupí/Guaraní) an effect of the colonial frontier? If it is too early to answer these iconoclastic questions,<sup>22</sup> we can affirm that multilingualism existed prior to the Jesuit missions and that Amerindian monolingualism was only achieved or well engaged after their departure in 1767.<sup>23</sup>

## Guaraní, a territorialising language

Even if sporadic missions were attempted from 1588, officially the Jesuit province of Paraguay (which included contemporary Uruguay, Argentina and Chile) was created in 1604. Every mission gathered people of various languages

- 22 W. Dietrich suggests that the Paraguayan war enhanced the divide between Guaraní and Tupí (W. Dietrich, 'La importancia de los diccionarios Guaraníes de Montoya para el estudio comparativo de las lenguas Tupí-Guaraníes de hoy', *Amerindia*, 19–20 (1995): 287–99). We go further and challenge the way historical linguists use an 'empty chronology', that is to say, a timeline out of social history.
- 23 Letter from father J.S. Labrador to L. Hervás y Panduro, Ravenna, 21 June 1783, in *Comparatio linguarum cognitarum*, "De linguis Paraquariensis", ARSI opp. nn. 342 IV, pp. 174–5. In this letter Sánchez Labrador explains that within the missions some languages are 'capitals' and 'common', such as Guaraní; and others accessories such as Guayaquí or Mbaya. He gives the example of the mission of Concepción, where the neophytes spoke nine different languages.



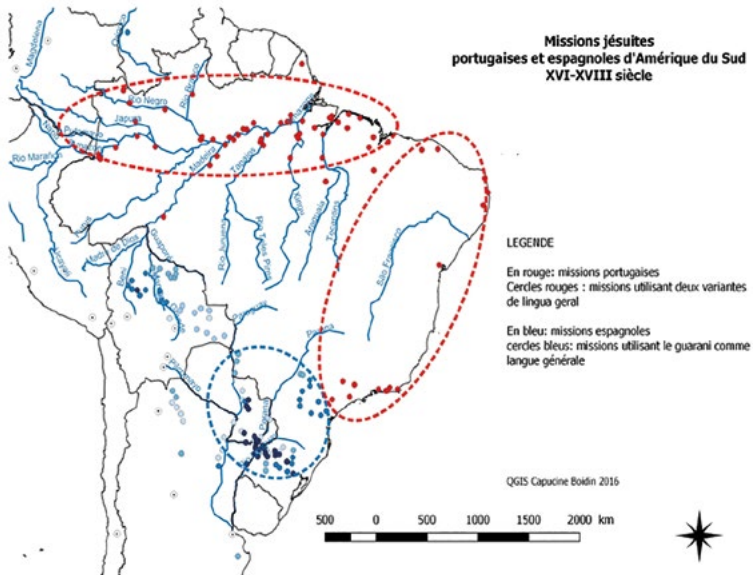


Figure 6.1. Portuguese and Spanish Jesuit missions of South America, 16th–18th centuries. In red: Portuguese missions; red circles where missions use two variants of the lingua geral. In blue: Spanish missions; blue circles where missions use Guarani as a general language. (Capucine Boidin).

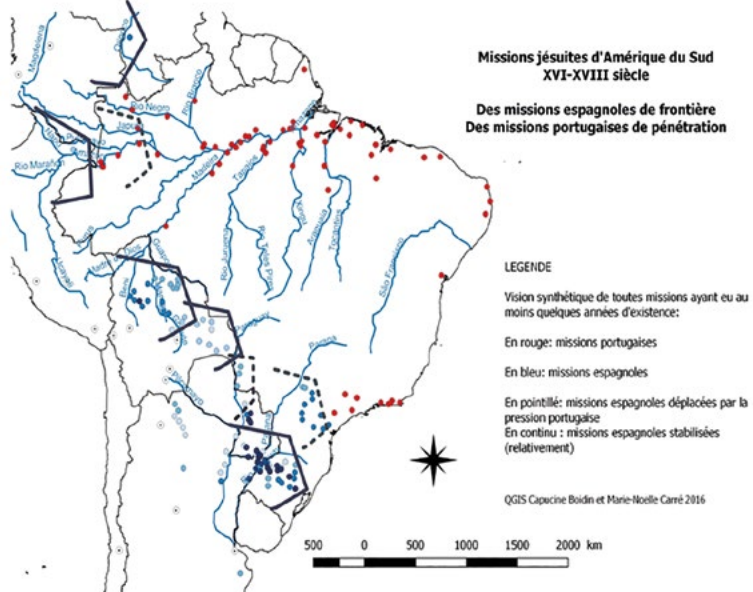


Figure 6.2. Jesuit missions of South America, 16th–18th centuries. Spanish frontier missions in blue; penetration of Portuguese missions in red. (Capucine Boidin).

and cultures. Sometimes they came from the region where the mission was settled, but usually groups of varying sizes came from remote regions.<sup>24</sup> Due to threats from other indigenous groups, Portuguese slave traders or Spanish *encomenderos*, some indigenous leaders decided to negotiate their participation in the Jesuit missions instead of continuing war.<sup>25</sup> In what language did they negotiate? Even if they were not natural Guaraní speakers, this idiom may have been the pivotal language they used in order to establish a translation chain (Spanish into Guaraní, then Guaraní into other indigenous languages). As stated above, the Jesuits learnt Guaraní with the help of previous analytical works and translations done by the Franciscans. On the other hand, Guaraní was already a *lingua franca* in the region of Paraguay for many different indigenous groups. In those complex linguistic interactions, a minimal *colonial vocabulary* in Guaraní could serve to fix the contract between both parties.

A legal document written at the end of the 17th century reports that, years before, the Jesuits proposed, and the Indians accepted, direct vassalage to the king, thus preventing the *encomenderos* from demanding allegiance and providing protection. This document uses Guaraní words, probably in order to reinforce its authenticity, demonstrate the linguistic ability of the Jesuits and indicate the conscious consent of the Indians.<sup>26</sup> However, even if this 'primitive' contract is a retrospective reconstruction, it is highly plausible that this vocabulary was effectively used from the beginning of the missions to define the mutual obligations and rights between the Indians and the king.<sup>27</sup> In the Jesuits' language, the king, *mburuvichavete* [the true superior], proposes to the Indians that they be his 'vassals', that is to say, his *voja* [minor], so as to treat them in the same way as the Spaniards. The king's judge or *oidor*, the *mba'ekuaapára* [el hombre de saber], is meant to protect them with his laws, *kuatia* [paper and graphics]. These four words are the product of a linguistic 'middle ground', a kind of 'third space' of mutual accommodations between

24 G. Wilde, 'Relocalisations autochtones et ethnogénèse missionnaire à la frontière sud des empires ibériques (Paracuaria, 1609–1768)', *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, 41 (2–3) (2011): 13–28.

25 M. Avellaneda, *Guaraníes, criollos y Jesuitas. Luchas de poder en las revoluciones comuneras del Paraguay, siglos XVII y XVIII* (Asunción: Editorial Tiempo de Historia, 2014).

26 AGN, Archivo y colección Andrés Lamas, Leg. 6, *Relacion sumaria de los servicios presentados a la Corona por los indios guaraníes de las misiones*, chapter 7, 'Del modo como estos indios de las reducciones pidieron y alcançaron de su mag. A el privilegio dicho de no ser encomendados a los españoles ni servirles sino ser vassalos de su mag.', fols. 7–8. My thanks to M. Avellaneda for sharing with me the copy of the documents in which I could identify those words. See Avellaneda, *Guaraníes, criollos y Jesuitas*, p. 40.

27 Except for *Mba'ekuaapára*, all the words presented in this chapter have been extensively used in our corpus from the 16th to the 19th centuries.

multilingual indigenous and multilingual foreigners (European missionaries and Spanish authorities).<sup>28</sup>

We are witness not only a process of acculturation, westernisation, colonisation and resistance, but possibly a burgeoning double, and mutual, process of re-interpretation. Everybody tries to speak the language of the other and, in order to do so, everyone identifies in the other their own customs or figures. The Jesuits identify the king with the autochthonous chief and vice versa. The Indians identify the judge with their 'verbal art' specialist.<sup>29</sup> The misunderstandings might be profound at the beginning,<sup>30</sup> but as colonial rule is established a Guaraní vocabulary is indexed to monarchical practices.

In regard to the 'creation of a religious language in Guaraní', the social process and the linguistic result are quite different.<sup>31</sup> It is not a question of diplomacy and negotiation but a story of spiritual conquest and westernization. In the process, the whole of Christian dogma and civilised (that is to say Spanish) way of life had to be translated – and, in fact, after a period of relative tolerance, the Catholic hierarchy controlled the orthodoxy of the outcome. The missionaries had a purpose, to 'reduce' the Indians to *policía Cristiana*, in other words, to reorganise their way of living and believing, reorienting their will and seducing their hearts. It was not only a question of mutual agreement or action, but a question of global and profound transformation.

Nevertheless, missionaries needed native speakers in order to align both languages and create a 'neologos' or 'translanguage'.<sup>32</sup> If they wanted to establish proper correspondences, they had to listen to the way the Indians used each word in different contexts. For instance, Father Montoya registers *ĩnakã ngorói ita* as they say when the water level falls and the rocks' heads just appear'.<sup>33</sup> We can imagine him sitting on the banks of a river, watching and listening to the Indians or even fishing with them. After gathering those daily observations, the *Lengua* Jesuits (experts in the Guaraní language) could engage in a dialogue

28 A source of inspiration is: R. White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

29 Richard Bauman, 'Verbal Art as Performance', *American Anthropologist*, n.s., 77 (1975): 290–311.

30 J. Lockhart, 'Double mistaken identity: some Nahuatl concepts in postconquest Guise', in J. Lockhart, *Of Things of the Indies: Essays Old and New in Early Latin American History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 98–119.

31 B. Melià, *La lengua Guaraní del Paraguay* and *La lengua Guaraní del Paraguay historia, sociedad y literatura*, Colección lenguas y literaturas Indígenas, 6 (Madrid: Mapfre, 1992). B. Melià coordinated the new edition of the four major works by A. Ruiz de Montoya published in Madrid between 1639 and 1640 (*Tesoro*, *Arte*, *Bocabulario*, *Catecismo*). Hereafter we refer to them with abbreviated forms and in modern editions, indicating the title of the original publication, the date of the modern edition in () and the original ones in [].

32 W.F. Hanks, *Pour qui parle la croix: la colonisation du langage chez les Mayas du Mexique* (Nanterre: Société d'ethnologie, 2009); W.F. Hanks, *Converting Words: Maya in the Age of the Cross* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), chapter 1.

33 Ruiz de Montoya, *Tesoro* (2011) [1639], p. 257.

with *ladino* Indian auxiliaries (skilled in Spanish) and lay interpreters in order gradually to stabilise the translation into words equivalent to those used in Catholic rituals and prayers. Together they established new correspondences to old words (*Tupã*, God; ñemombe'u, 'to tell oneself', i.e., 'confession'); created new ones (*Tupã óga*, 'house of God', 'church'); or introduced Spanish words (*espíritu santo*, the Holy Spirit).

They forged a Catholic register in Guaraní which was to be theologically coherent but also pleasing to Amerindian ears. The result is twofold: descriptive and prescriptive. Today it gives us access to a historical ethnography – Guaraní as it was when the missionaries arrived<sup>34</sup> – and to the prescriptive Catholic language – Guaraní as it had to be used in Catholic contexts.<sup>35</sup> Is the result artificial? Indeed, in some ways this Christian Guaraní is a kind of 'deterritorialised' language, a transformed and transforming tool, a converted language used to convert Indian men and women. It was created in order to be projected or, more accurately, introjected into the new social space of the missions. It helped to build the missions in the uncertain world of the mid 17th century.

### Guaraní, a territorialised language

By the end of the 17th century the Jesuit missions had gained economic and political stability. Thirty missions were stabilised between the Paraná and Uruguay rivers at the intersection of Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay, gathering together approximately 100,000 people amongst huge cattle stations and yerba mate plantations. Semi-nomadic hunter-gatherer societies had been transformed into sedentary, agro-pastoral societies. A social division of work took place, not without contradictions and instability. A process of territorialisation effectively took place, producing cultural and linguistic homogenisation among the inhabitants of every missionary town.<sup>36</sup> It transformed Amerindian concepts of space, time and the body – even though these were still expressed in Guaraní.<sup>37</sup> Between 1700 and 1727 a printing press was established in the missions in order to print books in Guaraní.<sup>38</sup> As many monolingual and some

34 G. Chamorro, *Decir el cuerpo historia y etnografía del cuerpo en los pueblos Guaraní: Diccionario etnográfico histórico de la lengua Guaraní*, vol. 1 (Asunción: Fondec Tiempo de Historia, 2009); A. Caballos, *Etnografía Guaraní según el 'Tesoro de la lengua Guaraní' de Antonio Ruiz de Montoya* (Asunción: CEPAG, 2013).

35 B. Melià, *La lengua Guaraní en el Paraguay*.

36 J. Pacheco de Oliveira, 'Uma etnologia dos "Índios misturados"? Situação colonial, territorialização e fluxos culturais', *Mana*, 4 (1998): 47–77.

37 G. Wilde, 'The political dimension of space-time categories in the Jesuit missions of Paraguay (17th and 18th centuries)', in G. Marcocci, W.D. Boer and A. Maldavsky (eds.), *Space and Conversion in Global Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 175–213.

38 Printed books mention Loreto and Santa Maria de Fe as places where books were printed; for further details see G. Wilde, 'Adaptaciones y apropiaciones en una cultura textual de frontera.

bilingual books were printed *in situ* and conformed to a high written standard, a new social order was emerging.

In this process Guaraní was a territorialising tool but also a territorialised language attached to the missions. Mental and individual prayers were combined with collective and sung recitations. These oral practices were based on written support and reading. The missionaries needed Guaraní to be written in order to give lectures in a comprehensible language; and the Indians needed the religious vocabulary to be fixed on paper in order to memorise the orthodox version. In that way they could both learn by heart a proper, unified, Christian Guaraní. Constantly repeated, this Guaraní religious vocabulary ended up being indexed to objects (crosses, statues), architecture (church, streets, houses) and body practices (kneeling, joining hands). Fixed and disseminated by writing, staged and repeated in daily practice, this religious Guaraní was coextensive with the social space of the missions. The paradox is that by taking roots it also became a form of vernacular. Every missionary town seems to have developed a few linguistic particularities.<sup>39</sup>

The Jesuits adapted new linguistic tools in order to update their metalinguistic knowledge.<sup>40</sup> Pablo Restivo's grammar and vocabulary (1727–28) are currently considered to be updates of those by Montoya.<sup>41</sup> During this period, the Jesuits also translated Latin and Spanish books into Guaraní: a spiritual 'bestseller' of the 17th century, *De la diferencia entre lo temporal y lo eterno* (1640), was translated and printed at the mission in 1705.<sup>42</sup> Montoya's chronicle *Conquista espiritual del Paraguay* (1639) was translated into Guaraní in 1733, probably by Pablo Restivo.<sup>43</sup> A monolingual Guaraní book, whose title could be translated as *The Good Use of Time*, was printed in two volumes in Madrid in 1759 and 1760. It follows the four-week structure of St Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*. It is a devotional book dedicated to the edification of the Indians and addressed in

Impresos misionales del Paraguay Jesuítico', *Revista História UNISINOS*, 18 (2014): 270–86.

- 39 G. Chamorro, 'PHRASES SELECTAS: Un diccionario manuscrito castellano-guaraní anónimo', *Corpus*, 4 (2) (2014).
- 40 L. Cerno and F. Obermeier, 'Nuevos aportes de la lingüística para la investigación de documentos en guaraní de la época colonial, siglo 18', *Folia histórica del Nordeste*, 21 (2013): 33–56 (42).
- 41 The linguist S. Liuzzi also re-edited A. Ruiz de Montoya's work and particularly the work by P. Restivo, *Gramática Guaraní Jesuítico*, Enciclopedia de Misiones, 1996, <http://www.fondazioneintorcetta.info/pdf/HISTACT2982.pdf> [accessed 4 Sept. 2019].
- 42 The front page of the Guaraní version indicates it was 'impresso en las doctrinas'. For further details, retro-translations and analysis see T. Brignon, *Mba'e Mymba Pye, la traduction en Guaraní d'un bestiaire salutaire : L'édition missionnaire de la diferencia entre lo temporal y eterno de Juan Eusebio Nieremberg (Loreto, 1705)* (Paris: Mémoire de Master 2 Sorbonne Nouvelle - IHEAL, 2016).
- 43 M. Ringmacher, "La conquista espiritual del Paraguay" en Guaraní clásico como objeto de conquista filológica', in W. Dietrich and H. Symeonidis (eds.), *Guaraní y Maweti-Tupí-Guaraní. Estudios históricos y descriptivos sobre una familia lingüística de América del Sur* (Berlin: LIT, 2006), pp. 223–39.

turn to ‘my little brother’, ‘my sons’, ‘my sons and daughters’.<sup>44</sup> This suggests that the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius of Loyola were given to the Indians. Furthermore, as many pages are dedicated to the way one should read – little by little, every day, night and day – we think that individual reading was encouraged, or at least proposed as an ideal to the Indians. This observation is congruent with the fact, as noted, that the majority of the printed books and manuscripts circulated in monolingual Amerindian versions. For what? Only for loud, collective reading? Or also for individual, possibly silent, reading as recommended by Father Insaurralde at the beginning of his book?

At this time some indigenous elites were writing Christian Guaraní with much more proficiency than the Jesuits themselves, if we give credit to Jesuit comments about Nicolas Yapuguay. This Guaraní musician and *cacique* is known for his two printed, monolingual Guaraní books written under Jesuit control: *Explicacion del catecismo* (1724) and *Sermones y exemplos* (1727). As recently demonstrated, these books are evidence of the scholastic training he received as a literate indigenous. For instance, depending on the genre (catechism or sermon), he practised the *reductio* and *dilatatio* of the same *exempla* (Christian moral histories repeated since at least the 13th century).<sup>45</sup>

A twofold process was underway. Jesuits were becoming familiar with colloquial Guaraní and native peoples with the literacy practices of the Jesuits. It seems that they collaborated in the emergence of a secular corpus, one composed of a war diary, *Diario de guerra* (1704–05);<sup>46</sup> a set of dialogues from everyday life (that is to say, labour) known as the Gülich manuscript or *Dialogos Guaraní* (undated, c. 1720);<sup>47</sup> and a pharmacopoeia manual called *Pohã ñana* (c. 1725).<sup>48</sup> In the Church, the yerba mate plantations, the cattle stations and the carpentry workshop, at the infirmary and during municipal assemblies, directions were given and obeyed in Guaraní. Sermons, technical instructions and political decisions are said to have been executed and often written in Guaraní; and this specific register of the Guaraní language was taught to children intended to govern their missions.

44 Insaurralde, *Ara poru aguyjei háva*, pp. a3–a4. See C. Boidin, L. Cerno and F. Vega, “‘This is your book’: Jesuits edition’s policy and native individual reading (Paraguay, 18th century)”, *Ethnohistory*, forthcoming.

45 T. Brignon, *Un traducteur exemplaire. Le cacique Nicolás Yapuguay et ses exempla en langue Guaraní (Missions Jésuites du Paraguay, 1724–1727)* (Toulouse: Mémoire de Master Université Toulouse 2, 2017).

46 See a complete translation in H. Thun, L. Cerno and F. Obermeier (eds.), *Guarinihape Tecocue – Lo que pasó en la guerra (1704–1705). Memoria anónima en Guaraní .... Edición Crítica*, *Fontes Americanae* (Kiel: Westensee, 2015).

47 See M. Orantin, *La cloche, le rabot et la houe: Fragments d’un quotidien de travail dans les missions Jésuites du Paraguay (1714?)* (Paris: Mémoire de master 2 Sorbonne Nouvelle - IHEAL, 2017).

48 See A. Otazú Melgarejo, ‘Contribución a la medicina natural: Pohã Ñana, un manuscrito inédito en Guaraní (Paraguay, S. XVIII)’, *Corpus*, 4 (2) (2014).

Within the missions, many indigenous authorities (*caciques* and *cabildantes*) became literate in Guaraní. Not only were they able to 'sing', 'imitate' and 'copy', but also think, express and defend their interests in this language, which could be a 'second' indigenous language for them. As a medium of their historical interactions, conflicts, discussions and negotiations, a common political vocabulary in Guaraní, embedded in religious and kinship vocabulary, was constantly produced and manipulated. By mastering alphabetic writing and colonial conventions of written correspondence, native elites managed to negotiate a space of power and of cultural reproduction within colonial society.<sup>49</sup>

### **Guaraní: a language to defend and administrate a territory**

The first document written, signed and dated by native hands was discovered by Eduardo Neumann in the Archivo General de Simancas in Spain.<sup>50</sup> On 20 February 1753 the deputy mayor Alexandro Mbaruari, probably of the estancia San Miguel, sent a folded paper to the mayor Pasqual Tirapare at San Antonio. Its mastery of epistolary rules (addressee, Catholic salutations, signature, etc.) suggests that natives had long been used to reading and writing. Nonetheless, it is the first letter found in the archives. It was probably kept because of its wartime context, the War of the Seven Reductions (1756).

In 1750 the Treaty of Madrid redefined the borders between the Iberian empires in South America. It established that in exchange for Colonia de Sacramento, the Spanish crown ceded to Portugal the territory on which seven Jesuit missions of Guaraní had been established along with numerous *estancias* and *yerbales*. The order was given to move 30,000 people and millions of head of cattle in one year. After some unsuccessful attempts by the Jesuits and the Indian authorities to influence the decree and then to respect it, armed resistance was organised. In February 1753 a Guaraní expedition prevented the boundary commission from entering mission territory. The Spanish governor José de Andonaegui then declared war on the missions. In a series of letters *caciques* and town councils denounced the injustice of the displacement (*jakabo*) and the war (*guarini*), which was inflicted on them: "They who are "poor Christian Indians". Their letters exhibit a refined Amerindian verbal art as well as use of the neo-scholastic political vocabulary of the time.

The Guaraní leaders express their demands in the language of man's natural rights: God (*Tupã*) gave them 'this land that is their place of life' (*ko yvy ore rekoha*); the king, who is the tenant of God (*-ekovia*), has to be a justice-

49 W.F. Hanks, 'Intertextualité de l'espace au Yucatan', *L'Homme*, 32 (122) (1992): 53–74.

50 'Corregidor Pasqual Tirapare upe guarãma Coquatia miri S. Ant.', AGS Secretaria de Estado, Legajo 7433 doc. 278 and AGS Secretaria de Estado, Legajo 7378, doc. 91 for a partial translation. See the analysis in E. Santos Neumann and C. Boidin, 'A escrita política e o pensamento dos Guaraní em tempos de autogoverno (c.1753)', *Revista Brasileira de História*, 37 (2017): 97–118.

keeper (*teko joja rerekua*) and its protector against his enemies (*amotare'y*), the Portuguese. They refer to the pact, established with the Spanish monarchs several generations previously: vassals (*voja*) of the king of their own will, they have always respected (*mboaje*) and trusted (*mbojerovia*) his orders, never failed (*javy*) and never boasted (*ñemboete*) against their sovereign, from whom they have so far received only love (*mborayhu*) and consolation (*angapyhy*), protection (*porerekua*) and conservation (*ñangareko*), help (*pytyvõ*) and salvation (*pyhyrõ*). It is as subjects of the king that they justify their resistance, a king who broke the pact which bound him to God as much as to men. If the king let himself be deceived by the Portuguese, who only know how to lie (*japu*), they do not let themselves be deceived (*ñembotavy*) and are ready to live at war against those who only want to impoverish them (*momboriahu*), reduce them to ashes (*motanimbu*) and make them disappear (*mokañy*).

All this Catholic and monarchical vocabulary and Amerindian rhetorical style are to be found in the rest of the corpus, even in documents exchanged between natives.<sup>51</sup> Letters sent from indigenous *caciques* and town councils to governors or military commandants of Buenos Aires articulate what we could call a Euro-Amerindian political space. It is neither simply European, nor simply Amerindian. It is a Catholic, monarchical, Guaraní rhetoric which was not necessarily understood by the Creoles – also Guaraní-speakers – living in the neighbouring city of Asunción or Villarica.<sup>52</sup> Some elements suggest that the Spanish authorities also communicated in Guaraní with the native authorities. Usually they sent Spanish letters or decrees which were translated orally into Guaraní, probably by a Jesuit. However, there are also two letters in Guaraní.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, we have discovered that by 1791 every sub-delegate of the missions had Guaraní scribes at his service.<sup>54</sup>

- 51 We have a continuous corpus of documents from 1752 until 1813 and a scattered one until 1832. We have collected 252 references to documents written in Guaraní and effectively gathered the digital copy of 180. Fewer than half appear with a translation into Spanish. The palaeography, transliteration, translation and retranslation of this corpus are still in progress. A first semantic analysis of this political vocabulary can be found in C. Boidin and A. Otazú Melgarejo, 'Toward Guaraní semantic history (XVI–XIX)', in A. Durston and B. Mannheim (eds.), *Indigenous Languages, Politics, and Authority in Latin America: Historical and Ethnographic Perspectives* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018), pp. 125–60.
- 52 Carta de una autoridad española desde San Juan a Don Miguel Parapy, cacique, San Juan, 6 Jun. 1757 AGN, sala IX 6-5-8. This letter argues that even a Spaniard versed in their language could not translate the Guaraní letter and that Antonio Parapy should come himself. My thanks to C. Pereira for sending us the document, now online at: [http://www.langas.cnrs.fr/#/consulter\\_document/extraits/128](http://www.langas.cnrs.fr/#/consulter_document/extraits/128) [accessed 15 Sept. 2019].
- 53 In 1757 (see n. 52) and Carta de Juan Francisco de la Riba a los oficiales de la guardia (n.p., n.d. [c. 1769]), AGN, sala IX 18-5-1. This document was also identified by C. Pereira in 2016.
- 54 *Intendencia del Paraguay, correspondencia [sic], y despacho de los Treinta Pueblos* (Memorial de Don Olegario Papa, Don Manuel Ayruca y Francisco Romualdo Avambi, los escribientes de Francisco Bruno de Zavala al Virrey Nicolas Arredondo), Candelaria, 1 Dec. 1791, AGN, room IX, Interior, leg. 31, exp. 21, fols. 801–9.



The majority of the documents we have found (70 per cent) were written after the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767 to 1768. Why? Did the Indian authorities take greater control over the relationship with the governors after the Jesuits' departure? If the current state of our archives is proportional to what was really written, we could say yes. Guaraní leaders might have experienced more liberty and need to communicate with imperial state authorities themselves. However, for the moment we cannot be sure. To our surprise, the prohibition of any language but Spanish, pronounced in 1770 by the Spanish administration, had little effect in the Rio de la Plata, as compared to Mexico, for instance.<sup>55</sup> After 1767 Guaraní missions were administered by the clergy in spiritual matters and by an administrator in the case of secular issues. A significant number of letters are testimonies which make demands for retribution or punishment of a native *corregidor*, *mayordomo*, or Spanish administrator, priest, commander, etc. Some letters reveal concern about poverty; demands for support and protection against Spanish tenants whose cattle were invading the community's property; commercial or military questions. They are more often written by individuals and on more diverse topics than before. Syntax and lexicon show evidence of some changes: Spanish borrowings are more frequent and some Guaraní morphemes are abandoned or modified.

## Conclusion

Besides being texts which record knowledge and make foreign-policy arguments, grammars, dictionaries and doctrines also served to extend the domain of a specific Guaraní language, able to produce Christian subjects and to govern the missions. Jesuits were not enculturated in a unique, holistic, genuinely precolonial 'Guaraní world': they operated in multilingual spaces. The *lingua brasilica* on the one hand and Guaraní on the other were media constructed to reduce this multilingualism. The evangelisation, westernisation and Guaranisation of those margins of the Spanish empire went hand in hand. To evangelise and westernise Indians implies to Guaranise them and vice versa. The Jesuits missions of Paraguay were modern, colonial spaces where Guaraní literacy flourished. Native elites read and wrote a Catholic, monarchical Guaraní language in order to defend and administer their lives and territories. As with Nahuatl in the *altepetl* of central Mexico and Yucatec Maya within Franciscan missions, the Guaraní language in the Jesuit missions of Paraguay articulated a Euro-Amerindian legal and political space. Native elites negotiated – resisting and collaborating at the same time – in Spanish and

55 Real Cédula, Carlos III, 10 de mayo de 1770, 'para que en los Reinos de Indias, Filipinas y adyacentes, se observen los medios para conseguir que se destierren los diferentes idiomas que se usan en aquellos dominios y solo se hable el castellano' (AGI, Indiferente General, Leg. 540, online).

Latin but also in 'their' languages, native languages previously territorialised by missionaries and clergy.<sup>56</sup>

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- 56 C. Cunill, 'La negociación indígena en el imperio ibérico: aportes a su discusión metodológica', *Colonial Latin American Review*, 21 (2012): 391–412; B. Owensby, 'Pacto entre rey lejano y súbditos indígenas. Justicia, legalidad y policía en Nueva España, siglo XVII', *Historia Mexicana*, 61 (2011): 59–106.

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