

Marina, Agueda and Catalina: Women property administrators in colonial Chile, sixteenth to eighteenth centuries: A case study

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Abstract

Women have played a fundamental role in the administration of assets in central Chile, breaking the myth that women's activities only focus on procreation, raising children and being good housewives. The objective of this research is to show and analyze the cases of women property administrators in central Chile between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. This research is a documentary analysis that presents the case of three emblematic women who lived in this historical period: Marina Ortiz de Gaete, Águeda Flores and Catalina de los Ríos. A review of the documents that are in the National Archive of Santiago was carried out. The documentary analysis and studies on the subject show that they defended the rights of women, overcoming the obstacles of the time such as discrimination, lack of formal education, among others. They face great challenges, including taking over the administration of their estates' assets, either because their husbands are absent for business or widowed. They prove to be good administrators, constituting a contribution to the economic development of the country.

Keywords: Women property administrators ; colonial Chile; housewives.

Introduction

The objective of this work is to show and analyze cases of women property administrators in colonial Chile, limited to the period between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. It focuses on three relevant cases such as those of Mrs. Marina Ortiz de Gaete, Águeda Flores and Catalina de los Ríos, as well as other examples in this context. This action is of great importance, since they are three central cases that demonstrate the key role that women had in the maintenance and growth of the colonial economy (Aguirrezabala, 2001). Many of the women who lived during this period in America were widows who had inherited their husbands' property and were in the task of

administering the land and slaves to ensure their economic viability (Socolow, 2016). Others were wives of absentee merchants and landowners, who delegated them to manage their businesses in their absence (Reyes, 2019). In detail, the administration of goods included tasks such as the maintenance and management of estates not minor in terms of area and goods, the supervision of production, the sale of products, the maintenance of slaves and Indians entrusted and financial decision-making. In this sense, we can point out that there were also women who managed their own assets (Armijo, 2016). These women had to be capable and competent to ensure the economic viability and success of their businesses (Barrancos, 2012).

In this article, we want to demonstrate that the economic strength that women achieved in the time of the Colonia and the power that this entailed, invalidates the myth that women's activities were limited to the realm of reproductive, spiritual, educational or moral, but never involved in productive activities or protagonists of the work at the time (Villalobos, 1975; Cano 1980; Ferro and Quirós, 1994). On the contrary, these women proved to be capable and competent administrators, taking into account the limitations imposed by the society of the time. Many of them had to face challenges such as lack of education and training, gender discrimination (Barraza and Contreras, 2007) and opposition from those who believed that a woman did not have the right to manage property or assets (Zambrano, 2014). However, these women overcame these obstacles and managed to maintain and even expand their businesses and haciendas. In addition to being effective administrators, many of them also played an active role in local society and politics (Pazos, 2005; Sassen, 2007), even coming -as in the case of Catalina de los Ríos- to carry a legend that of being a witch, cruel and murderous (Vicuña Mackenna, 1877). Beyond these nineteenth-century interpretations that sought to minimize women's contribution and their economic and administrative capacities, we believe and postulate that in light of current readings and documents, they became defenders of the rights of women and slaves (Sklar, 1991; 38.Sánchez, 2022) and worked to improve the living conditions of their relatives, parcels and communities.

This study represents a contribution to understanding the economic history of a period of many changes such as the Colony, and unveiling the contribution of women as protagonists of the economic, social and political development of the time.

To carry out the present investigation, documents related to the administration of assets in charge of existing women in the National Archive of Santiago were reviewed, focusing on the funds Notaries of Talca, Notaries of Santiago, Royal Audience and Accounting Office 1st and 2nd series, in which more than 5000 description sheets of Major Accounting were reviewed, looking for

vestiges of administrators. We also reviewed recent collections, such as the Archive of the Monastery of Poor Clares of the Old Foundation, located at the University of Los Andes.

History of property administration in the Côté'Ivoire: a historiographical balance sheet

During colonial times in America, property management was an important aspect of the economy and society. At that time, land and slaves were the most valuable assets and effective stewardship of these resources was crucial to the economic success and prosperity of communities. Portuguese, English and Spanish were responsible for economic, political and social changes in the Americas (Rodríguez et al., 2020). Ten years after Columbus' arrival in the Americas, the Spanish Crown established mechanisms through which they exercised control and administration over everything related to the newly discovered lands (Lázaro, 2017). Within these mechanisms were the prizes to the conquerors and that translated into mercy of lands and encomienda of Indians (Zavala 1935, 1978; Thayer Ojeda, 1905; Góngora, 1970; Stewart and Michea, 2016), headed by the encomenderos, who were in charge of indigenous communities and often used their inhabitants as slaves and as a source of income, allowing Spaniards to obtain benefits through political power (Pasquel, 2010). As Stewart and Michea clarify, "the main cause of the encomienda system was to provide the beneficiaries with land, labor, so the natives were moved to the various villages to carry out various economic activities. Many of the indigenous people were moved from their original places of residence and ended up living in haciendas, estancias, places of obraje and other types of work, such as mining or forestry extraction, where they often settled, their corresponding Indian peoples" (Stewart and Michea, 2016: 21). There were also women who were administrators of real Mercedes. They had the following functions: to manage indigenous taxes, market products, face lawsuits in real courts to safeguard the stability of their livelihood (Zambrano, 2014). In this way, a culture of the material developed, land and goods became a

symbol of status and power during the colonial period in America (Braudel, (1984 [1979]); Roche, 2000).

While it is true, in most cases, the administration of property was in the hands of men, either as landowners or as merchants and entrepreneurs, there were also in America, women who played an important role as administrators of assets. It stands out in this sense, the administration of businesses and haciendas in the Colonia, this as a consequence of inheriting the goods because of widowhood or being the sole heiress (Barraza and Contreras, 2007). Otra forma was by direct purchase, by his own performance or legacy of the mother (Ferro and Quirós, 1994). In Mexico, the wife won the dowry – delivery of goods from the woman's family to the future husband – (Armijo, 2016). Whenthe husband died or in case of a divorce, he also kept property acquired by her outside the dowry. According to Schmieder, quoted in Suárez (2002: 14) "in the elite wives received the arras or donation *propter nuptias*, up to 1/10 of the husband's assets for their personal use, and all women maintained control over their paraphernal goods, such as jewelry and clothing", by colonial times, fabrics and clothing were difficult to access given their high price (Bianchi et al., 2006).

The women who led their family groups were numerous in all sectors of the colonial population and had great influence not only in daily life, but also in the economic life of the cities (Dueñas, 1993). Case in point are the widowed women administrators of inheritances in Quixeramobim, Ceará, Brazil, in the eighteenth century. This activity became a recurring reality demonstrating that they not only managed their assets, but also increased their assets (De Freitas and De Alencar, 2017). In Medellín, Colombia, between 1675 and 1780, the administration of Doña Jacinta de Piedrahíta, mother of eight children, managed a hacienda inherited because of

her widowhood. Heemphasizes that he freed the hacienda from a mortgage for a thousand pesos (Rodríguez, 1987).

Likewise, Presta and Molina (2012:140) recognize for the Peruvian case "women workers in the retail trade, moneylenders, collectors of mass consumption products, such as coca, wine and wheat or corn", or the widow of the conqueror Pedro de Alconchel, "who in 1597 sold to census the lands, mills and other things she had in Mala. He received an annual income of 400 pesos" (Noejovich et al. , 2020). Women are also registered administering the Franciscan missions in Chile, an example of this was the syndic Clara de Eslava y Lope in the mission of Valdivia (Pino, 2018). Women in America managed goods and resources. In most cases they even doubled the initial assets. Such is the case of Isabel de Acurcio, who in her will in 1605 declared that "with my diligence and work and solicitude I have acquired another thousand and so pesos of the said silver tested, which for all that I possess will be like up to three thousand pesos of gold and six hundred rods of canvas of Los Jurés, that these were from the proceeding of an alms that was given to me in the province of Las Charcas and Potosí of up to eight hundred patacones for me and for the said my daughters, and I trudid it in the said canvas of Los Jurés by increasing it "¹

Assets, part of the heritage in the Community

During colonial times, assets were an important part of people's heritage. The administration of heritage in colonial times was marked by inequality and discrimination, since assets were reserved for the elite, which in the first years of the conquest was reserved for the conquerors and their descendants. That is, the distribution of asset ownership was not egalitarian in colonial society. Most of the assets were in the hands of a privileged few (Góngora², 1962; Mata, 2001), depended

¹ Testament of Isabel de Acurcio, Santiago, February 27, 1605. National Archives, Collection of Notaries of Santiago, in forward ANFES, vol. 20, p. 90.

² Understand by asset, an economic resource controlled by the entity in the present tense, as a result of past events and from which economic benefits are expected to be obtained in the future (Marcotrigiano, 2011) In the evolution of

largely on the type of asset and the social position of the person. Land and other material goods were managed by their owners, who made decisions about their use, management, exploitation and sale. In the case of aristocratic families and landowners, these assets were administered by parents or guardians and could be passed on to their children as an inheritance. While the majority of the population, especially slaves and indigenous people, did not have access to ownership of material goods (Cepeda and Meisel, 2014). On the contrary, slaves and other capital goods (the Indians in the figure of the *encomiendas*) were administered by their owners and were considered part of their assets, as were livestock, furniture and other material goods such as jewelry and clothing (Molas, 1981; Assadourian, 1983). These assets were valued, occupying for this purpose the accounting, which allowed them to record the economic events that developed in their day to day, according to Lavean et al. (2019: 7) this record covered "the goods that they elaborated, consumed, lent or alienated, as well as the goods that were given to be administered" and were transmitted from generation to generation as a way to strengthen family wealth and consolidate their social position and Economic.

An important asset that the elite possessed during the colonial period, was the *encomienda* of Indians and the *encomenderos*, as the concession beneficiaries were called, "had the right to receive from the Indians assigned to him two kinds of benefit: tribute and work" (Zavala, 1940). In this way, the *Campus* offered the opportunity to achieve economic success and social ascent to those who owned it and their family, diversifying their investments in the incorporation of companies (Presta, 1997). An example of this is presented by Díaz (2012,177) when he points out that "the agricultural and livestock production of the *encomiendas* supplied the mining populations, which generated an active commercial circuit at the regional level".

accounting, these economic resources began to be recorded in accounts where debtors are recognized, possession of movable and immovable property, drawing of bills of

Another source of assets that made up the family patrimony in the Republic was the marriage dowry, which according to Carcía (2014: 81) was made up of "lands, ranches, plots and houses in limited quantity, as well as livestock, tools, mills and slaves, but also merchandise for sale such as wine or agricultural products". An example of this are the marriage dowries of Marina Ortiz de Gaete, who years after the death of her husband, Governor Pedro de Valdivia, and already on the soil of the captaincy general of Chile insisted on the restitution of her dowry of 3000 gold pesos. Marina claimed many times to the king, "sobre three thousand pesos of dowry that I brought at the time that I married Don Pedro de Valdivia, for having spent them the aforementioned in the service of the King in this kingdom and in that of Peru; I leave ordered and commanded in his will, under whose disposition he died, were charged from S. M. and his Royal Treasury, with another much more amount, and from what was charged I would be paid the said three thousand pesos for the account of my dowry, and of this I have a sentence given in my favor by the Royal Audience who resided in the city of the Concepción of this kingdom, and at present it is pending in the Royal Audience of the city of Los Reyes" (Medina, 1906: 622), or the wife of the Master of the Field Martín Ruiz de Gamboa, Doña Catalina Verdugo de Silva, who in 1648 when she married, asserted "that she brought her a good dowry" (Medina, 1906: 776); and finally, the case of Mariana Córdoba, wife of Juan de Quiroga y Losada, prosperous neighbor of Santiago and *encomendero*, who in 1619, declared in his will that his wife had brought in dowry to the marriage "that the aforementioned brought in docte and marriage, when with me married, four thousand gold pesos of contract, that I granted scripture of docte and took charge, and I endowed it in two thousand pesos of the said gold, with which six thousand

exchange, cash holdings, known as positive patrimonial elements, that is, of those that made up the patrimony (Esteve, 2006)

pesos of gold were mounted, as it will seem from the scripture of docte to which I refer "³

The Spaniards imposed the mercantilist customs they brought from Europe, together with accounting and budgetary practices (Lavean et al., 2019). In this regard, some examples of women managing assets as part of their wealth are presented. A sample of accounts receivable is evidenced in the record that Doña Josefa Cortés Moroy, who, during the eighteenth century, carries out collection procedures, for the lease of a property. For this, Doña Josefa turns to Urispurro, an intermediary known for his support of these actions and for whom she is very grateful (Barraza and Contreras, 2007). Requesting that a landlord pay demonstrates the tenacity of women of the time, modifying the belief that those women lacked the competence to make decisions and execute them (Ferro and Quirós, 1994).

From the documents, we can affirm that women during the colonial period not only administered goods, but also that these were considerable. We highlight the case of Elena Ferrer, widow of Captain Gonzalo Gómez, president of the area, who at her death inherited her assets that included several properties and large flows. It is evident that Elena Ferrer requests an inventory of her husband's assets in 1670 "in ⁴form and according to law so that they are delivered clearly". Although Contreras (2003) highlights Elena Ferrer's request to carry out an inventory as a recognition of legality, thereby obtaining clarity in the delivery of inherited assets, we can point out ⁵ that -from the accounting perspective- the inventory is an administrative record that accumulates a set of assets and rights (Cebrián, 2005). As made explicit by Doña María Garay in 1640 who, in her will in the city of Talca, left large assets, highlighting the collection of several of them,

³National Archives, Fondo Escribanos de Santiago, (hereinafter ANFES), vol. 80, folios testament of Juan de Quiroga and Losada, Santiago, April 25, 1619, p. 287v.

⁴ National Archives, Notary Fund of Santiago, theft. 315, fs. 186-192. Registry of Goods of Elena Ferrer, Santiago March 31, 1670.

which left in evidence the commercial transactions with which María operated:

"Yten declare that he owes me don..... Juarez a mule [broken] male declared to give and receive with more 2 oxen that began to plow more, with more 12 cows small and large, command to charge everything for my goods that is provided

Of the goods he owes me....

Yen declare me owe me Don Alonso Retamal 4 horse saddle tame none of road by ceded of a loan that I and my deceased for doing him well we lend him, command are charged for my goods-----

Yten declare that Captain Juan de Bustamante owes me [broken] ceded from some naguas that he carves for his wife, I command to charge for my goods-----

Yten I declare that Reverend Cristóbal de Segura owes me [edge of document] sos that I gave him in meek sneakers, charge for my goods-----

Yten declare I owe Diego Bravo 3 pesos, command to be paid from my goods-

Yten declare I owe Captain Juan Bautista Pinto 23 pesos, I command to be paid from my goods"⁶

The examples presented allow us to demonstrate both the accounting knowledge and the interest that women printed in the framework of the administration of their assets, to efficiently control the patrimony of the family that they had under their management, an issue that was not left to chance or at the time of death.

Women managing family wealth

Below are three emblematic cases of women administering their patrimony in the Captaincy General of Chile during the colonial period, which

⁵ National Archives, Scribes of Santiago Fund, vol. Vol.315, fs.186-192,

⁶ Testament of Maria Garay, Concepción, August 13, 1640. Archivo Notarios Talca Vol 1, pp. 38 and 38v.

evidences prudence, perseverance, skill in economic transactions and character. It begins with Doña Marina Ortiz de Gaete, the widow of Don Pedro de Valdivia, the conqueror of Chile, an educated and capable woman, since she knew how to sign -an unusual issue for the time- in addition to an iron character, because she did not tire of vehemently claiming her goods and rights. Doña Marina made the foundation of her chaplaincy on December 16, 1589, in the Chapel of the Brotherhood of Clean Conception and Solitude of Our Lady, in the Convent of Our Lady of Help of the Franciscan Order.⁷⁸ According to Ferro and Quirós (1994: 22) "it is common to perceive the vulnerability of women to religious feelings, which inclined them to compromise their economic assets in favor of a cause such as the foundation of chaplaincies". In this act, she administers her eternal life, a concern that goes beyond her time, made clear by the History of the Annales, in writings of Philippe Ariès, Michel Vovelle and Jean Delumeau, who give an account in various eschatological writings how Western societies have responded to explanations of human uncertainty in the face of death. And Mrs. Marina Ortiz de Gaete was no exception.⁹

Doña Marina founded her chaplaincy on the dividends that rent her activities as an investor in commercial companies and another activity highly developed and exercised by both men and women in the colony: that of lender. This is how it stipulates that a shipment of merchandise that Gonzalo de Toledo bought at his "expense and risk" in the city of kings be sold at the best price in the Captaincy, detailing that in the company he invested three hundred and thirty pesos of good contract gold. To that capital and its profits, it adds another 710 pesos of gold from the same commercial activities, especially the loan. Doña Marina reveals with these actions, that she was a modern "businesswoman". On the other hand, it points out a much more complex mixed dimension for the mentality of the time, in that it incorporates the debt factor and links it to a settling of accounts that perpetually commits its concrete debtors and lands to the "beyond" and to the salvation of souls: his own and that of the conqueror of Chile (Martínez: 2014).

It is important that Doña Marina, allocates to her chaplaincy "all the goods, estates and titles disputed in a lawsuit that she holds with His

⁷ The chaplaincy is a foundation of income instituted before a judge with the aim of carrying out pious works and with the obligation to say masses for all eternity in favor of the soul of its founder. In its symbolic dimension, the Chaplaincy served to maintain the presence and social presence of the wealthiest families after the death of their members. In its transcendent dimension, it maintained the bond of reciprocity between the living and the dead, chaining the salvation of the souls of one and the other through prayers. See Horvitz V., María Eugenia (Dir.), *Memoria del nombre y salvación eterna: Los Notables y las Capellanías de misas en Chile 1557-1930*. Santiago de Chile: Universidad de Chile. Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities. Department of Historical Sciences, 2006.

⁸ National Archives, ANFES Fund, vol. 5, pp. 80v-83. Chaplaincy of Marina Ortiz de Gaete, Santiago December 16, 1598.

⁹ Véase al respecto, Gaby Vovelle y Michel Vovelle, *Vision de la mort et de l'au-delà en*

Provence d'après les autels des âmes du Purgatoire, Paris, Colin, 1973. *Baroque piety and dechristianization. Les attitudes devant la mort d'après les clauses des testaments*, Paris, Plon, 1973. *Dying in the past. Attitudes collectives devant la mort aux XVIIè et XVIIIème siècles*, Paris, Gallimard, 1974. *La mort et l'Occident de 1300 à nos jours.*, Paris,

Gallimard, 1983 (reissued in 2000 with a new updated introduction); ARIÈS, Philippe. *History of death in the West. From the Middle Ages to the present day*. Barcelona: El Acanilado, 2000 (original edición: *Essays on the History of Death in the West of the Middle Ages to us*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975). ÍDEM. *El hombre ante la muerte*. Madrid: Taurus, 1983 (original edición: *Man before death*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977); Delumeau Jean. *Fear in the West*. Paris: Fayard, 1978. In his work the theme of death is not treated per se, but by the fear it generates.

Majesty the King(Felipe II) and with the royal officers, their representatives. The lawsuit with His Majesty deals specifically with the 3000 inalienable pesos of dowry that Doña Marina brought to her marriage with Don Pedro and that he invested in Peru and in the enterprise of conquest of the Kingdom of Chile. Three thousand pesos with his earnings that Doña Marina demands be reimbursed at the expense of the royal treasury, for which he "asks and begs" the 24 patrons of his chaplaincy to continue with the lawsuit and its cause and the other proceedings that seem to them after his death and at the expense of his other assets. " (Martinez, 2014: 188) .

Doña Marina is a risky woman in terms of investments, everything is at stake. All their profits, acquisitions, in short, all their capital is requested and invested in their chaplaincies. She is not willing to lose either in this life or beyond. Her character and action is what we rescue in this article, because she not only saves her life, but also her soul. This is reinforced in his will. In the year 1592 she declares to be the holder of various goods, among which they emphasize that she leaves "for the dowry of the said chaplaincy, 400 pesos of principal that are imposed to census on the houses and block of Antonio Cardoso and Isabel Bravo, which they have in the trace of this city, so that with the revenues that they rent, the alms of the masses that for the said chaplaincy and for my soul are said in the said convent be paid" – adding in strengthening of the previous point that-"Item, plus another 700 pesos to be imposed on census for the income of the said chaplaincy, which will be named and declared in the said deed of the said institution and the possessions on which they would have been imposed to census."¹⁰

Doña Marina also possessed important material goods, which she took care of transactions with favorable balance until her last days and with

dispositions, beyond her death. In his will he mentions that: "I name by my property some houses that are on a plot in the trace of this city, bordering the glen of Mr. San Francisco and with the house of Licenciado Antonio de Escobar and Calle Real: which houses and plot is my will that they are not sold or disposed of, for it may be that perhaps some debt or debts which I legitimately seem to owe them, of which at present I do not remember and want to be rented and leased, and that with such rents and leases the said debts are paid and the said houses repaired as they seem to my executors and thus paid, I command that the said houses and plot for an increase of dowry to the said chaplaincy and according to their value Let me increase the masses and suffrages that are to be said for my soul." It is interesting the economic vocabulary that Doña Marina uses in her will, where she mentions "sales", "rent", "lease", "debts", "payments", all in a functional and differentiated way, which accounts for Doña Marina's administrative knowledge of assets.¹¹

She was a caring woman, who even supported others financially. In another of her testamentary clauses Doña Marina, she pointed out "Item, I declare that I made a donation to Beatriz Tamaya of 200 pesos of gold, which are imposed to census on the houses and possessions of Alonso Guerra, of which gold pesos has my declaration the said Beatriz Tamaya and I do it that if the aforementioned dies without leaving heirs or legitimate children of legitimate marriage, be brought and reduced to the dowry of the said chaplaincy, which thus instituted the said 200 pesos and that they may redeem it so that 10 masses may be said of them every year for the religious of the said convent of San Francisco, for the souls of purgatory and especially for the deceased Indians who have been of my entrustment." Interesting proposal, which allows us to think that its purpose was to ensure only Beatriz Tamaya, because if she did not marry or

¹⁰ Testament of Marina Ortiz de Gaete, wife who was Pedro de Valdivia, April 12, 1592. In Medina, José Toribio. (1896) Collection of unpublished documents for the history of Chile, from Magellan's voyage to the battle of Maipo, 1518-1818. Collected and published by J.T. Medina, Imprenta Ercilla, Santiago. p. 336.

¹¹ Testament of Marina Ortiz de Gaete, wife who was Pedro de Valdivia, April 12, 1592. In Medina, José Toribio. (1896) Collection of unpublished documents for the history of Chile, from Magellan's voyage to the battle of Maipo, 1518-1818. Collected and published by J.T. Medina, Imprenta Ercilla, Santiago. p. 336.

leave no children, this dowry should be returned to the chaplaincy. We know that the young woman used this economic benefit to marry Juan Chico^{12, 13}

Doña Marina knew what she was doing in economic terms and boasted about it. In her will, she mentions Licenciado Calderón, whom she recognizes lent for her service by taking gold, 40 Indians from her encomienda of La Serena, pointing out that she obtained little profit from it; adding that Calderón himself took advantage of a vineyard that she owned in the city of Concepción. All of which gives us an account of the business she carried out in life, with various subjects and areas of the Captaincy General of Chile, always keeping a detailed account of her transactions. In short, Marina was a great asset manager, who knew about economic transactions and made substantial profits in it.¹⁴

The second strong woman of the colonial period, administrator of goods is Doña Agueda Flores, famous for her ancestry, for herself and for her offspring, since Agueda was the daughter of the chieftain Elvira de Talagante, of Inca descent, and the German conquistador Bartolomé Flores. Married to Pedro Lisperguer, a rich encomendero of German origin, who had arrived in Chile with Don García Hurtado de Mendoza. She later became the grandmother of Catalina de los Ríos and Lisperguer, the famous Quintrala. "Águeda Flores, the daughter of the first benefactor of the hospital of Santiago and the chiefta, was a good woman, who had many sons and daughters" (Vicuña Mackenna, 1950). His father owned a house in Santiago, which he had built in 1558, two bread mills and several lands in the vicinity. (Thayer Ojeda, 1939: 32), highlighting the

encomiendas of Talagante and Putagán. (Amunátegui, 1910: 87)

When his father died on November 11, 1585, he inherited the encomienda of Putagán (Thayer Ojeda, 1939: 48), among other properties, including block No. 2 in downtown Santiago, where his father introduced advances in agriculture, and in the raising of horses and pigs; built one of the first mills in Santiago, founded the first chapel and a cart factory. In addition, Don Bartolomé owned an estate and vineyards near the current Cerro Santa Lucía (Thayer Ojeda, 1939).

For her part, her husband, Captain Pedro Lisperguer, had received in reward for his services in the Captaincy General of Chile, two encomiendas, one south of Maule, called Los Cauquenes, and close to that of Putagán, which belonged to his father-in-law; and another of Puelches or northern Patagonian Indians (Lenz, 1910:553).¹⁵

According to Indian legislation, once Bartolomé Flores died, his encomiendas and those of his son-in-law were merged into a single body and were for the benefit of his descendants, against strict provisions of the King of Spain, who, by Real Cédula of 1573, had ordered that the encomendero who married a woman encomendera had to choose between the natives of his distribution and those of his wife.¹⁶

Agueda was, without a doubt, a woman ahead of her time, administrator of goods, possessed gifts not awarded to the women of the time. In this sense, through the will we can observe not only how she inherits numerous and substantial assets, but also how she improves them and as her carnal inheritance died, she was positioning herself in

¹² Testament of Marina Ortiz de Gaete, wife who was Pedro de Valdivia, April 12, 1592. In Medina, José Toribio. (1896) Collection of unpublished documents for the history of Chile, from Magellan's voyage to the battle of Maipo, 1518-1818. Collected and published by J.T. Medina, Imprenta Ercilla, Santiago. p. 337.

¹³ Testament of Juan Chico de Peñaloza, dictated on August 7, 1625. In: AFEES, vol. 154, 187v

¹⁴ Testament of Marina Ortiz de Gaete, wife who was Pedro de Valdivia, April 12, 1592. In Medina,

José Toribio. (1896) Collection of unpublished documents for the history of Chile, from Magellan's voyage to the battle of Maipo, 1518-1818. Collected and published by J.T. Medina, Imprenta Ercilla, Santiago. p. 337 and 338.

¹⁵ Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Audiencia de Chile (ACh), 51, N° 1.

¹⁶ Compilation of Laws of the Indies, Law 7th Title 11, Book 6

property as administrator par excellence and even tutor of a new generation. This meant that at her death, she ¹⁷was constituted as one of the richest people in Chile, both for her own assets, as well as for the others she managed, highlighting lands in Peñalolén and farms in Ñuñoa, becoming one of the most powerful women of the Captaincy General of Chile in the Colonial era.¹⁸

Doña Águeda was curator and tutor of the already famous Catalina de los Ríos. For the same reason, it is not surprising the gifts and gifts she inherited from her grandmother, not to mention character. For the same reason, she became one of the strongest women in colonial society. Doña ¹⁹Catalina lived between 1603 and 1605, that is, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and has been considered one of the most controversial figures of the Colony in Chile. "His nickname of Quintrala is more famous than his name and corresponds to the one that secular generations made a saint and sign of reprehensible conduct." (Massone, 1994: 115).

The will of Catalina de Los Ríos was made in Santiago in 1665, through closed clauses. In it, she acknowledges being the daughter of Captain Gonzalo de Los Ríos and Catalina Flores y Lisperguer. He acknowledges in the document we²⁰are acknowledging as "that I have borrowed a gold emerald button from the general field master Don Fernando (...) the quantity of which will appear on my papers; command is charged." A not minor detail is that Doña Catalina kept a record of her transactions, as did the two cases of women administrators mentioned above.²¹

The goods also served to ensure the soul's stay in the afterlife (Roger de Cardinal, 1989; Broidapp,

1989) and this was clear in the testament of the controversial colonial figure, because "I command that twenty thousand pesos be imposed on my haciendas or other free ones to census so that with the income of the principal that I mount they tell me perpetually forever and ever, for my soul, for that of the said my husband for those of my (...) and persons of my charge and obligation 150 masses prayed and seven sung on the days of the following festivities: one on the day of San Ilafonso, another fourteen of May, another on the day of Señor San Agustín or in his octave, another on the day of Santa Catalina mártir, another on the day of Santa Catalina de Siena; another on St. Nicholas Day or his octave; another on the day of the conception of the Blessed Virgin"²²

I send to the said Gonzalo de los Ríos y Covarrubias the main plot of my house that is on the corner with the houses of the country master Don Francisco de Borrowed; command that Arévalo Briseño adjust (...) and on the other with houses of the general commissioner Don Bartolomé Maldonado street in the middle and likewise two slaves, male and female ... and twelve saucers, two fountains, a salt shaker, a jug, two candlesticks, two scrapie, two potties and six spoons of my service, all of silver all of which is administered by the said captain Martín de Urquiza until the said Don Gonzalo de los Ríos y Covarrubias, my nephew has said age.²³

Catalina owned in addition to the plot in the city, a large hacienda in "La Ligua with its major and minor cattle and a chacara that I have two leagues from this city in the payment of Tobalaba with its cellars vessel and wine that will be found in it. Likewise, I declare by my goods the said houses

¹⁷ See "Lawsuit of the protector of natives against the goods of General Gonzalo de los Ríos and his heirs for a debt that responds Doña Águeda as curator and tutor of her granddaughter, Doña Catalina de los Ríos on October 12, 1624; National Archives, Royal Audience Fund (in front ANFRA), ANFRA, 1047, piece 1

¹⁸ Archivo Nacional, Fondo Escribanos de Santiago, hereinafter ANFES, vol. 70, f. 222

¹⁹ ANFRA, volume 1047, piece 1.

²⁰ Transcription of the will of Catalina de los Ríos, January 16, 1665. National Archives. Notary Fund of Santiago. Volume 262, page 39.

²¹ Transcription of the will of Catalina de los Ríos, January 16, 1665. National Archives. Notary Fund of Santiago. Volume 262, page 40.

²² Transcription of the will of Catalina de los Ríos, January 16, 1665. National Archives. Notary Fund of Santiago. Volume 262, pages 40 and 40v.

²³ Transcription of the will of Catalina de los Ríos, January 16, 1665. National Archives. Notary Fund of Santiago. Volume 262, pages 40v and 41.

of my dwelling and another plot where my aunt Doña Magdalena Flores used to live, now deceased, bordering with the said my plot and with the houses of the said general Don Juan de Covarrubias street in the middle. The slaves found and other goods." Material goods that give us an account of economic and purchasing power. This undoubtedly demanded a great effort, because not only did he manage the haciendas²⁴, but also what was produced in it.

In the will we also find vestige of his business or commercial transactions, as he established when he pointed out that: "I declare that I owe Captain Don Juan Barros the price of a good horse that he gave me to send Don Diego de Carvajal to Lima my nephew, senior courier of Peru and five hundred pesos that he borrowed me; command to adjust the value of the said horse and also what the aforesaid owes me that the captain will give reason (...) and pay him what is owed to him and be thrown from the lands that aresaid to have occupied in the bliss my stay of La Ligua.²⁵

Before dying, Doña Catalina assured her nephew Don Gonzalo de Los Ríos y Covarrubias, since she had no children. For this, she stipulated that: "I send to the said Gonzalo de los Ríos y Covarrubias the main plot of my house that is on the corner with the houses of the country master Don Francisco de Borrowed; command that Arévalo Briseño adjust (...) and on the other with houses of the general commissioner Don Bartolomé Maldonado street in the middle and likewise two slaves, male and female ... and twelve dishes, two fountains, a salt shaker, a jug, two candlesticks, two scrapie, two potties and six spoons of those of my service, all of silver all of which is

administered by the said captain Martín de Urquiza until the said Don Gonzalo de los Ríos y Covarrubias, my nephew, has said age." It draws attention to the detail of what was stipulated by the famous "Quintrala" for his nephew, not only leaves him a property but physical elements of great value at the time, all of which administered by Captain Martín de Urquiza, great friend and faithful executor of the wishes of Catalina, whom he also rewards in his will with twelve thousand pesos, eight reales. Captain Urquiza was the executor that Catalina entrusted for her post-mortem sales, and his degree of confidence was such that he points out that he would be the guarantor that "there is no fraud in sales"^{26,27,28,29}

Final Thoughts

The present research allowed to demolish the myth that women in colonial times were subordinate to the control of men. Barraza and Contreras (2007) state that the woman had her assets at the time of testifying, administering both accounts payable and accounts receivable, buying or selling assets, complaining or participating in judicial matters, such as litigation. Marina, Águeda and Catalina are symbols of strength and change in the functional gaze of women during the colonial period in America.

The women in this research not only managed large assets often inherited and others from their own dowry, but also managed and even increased them. They never stopped helping others and

²⁴ Transcription of the will of Catalina de los Ríos, January 16, 1665. National Archives. Notary Fund of Santiago. Volume 262, p. 41.

²⁵ Transcription of the will of Catalina de los Ríos, January 16, 1665. National Archives. Notary Fund of Santiago. Volume 262, p. 41.

²⁶ Transcription of the will of Catalina de los Ríos, January 16, 1665. National Archives. Notary Fund of Santiago. Volume 262, page 39. In the Catalina she pointed out that: "I declare that I was married and veiled with the said country master Don Alonso Carvajal Campofrío from whose marriage

we had for son Don Gonzalo de los Ríos who died at the age of 9 or 10 years with which I have no ascending heirs or descendants."

²⁷ Transcription of the will of Catalina de los Ríos, January 16, 1665. National Archives. Notary Fund of Santiago. Volume 262, pages 40 and 41.

²⁸ Transcription of the will of Catalina de los Ríos, January 16, 1665. National Archives. Notary Fund of Santiago. Volume 262, p. 41v.

²⁹ Transcription of the will of Catalina de los Ríos, January 16, 1665. National Archives. Notary Fund of Santiago. Volume 262, p. 42.

prepared to die with dignity by ensuring their stay beyond life.

The documentary analysis allowed us to discover that these women were ordained and aware of their heritage, they managed to administer encomiendas, slaves, territories in the city and outside it. We maintain that their strength and drive was often punished by traditional historiography, either forgetting them, as was the case of Marina Ortiz de Gaete; minimizing their actions, in the case of Águeda Flores or simply installing on them a true "black legend" of fear and hatred, as was the case of Catalina de Los Ríos, popularly remembered as "La Quintrala".

In short, women managers in the West proved to be effective and competent leaders, and their legacy remains a reminder of women's ability and determination at a time when they were expected to fulfill limiting roles. These women were pioneers in their time and paved the way for future generations of women in economics and politics. Despite the difficulties, many women managed assets effectively and managed to succeed in their businesses. Some women even became important business leaders (Águeda Flores, Catalina de Los Ríos) and contributed significantly to the growth and development of the economy of the time (Marina Ortiz de Gaete). Overall, women's property management in the Netherlands demonstrates women's ability and determination to overcome the barriers imposed by society and succeed in difficult times.

In conclusion, the present research allowed us to analyze women very different from those languid and demure figures (Ferro and Quirós, 1994) that historians have stereotyped over time. The strength that women printed to protect and multiply the family patrimony shows their level of empowerment and clarity in the face of the commitment that society presented to them. Assuming with gallantry and impetus, functions that for the time of the Colonia were subscribed only for men.

The perspectives of future research are related to the need to generate deep reflections on the impact on the colonial economy, exercised thanks to the administration of heritage by women. The doors are then open so that, based on historical

documents such as Escribanos de Santiago, Real Audiencia and Contaduría Mayor 1^a and 2^a, among others, new analyses are generated that allow today's society to know the effective and efficient work of Women Administrators in the colonial era.

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