

# A possible mirror of sanctity in colonial Bahia: Mother Vitória da Encarnação (1661-1715)

*Um espelho possível de santidade na Bahia colonial:  
madre Vitória da Encarnação (1661-1715)*

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## RESUMO

O artigo procura analisar a obra de d. Sebastião Monteiro da Vide publicada em 1720, que trata da vida virtuosa e da morte santa de Vitória da Encarnação, freira do Convento de Santa Clara do Desterro. O objetivo principal é comparar a narrativa em foco com hagiografias e modelos de devoção influentes no contexto do período, como aqueles propiciados pelas vidas das santas Catarina de Siena e Rosa de Lima.

Palavras-chave: modelos de santidade no período moderno; Igreja e religiosidade na Colônia; religião e gênero.

## ABSTRACT

The article seeks to analyze the work published by D. Sebastião Monteiro da Vide's work in 1720, which deals with virtuous life and saintly death of Vitória da Encarnação, a nun in the convent of Santa Clara do Desterro. The main objective is to compare the narrative focusing on hagiographies and devotionals models influential at that time, such those provided by the live of St. Catherine of Siena and St. Rose of Lima.

Keywords: Models of sanctity in the Modern age; the Catholic Church and religiosity in the colonies; religion and gender.

In the preparation of a framework of the models of female sanctity in Portuguese America, the trajectory of Mother Vitória da Encarnação cannot be ignored.<sup>1</sup> Among all the virtuous women from the colonial epoch whose lives have left records, that of Vitória was the one which produced the most authoritative testimonies. Her act of profession in the Convent of Santa Clara do Desterro in Bahia provided the subject for a sermon by the Carmelite preacher Frei Eusébio de Matos, published during the life of Mother Vitória (Matos, 1694, p.1-43). Moreover, a few years after her death, the Archbishop of Bahia, d. Sebastião Monteiro da Vide, published a pamphlet which compiled the virtuous actions of the Clarissa nun (Vide, 1720).

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The deliberate projection of Mother Vitória da Encarnação through the publication of various actions from her virtuous life contrasts with the restricted number of studies about the Convent of Santa Clara do Desterro. Moreover, scholars have clung almost entirely to the narrative produced by the metropolitan of Bahia, without seeking to add other sources. Leaving aside some occasional comments by other authors, the most significant analyses of Vitória da Encarnação were prepared by Anna Amélia Vieira Nascimento and Evergton Sales Souza. The first author's study is more descriptive, even though it sought to relate the elements of religious practices in the Bahian cloister to the aesthetic traditions of the Old World. In a short passage the author presents an argument that requires more attention: "between the lines in the biography of Mother Vitória is the archbishop's perfect knowledge of the of the disagreements between the religious of the monastery, which happened frequently" (Nascimento, 1994, p.254). The analysis of the practices of asceticism assumes clearer contours in the work of the second historian, which provides valuable indications which deserve greater deepening. Certain characteristics of Monteiro da Vide's work, such as the fact that it was published in Rome, and the parallel established by the Bahian Archbishop between Mother Vitória da Bahia and St. Rose of Lima, justify Evergton Souza's conclusion that the publication of the pious narrative may have been aimed at starting a beatification process.<sup>2</sup> Detailing the aesthetic practices of Mother Vitória da Encarnação, the author highlighted the influence possibly exercised by the "model of sanctity of St. Catherine of Siena." Rose of Lima was considered in life a second Catherine of Siena, since in addition the common connection with the Third Order of St. Dominic, the spiritual lives of both were similar due to their precocious vow of virginity, the extreme use of fasts and corporal mortifications, absolute humility, coincidence of dates of births, etc. (Graziano, 2004, p.43-48). Despite these indications, Evergton Souza did not systematically exploit the parallels between the Monteiro da Vide's narrative and the hagiographies of Rose of Lima. Nonetheless, perceived in these narratives is the echo "of a pattern which was fully developed at its time."<sup>3</sup>

This paper hopes to complement some of the conclusions of the authors cited. In first place, even accepting the existence of a diffuse model of aesthetic spirituality in the period (Dias, 1960, v.1, p.449-452; Bellini, 2006, p.81-105; Gélis, 2010, p.19-130), which had simultaneously influenced Monteiro da Vide and the hagiographies of St. Rose of Lima, there exist elements in the sources which allow the identification of a precise correspondence between the two reports. This was done by collating two Spanish editions of the work of the

Dominican friar Leonard Hansen. He was one of the first hagiographers to report the spiritual deeds of St. Rose of Lima (Hansen, 1665; 1668). Second, it is sought, based on other evidence, to reconstitute the religious experiences of the nun from the Santa Clara do Desterro Convent, starting with an analysis of the works of Friar Eusébio de Matos and the close ties between the Jesuit college in Bahia and the Convent.

In the dominions of Castile and beyond, the impact of the divulgation of the heroic virtues and miracles practiced by the beatified Peruvian Rosa de Santa Maria, who became St. Rose of Lima after her canonization in 1671, seem to have been significant.<sup>4</sup> For the standards of the time, recognition by the Holy See occurred in record time. Living between 1586 and 1617, the hagiographers recorded that at her funeral, Rosa was publically acclaimed as a saint by the population of Lima. In 1630 the canonization process was opened in Rome, with the documentation being presented four years later to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. She was beatified in 1668, and two years later was declared by Pope Clemente X patron saint of America and the Philippines. This chronology was contrary to the new norms of canonization drafted by Pope Urban VIII, according to which, among other requirements, there had to be an interval of at least 50 years between the death and the judgment of the sanctity of a candidate.<sup>5</sup>

The only woman born on the American continent to merit canonization during the colonial period, St. Rose of Lima's reputation also extended to the Portuguese kingdom, at a time when the War of Restoration (1640-1668) had only just ended. Only five years after the publication of *Vita mirabilis mors pretiosa venerabilis Sororis Rosa de S. Maria* (1664), the first edition of the most influent hagiography of the Peruvian saint, written by Leonard Hansen, a Portuguese translation was released. In 1674 a new edition of this translation appeared, a sign of the interest this work awoke in the Portuguese public.<sup>6</sup> In 1670, the *fidalgo* Antônio de Sousa de Macedo published in Lisbon an abbreviated narrative of the life of the Peruvian saint.<sup>7</sup> The catalogue of the National Library of Portugal includes two sermons published in the country immediately after the beatification of Rosa de Santa Maria (Tomaz, 1669; Roubam, 1670).

Before focusing on the narrative of the Archbishop of Bahia, where parallels can be found between St. Rose of Lima and Mother Vitória da Encarnação, we need to analyze a text published at the end of the seventeenth century, which is the first testimony of the virtues of the Clarissa nun. It is a sermon preached in the Santa Clara do Desterro Convent by the Carmelite friar Eusébio de Matos, on the day of the Eleven Thousand Virgins. On the occasion

of these festivities – which divulged by the Jesuits, alluded to the martyrdom of St. Ursula and her other companions –, Vitória da Encarnação professed in the cloister of the Clarissas of Bahia alongside her older sister, Maria da Conceição. At no moment in the sermon did the name of the two sisters united by blood and religious vows figure, the identification was made by Monteiro da Vide.<sup>8</sup> The research of Anna Amélia Nascimento shows that the baptism names of the two sisters were Maria da Conceição Bixarxe and Vitória Bixarxe. They had entered Santa Clara Convent on 29 September 1686 and after completing their novitiate, they professed on the feast day of the Eleven Thousand Virgins the following year (Vide, 1720, p.19-20).

One of the principal arguments made by the Carmelite and former Jesuit was the comparison between the martyrdom of St. Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins and the sacrifice made by the two sisters who delivered themselves to the cloister of Santa Clara do Desterro Convent (cf. Leite, 1945, t.V, p.122). Aiming simultaneously to delight, instruct, and persuade the faithful listening to him, the orator sought in an ingenious manner to convince his audience that the martyrdom of the legendary companions of St. Ursula was less than that of the two sisters:

We know now what was the most heroic point, the most sublime, and the most exquisite of the martyrdom of the eleven thousand virgins. Some will believe that this consists in their death, but it is not this, since even though it is martyrdom, the most arduous martyrdom does not consist of dying; but in what? ... For the martyr to be a true and real martyr, since this involves suffering, to suffer you have to feel, to feel you have to live: therefore, with all the rigor, the greatest rigor of the martyr does not consist in that final instant in which they die, but in those space in which they still live... so it does not consist so much as their rigor in losing their life and in suffering death, as feeling death and achieving life. (Matos, 1694, p.13-14)

Developing the idea of St. Basil, according to whom, the “religious are live martyrs,” the author places himself among those who defend the superiority of heroic virtues – in particular that of obedience, considered the most important vow of the religious life – over the sacrifice of blood and miracles (Po-Chia Hsia, 2005, p.133-140). The so-called ‘white martyrdom’ became an valorized ideal of perfection during the Lower Middle Ages onwards, and was strengthened in the context of the Catholic Reform. According to Eusébio de Matos, the religious ideal was the one which practiced unlimited humility:

This is the greatest difficulty of live martyrs and the greatest obligation of True Clergy; they should not only subject themselves to the will of their Prelates, but also resign their will; above all they should not only resign themselves to what they are ordered to do [by their Prelates], they have to want the same that the Prelates want. (Matos, 1694, p.15)

Corporal mortifications, such as fasting and penance, became a recurrent instrument to guarantee the submission of the body and spirit to an ideal of the holy life. Impelled by the Catholic Reformation, aesthetic exercises reached their climax in the seventeenth century, to judge by the appearance of a myriad of works about the lives of virtuous men and virgins who followed these practices, extending them to believers. Particularly common amongst members of missionary orders, such as the Jesuits, Franciscans, Oratorians, and Discalced Carmelites, the ideal of aestheticism transformed post-Tridentine Catholicism into a 'religion of the cross,' marked by exaltation and the imitation of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. The multiplication of penitential processions, stations of the cross, and above all the leading place assumed by literature about and images of the Passion, were the most visible manifestations of spirituality then in vogue. According to Kessel, the intensity with which devout women felt the pains of Christ was above the feeling of men. Remaining closer to the rituals of birth and death, for these women "the body of Christ became their body, His passion their own passions" (Tavares, 1996; Châtelier, 1995, p.53-64 e 129-153; Marques, 2000, p.570-580; Kessel, 1994, p.216).

In 1701 in Bahia the church of the College of the Company of Jesus had a set of seven images of the Passion which were successively shown to the faithful every Friday during Lent. The congregation also heard on these occasions spiritual practices prepared by the priests from the Company (Leite, 1945, p.130). Eusébio de Matos, when he was still connected to the Jesuits, occupied the pulpit on the occasion of these religious exercises, with his most famous sermon being *Ecce Homo* (Matos, 1677). In this oratory piece, the preacher alludes to the scene of the Gospel in which Christ appears to the people with a crown of thorns and tied hands. In accordance with the directives of *devotio moderna* spirituality, Matos calls attention to the moving nature of that representation, meant to attract believers to the emotion and to conversion. If the suffering Christ was incapable of changing sinners, Matos reminds them that they would have to account to him as the rigorous judge of their sins (Matos, 2007, p.17-28). Later becoming part of the Order of Mount Carmel, Eusébio de Matos expanded on the theme quite broadly in the sermons of the

Stations of the Cross. In a set of five sermons, covering successively “the Garden”, “Christ at the Pillar,” the “Coronation of Christ,” “*Ecce Homo*” and “Christ with the Cross on his back” (Matos, 1694, p.218-350).

Living in this devotional environment were the sisters Vitória and Maria da Conceição. According to the work of Monteiro da Vide, at a very early age Vitória is reported to have said to her father that it would be easier to cut off her head than for her to choose a nun’s life. Alarmed by the blunt refusal of his daughter to follow such an honorable path, her father took advice from his confessor, the Jesuit priest Fr. João de Paiva. The latter calmed him, reassuring him that his daughter would be a great nun. The bishop’s report showed how after this Vitória became ever more inclined to the cloister, based on various dreams and revelations which showed her the excellence of being a nun (Vide, 1720, p.10-17). This conflict ridden moment of conversion is completely absent from the hagiographic reports about St. Rose of Lima. In these the logic of predestination dominates, in other words, since a very tender age the Peruvian virgin had decided to abandon the world and achieve elevated spiritual benefits (Sánchez Lora, 1988, p.411).

The influence of the spiritual orientation of the Company of Jesus on the devotional inclinations of Vitória can be seen in various testimonies. In first place, there appears the priest just mentioned, João de Paiva, who before dying in 1681 had the fame of a saint, according to the description of a visitor from the Company of Jesus: “all spirit, a shadow of a body. Assiduous in mortifications and in prayer, day and night. While he had strength, his care was charity with others” (Leite, 1945, p.82). Fr. Eusébio de Matos, whose sermon on the Eleven Thousand Virgins was preached during the religious profession of the sisters Vitória and Maria da Conceição, was also linked to the Company of Jesus in Bahia, leaving it in 1677 (Leite, 1945, p.123). The holding of the ritual of entering Santa Clara Convent on the day dedicated to the martyrdom of St. Ursula and her companions may indicate the devotional preference shared by the sisters Vitória and Maria in relation to a cult which was particularly linked to the Jesuits (Martins, s.d., p.116; Duarte, 2011). In the devotion which Vitória nurtured for the Blessed Sacrament there appears in a more secure manner the link which the nun had with the devotional practices spread by the Jesuits. Present since the beginnings of the Company, in 1693 a Jesuit priest created in Bahia “a perpetual adoration, or *laus perene*, every hour of the day and night in honor of the Anointed Lord.” In the cloister of Santa Clara Convent, Maria da Encarnação devotedly followed that devotional exercise, dedicating herself to the adoration of the Eucharist 50 hours a week (Vide, 1720, p.40-42).<sup>9</sup>

According to the narrative of the Archbishop of Bahia, Mother Vitória da Encarnação did the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola every year, following in this practice the direction of Jesuit priests. Monteiro da Vide reveals that as well as this the nun always confessed with the priests of the Company, “choosing for this purpose those whose virtue she had a better conceit of” (Vide, 1720, p.39-40). At one point in the narrative, the Archbishop of Bahia even reveals the name of the ordinary confessor of Mother Vitória: the Jesuit priest Fr. Jacobo Cocleo who, according to Serafim Leite, had entered the Province of Brazil in 1652 and professed in 1665 (Vide, 1720, p.56-57; Leite, 1945, p.289, 294 e 311).

After contextualizing of the spiritual practices of Vitória da Encarnação, their content needs to be detailed in a more systematic manner in order to collate them with the supposed devotional model, in other words the hagiography of St. Rose of Lima. Echoing recommendations contained in the sermon which Eusébio de Matos preached in the profession of vows ceremony, the narrative of the metropolitan of Bahia highlighted the virtue of humility in Vitória’s religious life. Some *exempla* or edifying cases are particularly instructive in this respect. According to the archbishop, the nun exercised the “low offices,” sweeping the “dormitories, kitchen, and gardens.” She also cleaned “the pipes taking the sludge from them with her own hands, as happy and content as if she had never seen in her life such cleaning.” In addition to finding satisfaction in the exercise of repugnant or painful occupations, Vitória sought within the walls of the cloister the company of women with a much more simple condition, “serving and eating equally with them” (Vide, 1720, p.21-24). It is not clarified if these were servants to the community – in other words, “white, poor, orphan girls” who sent petitions to be allowed into the convent to serve the nuns there – or private servants – who, “seen and taken to be maidens, with no other reputation,” could be free, slaves, or freed slaves (Nascimento, 1995, p.115-116). In another passage in Monteiro da Vide’s work it is clear that Vitória da Encarnação kept in her company a mulatto servant, who was expelled from the cloister suffering from madness, returning to the nun’s maternal house. After being cured she asked to return to the cloister, receiving for this support from Mother Vitória, who guaranteed that the servant had not lost her judgment. Since Vitória’s opinion was held in high esteem by the prelates, they allowed the servant “enter once again, waiving the right to prohibit students and servants a similar reentry” (Vide, 1720, p.96-100). In other tracts of the narrative Vitória’s contacts with slaves is explicit. On an undetermined occasion, “two blacks appeared pockmarked, one

belonging to Madre Vitória and the other to her sister.” Due to the threats of contagion, the other nuns asked that they be expelled from the cloister. Madre Vitória, disagreeing, answered them: “let the black girls be in her Cell, she would cure them” (Vide, 1720, p.100-101). When she held the position of *provisora* (responsible for provisions), she exercised it in an exemplary way her humility with a woman in similar position:

They were cutting the meat for the nuns when a slave took the food for her lady, and giving it to her, the slave did not want to accept it, and throwing it at her so furiously, that it happened to hit in the face the said Madre Vitória Provisora with such force (since she her head bowed) that it immediately made her not red with embarrassment, but black for being indigenously hurt. Those who were present were angry with the inadvertent slave, but the patient and virtuous *provisora* without complaining, nor altering her mood, said with all gentleness: What is this? (Vide, 1720, p.25-26)

In the same plane of humility, Monteiro da Vide’s hagiography situated the practice of the virtue of obedience of Vitória da Encarnação. The Archbishop of Bahia compared the perfect observance, on the part of the nun, of the three vows of religious life, – chastity, poverty, and obedience – to the “the three carnations on the Cross of Religion.” In relation to the final vow, she resigned her will to that of her prelates, confessors, companions of the cloister and, as has been seen, even the convent servants and slaves. In relation to the confessors, she scrupulously did all she was ordered to, even in questions of no importance (Vide, 1720, p.87-92). Regarding poverty, Monteiro da Vide narrates that the nun used only one habit, “the roughest one, and it was short (when religious modesty allowed) and patched.” During 20 years in the Convent she used one small cell with a length of 12 palms and a width of six, containing a bench with a width of three palms which served as her bed. To warm herself, she had a thick mantle and a sheet which she wove with “her own hands” and as a pillow a hard log. She have very few personal possessions (Vide, 1720, p.83-87).<sup>10</sup>

In the republication of Monteiro da Vide’s narrative prepared by Antonio de Santa Maria Jaboatão, in addition to formal changes and subtle additions of content, the Franciscan chronicler introduced a division into chapters absent from the original. Among the chapter titles added was “The many disciplines and rigorous penances of Mother Vitória,” which contemplated the description of some of the aesthetic practices of the Clarissa nun (Jaboatão,



1862, p.695-697). Nevertheless, in other points in the narrative penitentiary exercises multiplied, clearly showing the importance they occupied in spiritual life and in the perception of sanctity at that time. Starting to analyze the first citation alluded to, Monteiro da Vide describes the instruments of martyrdom which inflicted suffering on the body of Vitória, whose “Holy Soul armored with shields with these arms secured everything against the invasion of enemies” (Vide, 1720, p.32-33). The intense and frequent application of corporal disciplines left the marks of Vitória’s blood in the convent choir, who once tried unsuccessfully to hide them. She fasted on bread and water in Lent, every Friday and three days of the week.

These more general characteristics, present with a few variations in other reports of religious perfection from the period, can be complemented with more specific descriptions of penitentiary exercises. Visible in these is sensitivity to the suffering and fragility of Christ, as well as the occasional attempt to imitate his final days. According to the Archbishop of Bahia, after a vision or dream – in which Christ had said to Vitória: “spouse of mine follow my steps” – she decided to start in the Convent the procession of the ‘Holy Stations of the Cross’ (Vide, 1720, p.42-44). Leaving aside the motivations of the hagiographic narrative, Vitória da Encarnação could have found inspiration in the examples available in the Bahian city, where since the beginning of the seventeenth century the Calced Carmelites had held the procession of Our Lord of the Stations of the Cross (Souza, 1977, cap. VII, p.18-22). At the same time there was already in Carmo Convent a brotherhood dedicated to devotion to the Stations of the Cross, whose members were greeted with a sermon from Friar Eusébio de Matos. What stands out in this narrative is how Vitória accompanied the devotional exercise of Lent, namely by carrying a cross on her back and a crown of thorns on her head. To emphasize the efforts of the nun, the Archbishop of Bahia inserts in the narrative a typically hagiographic anecdote, which emphasize this deed of heroic sanctity:

The cross which accompanied the procession, and which was most often used, was so heavy, that only two nuns could carry it, as experience showed, since asking it from her on a certain occasion, and both carrying it, they felt so weakened after the procession, they did not dare to ask her a second time. Telling her while returning it to her: “Mother never again, since God does not want us to kill ourselves, we do not know how you can put up with it!” (Vide, 1720, p.46-47)

Devotion to the Stations of the Cross and the Passion assumed other meanings in Vitória's spiritual life. First, in the cloister a small chapel was built to house the image of Our Lord of the Stations of the Cross with the due decency." After this a Stations of the Cross was organized, an analogous devotional exercise, which sought to reproduce in a more authentic manner the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary:

So that all her steps would be in memory of the sacred Passion, Mother Vitória provided another Stations of the Cross, as well as the common one, which began in the said Chapel, went through her small and humble cell, and ended in a small garden, where with the permission of the Prelate she built it, surrounding it with various small trees and plants, and in the middle a little mound with many flowers and among them a cross, which she called her Mount Calvary. (Vide, 1720, p.49-50)

The construction of hermitages on convent fences was a practice adopted in the provinces of the Discalced Carmelite friars. Like Teresa, the founding saint of the order, they sought to "enjoy God more in solitude."<sup>11</sup> In Mother Vitória, 'Christocentrism' inclined to the most tender and sensitive representations of the Savior also found an echo in the devotion to the Birth of the Child Jesus.<sup>12</sup> To honor him, in addition to building her *lapinha* (a sort of extended crib), she organized in the Convent a novena which extended from 16 - 24 December and was repeated in other months of the year (Vide, 1720, p.54-56).

Leaving to one side the devotion aimed at the souls in Purgatory (Souza, 2011, p.77-84), already detailed in the historiography, and which finds few parallels in the female models of sanctity of that period, the general lines of the religious experience of Vitória da Encarnação was characterized. To allow a more complete parallel with the life of St. Rose of Lima, what now needs to be commented on is the death with a whiff of sanctity of the Clarissa nun. Due to the stereotypical characteristics that the description assumes at this moment in hagiographic narratives, what will be prioritized here is the analysis of the supposed miracles that occurred at the place of burial. With the news of the death, many believers flocked to Santa Clara Convent, bringing "beads, medals, scapulars, crosses, and scarves," with which they touched the body of the nun. These relics were afterwards used to cure certain diseases. This was the case of one nun who, suffering from a throat ailment which the doctors could not manage to cure, prayed for the intercession of Mother Vitória. After, "I

ordered a small piece of clay from her grave to be dissolved in a cup of water, and she drank it with Faith, and wet the swollen outside part, a wonderful success! Soon the pains were relieved... and she woke up with the tumor gone, with religious awe” (Vide, 1720, p.136-137).

The narratives about St. Rose of Lima analyzed here are Spanish translations of the work of Leonard Hansen, which was highlighted in the subtitle of these works, as mentioned above. Nevertheless, *Vida admirable y muerte preciosa* published in 1665 is clearly more abbreviated than *La Bien aventurada Rosa peruana de S. Maria*, published three years later. The level of detail supplied in the second narrative explains its inclusion in this comparative study. As other scholars have observed, the efforts of Hansen to present St. Rose of Lima as an almost complete copy of St. Catarina of Sienna is patent. The latter, canonized in 1461, was included among the lay penitents who practiced fasting, discipline, and devotional exercises linked to the imitation of Christ.<sup>13</sup> While St. Rose of Lima fitted into this type of lay penitent, remaining in her parents’ house while wearing the habit of a sister of the Third Order of St. Dominic, Vitória da Encarnação formally entered the convent cloister, governed by the Rule of St. Clare.

In the narratives about St. Rose of Lima, four points should be highlighted in order to allow a more systematic comparison with the history of the Clarissa nun: humility/obedience; the practices of aestheticism, including those dedicated to the Passion; devotion to the Birth of Christ; and the description of certain miracles which occurred near the tomb. In relation to humility, it is important to consider the analysis of a scholar of the *Life* of St. Catherine of Siena. Written by the confessor and hagiographer Raymond de Capua, it was translated into Castilian in Alcalá, in 1511. The impact of the work was tremendous, and even influenced the writings of Santa Teresa d’Ávila. The mode of spirituality inferred in that *Life* “is measured in terms of the growth of the soul in humility and the corresponding supernatural rewards which the soul receives.” Divine omnipotence emerges in weaker beings, such as women, who thereby become the “vehicle for divine activity in the world” (Ahlgren, 2000, p.53 and 65). The language of humility and the instrumental authority of women formed an influential rhetoric for female narratives in the Early Modern period, appearing in a clear form in the hagiographies of St. Rose of Lima.

In relation to humility, the hierarchies of the colonial world showed the practice of this virtue to an extreme degree. According to the hagiographic account, Rosa obliged an indigenous servant, “rustic in condition, in a toilet in her house to step on her, trample on her, spit on her, hit her, and if anytime

she refused, she would make her by begging” (Hansen, 1665, p.10). If she knew of the existence “of some sick servant, of the slave of an acquaintance, she would bring her home, without any difference of nation, Spanish or Indian, mulattoes, even black slaves, without any disgust of sores” (Hansen, 1668, p.67). When she lived in the house of the accountant Gonzalo de Maza, his wife witnessed that “she always took herself for the least of those with her. And as such, she accepted everything, and for everything, not only to the father of the family, his wife, and his daughters, who were young girls, but also servants, and even the lowliest of slaves” (Hansen, 1668, p.41).

Regarding obedience, the greatest hagiographer of St. Rose provided a particularly significant *exemplum* of the practice of this virtue even after death. After the disappearance of a silver spoon, the prioress of the Convent of St. Catarina of Lima convent directed herself in the following manner to an image of St. Rose: “I order you in name of the full obedience that all those in this convent owe to me, that you make the missing silver spoon appear,” a request which was answered (Hansen, 1668, p.21). Hansen also highlights the submission of St. Rose to her parents. In relation to her mother, the practice of this virtue required great skill from Rose, since María de Oliva intended to send her to the “vain pomp” of the century. When she asked her daughter to place a garland of flowers on her head, Rose had put a needle within her tress, pressing it in such a form that it became an instrument of torment (Hansen, 1668, p.13-14).

Similar to St. Catherine of Siena, Rose later used a real crown of thorns, which was inspired by the contemplation of an image which exhibited the drama of Christ:

“Putting her eyes on and gazing intently at a pious image of Christ, *Ecce Homo*, the tender and devout compassion of what she saw... She stayed there contemplating the crown of thorns, which lay bloodily on the head of Christ... Called from this attention, she then built her first crown.” (Hansen, 1668, p.68).

According to the prototype of the medieval saint, the aesthetic practices of St. Rose of Lima reached paroxysm. Hansen first highlights that during Lent, Rose fasted on bread and water. In another section, he indicates that when “Lent arrives, she stopped eating bread altogether, only eating orange seeds.” Usually from Thursday to Saturday the day ended with a domestic prayer, unless any corporal needs made her absent herself from there. She could spend eight days eating only the Eucharist (Hansen, 1665, p.13-15). Corporal penitences were equally severe. Even though he recommended moderation, her confessor allowed her to flagellate herself with 5000 lashes over a short period

of a number of days, which is the same number that “Christ received for our sins in his Passion, according to what is piously believed” (Hansen, 1668, p.59). The habit of disciplining herself every night with iron chains was forbidden by her confessors (Hansen, 1665, p.16). In search of greater isolation, she obtained permission from her mother to build in the orchard or domestic garden a small cell, five feet in length and four in width, the narrowness of which was noticed by a confessor (Hansen, 1665, p.20-21).

The imitation of the Stations of the Cross of the Passion became an *idée fixe* for Rose of Lima. At night,

She walked through the garden, her feet bare, with a large cross on her shoulders; and not happy enough that they were all bruised, she let herself fall to her knees, hurting them against the ground, measuring in this way with intimate sighs and bitter tears the steps of the Via Sacra of Calvary. (Hansen, 1668, p.61)

Sensitivity towards the suffering of Christ also extended to his birth. According to the hagiographer, “Christ never looked poorer than in the shelter (*portalexo* in the original) in Bethlehem, from where he was reduced to a stable, a little one in his body, naked, shaking with cold, wrapped only in poor cloths” (Hansen, 1668, p.195).<sup>14</sup> This sounds very similar to a passage from the narrative of Monteiro da Vide. It thus provides a possible indication to support the principal argument of this work, in other words, that the prelate of Bahia had possibly based himself on the hagiographies of St. Rose to prepare the narrative about Vitória da Encarnação. Describing the practices of prayer and penitence with which Clarissa accompanied the novenas of the Birth of Christ, he observed that she prepared herself to shelter in her heart “the Most Holy Child, whom she contemplated shivering in the cold, with no shelter, in the middle of the night, in the rigorous weather of the frozen winter” (Vide, 1720, p.55-56; Jaboatão, 1862, p.708).

To end the comparison between the narratives of a hagiographical nature, a miraculous cure shortly after the death of St. Rose of Lima needs to be mentioned. This episode has many analogies with what was described above by Monteiro da Vide, about a Clarissa nun cured with clay from the grave of Vitória da Encarnação:

Such a cruel tonsillitis had swollen all the parts around guttural muscles of Iosepha de Zarate, a six year old girl, and with such rigor that she could neither swallow anything, nor open her mouth without much pain. The Surgeon Ortega was called, who having inspected the wound ... declared it to be incurable... Her

mother beside herself with fear to see that that hope was given up so quickly for the health of her daughter, with ardent feelings sent her quickly to Rose: after putting into water a bit of soil, that with this intent had been brought by her grandmother Ioespha from the tomb of the Virgin, who with a spoon [illegible] in the mouth of the girl. Who with a single drop could open her mouth without difficulty. (Hansen, 1668, p.440)

If the argument defended here is right, the parallels existing between the histories of Vitória da Encarnação and St. Rose of Lima are not casual. As has been argued by one author, the narratives about the latter were constructed in order to fit in with the prototype of sanctity of St. Catherine of Siena. This type of writing, which resembles a palimpsest, had the effect of expanding the chances of the canonization of the Peruvian virgin (Graziano, 2004, p.49). Similarly, the Archbishop of Bahia sought to select for his account those episodes, *exempla*, and devotions which were closest to the dominant model of female sanctity, legitimated by the Church. The veneration of the souls in purgatory was partially an exception, as has been pointed out. In addition to the two passages where there appears to be a closer correspondence between the lives of the two women, it is worth highlighting the intensity of the aesthetic exercises conferred by the use of the crown of thorns and the heavy crosses in the Stations of the Cross and Via Sacras, and the search to alleviate the physical suffering of slaves, servants, and the poor who were suffering from disease. Finally, it should be emphasized that the hagiographies of St. Rose of Lima and the works of spiritual perfection of other women are part of a common current of aesthetic spirituality, for which St. Catherine of Siena was the model to be imitated. The beatification and canonization of St. Rose constituted an updating of the model, attracting the attention of the hagiographer Monteiro da Vide, interested in associating the “most pure Rose” born in the east of South America with the “singular Vitória” from Bahia (Vide, 1720, p.8-9).

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This paper is part of a Research Project which has received APQ1 financial support from Faperj. The spelling of the Portuguese sources was modernized, though the use of capitals

in the original was maintained. With some small adaptation the titles of the works from that time were kept in the original.

<sup>2</sup> SOUZA, 2011, p.64-68. The purpose of the Archbishop of Bahia to seek in Rome the formal recognition of the sanctity of the Clarissa nun was also indicated by MORAES, 2010, t.II, p.466.

<sup>3</sup> SOUZA, 2011, p.70 e 73, respectively.

<sup>4</sup> ANGULÓ, 1917, p.68ss. For the seventeenth century alone the author counted 34 different editions which dealt with the life of Rose of Lima, published in Latin, Castilian, Italian, French, and Portuguese.

<sup>5</sup> MYERS, 2003, p.258-259. The so-called reforms, induced by Protestant criticism of the worship of saints, had the effect of making the canonization process slower and more documented. It also came to be better controlled by the authorities in Rome. Cf. PO-CHIA Hsia, 2005, p.132; WOODWARD, 1992, p.74.

<sup>6</sup> The translations mentioned are “*Vida admiravel e morte precioza do Bemaventurada Santa Roza de Santa Maria, natural da cidade de Lima ...* Portuguese translation by R. P. Mestre Fr. Domingos Freire, deputy in the Inquisition in Coimbra. Lisboa, Off. Ioam da Costa, 1669.” The second edition has an identical title and was published in 1674 by the same printer as the first. Cf. RODRIGUES, 1992, p.78-80. It was not possible to consult these editions.

<sup>7</sup> ANGULÓ, 1917, p.99. This is the *Epítome panegyrico de la vida admirable y muerte gloriosa de S. Rosa de Santa Maria, virgen dominicana ...* En Lisboa, con las licensas necessárias. En la Officina de Antonio Craesbeeck de Mello. Año de 1670.

<sup>8</sup> VIDE, 1720, § XIV, p.19-20. The Franciscan chronicler Jaboatão compiled the work of D. Sebastião Monteiro da Vide, introducing occasional alterations in the language of the text and in details of the narrative, joining paragraphs from the first edition and adding subtitles in the narrative. For this reason I prefer to cite the original text from the Archbishop of Bahia. Cf. JABOATÃO, 1862, v.III, p.648-746.

<sup>9</sup> In relation to this, cf. CHAHON, 2008, p.349-350.

<sup>10</sup> It is outside the aim of this paper to detail the formal aspects involved in the original edition of Monteiro da Vide. Nevertheless, some elements should be registered in the hope of future investigations. The precariousness of the 1720 edition calls attention, visible initially in the numerous printing errors and other typographical imperfections, only a small part of which were corrected in the errata at the end of the work. At many points of the narrative these errors also compromise the reading, which is only possible by comparing it with the Jaboatão version, which suppressed most of the errors. Also singular in a work of a hagiographical nature is the lack of subdivisions into chapters. The interval of only five years between the death of Vitória and the appearance of the original can partially explain this. Cf. SOUZA, 2011, p.74.

<sup>11</sup> SANTA TERESA, Fr., 1959, p.90-91. In the personal narrative of her spiritual life, Santa Teresa said that “she sought to represent the Christ within me, and found myself better – for what it seems to me – in places in which I saw him more lonely. It seemed to me, being

alone and afflicted as a person in need, as a person in need he would have to accept me.” D’ÁVILA, 2010, p.94.

<sup>12</sup> GÉLIS, 2010, p.23: “The Christocentrism which appeared in the Middle Ages was accentuated by conciliar priests meeting in Trent, when they placed Christ at the center of the pastoral of salvation, giving each stage of his life on Earth, principally his passion, an essential cultural dimension.”

<sup>13</sup> SESÉ, 2008, p.7; LEHMIJOKI-GARDNER, 2005, p.1-39. These exercises “prepared the field for the devotional practice of the Stations of the Cross, which during the sixteenth century developed as a popular technique to commemorate the stages of the passion of Christ” (p.18-19).

<sup>14</sup> The lexicon of that time did not register the word *portalexo*, but rather *portalejo*, which appears to have been a graphic variant of the former. The latter is the diminutive of *portal* and the example provided in the entry alluding to the birth of Christ in Bethlehem, and is adapted to the context of the narrative of Hansen. The definition of the word *portal* closest to the narrative is “covered place, constructed over pillars, which is built in streets and squares, for passersby to shelter themselves from water and sun.” Cf. DICCIONARIO, 1737, p.330.