

Evangelical missions, capitalism and state regulation among the Guarani of the Argentine Northwest

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Abstract

Evangelism among the Guarani of the Argentine Northwest is a subject of study scarcely explored that would be important to vitalize given its geographical scope, historical depth and contemporary socio-cultural effects. This article broadens and complements historical and ethnographic knowledge about the expansion of evangelical missions of British and North American origin among the Guarani, putting in evidence three moments of the missionary undertakings and their relationships with the State and the agro-industrial companies, between 1890 and 1980. It is mainly the search for understanding and explanation of the current map of evangelical Guarani churches that leads us to propose a long-term study on the genesis and transformations of the socio-cultural system organized by the expansion of evangelism among indigenous communities in the region. The article combines historical sources, ethnographic observations and pertinent bibliographical references.

Key words: evangelical missions – Guarani – Capitalism – State regulation - Argentine Northwest

Introduction

Along the Yungas-Chaco ecotone of the Argentine Northwest (NOA), particularly in the urban and peri-urban areas of Jujuy and Salta provinces, there is a large number of evangelical churches whose facade reads "Evangelical Place", "Evangelical Christian Church", "Baptist Christian Church". These and other name combinations were used by indigenous and evangelical communities to progressively register their churches in the National Registry of Religious Organizations (RNC) as of its creation in 1978. The families and individuals that attend these are, to a large extent, Guarani. Most of them have worked or are still working in the sugar mills of the foothills. Although extensive research on the link between missionaries, indigenous people and ethnic evangelism has been conducted, especially in the ethnography and ethnohistory of Chaco (Wright, 2002; Demera, 2009; Ceriani Cernadas, 2015a), the processes of missionization intended for the Guarani community have not been widely explored. It is important to shed light on this area of study given its geographic scope, historical depth and contemporary socio-cultural impact.²

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² Rita Segato (2007) and Claudia Lozano (2001) studied the presence of the Christian Brethren and Baptists among the Colla people from *Quebrada* and *Puna*. The focus of this study is the presence of the Christian Brethren among the Guarani from La Esperanza sugar mill. These are the research backgrounds up to the moment (Espinosa, 2015, 2017).

The purpose of this study is to outline three socio-historical moments of the British and North American evangelical missionary presence among the Guarani of the NOA. The idea for this research emerged from a historical ethnography that I am conducting on the subject. This has helped me recognize at least three different moments in the missionization processes of the two most ingrained denominations in the area nowadays: Christian Brethren and Baptists. This differentiation is connected to different stages of the relationship among missionaries, agro-industrial enclaves—particularly the sugar mills of the foothills—, and the various control strategies adopted by the State to regulate indigenous and religious diversity³ in the region (Giumbelli, 2016: 19). The idea is not only setting dates and predefining fixed periods, but also understanding and explaining the current map of Evangelical Guarani churches. Therefore, a long-term study has been conducted on their development encompassing processes such as the missionaries' arrival and their most important displacements, the Guarani reterritorializations and other transformations in the framework of an enclave economy.

This research paper is then divided into three sections. Firstly, I will introduce the missionization process performed by the Christian Brethren or Plymouth Brethren, a group of British missionaries known in Latin America as *Hermanos Libres*. These arrived in San Pedro, Jujuy at the end of the 19th century and conducted their mission among the Guarani people from the La Esperanza sugar mill. Secondly, I will address the arrival of the American Baptist missionaries from the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society in such region in 1948. Finally, I will focus my attention on the experience of the Guarani community around the years ranging from 1960 to 1980. In this period, there emerged the effects of the overlapping presence of British and American missionary, their agreements and future differentiations, a new phase of the sugar mill and the effects of the new RNC.

To conduct this study, documentary, bibliographic and ethnographic sources were consulted. As regards the documentary sources, some issues of the monthly publication *El Sendero del Creyente (The Path of the Believer)* and also missionary reports were used. Specialized bibliography and apologetic bibliography were also employed. Last, field notes and sonorous records of meetings held with residents of La Esperanza, San Pedro, Cherenta and Tartagal were also used.

³ Giumbelli calls into question a vision of the "regulation of what is religious" by the State that is polarized between actions that either privilege or restrict the development of religious groups. Inspired by Foucault, he proposes the idea of regulation not as an anomaly but rather as a property of the system. He states that "regulation, as a concept for the social sciences of religion, can be used to designate the mechanisms by which, based on a certain definition of what is 'religious', it is constituted by the combination of actions by several actors" (2016: 17). Finally, he points out that "the most important thing is not determining the degree of regulation but the consistencies between certain conceptions of religion and the definition of the boundaries that design, in one way or another, the religious field and the relationship between religious and non-religious actors (2016: 19, the translations into English are mine). Although the focus of this research is not the State but the missionary actions intersected by the State and the development of an enclave economy, this idea will be developed at the end of this study.

I hope that this study on the Euro-American missionary presence in the NOA will raise new questions about the relations among religion, capitalism and the State as vectors for the transformations of the indigenous world under a neo-colonial regime. In turn, I would like to contribute to the understanding of little-explored facets of the current cultural and religious diversity in the region. Finally, I hope to extend the understanding of the Guarani past in the framework of various processes of communalization.

1. The Christian Brethren and La Esperanza sugar mill: an elective affinity (first decades of the 20th century)

A considerable part of the Protestant groups that arrived in Argentina at the turn of the 20th century was evangelical in nature. They conducted their missions in the framework of the growing expansion of a neo-colonial economic and cultural project involving the subordination of this region to world capitalism, the expansion of the national State and the conquest and colonization of areas considered as "deserted". The State, in some cases, exterminated, and in others, forcibly disciplined indigenous societies all throughout the country. The NOA and, especially, the sub-region under focus was being transformed as a result of the modernization of the old sugar mills, which was, in turn, linked to the military conquest of the Chaco region (1884) and the extension of the railroad to the northern cities (Teruel 2005). It was in this scenario that the Christian Brethren missionaries arrived in Argentina.

The Christian Brethren emerged in Britain in 1825 as a reaction against the clericalism of the established churches of the Empire. This religious movement originated from the assembly character and the dissolution of the figure of an ordained clergy. In Argentina, they were mostly defined by a soteriological Christology that emphasizes the transcendent Christ to the detriment of the historical Jesus; the importance given to sanctification, in terms of separating believers from the world for their devotion to God; a congregational ecclesiology; and a dispensational eschatology that proposes the impending Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the rapture of his church, before the pre-tribulation, a time when he would take the saints (Roldan, 1996).

As of 1882, missionaries from this movement, mostly British, started to arrive in Argentina. In this country, they established ties with their fellow citizens, which helped them hold various job posts in the railroads⁴. Thus, the extension of the rails, among

⁴A paradigmatic case was that of missionary William Charles Kirkby Tower, who became part of the Buenos Aires and Ensenada Railroad staff when he arrived in the country, for which he first worked as Secretary of the Traffic Chief and, later, as Chief of that area. Afterwards, he was the accountant of the contractors of the Port of Buenos Aires, C.H. Walker and Co. Anonymous, "William Charles Kirkby Tower" *El Sendero del Creyente* n° 11, 1923, p. 242. More information about this missionary was developed in an article written by A. Clifford for the 90th anniversary of the Christian Brethren in the country: "Mr. Charles Tower was the first of a group of English believers who held modest or important posts in the railroads to pay for the expenses of their consecrated Christian work. What would have been of all those assemblies had these rail knights not existed! Let us remember the names of some of them:

other factors, marked the foundation of missions and churches from Río de la Plata to the provinces in the Northwest (Bianchi, 2004, Espinosa, 2014). Circa 1911, the Christian Brethren had 24 assemblies in Argentina, as well as praying and hospice houses, publishing houses, printing presses, among others institutions. Innovation in missionization techniques and interdenominational collaboration facilitated the introduction of evangelical Protestantism in the country (Canclini, 2003, Espinosa, 2014).

Railroad companies did more than just chart an initial route. In the framework of a congregational ecclesial model and far from the imperial support, in order to materially stabilize their missions, churches and annexes, the missionaries took advantage of their relationship with these companies and enhanced the benefits of that circle of sociabilities⁵ and of a first group of converted immigrants who, through various businesses, got on the race for economic promotion. Apart from the economic contributions that they received from the churches of origin, it was these alliances that were particularly responsible for the expansion and settling of the Christian Brethren in Argentina. A missionary report highlights straightforwardly that the success of their efforts in the country was linked to the "business brethren", who were believers connected to medium and high spheres of foreign capital companies that emerged in the first quarter of the 20th century (Stunt et al., 1972:231).

The involvement of this group of missionaries with the Guaraní community of the NOA is not an exception to this trend. In fact, this would explain more clearly the link, as a Weberian elective affinity, between capitalism and Protestantism. This expansion began in 1887 with the arrival of John Linton at the La Esperanza sugar mill owned by the Leach English family and located in San Pedro de Jujuy, in the foothills of Jujuy. In 1908, missionary Thomas Easdale arrived there and married Elisabeth Linton, John's sister. The mill owners offered the Easdales a home and a piece of land to conduct their mission inside the sugar factory. This place was named *Cherenta* (my house in Guaraní language) (Easdale, 1988: 93).

Due to its geographical location, this mission was a strategic point to expand the evangelical message among indigenous groups of the Yunga-Chaco ecotone, and for the missionary circuit of the NOA in general, and to go beyond national borders. It should be noted that a huge diversity of indigenous groups from northern Argentina and

Ernest Airth, Frederic Coleman, George Spooner, Walter Pender, James Pender, James Kirk, Robert Hogg and Nigel Darling in the early years". Clifford A., *El Sendero del Creyente*, n° 5, 1972, pp. 130-131.

⁵ In 1972, A. Clifford wrote: "The Barnett spouses and Dr. Fleming, close friends of Mr. Charles, helped a lot in the foundation and the operation of the orphanage. Brother Fleming, a Scottish Presbyterian pastor, continually advised the Tower spouses and secured financial support from the British community. Brother Barnett, a wealthy Anglican residing in Soldini, near the city of Rosario, made substantial donations. It is important to point out that many of the first preaching houses of Argentina were built thanks to the disinterested help of brother Barnett, who, although he was an Anglican, did not worry about denominational labels and saw a brother in every being redeemed by Christ". Clifford A., *El Sendero del Creyente*, n° 5, 1972, pp. 130-131. For a more detailed study on the missionization process of the Christian Brethren in Argentina, see Espinosa (2014).

southern Bolivia converged in the sugar mills of Salta and Jujuy provinces (Lagos, 1992). The State, through its repressive forces, had to guarantee that the systems of "debt bondage" and "security" worked well as a condition for commercial success (Rutledge, 1987, Bossert and Córdoba, 2015). The employers' goal was to set a labor structure that would create the highest productivity. In order to achieve this, they subjected the indigenous people to subhuman working conditions, causing them physical, psychic and socio-cultural consequences and killing hundreds of them.⁶

In Jujuy, at the beginning of the 20th century, the majority of temporary workers were wichis, tobas, chorotes and other indigenous people from Gran Chaco, as well as indigenous groups from Quebrada of Humahuaca and Puna. Among the permanent members, the majority were Creoles and different Guaraní language groups. The Guaraní people also predominated in the factory, workshop and transport industries.⁷ This division of labor was consistent with the spatial distribution of the groups in the mills. In the early years of the 20th century, in La Esperanza, groups from Chaco lived in transitory camps of Indigenous huts located around the plantation fields, while Guaraní language groups lived in places closer to the factory in stalls and sheds set by the employers (Lagos, 1992; Bossert, 2012).

Knowledgeable about this scheme, the missionaries evangelized in those surroundings called "plots". Today, some plots have become neighborhoods, whose distance in relation to the factory and the employers' homes offers a glimpse of the past inter-ethnic and labor hierarchies. The plots constituted a handful of hectares with a permanent and transitory population during the harvest season. In turn, each plot was a relatively autonomous unit, since it was defined by the predominance of a certain ethnic group. Two groups or more could also cohabitate there during the harvest season. Today, this configuration can be seen in the extensive families that live there permanently. The Christian Brethren acted correlatively to these spatial redefinitions, which were the result of enclave economies. The following table shows the evangelical expansion of the Christian Brethren among the Guaraní until 1950. More precisely, the places where I identified permanent missionaries until that year. The table also shows the period in which these agents were in Argentina.

Table 1. Christian Brethren expansion among Guaraní groups in the NOA until 1950⁸

⁶ There is ample bibliography on this subject. See e.g. the compilation of Daniel Campi (1992). For the Salta and Jujuy sugar mills, see the studies conducted by Lagos (1992) and Santamaría (1992) published there. A historical ethnography on the subject can be consulted in Bossert (2012 and 2013) and Bossert and Córdoba (2015). For an ethnography addressing the indigenous peoples of Chaco, their work and migrations to the mills, see Langer (1995); Hirsch (2004); Gordillo (2010a), Gómez (2010) Ceriani Cernadas (2015b), Montani (2015), among others.

⁷ For the purposes of this study, many indigenous groups as well as NOA and transatlantic immigrants who also worked in the sugar mills during the first half of the 20th century were not included.

⁸ "Places" refers to neighborhoods, plots of sugar mills, streets and cities. In this way, I wanted to be consistent with the way the missionaries referred to their work. The missionaries shied away from the possibility of assigning a proper name to their missions and churches. Instead, they denominated them by

| Places | Foreign missionaries registered until 1950 | Stay of the missionaries in Argentina |
|---|---|--|
| Cherenta, La Esperanza sugarmill (Jujuy) | John Linton; | 1887-¿? |
| The San Antonio plot, La Esperanza sugarmill (Jujuy) | Thomas Easdale | 1908-circa 1960 |
| The El puesto plot, La Esperanza sugarmill (Jujuy) | Elizabeth Linton | Circa 1908-1959 |
| The Arrayanal plot, La Esperanza sugarmill (Jujuy) | Ernest Heycock. | 1927-1971 |
| The Parapeti plot, La Esperanza sugarmill (Jujuy) | Robert Leggat Mrs. Leggat | 1937-1971 |
| | Enrique and Maisie Dickson, (later in Hito, Chaco) | From the 1930's to circa the 1940's |
| | Herbert Gerrard Sra. Gerrard (later in Orán, Salta) | 1927-1971 1927-1972 |
| | Reginald Powell Mrs. Powell (later in Tucumán) | 1921-1972 1921-¿? |
| El Bananal (Jujuy) | Robert Leggat Mrs. Leggat | See above |
| Perico (Jujuy) The Los Lapachos country estate owned by the Leach family (Jujuy) | G. Cook (later in Bolivia) | 1928 and 1937 |

means of toponyms in the following manner: "Church of the Aráoz street", "Church of the Arrayanal plot", "Church of the Cherentas", "Churches of the Pericos".

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <p>The Maíz Negro plot, Ledesma sugar mill (Jujuy)</p> <p>The Paulina plot, Ledesma sugar mill (Jujuy)</p> <p>The Alto Talar plot, Ledesma sugar mill (Jujuy)</p> <p>(the last three without exclusive worship)</p> | | |
| <p>The Aráoz street (Tartagal, Salta)</p> | <p>Mr. and Mrs. Leggat</p> | <p>See above</p> |
| <p>Tiro Federal (currently the 9 de Julio neighborhood in Tartagal, Salta)</p> <p>Yacuyviejo (Aguaray, Salta)</p> | <p>Mr. and Mrs. Woodhatch;</p> | <p>1943-1966</p> |

Table 1. Sources: compiled by me, based on Stunt, W.T. et. all. *Turning the world upside down*. Bath, *Echoes of service*, Upperton Press, 1972; *El Sendero del Creyente*(1923, n° 5; 1944, n° 12; 1972, n° 1); Powell, D. *La historia que faltaba: El protestantismo en Tucumán*, Buenos Aires, co-publication of the Institute of Argentine History and Thought and Editorial Kairós, 1998; and Shank, J, *My Chaco Diary*, Mimeo, Indiana, Mennonite Board Missions, 1944.

According to what was said about the pattern of displacements and emplacements, it may be concluded that the Christian Brethren were functional to the settlement and pacification of the indigenous labor force. This position of the missionaries, also found resources in the so-called "Second Great Awakening" that influenced the definition of the doctrinal aspects outlined above. According to Míguez Bonino, at least until the First Great War, missionary Protestantism in Latin America was:

“(…) basically evangelical, (…) individualistic, Christological-soteriological in a basically subjective key, with an emphasis on sanctification. It has a genuine social interest, which is expressed in charity and mutual aid, but lacks structural and political perspective except as regards the defense of their freedom and the fight against discrimination; therefore, it tends to be politically democratic and liberal, but without sustaining such an option in its faith or making it an integral part of its piety” (Míguez Bonino, 1995: 46).

We believe that these ideas resulted indirectly in a certain attitude taken by the missionaries, their missions and future congregations. The mission of La Esperanza on several occasions is referenced in the sources as "the social part" of the actions carried out by the Christian Brethren in the country. In the missionary practice this implied, on the one hand, an attitude of social reform through education, such as the introduction to the written culture, and, on the other hand, the moral reform by transmitting the message of Salvation as the only way to solve an oppressive situation. Salvation was followed by an induction to sanctification; that is, delimiting a new community of belonging removed progressively from world affairs. This involved an approach to the indigenous person from an ethnocentric perspective that was functional to the demands of labor discipline made by the sugar employers. Likewise, referring to indigenous

missions as "the social part" did not mean sparing missionary efforts to place them in "other parts", since these missions were conducted in the arena of relationships that fueled evangelical expansion: the link with capitalist agents.

2. The arrival of American Baptists (mid-twentieth century)

In 1948, American Baptist missionaries who belonged to the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society arrived in San Pedro de Jujuy. At the turn of the century, Argentina had changed; the spheres of action and the social bases for which the missionaries were heading were not the same. The military government that came to power in 1943 set forth, the following year, Act 12,912, better known as *El Estatuto del Peón* (The Statute of Rural Pawns). In this framework, wages were raised and the State started to regulate the conditions of labor contracts. At the same time, companies were required to provide food at a fair price, housing and medical assistance to workers. However, Rutledge states that "it would be naive to believe that those provisions that favored the worker were always rigorously met by the contractor and the mills" (1987: 215). However, he adds that "between 1943 and 1955, some of the most unceremoniously coercive aspects of work on the plantations ceased to be valid" (1987: 216).⁹ Some of these transformations are plausible in the memory of the current residents of La Esperanza and San Pedro, while recalling both the extremely hard work and many injustices committed, they remember the time when they accessed goods more easily and received better health, housing and education than today. However, these representations are also intertwined with facets of the time of the Leach family. Businesspeople conducted a subsidiary action to the powers of a State in varying degrees. The apologists on duty praised these actions as engines of modernization and civilization in San Pedro and its surroundings.¹⁰

During the same period, the national State introduced policies to regulate religious expressions. Thanks to the Collective Pastoral of the Episcopate, there had been an increase in ecclesiastical criticism towards the Protestants who were challenged by foreigners and those with foreign tendencies. Intellectuals from this period, both religious and lay, promoted a kind of religious nationalism that was intended to ensure the predominance of a Latino and Catholic population (Bianchi, 2004; Catoggio, 2008). Once the first government of Perón was inaugurated, these discourses were highlighted. In this context, in 1948 a registry for non-Catholic religious organizations called *Fichero de Cultos* ("Worship Filing Cabinet") was created, by which it was forbidden for any unregistered religious center to operate. The following year, the government carried out a constitutional reform project establishing that the Ministry of Foreign

⁹ Curiously, to ratify this idea, Rutledge touches upon a testimony by a Chiriguano (Guarani) man working at the Tabacal sugar mill.

¹⁰ In other research papers, we include the current memories of the Guarani about the missionary process where there abound representations of "progress" and "civilization", which are consistent with the neocolonial imaginary inherent in the development of an enclave economy (Espinosa, 2015).

Affairs and Worship should not only guarantee the free exercise of worship but also "supervise" the organizations and "intervene, if necessary"(Bianchi, 2004). Furthermore, during this government, Comisión Nacional de Zonas de Seguridad (the National Commission of Security Areas) starting new missions and building temples among indigenous groups of the Gran Chaco was forbidden; and thus, some pre-existing missions were suspended (Lunt *ibid.*, p.57; Ceriani Cernadas, 2017).¹¹

Based on the framework previously described, it may be concluded, then, that the Baptists' mission field had been reduced. Hence, it is easy to see why San Pedro and the nearby towns in both Jujuy and Salta have been a first and sure landmark for the new missionaries. Another hypothesis for this socio-geographical preference can be linked to the general Baptist map of Argentina. The group of American missionaries who arrived in the area came from a Baptist movement different from the one that had already been established in the country. The aforementioned group had crystallized in 1908 in the Evangelical Baptist Convention and was concentrated mainly in Santa Fe, Buenos Aires, Mendoza, San Juan and Córdoba provinces (Baptist Board of Publications, 1959). The origin of the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society, where the NOA missionaries came from, dates back to 1943 in Chicago, when there was an important split among Baptists in the United States. The new group questioned what they considered theological "liberalism" and sought to "preserve" the truth of the Bible. The missionary interest is associated with the criticism inflicted by the doctrinal renewal of missionaries trained in currents that included critical and historicized ways of reading the Scriptures. Faced with this "threat", the missionary impulse of a new group was born.¹² Before we focus on the journey and performance of the Baptist missionaries in the NOA, there follows a table with information of the two missionary groups under study.

| Missionary society | Religious organizations | Foreign missionaries | | Consolidated work | Places of expansion |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------|----------------------------------|--|
| | | Men | Women | | |
| Plymouth Brethren/ | 319 | 23 | 30 | Buenos Aires; Santa Fe; Córdoba; | Río Negro, Neuquén, Chubut, Tierra del |

¹¹ The relationship between Peronism and religious minorities is not limited to these actions. Soledad Catoggio summarizes some of the readings on this subject, including that of Cucchetti, who considers that Peronism appropriated "a symbolic power of the sacred that allowed it not only to comfortably enter into dialogue with other religious agents, but also to undertake a process of hierarchical destructuring of religion". This thesis is consistent with the interpretation that, on the one hand, the government promoted some religious groups and, on the other, opted for legal actions to control them (Catoggio, 2008). In addition to the cited sources, see Di Stéfano and Zanatta (2000), and Bianchi (2004).

¹² [1] <https://www.worldventure.com/about/history/> (Last visited on 05/13/2017).

¹³ The variable "religious organizations" refers "not only to the constructions, chapels or churches, but also any place where a community often meets to celebrate some public event" (Damboriera, 1963:17).

| | | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|---|-----------------------------|
| Christian Brethren | | | | Santiago del Estero; Tucumán; Salta; Jujuy; San Luis; Mendoza; San Juan | Fuego. Misiones; Entre Ríos |
| Conservative Baptist Missionary Society/Baptists | 40 | 12 | 14 | Jujuy; Salta; Tucumán. | |

Table 2. Sources: Compiled by me based on Bingle & Grubb (eds) *World Christian Handbook*, London, 1957 in Damboriera, Prudencio. *El protestantismo en América Latina* (tomo II). Madrid: Oficina Internacional de Investigaciones Sociales de FERES, 1963, p.43; Stunt, W.T. et al *Turning the world upside down*. Bath, *Echoes of service*, Upperton Press, 1972; Bisio, Carlos, *Nuestros Primeros Pasos*, Buenos Aires, Librería Editorial Cristiana, 1982; and the National Directorate of the RNC of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship in Argentina.

The Christian Brethren who had begun their expansion in the country at the end of the 19th century, circa 1957 had 53 missionaries: at least 20 of them were missionary couples and the rest were single missionaries and some widowers. Most of them were long-lived people distributed as many as 139 religious organizations—or where a public event was usually held—located mainly in several provinces of the Río de Plata, Litoral, Centro and NOA. Based on the low number of missionaries in relation to the total number of religious organizations as well as bibliographic sources, it may be stated that by then all the missions and consolidated churches had national leaders, even in the places where there were foreign missionaries (see Table 2). This information is associated with the interpretation by Bisio, an elder historian belonging to the Christian Brethren who pointed out that in the context of the events in the 1940's

“(…) the British citizenship of our missionaries would tacitly object to the Creole components in the assemblies. A process that will allow to see that, at the turn of 1960's, leadership in most congregations was exercised by native elements and descendants of the different immigration waves” (Bisio, 2007: 179).

Meanwhile, Robert Jack, son of British missionaries, indicated that the Christian Brethren' missionary project "was losing momentum, particularly in post-war Argentina. It was crystallized as a work of missionary extension. But it grew in depth and in self-management, and was totally autonomous from the outside" (Jack, 2007: 167). As for the missionaries of the Conservative Baptist Missionary Society, there were 26 of them, and they were mostly married couples in Jujuy and Salta. It is known that, in 1948, two missionary married couples arrived in San Pedro.¹⁴ According to Lozano, between 1957 and 1984, the missionary married couples named Gerow, Ferguson and Johns were active (Lozano, 2001: 54).¹⁵ The Guaraní and the Creoles in

¹⁴ We would like to thank the National Directorate of the National Registry of Religious Organizations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship in Argentina for this information.

¹⁵ Although Lozano (2001) narrows down his study to the Quebrada and Puna regions in the NOA, we touch upon part of the information offered, since the names of the missionaries that she highlights are consistent with the same names we have written down during interviews held with Guaraní and Creole people from the foothills and western Chaco.

the area collected the names of the Gerow, Ferguson, MacPhersons and Hoops families. Additionally, they remember that the British missionaries stood out as good hosts for the Americans. In our opinion, the transition situation of the Christian Brethren' missionary work should be considered as what paved the way for interdenominational collaboration.

In fact, American missionaries were seen preaching the Gospel in the missions of the Christian Brethren. They conducted their work in the small towns that had been formed due to the mills in the Salta and Jujuy foothills, with a marked Guarani presence, which is still evident today. They followed the Ramal area in Jujuy¹⁶, then extended to Salta along the Ramal between Embarcación and Pocitos, and later reached Guarani communities in the share land between the cities of Tartagal and Aguaray. In my fieldwork, I observed that a large number of places where churches had already been built or where a regular celebration of a religious organization was held (see Table 1) then started to be managed by Baptists. Later on, testimonies on this "superposition" will be dealt with in this study. Therefore, the Baptists moved on to new towns and neighborhoods in the same region. In line with Segato (2007) and Lozano (2001), we have found that the missionaries who moved around the subtropical valleys also followed the path of the Christian Brethren in Quebrada and Puna among groups of Collas, who, in some cases, were harvesters, and, in others, worked in the mining sector. Until 1953, the American missionaries conducted their work almost exclusively in Jujuy and Salta and thereafter expanded to the province of Tucumán.¹⁷

The Baptist mission promoted the same rituals and ecclesial structure as the Christian Brethren: emphasis on the Lord's Supper; study of the Bible; rejection of the figure of the ordained ministry allowing any inspired member of the church to pray and preach; as for the pastors in charge, they respond to a divine "call" (Lozano, 2001: 52). Furthermore, it is also important to point out that both the Christian Brethren and the Baptists approached merchants, businessmen and officials and other influential actors in the local scene (Lozano, 2001: 55), although possibly for different reasons.

Lozano, who had access to paragraphs (previously edited) in the letters sent by missionary Charles Gerow to his relatives and missionary center in the United States, indicates that they "are full of stories about people who stopped drinking, stealing and taking drugs (coca leaves) to become responsible workers, and look better for their employers" (Lozano, 2001: 54-55). Likewise, it is considered that "the source of discomfort is the uncontrolled desire produced by demonic influences. Faced with this, the missionaries propose the conversion of personalities ruled by the flesh, the demon, guilt and meaninglessness into personalities controlled by the will to live a life in the forgiveness of Christ" (Shelley, 1973:11-12 in Lozano, 2001:52).

The differences between the Christian Brethren' and Baptists' missionary projects are evident in the social, political and economic framework of their actions.

¹⁶ "Ramal" was the name used for the railroad from Jujuy's capital to the North-east of Salta, where most of the sugar mills were placed.

¹⁷ See note 14.

The former emphasized practices and values related to written culture, personal hygiene, the nuclear family and traditional culture—considered pagan and/or syncretism product—, which, at the same time, were rudiments of a labor discipline. Baptists dealt with a population which was much denser in terms of demography and with considerable degrees of overcrowding.¹⁸ In this context, the missionaries highlighted problems of domestic violence, "laziness" and networks of corruption, and urged workers to let God work in all aspects of their lives (Lozano, 2001: 54). In those years, the serious problem of unemployment was becoming more and more visible.

The rapprochement between Christian Brethren and Baptists took a different direction in the 1960's and 1970's, when new transformations in the evangelical field occurred. Among the most important factors, in terms of its effects in Argentina, this should be noted: Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal growth; the "renewal" movement within Christian Brethren and Baptists; the ecumenical tendencies of some Protestant groups; and the creation of the RNC (1978), as a new stage of boundary delimitation within the Protestant field in general.

3. Evangelical churches and federations during evictions and new Guarani migrations (1960-1980)

In this section, I will address the effects of the presence of the British and American missionaries, their agreements, transformations and differentiations and some characteristics of the evangelical churches in a new socio-historical time. To this purpose, ethnographic records and inhabitants' memories were used. Before moving forward, it is necessary to signal some processes that will clarify the recounts by the Guarani.

According to Rutledge, since 1953, the sugar industry in Jujuy began to systematically reduce the number of permanent and temporary workers as a result of the growing mechanization of agricultural tasks. In La Esperanza, around 5,000 seasonal field workers were employed in 1956 as opposed to only 637 in 1966 (Rutledge 1987: 252-154). This had an impact not only on the natives from Gran Chaco who, year after year, would migrate during the harvest season, but also those groups who lived in the surroundings of the establishments, such as the Guarani community. In this framework, the companies evicted, displaced and relocated entire family groups, which led to new Guarani migrations both to the interior of Jujuy and to Salta and Bolivia.¹⁹

¹⁸ Between 1895 and 1947, the number of inhabitants in Jujuy went up from 49,713 to 166,700. San Pedro had a sustained inter-censal population growth, which might have been due to sugar companies. In spite of this, for instance, San Pedro grew by 198 % between 1914 and 1947 (it should be noted that there is no information on La Esperanza or La Mendieta sugar mill for the year 1914, but there is, indeed, for 1947). In 1943, the Ramal area in Jujuy had the highest percentage of individual overcrowding (60.2 %) (Jerez, 2010:29-30-60).

¹⁹An instance of this process can be seen in Gordillo (2010b). Here, the author studies the actions conducted since 2003 by the Guarani communities settled in the Ramal area in Jujuy (the same sub-region

At that time, there had also been changes in the evangelical field. In the 1950s and 1960s, in Argentina, there were major health services and miraculous healing practices performed by charismatic leaders. These laid the basis for the transformations that are usually associated with the return of democracy and whose conspicuous phenomenon is the so-called "neo-pentecostalism" (Wynarczyk, 1993, Algranti 2010). The Christian Brethren were alarmed by this situation, and were worried about the distortion of the "sound doctrine". Pastor and Historian Carlos Bisio, in a publication made for the 125 years of the assemblies in the country, wrote the following:

The generation that preceded us had to make a decision, and it did. Since the 1960s, faced with the confusion caused by the irruption of interdenominational movements with Pentecostal commitments and the advancement of the charismatic movement, most of these brothers, preventively, reviewed the scope of their respective ministries. After more than forty years, we can say that they were not wrong. It is the various gifts that these brothers displayed in the middle of the assemblies which has helped the brother movement to reach 125 years of homogeneous existence in Argentina (Bisio 2007: 12).

Lozano states that when the American pastors abandoned a church in Humahuaca, an authority crisis began. In the diagnosis, it was seen that, while some missionaries considered that their work had produced life transformations, others considered that people were not "truly Christian". Eventually, these tensions led to a renewal of the Baptist church (2001:55). A similar phenomenon occurred in the case of the Guarani:

“Unlike the conversational Baptists who offered a communication with God based upon the Bible, the prayer and the spiritual and material support caused by the networks fostered by the missionaries, the Baptist brothers of the charismatic renewal offered liberation from the worldly afflictions through the personal connection with God” (Lozano, 2001:56).

In this scenario, where “the evangelical essence” (a phrase belonging to Wynarczyk and Semán 1995) was at stake, the act 21,745, which provided for the creation of the RNC, was enacted and sanctioned by the military government in 1978 and, although it has been amended, is still in force today. Under this act, all religious organizations are required to be registered (except the Catholic Church) and shall be conditioned to operate based on state acknowledgment. Denying such acknowledgment implies for these organizations the prohibition operating nationwide.²⁰ Constrained and empowered by the section 5 of the act, which allows for the creation of second-order organizations, American Baptist missionaries managed the registration of the Missionary Baptist Society in 1979. A few years later, in 1988, the Christian Brethren

that we have dealt with) to recover their lands. He focuses on the Guarani communities settled in peripheral neighborhoods in the cities of Hipólito Yrigoyen and Pichanal, in Salta. These communities had previously lived in La Loma and Vinalito, which were lands under the ownership of the mill in El Tabacal, and they were evicted in the 1970's. I also refer to the analysis by Pérez Bugallo (2013), who focuses on the memories of the Guarani belonging to the old Franciscan mission in La Loma and the forced settlement in Pichanal.

²⁰ To read more about this act and state regulation concerning religious minorities in Argentina, please see Frigerio and Wynarczyk (2008) and López Fianza (2014).

of the country, all of whom were Argentine, founded the Federation of Evangelical Christian Entities of Argentina (FECEA).²¹

What follows is a transcription and analysis of the memories of the residents from La Esperanza and San Pedro who emerged mainly in 2014. Baptist presence in the life of the Guarani from La Esperanza—which could be considered as the most important due to its pioneering work and strategic location—gave rise to a new time marked by tensions among family groups and leaders, and also encouraged the expansion of an apparently renewed ethnic-evangelical identity. A milestone in the life of the Guarani from La Esperanza can help us objectify the relationship framework that had been developing in the old mission due to the superimposed presence of the Christian Brethren and Baptist missionaries and a new period for the industrial power plant. In the early 1970's, encouraged by the Baptist missionaries, believers moved the Cherenta church from La Esperanza sugar mill to the town of San Pedro de Jujuy. This spatial dislocation created and recreated conflicts in the community. Many inhabitants felt that a long story marked by the figures of the British missionaries was being threatened.

There were several reasons for this relocation. One of the most relevant was that the new owners of the mill were going to grow cane and made evictions threats. Moreover, new possibilities to own a house in San Pedro were opened to the workers and their families. Finally, some people heard of an alleged conspiracy between Catholics and the new owners. The missionary site of Cherenta occupied an area with a privileged position that expressed the evangelical predominance in the area. As for the housing promises, this was extremely tempting, since, under the Leach' power, the workers only had had the usufruct of the small houses and sheds conditioned as such, and in the Peronist period the housing problem was not fully resolved. In some stories, there is a certain astonishment and discomfort with the fact that Thomas Easdale, the Christian Brethren' missionary, had favored the entrance of the Baptists. It seems that the latter had entered the scene when a generation of Guarani evangelists who had been socialized in the mission was preparing to claim greater ministerial responsibilities. However, the readings on this conflict are also linked to the current denominational ascription by the protagonists.

"They moved the whole of it, masonry and all" recalls Clemente. When visiting the church in the city of San Pedro, Donato tells me: "the church of Cherenta was just like you can see it now". The believers from La Esperanza continued to meet in private homes. For a long time, the house of Clement's parents was the place of worship. In addition to the negative and accusatory side of the relocation, there are also memories of a time marked by evangelical brotherhood: "Everyone hung out with everyone". The meeting points were known as the Conferences. There were polyphonic choirs and traveling musical groups playing traditional instruments. The Conferences were a space for reflection and encounter typical of the evangelical denominations. Unlike other groups, the Christian Brethren institutionalized this modality at different scales (local,

²¹ In 1995, FECEA changed the name Federation of Evangelical Christian Churches and Institutions of Argentina (FICEA).

regional and national). Not only were they places for the transmission of "teachings" or doctrinal concerns, but they also recreated a sort of evangelical and ethnic citizenship. According to the memories, the Baptist missionaries continued this practice, for which there was a stable calendar, including holidays such as Carnival, Easter and the 9th of July. These dates were carefully chosen to affirm a membership that differed from the legitimated northern Catholicism. In this period, Guarani and evangelicals from La Esperanza and San Pedro remember trips to Yacuy and Cherenta where they would eat corn "until they couldn't eat anymore" and visit their relatives. A man born in La Esperanza happily remembers the time when he was a choirmaster. Although, by then, he lived in San Pedro and attended a church guarded by the Baptists, the choir he conducted belonged to a different church, from the Pentecostal denomination Church of God. A missionary married couple of this denomination who lived in San Pedro between 1978 and 1982 also recalls shared meetings free of denominational distinctions. These memories seem to express layers of missionary cultures that were appropriated and translated into a type of evangelism that privileges ethnic belonging (Guarani) to denominational differences (Christian Brethren, Baptists and Pentecostals).

Since the end of 1990, in La Esperanza, believers have had a new building on Esteban Leach Street, intended for worship meetings. The memories of the management of this new building seem to relocate the believers in polarized denominations. Answering who managed the land and the building reopens the discussion on who took the previous one, the Cherenta church (La Esperanza). Then, the Guarani's vivid memories of a plausible evangelical brotherhood become a fight between Baptist and Christian Brethren on this matter, which although more bureaucratic in nature, is still extremely significant for local identifications.

The relocation of the church was a turning point not only because "others" were able to take what was "typical" of the place, but also because the absence of that building and the departure of some families to San Pedro meant a sustained effort of material and symbolic restructuring by those who remained. The referentiality of that old worship house is not exclusive to the current believers. A group of Guarani families from La Esperanza concluded an ethnogenesis process by naming it "Cherenta". The mentor of this community with legal capacity, like most settlers, went to the Sunday school. In recent years, due to a division in said organization, the name changed to *Bapurenda*, a Guarani word that echoes the migrations of their ancestors from the Bolivian east towards the sugar mills in the NOA in search for job opportunities.

Now let us see a case in western Chaco. We transcribe and interpret memories from the year 2013, especially those of Ángeles and Pascual, who were Guarani evangelicals from the Cherenta mission in Tartagal. According to Ángeles, the history of this mission goes back to the 1950's, when her father, Jacinto, and his family left San Pedro de Jujuy to return to Bolivia. Gendarmerie did not allow his daughters of Argentine nationality to cross the border. Due to this imposition, Jacinto decided to stay with other families in the land known as Tiro Feredal (an area where the soldiers of the Argentine army practiced target shooting). At that time, they attended an evangelical church run by the Christian Brethren, the same one that they had started in the 1930's in

Tartagal, and which had expanded among the Guarani communities in Tiro Federal, Yacuy (Old Yacuy), Piquirenda and Aguaray.

In Tiro Federal, Jacinto's family and other like-minded families felt comfortable. The humidity and the vegetation in that mountain range were ideal to live and resume farming activities. In 1965, "little brother Jacinto was appointed as cacique" (Cherenta Mission Record Book). It was him who started efforts to obtain the lands in 1968, in a framework of "water and housing shortages, shortages of all kinds. Unfortunately, there was a military coup that year, so nothing could be achieved". In addition, the Guarani were displaced from Tiro Federal after the Argentine army appropriated these lands. Ángeles remembers that his father contacted Alberto Abraham, who, back then, was City Councilor of Tartagal, in order to demand lands for his community. During a conversation that they had, he said: "now we are going to have to undertake another task (...) we are going to look for another land". In 1969, they found a piece of land and took possession of it. Ángeles remembers that the "peasants" are called to move there immediately: "Cherenta, my house, grew a lot. He, my dad, named it 'Cherenta'. Because we, he, when I was little, he attended the church in Cherenta, there in La Esperanza, which was a beautiful church".

Before moving to Cherenta, Ángeles and her family had stopped attending the church on Aráoz Street. "First we were supported by a church, known as the 'church on Aráoz Street'. Later, when we grew considerably, since we are Guarani, we were too many already. Thus, he could no longer host us there on Aráoz". In another passage of our conversation, Ángeles insists on this and adds "...then they took their distance because they [the Christian Brethren of Aráoz Street] already told him that they could not deal with all of us. Hence, they sought the support of the [Baptist] missionaries, since they always came here". Moreover, Ángeles and Pascual stopped going to Aráoz Street because men were required to wear long pants and blazer, which was clothing that they did not have. These testimonies suggest several processes. It is observed that, on the one hand, at the end of the 1960's and during the 1970's, the missionary presence of the Christian Brethren was weak, almost null—I recorded only one missionary married couple in that period in Tartagal and its surroundings (see Table 1)—and the Baptists, on the other hand, were gaining ground. It is also observed that those who held positions of authority among the Christian Brethren had little interest in preaching the Gospel to the Guarani. It should be added that the current membership and authority positions in the Aráoz Street church are predominantly of Colla ancestry. It is possible to assume that this pre-eminence, especially in authority positions, has been manifested for a long time and that the Guarani taking their distance has been an answer to frictions between ethnic groups and disputes between leaderships. By the end of the 1960's, the presence of American missionaries among the Guarani was common, and, in 1972, it becomes stronger with their financial help to turn the old adobe and straw room into a cement worship house.

The directions taken by the churches in La Esperanza, San Pedro and Tartagal, those under study, are markedly different. Nowadays, the Cherenta mission (Tartagal) and the church in San Pedro are affiliated to the Baptists, which is reflected in their

forms of ecclesiastical administration. However, in the ritual of the Lord's Supper, which involves instances of praise and adoration, a deep syncretism is observed. This includes the use of the British hymnbook and a performance with typical features of the indigenous Pentecostalism as well as interethnic dances originated in the harvest time in the sugar mills. The churches in Aráoz Street (Tartagal) and Esteban Leach Street (La Esperanza) turned to a strong legalism in terms of worship and doctrinal aspects; they seek to reproduce certain ritual performances that include prescriptions such as the use of the veil by women and the prohibition to their public ministry. Every now and then, these practices are questioned, especially by new generations.

This scenario of denominational ascriptions that seems to override a diversity of practices and beliefs effectively developed (see Espinosa and Moyano, 2017) is encouraged again by the ways in which the State has gotten involved, and also by the transformations that the evangelical field went through and which led to redefinitions of evangelical identities. As we have already anticipated, the creation of the RNC (1978) as well as the subsequent foundation of the Missionary Baptist Society (1979) and that of the Federation of Evangelical Christian Entities in Argentina (1988) had different effects on the reorganization of the pre-existing Guarani and evangelical communities.

In order to be registered, religious organizations had to comply with several legal requirements such as the acquisition of a criminal record certificate religious ministers issued by the National Registry of Criminal Records; this requirement was repealed in 2000 (Catoggio 2008). Additionally, until 2005, organizations were required to have legal capacity which was not granted by the State; and thus, organizations had to obtain legal entity status by their own means (Frigerio and Wyncarczyk, 2008). These aspects were extremely limiting for the small congregations scattered far from the power centers and with little access to instructions on such procedures. Although further research is needed, I believe that this was the situation of many evangelical Guarani and Creole churches in the NOA. Some still remember the tedious letters that were sent back and forth with the Worship Directorate due to bureaucratic demands and rectification of unintentional errors. In this sense, the creation of Evangelical Baptist and Christian Brethren Federations and the reorganization of small evangelical churches distributed between both were a means to fulfil legal requirements. But, in turn, in the framework of a struggle for the definition the evangelical, federations appear to have an impact on the configuration of ethnic evangelism by forcing denominational definitions and reactivating identity redefinitions into the inhabitants of these places. Among the potential and scarcely studied effects of this law, I understand that it led to a kind of re-denominationalization; in short, the communities—who lived their religiosity in less taxonomic ways—were required to have to seal an evangelical identity in "denominational" terms.

The Cherenta Mission church in Tartagal (Salta) and the San Pedro church (Jujuy) that are affiliated to the Baptists, are precisely linked to the Missionary Baptist Society. In addition, the church on Esteban Leach Street in La Esperanza (Jujuy) and Aráoz Street in Tartagal (Salta), which, as I said, hold on to the Christian Brethren, are organizationally linked to the FECEA. Furthermore, in San Pedro, a church was

registered in the RNC as "Bethel Baptist Christian Evangelical Church". The last three words of this name correspond to the denomination chosen by Christian Brethren to sign up in the registry of the Peronist government. In effect, this long name evokes the past denominational transitions, expresses impositions, but, at the same time, strategic adoptions in different contexts.

In no way do I consider that the emergence of these federations implied an automatic rearrangement of the local churches in the Northwest and a subsequent cultural and doctrinal enlightenment. The evangelical Guarani communities conducted several actions and had varying representations with the RNC, with the projects designed by the missionaries, the authorities of the churches and these federations. Besides controlling purposes, in some cases the steps to register (or re-register, in the old Filing Cabinet) were perceived as instances of legitimation towards historical forms of grouping and also as transit forced by instances that required certain knowledge due to police threats of a possible closure. Moreover, the registration offered benefits to these organizations and churches, including tax exemption and the guarantee that the lands would not be expropriated. These conditions were known by local believers.

Conclusion

The evangelical missions were spaces for cultural transmission, exchange and impositions. This is one of the major reasons for the unprecedented local intervention of translational business in the socio-religious reconfigurations of various ethnic groups. In the Argentine Northwest, particularly in the sub-region under study, the missionary activity among the Guarani was marked by the integration of the region to world capitalism and the development of the national State. I have attempted to delineate three moments of this intervention by which a series of specific topics and theoretical-methodological problems are put forth so that they can be addressed.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Christian Brethren conducted their activities in the context of a liberal hegemony that recreated a subsidiary State of world capitalism. Beyond its humanistic side, the missionary project reaped the benefits of this framework while the sugar companies benefited from the Christianization of their workforce. Together with the arrival of the Baptists, we can see another form of state presence, with policies aimed at both religious minorities and regions with a predominantly indigenous population. The Baptists had less room for action but, determined to accomplish their goals, they were able to negotiate their admission to the missionary field, and even expanded it. In the 1970's and 1980's, a new evangelical configuration emerged, as a result of the Guarani's appropriation of the missionary culture. Besides, new evangelical currents arose and new policies evolved in the sugar mills. Meanwhile, the creation of the RNC and the foundation of evangelical federations soon started to show their consequences.

The purpose of this study was not to raise a discussion on the concept of "state regulation" or that of "missionary action". Rather, the intended goal was to analyze how, over time, the actions taken concerning indigenous groups and religious minorities "defined boundaries that delineated" (Giumbelli, 2016: 16) the phenomenon of "Guaraní evangelism" in the Andean foothills and western Chaco in the NOA. Throughout this study, I intended to adopt a historical approach to the ethnographic present and analyze the phenomenon by resorting to various interpretive planes. In other words, I have attempted to study the bibliographic and documentary material by reading an ethnographic dimension between lines and in ethnography I looked for condensed and transformed evidence of the successive "historical litters". This strategy has not solved the imbalance of data on such dissimilar periods, gathered from very few and diverse sources—for these marginalized phenomena.

However, we believe that this exercise has helped us state that the current map of indigenous and Creole churches, Baptists and Christian Brethren missionaries, and their configurations cannot be explained by a single cause. It is not enough to know about the Baptist presence, which, regardless of its contemporaneous nature, is more palpable in memory. Moreover, it is not enough to know about the origin and the missionary action by the Christian Brethren, or the transformations in both groups. In the creation of some churches and the split of others, there is an overlapping intervention of both groups, whose alliance and subsequent differentiation is not a monocausal phenomenon either. Therefore, I showed, for example, that the current denominational affiliation, and belonging to a movement of ethnogenesis do not close the past in an evangelical mission; rather, this past is recreated by the current inhabitants. In addition, I have tried to show that the agro-industrial development and state presence, through the regulation of religious diversity, intersected the planes that conditioned missionary action and indigenous possibilities.

To confine the past to a mere context that the anthropologist is forced to narrate comes at a price: feeding the invisibility of indigenous communities which, as they are "less pure", including being evangelical as part of their impurity, have remained on the margins of the State, the Nation and the bibliography. Likewise, postponing the study of evangelical churches which, as they are small and denominational, would be prone to disappearing prevents us from having access to a scenario that would enriches our visions of ethnic and religious diversity in the NOA and the Latin American evangelical field in general. From this historical and ethnographic perspective, I consider that generating sustainable and lasting hypotheses on these issues is fruitful.

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