

***“Conciudadanas”*: The Book of Gold, Women, and Politics in Paraguay,
1864-1870**

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Image 1: “To the distinguished Marshall López; the daughters of the homeland; July 24, 1867”¹



The gilded inner cover of the Book of Gold that depicts the Greek goddess and muse of history, Clio, who records the offerings made by Paraguayan women in support of Paraguay’s defense against the Triple Alliance.

¹ *Libro de Oro (Book of Gold)*, Archivo Nacional de Asunción, (unpublished archival material, accessed electronically via Archivo Nacional de Asunción, December 11, 2019, PDF, cover.

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My relationship with the History Department began with a beautiful mistake. On the first day of classes as a confused first year, I walked into the wrong lecture hall and stumbled upon Professor Caterina Pizzigoni's Latin American Civilizations I class. Minutes into the lecture, I realized that it was not the "Introduction to Economics" that I was looking for. However, I was so captivated by Professor Pizzigoni's introductory lecture—in particular her claim that the study of history is an exercise in empathy—that I decided to not only stay for the hour, but to take a leap of faith and become a History major myself. Four years later, everything has come full circle as I complete this thesis with the teacher who inspired me to embark on the journey in the very first place. To Professor Pizzigoni, thank you for being a steadfast mentor and a constant inspiration. Of everything that I admire about you, your compassion for others is something that I hope to match in the years ahead.

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Introduction

On January 1, 1869, under the orders of Brazilian general João de Souza da Fonseca Costa, the joint armies of the Brazilian Empire, the Argentine Republic, and the Oriental Republic of Uruguay invaded the Paraguayan capital Asunción. According to Paraguayan historian Juan E. O’Leary, the Allied forces “looted the city for three days, not sparing the temples or graves, in their barbaric eagerness to increase the spoils [...] And when there was nothing else important to steal, [the Allied soldiers] took to the doors, windows, and marbles of López’s palace and many houses and public buildings.”² The Allies’ sacking of Asunción was intended to demonstrate to Paraguayan President, Marshall Francisco Solano López, the inevitability of Paraguay’s defeat in the Paraguayan War, also known as the War of the Triple Alliance.

Generations of historians have written about the Paraguayan War since its conclusion in 1870 with López’s death in Cerro Corá, and the War indeed merits the ample attention that it was given. Not only was it the bloodiest inter-state war in Latin American history, it was also a case study of the troubling geopolitical dynamics that confronted Paraguay and its failure to combat imperialism from both regional rivals—the Triple Alliance countries—and international behemoths—the United States, Great Britain, and France. However, not much attention has been paid to the Paraguayan War as a historical event that transformed the female population of Paraguay into a class of active political actors who self-organized across socioeconomic class lines in support of their country. The Paraguayan War was a war in which women were heavily

² Juan E. O’Leary, *El Mariscal Solano López (Marshall López)* (Asunción: Casa América-Moreno Hnos., 1970), 267.

involved on political, socioeconomic, and military levels. Paraguayan women from both the capital and the interior provinces rallied to President Francisco Solano López's call for homeland defense, mobilizing through the donation of their jewelry; the production of wartime supplies; the cultivation of abandoned lands on behalf of their fathers, husbands, and sons; and even the taking up of arms at the final stages of the war.

Various proclamations, ceremonies, and honors were endowed upon Paraguayan women by the political class,³ who became acutely aware of the need to engage every member of the population, women and children notwithstanding, as the country's resources continued to deplete. Nonetheless, when Paraguay fell to the Alliance and negotiations on peace treaty terms began, female voices and actors gradually fell out of focus in contemporary narratives of the war and its effects. And in the rare occasions when women were featured, they either occupied sensational roles or were written about in terms of their relations to and labor performed for men.

⁴ This thesis investigates the fact that the Paraguayan War of 1864 kickstarted the political awakening of a class of women who were widely and officially recognized as heroes to their country but were immediately written out of history in the aftermath of the War.

It must be emphasized, however, that the silences built in this historical moment do not reflect a general disinterest in the experiences of women within modern Paraguayan

³ *Decreto de Presidente Francisco Solano López, Presidente de Paraguay, condecorando a las mujeres que donaron sus joyas*. September 14, 1867, Item 4445 Page 1-1, PY-ANA-AHRP-4445-1-1, Archivo Histórico de la República del Paraguay (ex Colección Río Branco), Archivo Nacional de Asunción, Asunción, Paraguay.

⁴ See Eliza A. Lynch, *Exposición y protesta (Exposition and Protest)* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Imprenta Rural, 1875) for an account of the sensationalization and personal attacks launched against Eliza Lynch, the mistress of Paraguayan President Francisco Solano López. The original Argentinian version is digitized by University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and can be accessed via the HathiTrust Digital Library, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100606004>.

historiography. In fact, the history of women has been “a major theme” in the literature on Paraguay’s social and political development.⁵ According to historian Barbara J. Ganson’s brief historiographical overview, most historical essays focused on Paraguayan women have detailed their contributions during the Chaco War against Bolivia between 1932 and 1935.⁶ The minimal scholarly attention given to the circumstances of Paraguayan women between 1864 and 1870 can be attributed to the dearth of written primary sources produced by women during the period, which in turn was a result of low female literacy rate. Regarding female literacy at the dawn of War, Ganson writes:

“It is difficult to assess the level of women’s education on the eve of the war. Charles Mansfield, a British chemist and graduate of Cambridge University who visited Paraguay in the early 1850s, wrote that they were utterly devoid of education, beyond reading and writing, which meant that some women at least were literate. On the other hand, George Masterman, a British pharmacist employed in the service of the López government, wrote [...] that it was rare to find women who were able to read and write.”⁷

From Ganson’s analysis, we can conclude that education for Paraguayan women was rare, and even if these women had some access to instruction, they did not receive much of it beyond the elementary level.

⁵ Barbara Ganson, “Following Their Children Into Battle: Women At War In Paraguay, 1864-1870,” *The Americas* 46, no. 3 (1990), 336.

⁶ *Ibid.*, “Following Their Children Into Battle,” 336.

⁷ Charles Mansfield, *Paraguay, Brazil and the Plate: Letters Written in 1852-1853* (Cambridge: MacMillan, 1856; repr., New York: AMS Press, 1971), 392; and George Masterman, *Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay: A Narrative of Personal Experience Amongst the Paraguayans* (London: Sampson, Low, Son and Marston, 1870), 42, both cited in Ganson, “Following Their Children Into Battle,” 345.

How can we write about historical actors who did not produce many written records?⁸

Some scholars such as Olinda Kostianovsky turned towards written material like periodicals and government decrees that contained important information regarding women of the time though not authored by the women themselves. Some scholars like the aforementioned Ganson, Vera Blinn Reber, and Thomas L. Whigham turned to census records to determine the number of women who acted as heads of households in the periods immediately before and after the Paraguayan War and assessed the impact of the War on the socioeconomic roles of women. Even so, new discoveries about women's wartime lives have been limited due to the challenges of the archive.

The discovery of the Book of Gold serves to mitigate the problem of women's archival absence, as it contains evidence of Paraguayan women's self-organization and transcripts of their political speeches during the Paraguayan War. While the Book's creation and presentation were well-recorded in contemporary periodicals,⁹ its content and whereabouts following the Triple Alliance's sacking of Asunción have remained unknown. It was not until Julia Vellila—the Paraguayan Ambassador to Bolivia, Uruguay, and Peru and an accomplished historian in her own right—stumbled upon the Book in 1964 during a tour at the Museu Histórico Nacional

⁸ This conundrum is certainly not one that is unique to the study of women actors in history. In *Silencing the Past*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot ponders on the powerful act of silencing as it occurs in the making of historical sources; creation of archives; creation of historical narratives; and creation of the historiographical corpus. Trouillot suggests that readers 1) consider the power dynamics and personal ideologies embedded in the histories that they encounter; and 2) read against the grain of the archive(s). See Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

⁹ See the March 2, 1867; May 2, 1867; September 2, 1867; September 19, 1867; September 19, 1867; and November 7, 1867 issues of *El Centinela* for journalistic reports on the activities and interactions with state officials of Paraguayan women. See also the March 2, 1867 and 8 September, 1867 issues of *El Semanario* for reports on Paraguayan women's commission and presentation of the Book of Gold, which will be discussed at length in Chapter 2.

(National Historical Museum) in Rio de Janeiro that scholars became once-again aware of the artifact and made efforts to access its contents.¹⁰ While scholars such as Olinda Kostianovsky, Barbara Ganson, and Noélia Quintana Villasboa have contributed to the transcription of the source before it was made digitally available by Paraguay's national archive, no critical reading or analysis of the Book has been written beyond passing mentions of its existence.

This thesis, thus, aims to provide one of the first close readings of the Book of Gold with the dual objective of introducing a recently-discovered artifact and using the artifact to problematize categorical claims about the participation of women during the Paraguayan War. Incorporating digital humanities techniques such as GIS mapping and statistical analysis, this thesis breaks down two key binaries—that between Paraguay's geographic political center of the capital, Asunción, and the periphery of smaller towns and rural areas beyond it; and that between women of wealthier and poorer classes, the persistence of which precludes a more nuanced understanding of women's agency during the Paraguayan War. Most significantly, this thesis not only highlights the various sub-identities within the category of "women" constructed as an Other to the predominantly white, male political elite class, but also analyzes women's political interaction and collective mobilization, discussions of which are especially missing from historiography. For instance, the women contributors to the Book referred to themselves as "*conciudadanas*," which roughly translates as "female co-citizens," a clear indication of their intent to be seen as political actors with a unity of purpose. Despite their differential wartime experiences due to racial and socioeconomic reasons and *the awareness of* their intra-group

¹⁰ "Las mujeres tras el 'Libro de Oro'," *ABC Color*, September 27, 2017, accessed April 15, 2018, <https://www.abc.com.py/edicion-impresa/artes-espectaculos/las-mujeres-tras-el-libro-de-oro-1635377.html>.

differences, Paraguayan women were able to self-organize and mobilize one another to donate to the defense of their country. Yet, this solidarity operated within the borders of “republican motherhood”¹¹ prescribed by Paraguay’s male-dominated political system.

Chapter 1 provides the historical background of the Paraguayan War, surveys the main perspectives in historiography, and analyzes in detail the few works that address Paraguayan women and their contribution to war efforts. Chapter 2 provides a first-ever close reading of the Book of Gold and contextualizes it using never-discussed archival materials to construct a chronology of key events of the Paraguayan War, in which women acted in major capacities. In this chapter, images from the Book of Gold are also incorporated to analyze the object’s materiality and the economics that supported its creation. Chapter 3 problematizes the category of “women,” as Paraguayan politics at the time functioned to exclude all women as incapable of political action; thus male political actors dominate historical narratives. This chapter breaks down the monolith of gender and questions the relationship between politically active women’s varying socioeconomic status and their differential access to political capital. In my conclusion, I discuss the rhetorical operation performed by Paraguayan women to render their very public act of political engagement tolerable to the male political elite, in addition to the politics behind the jarring contradiction between the ecstatic celebration of these women when Paraguay was at war and the exclusion of women in the political sphere in the post-war era.

¹¹ The tenets of republican motherhood and how it applies to nineteenth-century Latin American gender politics will be discussed in depth in Chapter 3.

Note to Readers

Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this thesis are my own.

Chapter 1: One War, Four Nations, Myriad Narratives

While there is consensus on the event timeline and proceedings of the War, the “true cause” of the Paraguayan War has deeply divided generations of historians. On one hand, the traditional and dominant narrative attributes the eruption of inter-state aggression to López’s bellicose tendencies and expansionist agenda. On the other hand, the revisionist view sympathizes with López, who found himself cornered by his alliance with Uruguay’s Blanco Party and the need to resist Brazil’s repeated instances of territorial encroachment. This chapter provides three geopolitical lenses through which we can understand the Paraguayan War: 1) the legacy of European imperialism and unresolved territorial disputes from the colonial era; 2) the quest for regional hegemony amongst Paraguay and the Triple Alliance countries; and 3) the alliance system of South American countries. Most notably, this review of the debates at work in the historiography of the Paraguayan War reveals the marked absence of any substantial discussion on women’s wartime lives until recent years.

The seeds of discord between Paraguay and the Triple Alliance countries that sparked the Paraguayan War were not sown overnight. Since the beginning of European colonization in the Southern Cone, border contention caused recurring conflict between the Spanish and Portuguese empires, and it remained a foremost reason for the War centuries later. In the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, the Spanish and Portuguese empires agreed on a border line that rested 100 *millas* west of the Azores and the Cape Verde Islands.¹² However, as David James Owens pointed out,

¹² David James Owens, “Spanish-Portuguese Territorial Rivalry in Colonial Río de la Plata,” *Yearbook (Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers) 19* (1993), 15.

millas was an anachronistic unit that, although still used in papal documents,¹³ was no longer used at the time by either Spain or Portugal. While representatives of both empires had interpreted *millas* used in the Pope's language to be the international maritime unit of *leagues*, the Portuguese later re-interpreted the Treaty and asserted new calculations of border demarcation.¹⁴ Using their own border calculations, Portuguese settlers repeatedly challenged Spanish sovereignty and set up outposts in borderlands. The legacy of Spain and Portugal's failure to utilize common points of reference and the variance in distance measurements used between these two empires led to the absence of a definitive border between Spanish and Portuguese settlers in the Río de la Plata region.¹⁵

Even with the understanding that border demarcation remained unsettled, the Spanish empire was not preoccupied by its resolution until the Río de la Plata region showed economic promise as a trade hub. Not only were there no precious metals or cash crops available in the region, the difficult terrain, swampy geographical conditions, and the presence of militant and mobile indigenous groups such as the Guaycurú and the Guaraní, who often took to war in order to oppose European hegemony, discouraged Europeans from colonizing the area. The deployment of troops and resources to settle an area not central to imperial interests was simply not a good deal for the Spanish Crown. Thus, while the Portuguese repeatedly made expeditions in areas on the side of Spain's line of demarcation, "Spain had never seen fit to fortify [...] nor

¹³ At the time, the Pope wielded much influence over Spain and Portugal, which were both Catholic countries. The Pope often arbitrated conflicts between Catholic countries by claiming the "authority of the Almighty God" in his papal bulls.

¹⁴ Owens, "Spanish-Portuguese Territorial Rivalry," 15.

¹⁵ Ibid.

otherwise defend” those areas.¹⁶ James Lockhart observed that colonies became central to the Spanish and Portuguese empires depending on the existence of assets valuable to Europeans in the region, specifying that such assets ranged widely—from sugar to scented wood, as long as it was sought after by Europeans.¹⁷ Conversely, “fringe” areas of the Spanish and Portuguese imperial territories were those in which “Iberians at any given time were not very interested.”¹⁸ Based on Lockhart’s framework, it is clear that until 1680, the Río de la Plata region was considered to be “fringe” by both Spanish and Portuguese empires.

As were the cases with such peripheral areas in the Ibero-American empire, Paraguay (in fact, the Río de la Plata region in general) did not have the best geographical and settlement patterns conducive towards the planting of cash crops. The low economic potential of Paraguay prompted a type of occupation and social evolution that shared basic similarities on either side of the Spanish and Portuguese boundaries.¹⁹ Additionally, spatial proximity contributed to both sets of colonial officials’ ambitions for expansion and continual debate over rightful claims to the land. The Río de la Plata region only rose in the hierarchy of Spanish colonies in 1680 when the Portuguese formally established the strategic military and trade outpost, Colônia do Sacramento, across the river from the Spanish city Buenos Aires with the intention to profiteer from contraband trade that passed the port of Buenos Aires, thus posing an imminent threat to Spanish economic interest.

¹⁶ Ibid., 18.

¹⁷ Lockhart and Schwartz, *A History of Colonial Spanish American and Brazil*, 254.

¹⁸ Ibid., 256.

¹⁹ Most of the settlement in the region was performed by Jesuit priests, who took on expeditions into indigenous communities that exhibited both an evangelical and political nature as missionaries.

From the perspective of the Spanish Crown, the Portuguese were aggressors who openly threatened the political sovereignty and the economic prospects of the Spanish empire. From the perspective of Spanish colonists of Buenos Aires, however, Portuguese traders were often “partners in crime” with whom they colluded in order to circumvent stringent Spanish trade regulations. Since the establishment of its first colonies in the Americas, the Spanish empire had imposed a monopoly on international trade between its colonies and other European sovereigns, as well as internal trade amongst its colonies. Heavily fortified ships were dispatched from Seville’s Casa de Contratación, the Spanish empire’s central procurement house and only port authorized to trade with the American colonies, to the port of Lima, the viceregal capital of the viceroyalty of Perú. Goods were subsequently distributed amongst other cities such as Buenos Aires that were governed under the viceroyalty. As such, traders of Buenos Aires had no role in the Spanish trade network apart from arranging the regional distribution of goods that had arrived from Perú. This effectively “made the inhabitants of [Buenos Aires] largely dependent on contraband trade with members of other nations,” giving the neighboring Portuguese “an opportunity to smuggle their goods over the border, and build up an illicit trade, which not only supplied the Spanish settlement on the Rio de la Plata, but also threatened to diminish the trade of Lima.”²⁰

In 1776, to further counter Portuguese ambitions in the region as well as contraband trade conducted by its own subjects in the Southern Cone the Spanish Crown granted Río de la Plata

²⁰ Bernard Moses, *South America on the Eve of Emancipation: the Southern Spanish Colonies in the Last Half-Century of Their Dependence* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1908), 317. This book is digitized by University of California and is available via HathiTrust digital library, [https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.\\$b241606](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b241606).

viceregal status. The viceroyalty of Río de la Plata was created by carving parts of present-day Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Bolivia from the viceroyalty of Perú and establishing a new administrative and legal unit centered around the viceregal capital Buenos Aires. Nonetheless, this change came too little too late, as calls for independence had swept through Latin America before border contentions could be fully resolved with Portugal. Independence, however, did little to resolve the region's border troubles. Historian Pelham Horton Box summed up the legacy of European imperialism on the modern fortunes of South American countries with the statement that "Imperial Spain bequeathed to the emancipated Spanish-American nations not only her own frontier disputes with Portuguese Brazil, but problems which had not disturbed her, relating to the exact boundaries of her own viceroyalties, captaincies general, audiencias and provinces."²¹ As Box suggested, the independence movements throughout South America started a quest for regional hegemony that would become the second latent cause of the Paraguayan War.

Second, turmoil in Europe during the Peninsular War (1808-1814) precipitated a wave of independence in the colonies, as well as a quest for regional hegemony amongst the subsequently independent countries in the Southern Cone. When Napoleon Bonaparte occupied Spain—instating his own brother Joseph Bonaparte as Emperor of Spain—Spanish settlers in the Americas were provided with an excuse to strike for independence—that of loyalty to the legitimate king of Spain. In May of 1810, political elites in Buenos Aires deposed the viceroy of Río de la Plata—who was in fact sent by the Bourbon Spanish king—and established a junta.

²¹ Pelham Horton Box, *The Origins of the Paraguayan War* (New York, NY: Russell & Russell, 1967), 54.

Eager to reshape the Southern Cone into a loose confederation of republics at the helm of which was Argentina, Buenos Aires elites sent an army to Paraguay “to restore [to Paraguayans their] rights of liberty, property, and security of which [they] have been deprived for so many generations,” a declaration in which, according to Charles Washburn, the “falsity” was “transparent.”²² It was instead a maneuver on the part of Argentina to establish leadership in the region. Having been the capital of the viceroyalty of Río de la Plata since the conception of the administrative unit, Buenos Aires had historically enjoyed immense influence over the political and economic decisions in Asunción. As Whigham observed, “the various governments in Buenos Aires frequently regarded Paraguay as a breakaway province that someday would reunite with the Argentine motherland.”²³ The failed campaign of 1810 to occupy Paraguay did not divert Argentina’s gaze from its Río de la Plata neighbors, but a series of civil wars prevented Argentina from further asserting geopolitical hegemony until the Paraguayan War of 1864.

Argentina’s ambitions found a match in Brazil, which obtained its independence from the Portuguese Empire in 1822 when the Portuguese prince regent Dom João declared himself the Emperor of Brazil when his father returned to Portugal after Napoleon’s defeat. The subsequently established Brazilian empire, though for not as long as did Argentina, had a difficult relationship with Paraguay regarding border contentions and rights of navigation on the

²² Charles Ames Washburn, *The History of Paraguay: With Notes of Personal Observations, and Reminiscences of Diplomacy Under Difficulties* (New York: Lee, Shepard, and Dillingham, 1871), 141. The digital version of this book is available online via the University of Michigan’s Making of America collection, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moa/ARD0779.0001.001/7>.

²³ Thomas L. Whigham, “The Paraguayan War: A Catalyst for Nationalism in South America,” in *I Die with My Country: Perspectives on the Paraguayan War, 1864-1870*, edited by Hendrik Kraay and Thomas L. Whigham (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 182.

rivers that divided the two countries. With no viable inland routes that linked the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso to the imperial capital Rio de Janeiro, Brazilian fleets relied on water routes—more precisely the Paraguay River—in order to fulfill their shipping needs. Difficult negotiations with the Paraguayan government, which pursued a policy of isolation,²⁴ prompted Brazil to pursue more dramatic and lasting solutions to navigation rights. By the time hostilities erupted between Brazil and Paraguay in the first stage of the Paraguayan War, not only were large parts of the Argentine territories neighboring Paraguay—Chaco and the Misiones in dispute; but also a contest had unfolded over the borders between Paraguay and the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso.²⁵

The third geopolitical cause that contributed to the outbreak of the Paraguayan War was the peculiar alliance system popular amongst South American governments at the time, which connected the central government of a given country to oppositional political factions of another country. On one hand, the dissenting faction of Argentina—the Unitarios—and the government of Brazil were allies with the Uruguayan Colorados Party; on the other hand, the dissenting faction of Uruguay—the Blancos—were allied with the government of Paraguay, led by Francisco Solano López.²⁶ Paraguay officially departed from its aforementioned isolationist policy in 1862 upon the death of Carlos Antonio López, father of Francisco Solano López and

²⁴ Washburn, *The History of Paraguay*, 268-280.

²⁵ John Hoyt Williams, “The Undrawn Line: Three Centuries of Strife on the Paraguayan-Mato Grosso Frontier,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* (1980), 29-31.

²⁶ Although they were called the Blanco and Colorado Parties, these political entities were not political parties in the contemporary sense, but rather rivaling networks of patron-client relationships reinforced by family ties. For further reading, see William C. Tetley, *Blanco y Colorado: Old Days Among the Gaúchos of Uruguay* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co, 1921) and Carlos Maria Ramirez, *La Guerra Civil y los partidos de la República Oriental del Uruguay* (Montevideo: El Siglo, 1871).

former Paraguayan President. The younger López was wary of the ways in which Brazil repeatedly sponsored agents of dissenting factions in neighboring countries in order to ensure the lack of strong competitors that could rival its own interests in the region. In addition, López always worried that Argentina would annex Paraguay and Uruguay in order to reconstruct the old viceroyalty of Río de la Plata. When Brazil threatened to wage war on the Uruguayan government in May 1864, López became so uncomfortable with the prospect of Brazil disrupting the balance of power in the Southern Cone that he released the following statement: “The Government of the Republic of Paraguay would consider the occupation of Uruguayan territory by Imperial forces ... as an attack upon the balance of power of the Platine states, which interests the Republic of Paraguay as the guarantee of its security, peace, and prosperity. That Government protests in the most solemn manner against such an act, disclaiming at once all responsibility for the ultimate consequences of the present declaration.”²⁷ The excerpt above, with which López at once asserted Paraguayan sovereignty and dissociated his country from the potentially belligerent results of his statement, was an illustrative example of López’s early approach to diplomacy and foreign affairs.

How the Story Has Been Told

Myriad interpretations of the Paraguayan War have been offered in the 150-year period since the defeat of Paraguay in the decisive battle of Cerro Corá. From eulogical poems written in celebration of fallen troops and vitriolic essays written to attack the enemy, to contemporary

²⁷ José Berges, *Cartas de José Berges al Ministro César Sauvan Vianna de Lima (Letters of José Berges to Minister César Sauvan Vianna of Lima)*, August 30, 1864, Item 2972 Pages 1-6, PY-ANA-HARP-2972-1-6, Archivo Histórico de la República del Paraguay (ex Colección Río Branco), Archivo Nacional de Asunción, Asunción, Paraguay.

letters and general surveys of South American history that each provide a unique account of the proceedings of the Paraguayan War, the number as well as format of sources abound. In this intellectual landscape, the line between primary and secondary sources sometimes becomes blurred. While the 1875 autobiography of Eliza A. Lynch (the partner of Francisco Solano López) best classifies as a primary source, the 1871 general survey of Paraguayan history penned by Charles Ames Washburn, the United States' Ambassador to Paraguay during the entirety of the War and a central figure in diplomatic correspondences between Paraguay and the Alliance, is more difficult to categorize. On one hand, Washburn presented his thoughts on geopolitical tensions during the time of the Paraguayan War informed by his unique position as a key diplomat in the region; on the other hand, he incorporated previous scholarship on Paraguayan history in order to present the Paraguayan War as an episode in a broader history of a people long subjugated to the whims of authoritarian leaders since the era of European settlement in the Southern Cone. Thus, while the section on the Paraguayan War in Washburn's work is a primary source, the sections that focus on earlier Paraguayan history function as a hybrid of primary and secondary sources. Nonetheless, most modern-day historians consider sources produced by historical actors in the immediate aftermath of the Paraguayan War as historical writing, despite the fact that these actors seldom incorporate analyses of earlier scholarship or provide evidence other than their personal recollections of the War.

In their historiographical reviews, historians Thomas L. Whigham and Vitor Izecksohn adopted a largely chronological framework, with various additional comments on the biographical and ideological backgrounds of authors who produced the historical accounts under examination in order to account for likely biases. Whigham and Izecksohn both began their

analyses in the immediate aftermath of the war, and they identified memoirs produced by former soldiers to be the first works of historical scholarship. The two categorized these narratives based on the soldiers' criticism towards either Paraguay or the Alliance, which according to Whigham and Izecksohn fell along nation lines.²⁸ I verified Whigham and Izecksohn's observations with a review of these early works on the Paraguayan War, looking into accounts written in both Portuguese and Spanish. Whereas Brazilian soldier Dionísio Cerqueira dedicated his work to the "glory of the brave comrades who fell in the field of honor"²⁹ and Brazilian General José Luiz Rodrigues da Silva commemorated a Brazil that—in "unparalleled heroism [and] indescribable hardships with an eminently human purpose"—ended once and for all "the criminal adventures of dictatorship,"³⁰ Paraguayan soldiers such as sergeant major Justo Alejandro Pane celebrated the "insurmountable heroism" and "martyrdom" of the Paraguayan people who fought valiantly

²⁸ Thomas L. Whigham, "Introduction," in *I Die with My Country: Perspectives on the Paraguayan War, 1864-1870*, edited by Hendrik Kraay and Thomas L. Whigham (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 15-16; and Vitor Izecksohn, "State Formation and Identity: Historiographical Trends Concerning South America's War of the Triple Alliance," *History Compass*, 2019;17:e12589, 1-2. One exception to Whigham and Izecksohn's observation was Juan Crisóstomo Centurión autobiography, in which Centurión takes an ambivalent position towards Paraguayan President Francisco Solano López and his actions in the War. See Juan Crisóstomo Centurión, *Memorias del Coronel Juan Crisóstomo Centurión: o sea reminiscencias históricas sobre la guerra del Paraguay (Memoir of Colonel Juan Crisóstomo Centurión: or reminiscences on the Paraguayan War)*, vol. 4 (Buenos Aires: Imprenta de Obras de J. A. Berra-Bolívar, 1897).

²⁹ Dionísio Cerqueira, *Reminiscências da campanha do Paraguai, 1865-1870 (Reminiscences of the Paraguayan Campaign, 1865-1870)* (Rio de Janeiro: F. Briguiet & cia, 1928), second edition, dedication.

³⁰ José Luiz Rodrigues da Silva, *Recordações da Campanha do Paraguai (Memories of the Paraguayan Campaign)* (Brasília: Senado Federal, Conselho Editorial, 2007), 14.

against the Allied forces.³¹ These ex-military writers justified their respective countries' causes as rightful exercises of territorial claims and portrayed enemy leaders as authoritarian oppressors.

In Whigham and Izecksohn's chronological framework, the early to mid-twentieth century historiography of the Paraguayan War took an ideological turn, as Latin American historians increasingly contextualized their discussions around the War with "wider issues in [the region], such as theories of informal imperialism"³² and dependency theory³³ that were popular areas of scholarship at the time. Paraguayan revisionist historians such as Juan E. O'Leary condemned the imperialistic intentions and competing attempts at hegemony between Brazil and Argentina during and after the War. O'Leary and his colleagues depicted a Paraguay rapidly modernizing in the decades before the War under the strong guidance of a paternalistic

³¹ Justo Alejandro Pane, *Episodios militares (Military Episodes)* (Asunción: Talleres R. Monte Domecq' & Cía, 1908), 7; 19.

³² Peter H. Wilson, Review of *The Paraguayan War. Volume I: Causes and Early Conduct*, by Thomas L. Whigham, *War in History* 12, no. 1 (2005), 103. This article is available electronically via Sage Journals, <https://doi.org/10.1177/096834450501200110>.

³³ Dependency theory was first developed in the late 1950s as an economic explanation to the phenomenon of unequal global economic growth in interactions amongst national economies and institutions. In the decade that followed, dependency theory was adopted and elaborated upon by Latin American economists such as Andre Gunder Frank and Raúl Prebisch, who argued that Latin American economies were underdeveloped because of the colonial legacy of being subordinate to the Global Northern centers of power and treated as sites for nothing but resource extraction. In 1979 with *Dependency and Development*, Cardoso and Faletto modified this argument and demonstrated that the underdevelopment of peripheral economies (i.e. many Latin American economies, including Paraguay) was due to the compounding of internal turmoil in peripheral countries that rendered them inefficient (vis-à-vis neighbors in the Global North) and the inevitability of participation of each country—regardless of their development status—in a globalized economy. See Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America*, translated by Marjory Mattingly Urquidi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). For a comprehensive explanation of Cardoso and Faletto's work, see Gaylord George Candler, "Cardoso, Dependency Theory and Brazil," paper presented at the International Studies Association (St. Louis, MO, October 19, 1996), <https://www.unf.edu/~g.candler/articles/FHC-RM.pdf>.

government until Brazil and Argentina conspired to disrupt the existing regional balance of power and ruin Paraguay in the process.³⁴ To revisionist historians, Francisco Solano López was a national hero who correctly identified the defense of Paraguay as a matter of the nation's right to self-determination and survival.³⁵ At the same time, primarily in Argentina and other South American countries, left-wing historians informed by Marxist historical materialism viewed the Paraguayan War as a classic struggle between the underdeveloped Latin American periphery and the international capitalist centers.³⁶ In his works, the Argentinian historian León Pomer even proposed the theory that the British Empire was conspiring for the defeat of Paraguay alongside the Alliance in order to exploit Paraguay's privileged geography on the Río de la Plata for trade.³⁷ Finally, according to Whigham and Izecksohn's chronological framework, the most comprehensive and moderate discussions on the Paraguayan War were produced in the "post-revisionist" era,³⁸ thanks to the declassification of Paraguayan military archives.³⁹ Many modern scholars considered the War within the larger context of modernization and development

³⁴ Juan E. O'Leary, *Nuestra epopeya (Our epoch)* (Asunción: Imprenta y Librería La Mundial, 1919), 17.

³⁵ Juan E. O'Leary, *El mariscal Lopez* (Asunción: tall. Gráf. "La Prensa," 1920) and *El héroe del Paraguay en el LX aniversario de su gloriosa muerte* (Montevideo: Prometeo, 1930).

³⁶ Izecksohn, "State Formation," 3.

³⁷ León Pomer, *La guerra del Paraguay: gran negocio!* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Caldén, 1968). In addition to Pomer, Argentinian writer Milcíades Peña, Uruguayan journalist Eduardo Galeano, and US-trained Nicaraguan scholar José Fornos Peñalba also strongly suggested British shadow involvement in the Paraguayan War. See Milcíades Peña, *De Mitre a Roca: consolidación de la oligarquía anglocriolla* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Fichas, 1968); Eduardo Galeano, *Las venas abiertas de América Latina* (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1996); and José Fornos Peñalba, "The Fourth Ally: Great Britain and the War of the Triple Alliance" (Doctoral Dissertation), University of California Los Angeles, 1979, 7921397.

³⁸ Wiebke Ipsen, Review of *I Die with My Country: Perspectives on the Paraguayan War, 1864-1870*, edited by Hendrik Kraay and Thomas L. Whigham, *Luso-Brazilian Review* 43, no. 1 (2006), 142, University of Wisconsin Press, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4490654>.

³⁹ Wilson, Review of *The Paraguayan War*, 104.

of nationalism in Paraguay and in the Allied countries.⁴⁰ For example, while Franklin James McLynn's 1984 and Izecksohn's 2017 analyses considered the Paraguayan War as a key event in a broader Argentinean process of national unification and identity formation, Whigham named the Paraguayan War as the "catalyst for nationalism in South America."⁴¹ These modern discussions of the Paraguayan War tended to deemphasize the culpability of individual actors, and instead focused on the inter-state and geopolitical dynamics that culminated in Paraguayan tragedy.

Whigham and Izecksohn's framework demonstrated that the most polemic and biased accounts of the Paraguayan War were created either contemporary to or in the immediate aftermath of the War. As time between the occurrence of the historical event and the historical writing elapsed, historians either proposed alternative interpretations of existing historical evidence or discovered new evidence that allowed them to challenge long-held historical assumptions. Eventually, there were no breakthrough discoveries to be made in the field, and narratives of the Paraguayan War proposed by scholars became increasingly moderate. Additionally, a geographic pattern emerged from Whigham and Izecksohn's historiographical framework. Works created in the immediate aftermath of the war had a national focus. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century writers generally anchored their analyses on the Paraguayan War in one specific country and discussed the War in terms of that country. As time progressed, the focus of historical works engaged a broader analytical scope, moving from the

⁴⁰ Whigham, "Introduction," 17; and Izecksohn, "State Formation," 8.

⁴¹ F. J. McLynn, "Consequences for Argentina of the War of Triple Alliance 1865-1870," *The Americas* 41, no. 1 (1984), 81, 98, DOI: 10.2307/1006949; and Vitor Izecksohn, "The War of the Triple Alliance and the Argentinean Unification: A Reevaluation," *História Unisinos* 21, no. 3 (2017), 365, DOI: 10.4013/htu.2017.213.06.

national level to the regional and international levels. Late twentieth and twenty-first century historians eventually took into account regional geopolitics as well as international diplomatic and trading systems in their discussion of the Paraguayan War.

Whigham and Izecksohn's respective historiographical reviews, nonetheless, were useful only to a limited extent for understanding the extent to which women have been discussed in the historiography of the Paraguayan War. First, as noted in the beginning of the chapter, Whigham and Izecksohn included in their corpus of review various primary sources that were fraught with biases. Second, the majority of works included in Whigham and Izecksohn's historiographical reviews were general surveys of the Paraguayan War that did not provide group-specific observations. Whigham and Izecksohn's objectives were to track the evolution of broader political perspectives on the War and central actors to the conflict, rather than to focus on the wartime experiences of particular non-state actors such as Paraguayan women.

Not A Men's War: The Absence of Women in Historiography

Just as powerful as what is included in historiography, however, are the omissions. The preceding discussion suggests clearly that despite the abundance of research on the military and diplomatic history of the Paraguayan War, the last 150 years of literature has been remarkably silent on the lives and role of women during the War. And on the rare occasions when women appeared in early historical accounts on the Paraguayan War, they either fulfilled sensational or subservient roles, tied to their relations to and labor performed for men.⁴²

⁴² See Lynch, *Exposition and Protest* for an account of the sensationalization and personal attacks launched against Eliza Lynch, the mistress of Paraguayan President Francisco Solano López.

Generally, early historical accounts of women's experiences during the Paraguayan War discussed their reproductive capacities, social connections to key male historical actors, or economic productivity. Take for example, Paraguayan historian Carlos R. Centurión's essay "La Mujer Paraguaya A Través De La Historia" in his seminal *Historia de la Cultura Paraguaya* (*History of the Paraguayan Culture*), written in 1939 and published in 1961. In this essay, Centurión discussed women as reproductive tools, with which the Paraguayan nation could aspire to look more Spanish and create a new breed of Paraguayan women "of sweet character, full of grace and full of serene energy, and in whom is the base of the Paraguayan home."⁴³ Centurión traced Paraguayan women's contributions to the country back to the early colonial period—when Spanish men pursued sexual connections with indigenous women as a settlement tactic—and deemed this violent practice as "that which allowed the conqueror to defeat barbarism."⁴⁴ At the heart of Centurión's take on Spaniard-indigenous relations was the same whitening discourse promulgated by many nineteenth-century Latin American liberals, who were unable to "escape the racism that considered civilization the provenance of white Europeans, while 'blacks' and Indians would remain 'barbarous' until educated and disciplined."⁴⁵ In describing Paraguayan women's sufferings during the Paraguayan War, Centurión portrayed a group who, out of love for the country, "sacrificed the fruits of their loves: the son; left their fathers, husbands, and brothers; gave their jewelry and abandoned their homes."⁴⁶ Centurión

⁴³ Carlos R. Centurión, *Historia de la cultura paraguaya* (Asunción: Biblioteca "Ortiz Guerrero," 1961), 656.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 655.

⁴⁵ James E. Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World: Creating Modernity, Nation, and Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 102.

⁴⁶ Centurión, *Historia de la cultural paraguaya*, 658.

highlighted the emotional labor performed by women at the expense of discussing other aspects of their contributions in the political and economic realm, focusing instead on women's reproductive capacities and their social roles as mothers, wives, and lovers.

Even in later works such as Kostianovsky's *La mujer paraguaya*, women were seldom discussed beyond the motif of patriotic sacrifices of mothers. Like Centurión, Kostianovsky proclaimed the Paraguayan woman, "with her love as a mother and her soul of patriotism," as the anonymous heroine of the Paraguayan War.⁴⁷ Upon further examination, Kostianovsky's work lacked key insights that can problematize the role of Paraguayan women in the War, and instead functioned as an anthology of primary documents and poetry produced by historical actors from the period. Kostianovsky neither differentiated between the experiences of women from the capital and women in the interior provinces nor between the experiences of indigenous and white women. Kostianovsky's inability to see beyond the category of "women" and, in the words of Ganson, "[treatment of] women as a fairly undifferentiated whole"⁴⁸ amounted to a regrettably simple argument that Paraguayan women made important contributions to the war effort.

The politicization of women's sexuality and reproductivity was not an invention of scholars of the Paraguayan War. This was central to the propaganda produced by the Paraguayan government throughout the War. All over the pages of government decrees and periodical articles with propagandistic leanings were assertions that Paraguayan women—the "fair sex"—would be the first victims upon the defeat of the Paraguayan homeland, helpless and

⁴⁷ Olinda Massare de Kostianovsky, *La mujer paraguaya: su participación en la Guerra Grande* (Asunción: Fundación Nicolás Darío Latourrette Bo, 2012), 15.

⁴⁸ Barbara Ganson, "Following Their Children Into Battle," *The Americas* 46, no.3 (1990), 336.

ravaged at the hands Brazilian “monkeys” and “black hordes” anxious for rape.⁴⁹ The explicit racism in this description of Brazilian armies demonstrated the fears of race mixing and the adherence to whitening ideologies that dominated Latin American regional discourse at the time. As Potthast observed, bilingual Guaraní and Spanish newspapers tapped into the compounded anxiety towards violation and race relations in order to appeal to the “martial and patriarchal values of Paraguayan men,”⁵⁰ and thereby rallying them to join the army. Although Whigham did not explicitly name the rape of Paraguayan women in his description of the Allied sacking of Asunción, he too considered the fear of rape at the hands of Allied soldiers as a strong political motivator that aligned Paraguayan women with López’s regime and his followers.⁵¹ The sexuality of Paraguayan women—whether used to promote the wellbeing of Paraguay in a maternal fashion or leveraged to rally the macho patriotism of Paraguayan men—was clearly a main theme in both historiography and historical sources. The recurring emphasis by white, male state actors on Paraguayan women’s sexuality was out of a poorly veiled concern for the implied reproductivity at work in sexual relations, and the possibility of the darkening of Paraguay’s national character if not safeguarded in the “martial and patriarchal” ways.⁵² Women were

⁴⁹ *Cabichuí* (Paso Pucú), 22 June 1868. Cited in Barbara Potthast, “Protagonists, Victims, and Heroes: Paraguayan Women during the ‘Great War,’” in *I Die with My Country: Perspectives on the Paraguayan War, 1864-1870*, edited by Hendrik Kraay and Thomas L. Whigham (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 50.

⁵⁰ Potthast, “Protagonists, Victims, and Heroes,” 53.

⁵¹ Thomas L. Whigham, “Another Pause” in *Road to Armageddon: Paraguay Versus the Triple Alliance, 1866-70* (Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, 2017), 328.

⁵² Michael Kenneth Huner, “Toikove Ñane Retã! Republican Nationalism at the Battlefield Crossings of Print and Speech in Wartime Paraguay, 1867-1868,” in *Building Nineteenth-Century Latin America: Re-rooted Cultures, Identities, and Nations*, edited by William G. Acree Jr., and Juan Carlos Gonazález Espitia (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2009), 85. In his chapter, Huner provides a well-researched discussion on the legacy of Spanish colonial racial hierarchies that persisted beyond the independence period and well into the 1850s. Paraguayan wartime propaganda claimed an association between blackness and

discussed as a collective, and their histories were presented as addendums to general histories of the War that focused on the actions, speech, and behaviors of male historical actors.⁵³

Although women did not feature as individuals with their own motivations and agendas worthy of examination in early historical analyses, the works of Ganson and Potthast greatly enriched our understanding of women's socioeconomic circumstances during the War. Ganson paid close attention to the ways in which working class, rural women upheld Guaraní traditions of agricultural and textile production in support of war efforts, serving as the main engines of Paraguayan economy during the period. Citing governmental tallies of agricultural production and archival records on war supplies, Ganson observed that many peasant women took on new farming tasks that they had not previously performed and engaged in military-specific textile manufacturing.⁵⁴ Perhaps out of an attempt to compensate for the lack of attention that Kostianovsky paid to socioeconomic status as a differential factor in the wartime experiences of women,⁵⁵ Ganson did not pay much attention to the contributions of wealthy women other than noting that Paraguayan women had no political right to vote, regardless of their class status. Whereas Kostianovsky's narrative gave rise to a uniform understanding of the Paraguayan

“slavishness,” a quality which was applied to not only the enslaved and freed black soldiers in the Brazilian soldiers, but also to white Brazilians, to criticize their undignified obeisance towards the Emperor. Conversely, Brazilian propaganda also claimed an association between the high percentage of indigenous people in Paraguay's population and “savagery.” Both blackness and indigeneity were manipulated and weaponized by white elites at the time to further their claims of righteousness in the Paraguayan War.

⁵³ One woman, however, was often given individual attention and stood outside of broad-stroke discussions of women in historiography: Eliza A. Lynch. Lynch, the common-law partner of Paraguayan President Francisco Solano López, captured the fascination of many Paraguayans of her time and historians of Paraguay long after. The story of Lynch will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.

⁵⁴ Ganson, “Following Their Children Into Battle,” 349-352.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 337.

female wartime experience with little nuance, Ganson's discussion precluded possibilities of identifying moments of cross-class (and likely cross-racial)⁵⁶ solidarity amongst Paraguayan women.

While Ganson connected women's wartime economic activities such as subsistence farming, textile weaving, and household management to the Guaraní tradition, Potthast successfully moved past the "dichotomy of 'patriotism' or 'coercion' as the only explanatory models"⁵⁷ for women's support towards the war cause to underscore the ways in which women seized the economic benefits that the war brought about in its initial phase. Both Ganson and Potthast's research endowed Paraguayan women with greater economic agency than ever before, treating them as self-interested actors that consented to or negotiated against the historical currents of their time as they saw fit. Nonetheless, the historians who uncover women's lived experiences during the Paraguayan War remain a minority in the field.

Opportunity for Breakthrough

A critical episode first analyzed in Kostianovsky's *La mujer paraguaya* and later cited by both Ganson and Potthast that demonstrated women as political actors during the war was the self-organization of women from all over Paraguay to form a national assembly in September of 1867. Historians have long known of this political event of 1867, which was widely reported in contemporary periodicals and governmental documentation. Synthesizing various excerpts of

⁵⁶ The geographic and racial diversity of the women involved in the Book of Gold project will be analyzed in Chapter 2.

⁵⁷ Bruce A. Castleman, "A Crucible of South American Nationalism?" Review of *I Die With My Country: Perspectives on the Paraguayan War: 1864-1870*, edited by Hendrik Kraay and Thomas L. Whigham, *H-War*, 2005.

contemporary newspaper articles reproduced by Kostianovsky in her book,⁵⁸ Ganson described the event as “a formal ceremony [in which] thirty-two women delegates from villages all over the country offered their jewels to the government. The women delegates also presented President López with *El Libro de Oro* containing the names of those women who made donations to the government.”⁵⁹ As a case of female pursuance of political agency through self-organization, as well as an instance of cross-class solidarity between elite women from the political center—Asunción—and working class women from rural areas, the women’s assembly should have been a point of extensive discussion in any contemporaneous narratives of the Paraguayan War.

Similarly, the function of the Book of Gold as an instrument for Paraguayan women to not only economically contribute to the war effort, but also to obtain political recognition for their contributions, should have generated more modern scholarly interest than it has received. However, while it is true that scholars who study the Paraguayan War know that a far ranging alliance of women commissioned the Book of Gold and presented it to Vice President Francisco Sánchez on behalf of López in 1867, no historian has provided any in-depth commentary on the Book beyond general statements regarding the circumstances of its creation and piecemeal descriptions of its materiality.

This absence of analysis in part rests on the uncertainties of the whereabouts of the Book of Gold in the chaotic aftermath of war. The Book of Gold was one of the 50,000 pieces of Paraguayan manuscripts and artefacts looted by Brazilian forces at the sacking of Asunción. It

⁵⁸ Kostianovsky, *La mujer paraguaya*, 28.

⁵⁹ Ganson, “Following Their Children Into Battle,” 362.

was subsequently forgotten in the depths of the Brazilian archive until the chance discovery of a Paraguayan historian reintroduced the source to public consciousness. After 11 years of negotiations,⁶⁰ the governments of Brazil and Paraguay finally agreed to have the Book repatriated to Paraguay on December 4, 1975. Due to conservation needs, however, the Book of Gold spent more than four decades in the custody of the Paraguayan presidential office until 2017, when it was finally transferred back to its permanent home,⁶¹ the Archivo Nacional de Asunción (Paraguayan National Archive). Immediately upon the artifact's transferral, the Archivo announced to the press its plans to digitize the Book of Gold and make it available "for historians to discover its enigmas."⁶² Two years later, nonetheless, the Archivo has yet to release a full digitized version of the artifact on its website. The long restoration and digitization process that accompanied the Book of Gold's 2017 entrance into the Archivo Nacional de Asunción has provided a short temporal window for scholars to closely examine the source and provide meaningful analyses.

Paraguayan scholar Noélia Quintana Villasboa was one of the first historians to take a close interest in the Book of Gold and to thoroughly access its contents. Despite not being able to offer any new arguments in her 2018 book regarding the experiences of women beyond what was already published and acknowledged in the field, Villasboa contributed by essentially transcribing the contents of the Book of Gold in her *La mujer paraguaya durante la Guerra de la*

⁶⁰ "Las mujeres tras el 'Libro de Oro,'" *ABC Color*, September 27, 2017.

⁶¹ "Tras 150 años Libro de Oro volverá al Archivo Nacional," ADN Paraguay, August 22, 2017, accessed April 15, 2018, <http://www.adndigital.com.py/tras-150-anos-libro-de-oro-volvera-al-archivo-nacional/>.

⁶² "'Libro de oro' expone en Asunción sus registros de Guerra de la Triple Alianza," *El Economista*, November 15, 2017, accessed April 15, 2018, <https://www.eleconomistaamerica.com/cultura-eAm/amp/8747373/Libro-de-oro-expone-en-Asuncion-sus-registros-de-Guerra-de-la-Triple-Alianza>.

Triple Alianza. Although Villasboa offered no analysis of the Book, within one year of its repatriation to the Paraguayan national archive, she commendably digitized the Book's content.

Another contributor to the historical discussion of the Book of Gold was Delphine Demelas, who published her article "Con el objeto de adherirse al laudable pensamiento: el Libro de Oro y el sistema de obsequios durante la Guerra Grande (Paraguay, 1864-1868)" in December 2019.⁶³ Demelas's discussion of the Book of Gold overlapped in useful ways with my presentation in Chapters 2 and 3 regarding the Book's social and political significance for Paraguayan women at the time. For example, we both sought to map the districts that participated in the Book of Gold project to highlight the Book's attempt at geographic representation.⁶⁴ While Demelas and I drew from a common set of archival documents,⁶⁵ juxtaposing Demelas's article with this thesis will, nonetheless, show significant differences in the conclusions we each drew from the Book of Gold.

⁶³ Thanks to my second reader, I was made aware of Demelas's article in January 2020, four months after I had already put together the set of primary sources to be cited throughout my work and produced a first draft of this thesis. Although my work in this thesis is centered around a body of primary sources written in Spanish, a lot of the secondary sources that I reference were written in English. Demelas's article was published by the online journal affiliated with the Institute of Historical-Social Studies of Argentina's National University of Central Buenos Aires Institute, the information base of which was unfortunately not part of the CLIO or WorldCat scholarship networks. I take this opportunity to reflect on the importance of diversifying information bases in a historian's research process and to critique on the importance of decentering the Global North in the production of scholarship.

⁶⁴ However, while Demelas merely marked the districts on a Google Satellite Map, I created a QGIS map that better demonstrated the distribution and clustering of participating districts.

⁶⁵ Demelas performed extensive archival research using the Archivo Nacional's online database to provide strong evidence for her claims in the article. Our archival research have some areas of overlap, such as our common citation of passages in the Book of Gold and contemporary periodicals. However, due to differences in the analytical focus of our respective work, there are key documents in my bibliography that were not discussed by Demelas, and vice versa.

For Demelas, a specialist in manuscript studies, the Book of Gold was historically significant because it was the only surviving instance of a tradition of wartime gift-giving between 1866 and 1868. Even though Demelas aimed to situate the Book of Gold within this material context, she did not define the meaning of gift-giving during this precarious time in Paraguayan history. Rather than the Book's creators, Demelas's focus was the literary similarities between the writings in the Book of Gold and those in precedent gift projects. Due to this focus, Demelas's discussion at many points throughout her article came across as more descriptive than analytical, falling short of making a claim about the Book's significance for the Paraguayan women involved, and what exactly was the "gendered reading into the Book of Gold [that] readers are obliged to make."⁶⁶ In fact, Demelas only mentioned Paraguayan women in passing when discussing the historical context around the Book's creation.

In contrast, this thesis claims that the Book of Gold project was strategically conceived by a group of Paraguayan women, all of whom had different political agendas. While some used the project to insert themselves into national political discourse, others leveraged the project as protection of sorts—a hedge against the violent tendencies of López who, in fear of coups against his government, began to persecute Asunción elites, men and women alike, in the latter half of the War. Although the formal analysis of the Book of Gold constitutes an important element in this thesis, the present work is primarily concerned with analyzing how the Book at once exemplified Paraguayan women's collective subversion of a patriarchal political system that precluded their participation and complicate current understanding of the relationships

⁶⁶ Delphine Demelas, "Con el objeto de adherirse al laudable pensamiento: el Libro de Oro y el sistema de obsequios durante la Guerra Grande (With the objective to adhere to the laudable thought: the Book of Gold and the tributary system during the Great War) (Paraguay, 1864-1868)," *Anuario IEHS* 34, no. 2 (2019): 169.

between different groups of women, separated along geographic, socioeconomic, and racial lines. Nevertheless, given that limited literature has been produced on Paraguayan women between 1864 and 1870—and not to mention on the Book of Gold—Demelas’s work is certainly a welcomed and valuable addition to the research corpus.

Chapter 2 - The Book of Gold: An Admission Ticket into Paraguayan Politics

In Paraguay's post-Independence bourgeois society, gift-giving was a way for civilians and government officials alike to demonstrate their honorable citizenship and patriotism. The Book of Gold was not the only group-funded honorary gift of Paraguayan citizens to President Francisco Solano López during the Paraguayan War. A greater cultural tradition of gift-giving existed during the Paraguayan War that informed the creation of the Book of Gold. However, no other gifts represented an assertion of female political agency as did the Book. While Paraguayan women had involved themselves in financing many previous gifts, they often received secondary political recognition at the time and subsequently lesser visibility in the archives of these efforts. In contrast, the Book of Gold was a project that was entirely conceived, composed, commissioned, and presented by Paraguayan women. Using the Book of Gold, Paraguayan women successfully conveyed and manifested their wish to "participate in the glories [...] attained against the infamous enemies" and to be remembered as influential political actors in Paraguayan history.⁶⁷ These women negotiated gendered political boundaries to leave a permanent mark on national politics through creating and financing an exquisite gift to the president. This chapter argues that the Book of Gold should be comprehended as a singularly important instance worthy of individual examination above all other extant efforts because of its material role in capturing women's desire to be remembered in Paraguayan history.

⁶⁷ *Libro de Oro (Book of Gold)*, Archivo Nacional de Asunción, (unpublished archival material, accessed electronically via Archivo Nacional de Asunción, December 11, 2019, PDF file, folio 1r.

Precedents: 1865-1866

Archives of the period reveal that the Book of Gold was not the first gift to be presented to President López during the Paraguayan War, as multiple groups attempted to win López's favor through gift-giving.⁶⁸ Discussions between civilians and government officials regarding ways to support the Paraguayan war effort show that almost immediately following the commencement of the War in mid-1865, various segments of Paraguayan society had begun self-organizing and rallying to support the armed forces, a year before support in the form of labor was officially mandated of them in López's February 1866 conscription decree.⁶⁹ In *Correspondences of different populations with Vice President Francisco Sánchez*,⁷⁰ donations towards the support of poor families made by Paraguayans from different regions of the country, from smaller cities to rural areas, were recorded chronologically. Additionally, the document listed the names of donors and the respective towns and villages from which they hailed. A closer examination of these names recorded in the document reveals that both men and women

⁶⁸ Gift-giving throughout the War manifested itself in many forms, from monetary donations and magnificent objects to household production of war supplies and manual labor. This chapter—and the thesis at large—focuses on the political significance of formal gifts such as money and objects crafted from precious materials. See the May 26, 1866 issue of *El Semanario* for a report on women's production of textile items such as pillows, sheets, bandages, and "necessary elements for the wounded soldiers of our army."

⁶⁹ Francisco Solano López, *Contiene un Decreto Supremo, llamado al servicio de las armas a todos los ciudadanos aptos para el servicio militar (Contains a Supreme Decree, summoning all apt citizens to the army for military service)*, February 23, 1866, Item 4195 Pages 1-2, ANA-AHRP-PY-4195-1-2, Archivo Histórico de la República del Paraguay (ex Colección Río Branco), Asunción, Paraguay.

⁷⁰ *Correspondencia de distintas poblaciones con el Vicepresidente Francisco Sánchez, sobre donativos para la guerra (Correspondences of different populations with Vice President Francisco Sánchez regarding donations for the war)*, August 31, 1865, Item 418 Pages 159-353, PY-ANA-SH-418n2-159-353, Sección Histórica, Archivo Nacional de Asunción, Asunción, Paraguay.

made donations as the respective heads of their households.⁷¹ Although most of the recorded donors were men, there were individual districts that saw higher representation of female heads of households. For example, while only 8% of the recorded donors from the district San Estanislao were women, women donors constituted 25% of total recorded donors in the district Capiatui.

Even in 1865, when hostilities between Paraguay and the Triple Alliance were intensifying, Paraguayan women had already begun to involve themselves in their country's defense against war enemies. Yet, the records of these gifts failed to treat the women who donated to precedent gifts as equal contributors to the men.⁷² One such record contained a typed copy of the motion to create the "sword of honor" to celebrate López's birthday. On the backside of the document, the name of a woman, Antonia Cardoso de Candia y Colegas, was recorded and noted as a member of the steering committee that supervised the project's completion. However, the language in the motion on the frontside does not acknowledge the presence of women in the group of creators of the sword, as all nouns in reference to this group are in masculine form. While it is true that in the Spanish language, the plural masculine form is used to refer to a group

⁷¹ Ibid. The document *Correspondences of different populations* was made up of various pieces of writings and lists of donors, and on each list the total number of donors as well as number of female donors varied. In the list on pages 4 and 5, there were 6 women out of 47 donors in total (approximately 13% representation); in the list on pages 8 to 10, there were 21 women out of 79 total donors (approximately 27% representation). For a more in-depth discussion of Paraguayan women serving as heads of households during the Paraguayan War in the absence of their fathers, husbands, and sons, see Ganson, "Following Their Children Into Battle."

⁷² Escolástico Garcete and Raymundo Ortiz, *Expediente sobre la creación de una comisión para el obsequio de una espada artística de oro al Presidente en el día de su natalicio (File on the creation of a commission for the gift of a gold, artistic sword to the President on the day of his birth)*, March 24, 1866, Item 352 Pages 282-190, PY-ANA-SH-352n28-282-290, Sección Histórica, Archivo Nacional de Asunción, Asunción, Paraguay.

whose membership contains both men and women, there are ways to circumvent this confounding of genders. For example, instead of the original “En tal partido & á tanto de [...] nuestros conciudadanos de la Capital de la República [...]”⁷³ the writer(s) of the motion could have written “En tal partido & á tanto de [...] nuestros conciudadanos y nuestras conciudadanas de la Capital de la República [...]”⁷⁴ in order to highlight the valued presence of women in the group.⁷⁵ Therefore, underscoring the presence and contribution of women was clearly not a priority for the writer(s) of the motion.

Regardless of the reason behind civilian mobilization—be it voluntary adherence to Francisco Solano López’s wartime narrative of a country fighting for its survival, or sheer empathy for the dead and the wounded—the self-organization and fundraising efforts of these Paraguayans established a precedent for the creators of the Book of Gold that anticipated the latter’s project by two years. Just as civilians mobilized, high-level governmental officials also organized to contribute towards the War cause, specifically through the celebration of President López and his wartime performance as the Commander-in-Chief of the Paraguayan army. In September 1865, José Falcón, the Vice President of the Paraguayan Congress, approved a Congressional decree that ordered the presentation of a medal and a “sword of honor” to President López in appreciation for his military performance.⁷⁶ However, these two gifts to

⁷³ “In this part [of Paraguay] and this month, aware of our [male plural form] co-citizens [male plural] of the Capital of the Republic [...]”

⁷⁴ “In this part [of Paraguay] and this month, aware of our [m. pl.] co-citizens [male plural form] and our [female plural] co-citizens [female plural] of the Capital of the Republic [...]”

⁷⁵ Garcete and Ortiz, *Expediente sobre la creación de una comisión (File on the creation of a commission)*, folio 1.

⁷⁶ José Falcón, *Copia de la ley del Congreso sobre reconocimiento de gratitud al Mariscal López con el obsequio de una presea de brillantes y una “Espada de Honor” (Copy of the Congressional law regarding the recognition of gratitude towards Marshall López with a*

President López did not materialize until July 1867, when the 1865 decree was realized through a special commission created to, once again, celebrate President López's birthday by presenting the latter with a golden sword.⁷⁷

Key differences in the respective formats, presentation dates, and creators of the Book of Gold vis-à-vis its precedents suggest that the Book asserted a different political message than what was conveyed by earlier gifts presented to López. On one hand, the Paraguayan male political elite who gifted the President-cum-Commander-in-Chief of the Paraguayan Army with a weapon (a “sword of honor”) in 1865—when the War had just begun and the Paraguayan troops had won several key initial battles—intended to emphasize the military prowess of López. The phallic symbolism of the sword and its being a weapon evoked notions of diplomatic assertiveness, militaristic aggression, and martial excellence that were all gendered (more precisely, male-dominated) political ideals inaccessible to Paraguayan women at the time. And while it is uncertain whether or not the men's choice of gift was a deliberate act to exclude their fellow female citizens, it is clear that the sword was not created with Paraguayan women in mind.

On the other hand, the group of thirty or so Paraguayan women who gifted López with a gilded book in 1867—when the War had entered its most intense stage, with Paraguay having lost approximately 60,000 men to battle casualties, injuries, or diseases—were focused on proclaiming their unwavering patriotism and political allegiance towards López, as well as on

tribute of a medal of jewels and a “Sword of Honor”), March 09, 1865, Item 343 Pages 315-316, PY-ANA-SH-343n23-315-316, Sección Histórica, Archivo Nacional de Asunción, Asunción, Paraguay.

⁷⁷ Garcete and Ortiz, *Expediente sobre la creación de una comisión*, (*File on the creation of a commission*).

requesting the opportunity to participate in the nation's wartime political economy.⁷⁸ By 1867, the tone of periodical articles and official propaganda turned defensive, rejecting any empty promises of a quick victory or easy defeat of the Alliance, and instead highlighting the unity of the Paraguayan people in the face of foreign aggression. Given the political context, gifts that directly asserted military power were no longer appropriate. Thus, Paraguayan women created a gift that served to inspire national pride with its materiality and to rally the morale of Paraguay troops. Texts in the Book of Gold make repeated and explicit declarations of the women's gratitude for soldiers' sacrifices and their wish to donate their jewelry to support the Paraguayan cause as loyal "daughters of the Republic."⁷⁹ Not explicitly declared in the texts within the Book of Gold, however, is the women's desire to insert themselves into the political discourse by archiving their own writing through assembling the Book.

Chronology of the Book of Gold

A practice of female economic mobilization developed during wartime that fully manifested itself in the creation, commission, and presentation processes of the Book of Gold, in which women throughout Paraguay were heavily involved and even spearheaded communication with male artisans. These processes displayed considerable self-organization and governance among women contributors. The first formal event that generated the idea for the Book of Gold was the First Assembly of Women, which took place in the main square of Asunción on

⁷⁸ *Paraguay: a country study*, eds. Dennis M. Hanratty and Sandra W. Meditz, Area Handbook Series, Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress (Washington D.C.: 1998), 28, http://memory.loc.gov/master/frd/frdcstdy/pa/paraguaycountry00hanr_0/paraguaycountry00hanr_0.pdf.

⁷⁹ *Libro de Oro (Book of Gold)*, folio 1r.

February 24, 1867.⁸⁰ Delegates to this First Assembly came mostly from Asunción. From this collection emerged a steering committee of 12 “distinguished”⁸¹ women who presented a resolution that became the first *Acta de Asunción* (Resolution of Asunción) transcribed in the Book of Gold. In act 3 of this resolution, the creation of the Book of Gold, with “all possible elegance considering the current circumstances and considering the brevity of time,” was officially mandated.⁸² The same act sought two hundred signatures of women from both the capital and the countryside to be included in the Book of Gold, which necessitated a Second Assembly of Paraguayan Women—also known as the General Assembly held on August 10, 1867 in Asunción.⁸³ Each district that responded to the capital’s call-to-action sent two women representatives to the August assembly, who signed their names in the Book and forever recorded their contributions to the country in history. The Book of Gold was presented around a month later on September 8, 1867 in a formal ceremony to Vice President Francisco Sánchez. The September 8, 1867 issue of *El Seminario* reported that the steering committee was first received by a reception of guard with the highest level of formalities, before they met with

⁸⁰ *El Seminario*, no. 671, published March 2, 1867, Asunción, Paraguay.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* “Distinguished” was the descriptor used by the contemporary periodical *El Seminario* to describe these women. We can assume that these women most likely came from elite families of the upper or, at the very least, the upper-middle class of Asunción society. The relationship between class and visibility rendered upon these women in the Book of Gold will be discussed in Chapter 3.

⁸² *Libro de Oro (Book of Gold)*, folio 18r.

⁸³ In *La mujer paraguaya*, Kostianovsky reports that the idea of donating their jewelry and heirlooms to benefit the homeland defense developed amongst a small group of Paraguayan women from Asunción as early as on January 10, 1867. Unfortunately with no citations, Kostianovsky’s work does not point us to a useful primary source to substantiate her claim. Thus, we should take the First Assembly of Women held on February 24, 1867 as the first, formal event in the creation process of the Book of Gold. We can also reasonably conjecture that the January 10, 1867 date refers to an instance of private salon meetings that were popular amongst society women at the time.

Sánchez, who awaited the women's entrance in the Presidential Palace "in formal attire" and with "all the pomp and solemnity that were merited."⁸⁴

Political Statement of the Book of Gold

Lacking any formal organizational divisions, the Book of Gold contained neither a table of contents nor any consistently skipped pages that could indicate section breaks. Instead, the Book of Gold was designed to be read continuously from cover to cover, with each page containing useful information for our understanding of the political agency of women from various socioeconomic backgrounds at the time. Different portions of the Book of Gold served to assert particular qualities about the Paraguayan women involved and their politics. I comprehend the Book as unfolding in four sections: Preamble, Signatures, Actas, and Closing Resolution. From this structure, I demonstrate how the contents of each section built up to one central political statement: Paraguayan women from all over the country deserved full participation within the country's political sphere because of their unanimous and loyal support for President López and the troops. Given that not much written evidence was produced and preserved by Paraguayan women on their political ambitions, present-day historians can only speculate as to what this participation would look like for the women. Yet, we can discern from the laudatory yet curious tone of contemporary periodical reports on the Book of Gold project that the women's organizational efforts must have been highly unusual—thus worthy of commendation and more importantly investigation. The dozens of articles that appeared in *El Centinela* and *El Semanario* that praised the women's loyalty to their country were reflective of the scarce instances that Paraguayan women had previously participated in their country's political sphere.

⁸⁴ *El Centinela*, no. 21, published September 17, 1867, Asunción, Paraguay.

As such, we can make the educated the guess that the women were perhaps considering a normalization of their inclusion in national political discourse.

The first section Preamble, which spanned 12 pages of the Book of Gold, can be interpreted as an open-letter to President López. The authors began by presenting themselves as a female collective and explained that they created the Book of Gold to express gratitude for and publicly profess their political allegiance towards López. The Book of Gold allowed women to “give an unequivocal signal that they share the sentiments as their compatriots, and they are willing to accompany those hardworking defenders of the Fatherland without sparing any kind of sacrifices [and] fulfill the pleasant duty of offering [...] all the jewels and heirlooms that they possess.”⁸⁵ At first glance, the Preamble simply appeared as a public profession of political loyalty to the national cause in the War in the form of jewelry donation. However, closer examination of the language in the Preamble reveals that the section provided many clues for understanding the gendered political environment in which the Book of Gold was created.

The women began the section with a discussion of the dire geopolitical situation facing Paraguay. Using the first-person plural point of view, the women highlighted their personal stakes in the country’s politics and the moral imperative to organize themselves in support of the country. Then, the women outlined examples of political events that they held, such as the “animated public elections” that culminated in the nomination of certain women to the general assembly and the creation of the Book itself.⁸⁶ Lastly, to signal a political agency and endorsement of the sentiments conveyed in the Preamble, each woman present at the First

⁸⁵ *Libro de Oro (Book of Gold)*, folio 3r.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, folio 1r.

Assembly signed her name at the end of the section, giving an additional veneer of formality and solemnity. From hosting elections and assemblies to implementing a representation system, the semblance of the women's activities to official political proceedings must be considered significant, given Paraguayan women's exclusion from the country's political sphere at the time.

Paraguayan women did not achieve the vote or the right to run for office until 1961, almost one hundred years after the creation of the Book of Gold; in the first year of universal suffrage, only two women won parliamentary seats.⁸⁷ Though formally excluded, Paraguayan women nonetheless found ways well before 1961 to resist the denial of their political rights by the patriarchal political elite, including participation in the Book of Gold project. Throughout the Preamble, the women addressed themselves and their cohorts throughout the country using the word "*conciudadanas*," a word which does not have a precise English translation, as its gendered form is a linguistic element extant only in Spanish. "*Conciudadanas*" is the conjunction of the prefix "*con*," meaning "co-" or "fellow," and the word "*ciudadanas*," meaning citizens of the female gender. While the operative word "*conciudadanas*" affirmed the women present in the general assembly as citizens and figuratively included all other women not present under the umbrella of citizenship too, this citizenship was a discounted form of the legitimate, male citizenship in which the women wanted to participate. The Royal Academy of Spain defines

⁸⁷ Centro de Documentación y Estudios (Center of Documentation and Studies), Proyecto del empoderamiento de las mujeres para luchar contra las desigualdades (Empowerment of women to fight against inequalities project), *Partidos políticos y participación de las mujeres en Paraguay: Elementos para debate*. (Asunción: Centro de Documentación y Estudios, 2015), <http://www.cde.org.py/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Partidos-pol%C3%ADticos-y-participaci%C3%B3n-pol%C3%ADtica-de-las-mujeres-en-Paraguay.-Elementos-para-el-debate-CDE-2014.pdf>

“*conciudadano/conciudadana*” as “a citizen of the same city or nation, in respect to the others.”⁸⁸ In this definition of “*conciudadano*,” the subject in question is defined *in reference to* an existing group of citizens. The fact that the women chose not to address themselves simply as “citizens” (“*ciudadanas*”), but rather as a modified form of citizens (“*conciudadanas*”), defined by their uncertain relationship to the male political establishment, was an insinuation of women’s outsider status in Paraguayan politics. The Book of Gold gave women a remarkable way to assert their equal right to political participation.

Whereas the Preamble aimed to demonstrate women’s political views and their roles as supportive citizens of the Republic, the concluding signatures signified that the political sentiments communicated in the Preamble were shared by all Paraguayan women. This assertion is premised on the diversity of the women involved in the Book of Gold, as a considerable number of districts across the country were represented therein. A considerable geographical range could be discerned in the Signatures and Actas sections. The Signatures section spanned 20 pages, in which 71 Paraguayan districts, from the more metropolitan Asunción and Luque to the rural Caapucú and Yhú, were listed in chronological order of their response to the capital’s call-to-action.⁸⁹ Under each district’s name, the two women nominated to attend the General Assembly as representatives from the district signed their names in their own handwriting.

For better appreciation of the wide swath of Paraguay represented in the Book, I created the following map using QGIS. In this map, I constructed two layers, one of Paraguay’s 247

⁸⁸ “Conciudadano, conciudadana”, *Diccionario de la lengua española* (Dictionary of the Spanish Language), la Real Académica Española (Royal Spanish Academy), 2014, <https://dle.rae.es/conciudadano>, accessed February 27, 2020.

⁸⁹ Recall that this call-to-action rallied the female denizens of each district to self-organize a jewelry donation drive.

districts and one of its 17 departments.⁹⁰ I overlaid the two layers and used an attribution table to color code the districts that participated in the Book of Gold and answered to Asunción's call-to-action, sorting districts by the departments. There were two main challenges in the construction of this map. First, border divisions of departments and districts are configured differently today from the way there were in 1867. For example, the current districts Coronel Martínez and Félix P. Cardozo were created from the 1867 district of Hiati, which can no longer be found in contemporary Paraguayan maps. The district Villarrica today is much smaller than its 1867 version, which also encompassed the neighboring modern-day district of Ñumí. Second, the practice of renaming of districts after prominent Paraguayans has presented significant challenges to the labeling process, especially because historical records of district dedications were not complete. For example, the present district of Eusebio Ayala includes the 1867 districts of San Roque and Barrero Grande. In order to overcome these two mapping challenges, I referenced Reber's table of Paraguayan population by district and household and map of Paraguayan districts circa 1864, which provided the respective location of each 1864 district. Using her map, I identified districts that had different names in 1864 from today and confirmed possible renamings or border reconstructions with additional research.⁹¹ Readers should nonetheless be wary of data discrepancies in the map below.

⁹⁰ DIVA-GIS. "Download Data By Country." <https://www.diva-gis.org/datadown>.

⁹¹ Vera Blinn Reber, "The Demographics of Paraguay: A Reinterpretation of the Great War, 1864-70," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 68, no. 2 (1988), 300-302, 306.

Figure 1: Map of Participating Districts in the Book of Gold project

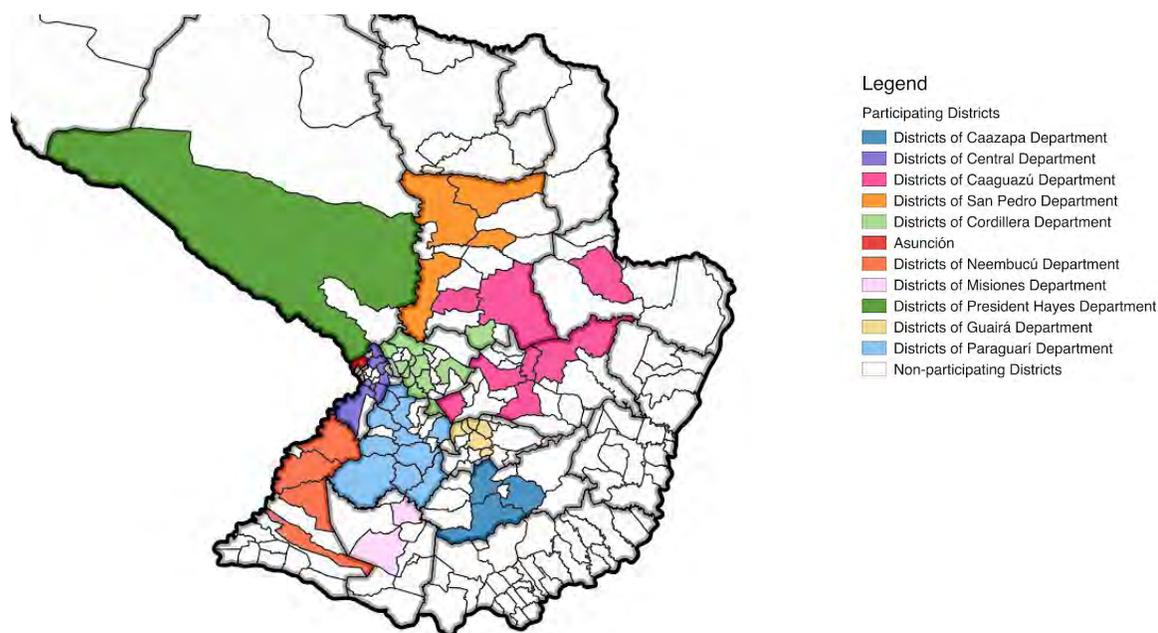


Figure 1 shows that departments closest to Asunción had the highest rates of participation amongst its districts. Almost all of the districts in the departments of Central, Cordillera, and Paraguari, save for two or three, responded to the capital's call-to-action. It is especially important to note that the district of Altos in the Cordillera department and San Miguel in the Misiones department were among the districts highlighted in Figure 1, due to the highly indigenous nature of these districts' populations.

Census taking in Paraguay in the nineteenth century was often irregular and methodologically inconsistent, leading to population figures that baffled many historians.⁹²

⁹² A great example of the scholarly debate on population figures and census interpretation is the exchanges between Whigham and Potthast; and Reber and Kleinpenning. See Vera Blinn Reber, "The Demographics of Paraguay: A Reinterpretation of the Great War, 1864-1870," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 68 (1988): 289-319; and Whigham and Potthast, "Some Strong Reservations: A Critique of Vera Blinn Reber's 'The Demographics of Paraguay: A Reinterpretation of the Great War,'" *Hispanic-American Historical Review* 80, no. 4 (1990): 667-76. See also Whigham and Pottast, "The Paraguayan Rosetta Stone: New Insights into the

Generally, nonetheless, most historians agree that the 1846 census ordered by Carlos Antonio López was one of the most reliable counts of the Paraguayan population at the time, and that the anthropologist Branislava Susnik has performed the most thorough research on the history of the indigenous communities in Paraguay.⁹³ According to Susnik, Altos was a “traditional” district where Guaraní last names were “greatly preserved” despite the state-sanctioned displacement⁹⁴ of traditional Guaraní communities under Carlos Antonio López’s tenure.⁹⁵ On the other hand, San Miguel was a former Jesuit mission, where many Paraguayan indigenous people had been exploited for agricultural labor since the colonial era. Due to the lack of data, it is difficult to make direct claims on the ethnicities of the specific women sent to Asunción as district representatives, as it was still possible for the elites from heavily indigenous districts to be white. Nonetheless, due to the subsistence nature of Paraguay’s agricultural production with few

Demographics of the Paraguayan War, 1864-1870,” *Latin American Research Review* 34, no. 1 (1999): 174-186; Reber, “Comment on ‘The Paraguayan Rosetta Stone,’” *Latin American Research Review* 37, no. 3 (2002): 129-36; Jan M. G. Kleinpenning, “Strong Reservations about ‘New Insights into the Demographics of the Paraguayan War,’” *Latin American Research Review* 37, no. 3 (2002): 137-42. Finally, see Whigham and Potthast, “Refining the Numbers: A Response to Reber and Kleinpenning,” *Latin American Research Review* 37, no. 3 (2002): 143-48.

⁹³ James Schofield Saeger, “Warfare, Reorganization, and Readaptation at the Margins of Spanish Rule—The Chaco and Paraguay (1573-1882)” in the *Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*, vol. 3 “South America” part 2 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), 283.

⁹⁴ See Barbara Ganson, *The Guaraní under Spanish rule in the Río de la Plata* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), for a discussion on state-sanctioned encroachment on lands held by indigenous communities in Paraguay. Most notably, under the pretense of granting equal citizenship to indigenous people, Carlos Antonio López divested all communal lands held by indigenous people and removed formal legal mechanisms that protected indigenous rights. See also Cheryl Lynn Duckworth, *Land and Dignity in Paraguay* (New York: Continuum, 2011), for a historical overview of the indigenous rights movement in the country.

⁹⁵ Branislava Susnik and Miguel Chase-Sardi, *Los indios del Paraguay* (Madrid: Mapfre, 1995), 232. This book is digitized by the University of Texas at Austin and is available via HathiTrust digital library, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/101234694>.

hacienda-style plantations that could guarantee large profits, white elites were unlikely to voluntarily leave the metropolitan area of Asunción and settle amongst “backward” indigenous people.⁹⁶ If they could help it, few white Paraguayans would live alongside their indigenous counterparts who were perceived as “barbaric”.⁹⁷ Even if the representatives from Altos and San Miguel were not indigenous themselves, they surely were not amongst the ranks of top-tier elites in Paraguay at the time to have been inhabiting alongside indigenous communities. Thus, while the Book of Gold was conceived by wealthy elites from the capital, the project was sustained by the contributions of women from areas of the country that were less socioeconomically privileged.

The longest of all sections in the Book of Gold, *Actas* spanned 178 pages. The section consisted of resolutions that were ratified by groups of women from various districts throughout Paraguay and subsequently sent to the capital for compilation. Compositional similarities and linguistic unity amongst regional *actas* demonstrated the women’s wish to underscore their constituents’ diversity in membership and unanimity in political stance. In terms of format, all regional *actas* shared the same title style, header, and addressee. They were all named after the district where the resolution was agreed upon and ratified. Each *acta* began with the header, “Viva la República del Paraguay!”⁹⁸ and were addressed to “Exñmo Señor”⁹⁹—an honorific title that was commonly used in official governmental communiques or formal petitions to address

⁹⁶ Ganson, *The Guaraní under Spanish rule*, 153.

⁹⁷ Washburn, *The History of Paraguay*, 426.

⁹⁸ “Viva la República del Paraguay” translates to “Long live the Republic of Paraguay!”. The verb in this phrase, “viva” is in the subjunctive mood of the Spanish language, and is used to express a subjective wish or desire.

⁹⁹ “Exñmo Señor” is the abbreviation of “Excelentísimo Señor,” which is the male form of “Your Excellency.”

male leaders—in reference to López. In terms of content, regional *actas* utilized highly similar (yet still distinct) language that conveyed like messages of wanting to adhere to the call-to-action of their fellow citizens (“*conciudadanas*”) from the capital and creating their regional version of the capital’s February 24 *Acta de Asunción*. The first paragraph of the *Acta de Caraguatay* began as follows:

“In this district of Caraguatay on March 16 of 1867, the residents [female] of this district, seeing with the greatest satisfaction in issue 671 of the *Semanario* the resolution of their fellow citizens [female] of the Capital have signed on February 25 of the same year; and keenly wishing to take part in a thought that with such ardor and nationalistic enthusiasm they have already engaged in other actions, they have met in a general assembly with the purpose of stating in a solemn and public way their sincere and spontaneous adherence to the grandiose idea that the worthy daughters of Asunción have happily initiated.”¹⁰⁰

The *Acta de Guarambaré* was written with similar language to express the same political message:

“In this district of Guarambaré on March 16 of 1867: we unite today all residents [female] in this district in general assembly, with the noble objective of making a public and solemn manifestation, of our intimate and spontaneous adhesion to the patriotic thought initiated by the Capital by our fellow citizens [female], recorded in the February 24 act of this year, published in n°671 of the *Semanario*.”¹⁰¹

The two excerpts above show that the regional *actas* both contained factual information—such as the district name and the date the *acta* was written—and expressed political purpose—to declare collective support of the *Acta de Asunción* published on February 24, 1867 (the Preamble of the Book of Gold) and to characterize their support as noble, public, and solemn. Importantly, the *Acta de Asunción* and the regional *actas* all mandated the inclusion of the writings of non-capital women in the book that was to be presented to President López. It was essential to include every single *acta* not because they contained entirely different content,

¹⁰⁰ *Libro de Oro (Book of Gold)*, folio 44r.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, folio 42v.

but because the more *actas* in the Book, the stronger the project's apparent diversity of representation.

The role of the Book of Gold as an agent of change emerges in its last section—the Closing Resolution, which spanned six pages. The Closing Resolution was penned by the Second Assembly of women at Asunción on July 29, 1867 to provide careful and detailed instructions regarding the Book's commission and artistic production. In this section, the women stated their vision for the Book's material appearance, mandating the Book to contain “one hundred and ten sheets of parchment the size of thirteen inches long and ten wide, with covers lined with gold plates drawn.”¹⁰² Likewise, the Book's inner covers were gold-plated and featured allegorical figures that invoked the patriotism of its creators—Paraguayan women. The women were intent on having themselves remembered as the grateful daughters of the Republic, and their presentation of the Book to be recorded as an “offering and national pronouncement of the female Paraguayan citizens.”¹⁰³ The most significant instruction given by the women regarding the artistic creation of the Book of Gold was perhaps to engrave an image of Clio—Greek muse and patron goddess of history—in the gilded cover of the Book. With this engravement, the women were clearly asserting their desire to be remembered and *written into* Paraguayan history, despite the multiple obstacles that precluded any female political activity at the time. This marked a deliberate push to transform discourse while seeking a further place within it, anticipating possibilities like enfranchisement in the future.

¹⁰² *Libro de Oro (Book of Gold)*, folio 106r.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

The ornate materiality of the women's gift, the humble tone employed in the writings throughout the Book of Gold imploring López to accept its proffering, and the high-profile reporting surrounding the Book made it virtually impossible for López and his associates to turn down the women, even though the Book subtly critiqued their society by pressing for female political participation. López had no choice but to express his appreciation for the women's gift and to endow upon them some form of political honor—which was the Grand Cross of the Paraguayan National Order of Merit—to demonstrate his magnanimity as the Supreme Leader and “Most Beloved Son of the Fatherland.”¹⁰⁴ Creating a magnificent gift for the President and Commander-in-Chief at a strategic time when the Paraguayan Army had suffered a series of defeats secured for Paraguayan women official, public recognition for their contributions towards the country's defense. Notwithstanding this achievement, this recognition was not given to all of the 450+ women involved with the Book of Gold. The questions of who did and did not receive acknowledgement for the effort to produce the Book of Gold and why, will be explored in the next chapter.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., folio 4v.

Chapter 3 - The Category of “Women”: Many Subtleties Undiscussed

Chapter 2 established that the Book of Gold allowed Paraguayan women to resist political disenfranchisement and receive some recognition for their patriotic contribution towards the nation’s defenses. This chapter, in turn, explores how this recognition varied for women coming from different geographies and socioeconomic classes. Drawing from textual evidence in the Book of Gold and other archival documents, this chapter demonstrates that the degree of political recognition received by each woman varied depending on their existing access to political power as a result of their proximity to male-dominated institutions and male political actors in power. Furthermore, the historical reception of the Book raises some critical complications of the category of “women;” while all women were excluded from politics by the predominantly white, male elite class, some women experienced more exclusions than others. The aftereffects of the Book provide evidence of political interaction and mobilization across class and the persistence of inequality among women, the discussion of which is missing from the historiography.

Class and Political Visibility

To problematize the monolithic category of “women” in wartime Paraguay requires a read against the grain of the writings in the Book of Gold. In the Signatures section, conspicuously six districts did not have any signatures underneath. Why were these districts listed if they did not send any representatives? Why did the Steering Committee allow for the inclusion of these districts if no representatives were present at the Second Assembly? Also keeping in mind that the Steering Committee (which had full control over the content and

compilation of the Book of Gold) was made up of only women from Asunción, it was likely that the appearance of many districts participating in the project was prioritized over ensuring that all involved districts were able to send representatives to contribute to the Assembly. In other words, Asunción women enjoyed a higher degree of agency vis-à-vis women from other districts regarding input into the Book of Gold, despite the Steering Committee's attempt at geographic representation through the use of quotas.

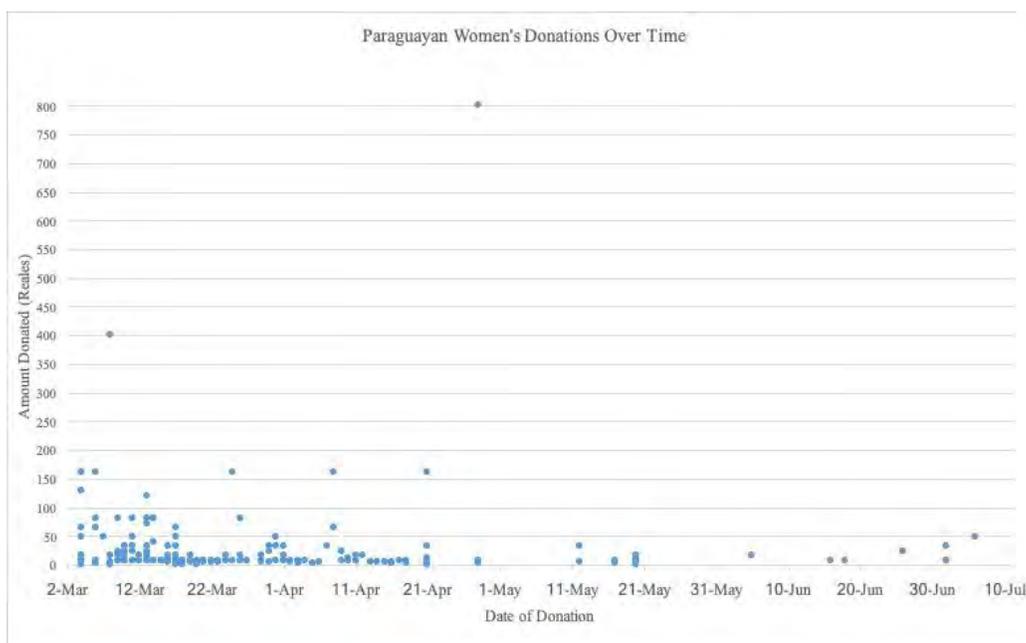
Another powerful determinant of women's political capital was their socioeconomic status. Close attention to the microeconomics and materiality of the Book of Gold shows that women from wealthy and politically connected families received disproportionately greater public recognition for their involvement with the Book. Weighing 10 kilograms, the Book of Gold cost 978 pesos and 2 reales to produce.¹⁰⁵ The exterior cover of the Book was lined with gold and precious jewels, while the Book of Gold's inner covers were gilded and engraved, all of which communicated the considerable expense its production required. Those who could donate more got more accolades. To visualize the distribution of donations made over time, I plotted the amounts donated towards the Book of Gold and the date of donation on a scatterplot graph (Figure 2).¹⁰⁶ The nominal list also contained sparse annotations of the districts from which the donors originated. However, since roughly thirty out of a total of 476 entries had such annotations, I did not include that information. To ensure that differences in magnitude are

¹⁰⁵ *Lista nominal de las conciudadanas que han contribuido para la obra del libro donde deberá constar la oferta de sus joyas (Nominal list of the [female] co-citizens who have contributed towards the work of the book where the offering of their jewelry will be recorded)*, March-July 1867, Item 4548 Pages 1-16, PY-ANA-AHRP-4548-1-18. Archivo Histórico de la República del Paraguay (ex Colección Río Branco), Archivo Nacional de Asunción, Asunción, Paraguay.

¹⁰⁶ *Nominal list of the [female] co-citizens who have contributed.*

properly captured, I converted all donation amounts into reales before plotting them onto the graph. Although a digital copy of the *Nominal List* has been available on the website of the Paraguayan national archive since 2016, no historian has examined the data recorded from a statistical perspective.

Figure 2: Paraguayan Women's Donations Over Time, March - July 1867



The heavy cluster of data points in the lower-left corner of Figure 2 indicates that over two-thirds of the total amount collected was donated in the first month of fundraising in March 1867. This means most donations came in small amounts. As time progressed, donations decreased in frequency but increased in amount. This understanding is confirmed by descriptive statistical metrics. Average donation between May 12 and July 6, 1867, the last day when women made donations, only amounted to 6.6 reales, which was 0.825 pesos according to

contemporary accounting rules.¹⁰⁷ Both mode¹⁰⁸ and median¹⁰⁹ donation quantities were 1 real, implying that out of the 476 total women whose donations were recorded on the *Nominal List*, more than half were willing or able to donate only 1 real or less.¹¹⁰ This suggests that while big donors were few in numbers (only 88 out of 476 total), there was a smaller cohort of wealthy elite women able to contribute much higher sums than their fellow citizens. The Book of Gold mobilized not just privileged women from the capital Asunción, but also women from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds in rural areas of Paraguay. The concerted donations and self-organization of these women constituted an impressive political act that united women across class, but did not erase their fundamental differences, given the deliberate push to record individual donation amounts.

While the Book of Gold reflected the collective work of women of middle and working class backgrounds from districts outside of the capital, political limelight often favored those women that were socioeconomically privileged, often connected to key male political figures of the time. Notably, the first woman named on the *Nominal List*, Tomasa Bedoya de Fernández, was also elected as the president of the general assembly. In 13 different receipts dating to 1867, Tomasa Bedoya de Fernández was addressed by artisan Ramón Franco as “Doña Comisionada” (“Lady Commissioner”), and she also paid the expenses related to the Book’s creation. Tomasa

¹⁰⁷ At the time, Paraguay still followed Spanish colonial accounting rules, which equated one peso to eight reales.

¹⁰⁸ In descriptive statistics, mode is the value that appears the most often in a data set.

¹⁰⁹ Median is the middle value of a data set.

¹¹⁰ Using the median to compute the interquartile range# and outlier# values, which are 4 reales (or 0.5 pesos) and 7 reales (or 0.875 pesos) respectively, we find that there are 88 donations that could be considered extreme outliers, falling outside more than 3 times of the interquartile range above the median value.

Bedoya de Fernández, like certain other women in the general assembly such as Rafaela López de Bedoya, Escolástica Barrios de Gill, and Juana Pabla Pesoa all came from the prominent political families of Paraguay. Tomasa came from the Bedoya family, whose patriarch was the Head Supreme Court judge; Rafaela was the wife of Saturnino Bedoya, who was the Treasury Minister; Escolástica was the wife of Juan Andrés Gill, the president of the Superior Court before his death; and Juana was the childhood sweetheart of Francisco Solano López himself.

It was no coincidence that elite women represented an overwhelming majority in the general assembly. One may argue that the general assembly and the position of Lady Commissioner were created for expediency, given that there were only four months between the beginning of the fundraiser in May and the presentation of the Book of Gold to government representatives in September. Waiting for all women who contributed their jewelry to travel from their respective hometowns to the capital would take considerable time, so these mechanisms unfortunately served to exclude the majority of the women whose contributions were invaluable to the creation of the Book. Despite such logistical concerns, their resources and access guaranteed that this privileged circle of women would gain greatest control and visibility in this effort.

The last and perhaps most direct piece of evidence is López's endowment of the Grand Cross of the Paraguayan National Order of Merit upon select women who were involved with the Book of Gold. This group included elite women from the capital and delegates to the general assembly from rural districts. Not all capital women who attended the general assembly were awarded the Grand Cross; the ones who were given the highest honor in the Paraguayan republic

were the ones who donated the highest amounts of money towards the project. Tomasa Bedoya de Fernández, Ana Josefa Mora de Haedo, Antonia Alarcón de Talavera, Escolástica Barrios de Gill, Constancia Haedo de Benitez, and Clara Escato de Goiburú all donated 16 pesos or more. Whereas multiple women from the capital were awarded the Grand Cross for their involvement with the Book of Gold, only one delegate from each of the other districts received the honor. The district delegates chosen for the award were the chairwomen of the district commissions, who likely had some degree of local clout to have ascended to commission leadership. Clearly, the women who gained the most political capital out of the Book of Gold, from the fundraising for its creation to its presentation to the government, were the “insiders” who already came from wealthy and elite families, or whose male relatives were already in key positions of power in the Paraguayan government.

The Outlier: Eliza A. Lynch

The outlier case of Eliza A. Lynch, however, suggests that although political access was more available to the women from families central to Paraguayan politics, proximity to the political center did not consistently guarantee political capital. Even within the bloc of elite Paraguayan women, factors such as family lineage and perceived moral dignity also further stratified the group. On April 28, 1867, Lynch made a donation of 100 pesos, which constituted the largest sum that was donated in the entire fundraising process. Lynch’s donation was double the second highest greatest sum of donation, and more than one hundred times the median donation amount. However, Lynch’s donation was not highlighted at all despite its magnitude. While most women such as Ana Josefa Mora de Haedo and Antonia Alarcón de Talavera who

took part in the First Congress in Asunción on February 24 were the first ones to contribute towards the creation of the Book of Gold and had their donations recorded in the *Nominal List*, Lynch's donation was not recorded until around the midpoint of fundraising on April 28, 1867. Additionally, Lynch was not invited to be a part of the group of 12 "distinguished" capital women who made up the steering committee of the Book of Gold.

Lynch's exclusion from the ranks of Paraguayan elite women can be attributed to the undesirable conspicuousness of her foreign background and perceived "immorality" due to her marital status in the deeply conservative and Catholic Paraguay. Despite literally occupying a particular seat in Paraguayan politics as the partner of López and the mother of his nine children, Lynch was still considered as an "outsider" when compared to the women who hailed from other elite families in Asunción whose patriarchs held influential federal and gubernatorial positions. Lynch's outsider status is highlighted in the *Nominal List*, where all women are addressed as "Doñas" except Lynch, who is the only woman addressed as "Madame." López and Lynch met at a Parisian ball in 1854,¹¹¹ when López was sent to Europe by his father and then-dictator of Paraguay, Carlos Antonio López, to establish a strategic alliance with Queen Victoria of Britain and Napoleon III of France.¹¹² López and Lynch's relationship was frowned upon by many in both Europe and back in Paraguay, primarily because Lynch was still married to the French physician Quatrefages (despite no longer cohabiting with Quatrefages) and that she was a

¹¹¹ *The Times*, published May 15, 1871, London, cited in Thomas L. Whigham, "Eliza A. Lynch (1835-1866)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, last updated May 19, 2011, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/10.1093/ref:odnb/38273>.

¹¹² Whigham, "Eliza A. Lynch (1835-1866)."

courtesan famous for her linguistic abilities and ingratiating mannerisms.¹¹³ According to Whigham, Pope Pius IX refused to receive López because of his relationship with Lynch, even though López was the descendant of the leader of Paraguay, a deeply Catholic country fiercely loyal to the Vatican.¹¹⁴ The Pope's strong objection to López's relationship with Lynch presumably was shared by the people at home in Paraguay.

While Lynch might have compensated for her lack of formal social status with extremely opulent displays of wealth and López's affection, she still faced the social censure in abundance—due to, in part, her marital status, but in greater part to her connection to López. In her petition-cum-autobiography, *Exposición y protesta (Exposition and Protest)*, Lynch admonished the statesmen of Brazil and Argentina, as well as their Paraguayan allies who rose to power in the wake of López's death, for circulating unsavory tales about her as though [she was] one of those human beasts who seek satisfaction in the extermination of society itself."¹¹⁵ She accused the coalition of Allied officials and complicit Paraguayan politicians of pillaging the country at its weakest moment post-war, while portraying her and López as a pair of power-hungry tyrants. In writing, Lynch demanded the return of the López family treasures that were looted by both the Allies and the Paraguayan elite. In her "demand for justice," Lynch attempted to return to Paraguay in 1875 in order to take her rivals to court. According to Lynch,

¹¹³ Recent research by Lillis and Fanning has provided contrary evidence to the long-held claim that Lynch was a courtesan. Lillis and Fanning look to French police files and records of Paris brothels to argue that Lynch was never a prostitute. The lack of official records can be explained by the informal and clandestine nature of elite prostitution, as well as Lynch's attendance at second-tier salons rather than premier social gatherings, where record-keeping of membership attendance would have been more complete. See Michael Lillis and Ronan Fanning, *The Lives of Eliza Lynch: Scandal and Courage* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2009).

¹¹⁴ Whigham, "Eliza A. Lynch (1835-1866)."

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Paraguayan President and successor to López, Juan Bautista Gill, had invited her to return to Paraguay after her exile in Paris for six years. However, a coalition of Paraguayan ladies received notice of Lynch's impending arrival and petitioned for her expulsion from the country. It seems likely that this petition was a complaint filed by a group of Paraguayan women, most likely of upper-class background and potentially family members of the newly empowered Liberals. Due to the petition and perhaps a suite of other factors as well, Gill withdrew his olive branch and ordered Lynch and her sons to leave Paraguay merely fifteen hours after their disembarkation.

Written as Lynch's self-vindication, requisition for pillaged property, and indictment of the Liberals who rose to power after the death of López under the support of Argentina and the Brazilian Empire, *Exposition and Protest* is of course rife with biases, as it favorably portrayed Lynch and her historical role in the Paraguayan War. On one hand, the text gave voice to Lynch and provided an alternative perspective to the tirade of punitive accounts that have dominated the field for a century until the historical revisionism movement of the 1960's.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, her writing provided a more nuanced understanding of Paraguayan women beyond their monolithic framing in the histories of the time. Lynch's writing proved that not all members within the same socioeconomic class shared the same political perspectives. It is also remarkable that a group of women's complaints had so much sway on the President's decision that he was willing to renege on a publicly made promise to Lynch and her family. One cannot help but wonder if the women themselves were the true masterminds behind this complaint, or if they

¹¹⁶ See Chapter 1 for a discussion of historiography around the Paraguayan War and its key historical players.

were instructed by their families to create an excuse, based on constructs of religious values and morality, for Lynch's expulsion. As Lynch's account demonstrates, Paraguayan women and their politics cannot be treated as a monolith. Tensions not only arose externally—Paraguay versus the Allies—, but also internally—amongst the many factions competing for power and visibility within the nation at such a precarious time.

Redefining Public Motherhood

The greatest cause of discomfort regarding Lynch for Paraguayans, however, was perhaps the way in which her high-profile social activities teetered on the brink of political activism, constantly threatening to transgress the political boundaries prescribed by the patriarchy to limit women's participation in the public sphere at the time. As discussed in the historiographical review in Chapter 1, women in nineteenth-century Paraguay were socialized into “the mother, the wife, the lover”—“the other diamond needed to harden the constitution of the diamond that [male] Paraguayan patriotism.”¹¹⁷ The civic role of Paraguayan women was articulated through “republican motherhood,”¹¹⁸ an ideology leveraged by male elites to restrict a

¹¹⁷ Centurión, *Historia de la cultural paraguaya*, 658. Clarification is added to the quote in order to accurately translate Centurión's idea from Spanish.

¹¹⁸ The term “republican motherhood” is most used in the context of 19th century Europe and the United States—see Linda Kerber, “The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment—An American Perspective,” *American Quarterly* 28, no. 2, Special Issue: An American Enlightenment (1976): 187-205; Kathleen Canning, “The ‘Woman Question’,” 193-208, *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Europe*, edited by Stefan Berger (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009), 193-208. However, given the intellectual legacy of European and North American political ideologies on Latin American nation- and identity-building processes in mid- and late-19th century, “republican motherhood” is increasingly used amongst Latin American historians as a framework to examine the experiences of women in Latin American during the period. See Rubén Dell'arciprete, “La representación de la mujer en la narrativa argentina de fin de Siglo XIX: una etiología imaginaria del cuerpo y la moral femenina,” *La Palabra* 25 (2014): 93-103; and Edda Hurtado P., “Intelectuales tradicionales, educación de las mujeres y

woman's political agency and the scope of her political impact, such that the only capacities for which she can be recognized are supporting her husband domestically and instilling in her children republican values. The underlying premise of republican motherhood is that women are only fit and capable to perform a support role. In redefining women's political role in terms of their domesticity, republican motherhood does not recognize and allow for women to be political agents in their own right. The notion that a woman was able to assist a man in the actualization of his political aspirations as an equal was likely a source of discomfort for many Paraguayans—men and women alike—at the time.

Thus, when Francisco Solano López ascended to the presidency and Lynch began to host a number of balls and other diplomatic events as the *de facto* first lady, she was met with waves of scorn and criticism. According to Washburn, “neither the President nor any of his ministers ever entertained in any manner” until Lynch's arrival in Paraguay,¹¹⁹ setting “an example of extravagance that the more wealthy tried to imitate in the Paraguayan court.”¹²⁰ Although Lynch herself did not believe her activities were political in nature, claiming that she “was far from being involved in the administration of Marshal López or his policies,”¹²¹ she was in fact helping López accelerate his plans to “Europeanize” Paraguay. The top priorities for López when he first became president was to import European military armaments, introduce European mannerisms to replace “backward” Paraguayan customs that were informed by the Guaraní indigenous

maternidad republicana en los albores del siglo XIX en Chile,” *Acta Literaria* 44 (2012): 121-134.

¹¹⁹ Washburn, *The History of Paraguay*, 441.

¹²⁰ Whigham, “Eliza A. Lynch (1835-1866).”

¹²¹ Lynch, *Exposition and Protest*, 4.

tradition,¹²² and to obtain “favorable notice by European nations.”¹²³ Though Lynch herself did not consider her actions as political in nature, by putting her knowledge of European court culture to good use, popularizing European dances at court, and sponsoring artistic projects such as literary contests and regular salons, she stepped into the role of a political assistant and came to be regarded as “scandalous” for many Paraguayans.¹²⁴ Lynch was not, however, the only woman to challenge the limitations on female political agency at the time. Some of the same women who criticized Lynch’s apparent political participation were able to trouble the “ambivalent relationship between motherhood and citizenship,” as they participated in the Book of Gold project to profess allegiance to López on behalf of their families.¹²⁵

In 1868, as Paraguay’s prospects to win the War dwindled, López received intelligence of a planned coup d’etat that supposedly involved 80 members of his government, including some of his cabinet members, and the Brazilian general Marquis de Caxias.¹²⁶ Compounding the series of defeat on the battlefield with such rumours of conspiracy against his administration, López “envision[ed] a vast, silent plot to depose and kill him.”¹²⁷ He subsequently went on a spree of

¹²² As a diplomat representing the United States in Paraguay, Washburn was privy to the social life of Paraguayan elite society. He recalls that young ladies from “respectable families” often went barefoot and wore the tupoi at official balls, until Lynch introduced rules “at the courts of Europe [that] the court of Paraguay could not ignore [as] the state balls must be worthy of a court, and any shortcomings would, sooner or later, be followed by penalties.” Washburn, *The History of Paraguay*, 442.

¹²³ James Schofield Saeger, *Francisco Solano López and the Ruination of Paraguay: Honor and Egocentrism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 60.

¹²⁴ Lynch, *Exposition and Protest*, 3.

¹²⁵ Kerber, “The Republican Mother,” 205.

¹²⁶ Thomas Whigham, “Court of Blood: Treason and Terror Under Paraguay’s Francisco Solano López,” *The Americas* 75, no. 2 (2018), 328.

¹²⁷ John Hoyt Williams, *The Rise and Fall of the Paraguayan Republic, 1800-1870* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1979), 223.

demotions and arrests known as the San Fernando massacres of prominent men and women, amongst whom included his own sister Inocencia López Carrillo de Barrios, whose husband General Vicente Barrios was López's scapegoat for the loss of the Second Battle of Tuyutí. Barrios had spoken up against López's instruction to attack Allied supply bases at Tuyuti and Itapiru, and after López's plan fell out, Barrios was arrested and executed for charges of insubordination and treason.¹²⁸ In addition to Inocencia, other elite women were arrested and sent to concentration camps in the districts of Luque and San Fernando because of charges against their fathers, husbands, and brothers. The exiled women were named "the *destinadas*," destined for exile and dishonor on terms imposed upon them by their country's leader.

While the purported conspiracy of 1868 triggered the full manifestation of López's paranoia and violent tendencies, he had always espoused an authoritarian leadership style. According to Saeger, Paraguayans were "subject to the whims and prejudices" of López, who held absolute political and military power through his control of the army.¹²⁹ At the onset of the Paraguayan War, López had revived the defunct Spanish colonial law of *Siete Partidas* that allowed him to incriminate anyone for their familial connection to criminals.¹³⁰ Dissidents like the Deputy Florencio Varela, who challenged nepotism explicit in the latter's assumption of the presidency after the death of Carlos Antonio, were sent to jail. Given López's propensity to publicly take vengeance against his opposers, it is likely that at least some women were aware of

¹²⁸ Whigham, "Court of Blood," 342, 332 (footnote 14).

¹²⁹ Saeger, *Francisco Solano López and the Ruination of Paraguay*, 95.

¹³⁰ The martial courts of López set up in San Fernando repeated cited clauses related to treason in *Siete Partidas* that required the subjects of the Spanish monarch to "acknowledge, love, fear, honor, and protect the king by the command of God whose place he occupies on earth," and failing to do so can result in charges of treason, which was punishable by death. For an in-depth discussion of the San Fernando massacre, see Whigham, "Court of Blood."

the repercussions that would await them if they refused to give up their heirlooms—which could be interpreted as disloyalty towards the president. Some women might not have truly “spontaneously adhered” to the cause outlined in the Book of Gold, but instead made the politically calculated decision to donate towards the project in order to protect themselves and their families from López’s wrath.

A tell-tale piece of evidence that the latter held true was a letter penned by Encarnación Bedoya, who hailed from the same prominent family as the Lady Commissioner Tomasa Bedoya and was also one of the “*destinadas*” imprisoned for the “crimes” of her husband. In her diary, Encarnación writes:

“When the tyrant López wanted the families to give up their jewelry for the maintenance of the war, the gold that was gathered was for him alone and Doña Fulana¹³¹ asked for the jewelry. Nobody gave anything except rings from wire and old earrings [...] When this Doña Fulana [was] uttering the wish for the gold and jewelry, an innocent man stepped forward to say that this was her second thought, but none of us was mistaken: We all knew who had asked for the jewelry and nobody gave anything save those pieces that they could spare anyway.”¹³²

On one hand, Bedoya expressed skepticism towards the objective and legitimacy of the project and suggested that the Book was a facade for Lynch’s self-serving wealth accumulation.

According to historian Ana Barreto Valinotti, Bedoya’s condemnation of Lynch’s morality and greed was “typical of her class,”¹³³ representative of the rhetoric espoused by Paraguayan elites

¹³¹ “Fulana” means “prostitute” in Spanish. “Doña Fulana” was probably Encarnación Bedoya’s way of referring to Eliza Lynch without explicitly naming the latter.

¹³² Recorded in Guido Rodríguez Alcalá, ed. *Residentas, destinadas y traidoras*. Asunción: rp-Ediciones Criterion, 1991. This book is available electronically via Portal Guaraní, http://www.portalguarani.com/539_guido_rodriguez_alcala/10644_residentas_destinadas_y_traidoras_2_edicion_compilador_guido_rodriguez_alcala_ano_1991.html.

¹³³ Ana Barreto Valinotti, *Elisa Alicia Lynch* (Asunción: Colección Protagonistas de la Historia, 2001),

who disliked Lynch, her values, and her high-profile social persona. Contemporary accounts of Lynch varied greatly — while some historical actors saw her as a savvy diplomatic agent assisting López on foreign affairs, others regarded her as a frivolous interloper in Paraguayan politics. The excerpt above shows that Bedoya clearly identified with the latter. Bedoya was not the only “destinada” whose family was involved with the Book of Gold project. Susana Céspedes de Céspedes, who personally participated in the creation of the Book of Gold and was among the few that were awarded the Grand Cross of the Paraguayan National Order of Merit by López, was also “destined” to one of the prison camps. On the other hand, Bedoya’s unfavorable perception of López as a “tyrant” contradicted from the venerating tone of the writings in the Book of Gold, which adds strength to the claim that women’s participation in the Book of Gold project was fraught with political calculation. Given how despised López was amongst some elite women, it is more likely that these same women committed themselves to the project and pledged allegiance to López out of a desire to protect their families from López’s wrath than out of patriotism alone.

As demonstrated, political fortunes and access to political power differed amongst women of the same socioeconomic class. Even within the same family, not all female members were able to survive the precarious coin toss of López’s favor and emerge unscathed. The Book of Gold provided an opportunity for Paraguayan women to declare their loyalty to López, and protect their families. The stakes were high for Paraguayan women, as they engaged in a public

motherhood that broke down the limitations to women's agency inherent to the ideology of republican motherhood.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Kerber writes that "The Republican Mother," 205.

Conclusion - A Desire to Be Remembered: Writing Themselves Into History

The subversive political significance of the Book of Gold, be it the women's desire to be considered as equal citizens to men (presented in Chapter 2), or their wish to create protection of sorts against the president's violent tendencies, was not lost on López. López initially declined to accept the women's gift using the excuse that he intended to finance the war through the country's own Treasury. The women's proclaimed desire to share and "participate in the glories of the Fatherland" was an alternative way to highlight their exclusion from the country's politics. In addition, the diversity in wealth (and likely race) amongst the Book of Gold's creators enriches the political statements asserted within, that the call for inclusion came from not just Paraguayan women, but significantly less privileged, non-wive Paraguayans. The diversity of the Book of Gold implicated López to concede on his racist beliefs against indigenous Paraguayans and accept their assertion of political agency. Accepting the women's tribute implied having to account for their petition to be considered as political equals to men, which was concerning for the deeply conservative López.¹³⁵

Nonetheless, virtually everyone in Paraguay, in the Southern Cone, and even South American expatriates living in San Francisco, California, was made aware of the women's good-willed intent to contribute to their country's defense through high-profile reporting by the press around the world. This made it inexpedient for López to turn down the women's offers, and he had to resort to accepting the Book of Gold and a portion of the donated jewelry as

¹³⁵ According to some published primary sources, López once ordered a public flogging of his 70-year-old mother Juana Pablo Carrillo after she told him that he was born out of wedlock. See Silvestre Aveiro, *Memorias militares: 1865-1870* (Asunción: Ediciones Comuneros, 1970), 108.

compromise. As such, a small victory for Paraguayan women and their journey to achieving political enfranchisement was achieved through the Book of Gold.

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I provided the historiographical context around the narratives of Paraguayan women during the Paraguayan War and noted the homogeneity around the one-dimensional category of “women” that has been used by the field to describe a group that was interestingly divided by factors such as geographical origin, socioeconomic status, and political allegiance. In Chapter 2, I offered the first interpretation of two possible interpretations of the politics embodied by the Book of Gold. I argued that the Book represented Paraguayan women’s demand to be considered as equal citizens to their male counterparts and to reclaim their political agency in a country that had disenfranchised them since its founding. I first enumerated precedents to the Book of Gold and noted why it stood out as a singular project that deserved in-depth analysis that has not been produced in the field, primarily due to a lack of sources. Using the scanned document of the Book of Gold that was recently made available by the Paraguayan national archive, I reconstructed the timeline of the Book of Gold project and offered ways to comprehend its textual, as well as material, contents. Finally, in Chapter 3, I evaluated the ways in which political visibility for Paraguayan women at the time depended on their socioeconomic capital, and especially on their social connections to elite men in power, by putting the Book of Gold in conversation with other contemporary primary documents. In revealing the tensions amongst women from the elite class, this chapter demonstrates that while the Book of Gold engendered unprecedented levels of cross-class, as well as likely cross-racial, solidarity amongst Paraguayan women, their political agency were nonetheless circumscribed by the political troubles of their male family members.

By performing the first-ever close reading of the Paraguayan Book of Gold, contextualizing the text in the Book of Gold with other archival primary documents, and applying seldom-used analytical methods such as QGIS and statistical analysis amongst scholars of Paraguayan history, this thesis provides an interpretation of the object's significance for Paraguayan women's political mobilization on a national scale. The conclusions in this thesis only began to unravel the stories and circumstances faced by Paraguayan women during an incredibly difficult time of their lives.

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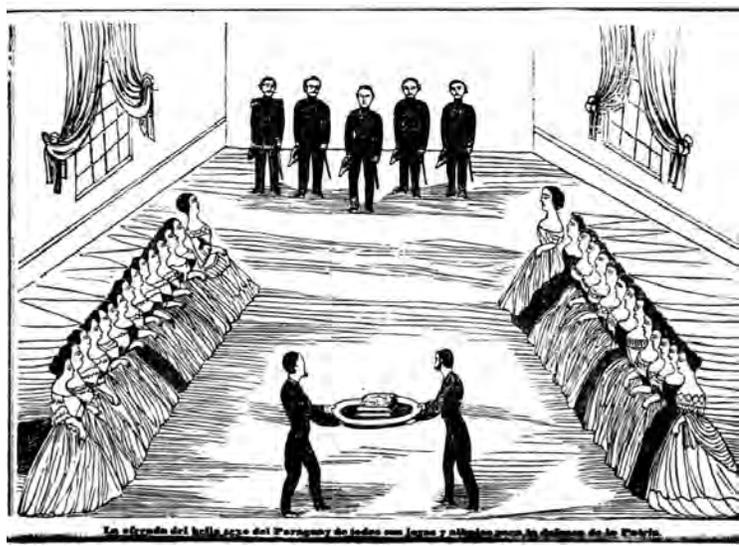
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Appendix - Images from Periodicals and the Book of Gold

Image 2: Presentation ceremony of the Book of Gold

“The offering of all of their jewelry and heirooms of Paraguay’s beautiful sex for the defense of the Fatherland.” *El Centinela*, no. 21, published September 17, 1867, Asunción, Paraguay.



Images 3 and 4: Sample pages from the Preamble Section

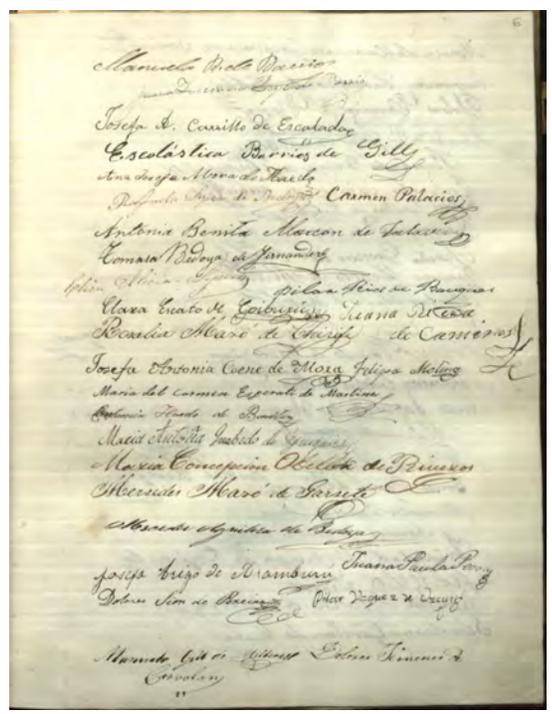
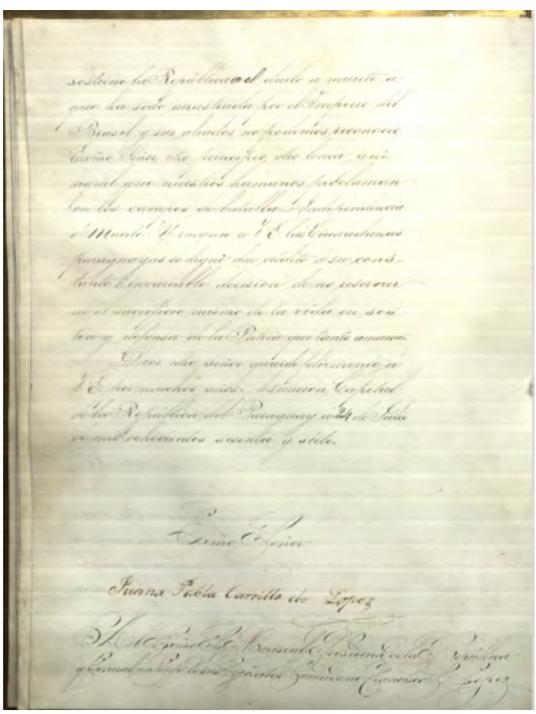


Image 9: Outer cover of the Book of Gold

