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**The Trial of Íria Álvares**  
Conviviality and Inequality in the  
Portuguese Inquisition Records

Jessica O'Leary



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# The Trial of Íria Álvares: Conviviality and Inequality in the Portuguese Inquisition Records

Jessica O'Leary

## Abstract

In this paper, I analyse the Inquisition trial record of Íria Álvares (fl. 1580-1600), an Indigenous woman from the *sertão* of Bahia. Íria was the only Indigenous woman born to Indigenous parents who was tried by the First Visit of the Inquisition to Brazil in the sixteenth century. For this reason, her trial record represents a unique opportunity to explore the experiences of a freed Indigenous woman who spent her childhood in the *sertão* and adolescence and adulthood in colonial society. An analysis of her trial suggests that Íria was cognisant of the dynamics of colonial society and used her understanding of idealised convivialities to her advantage when negotiating the legal apparatus of the Portuguese Inquisition.

**Keywords:** gender history | sixteenth century | Íria Álvares | colonial Brazil

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Jessica O'Leary is a Research Fellow at the Australian Catholic University. She holds a PhD in History from Monash University. In 2021, she joined ACU in the Gender and Women's History Research Centre in the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences. In 2022, she was a Mecila Junior Fellow in 2022-23, and a Renaissance Society of America Paul Oskar Kristeller Fellow. Between 2023 and 2024, she is a Chief Investigator on a Universities Australia and DAAD Joint Research Cooperation Scheme Project entitled "Child Slavery in the Early Modern World: Gender, Trauma, and Trafficking in Transcultural Perspective (1500-1800)" and a veski-DAAD Bilateral Exchange project entitled "Women in the Global Portuguese Empire". Her research interests include gender and cultural histories of the early modern period, especially in the fields of global history and cross-cultural contact and exchange.

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## 1. Introduction

On 10 September 1595, the Indigenous woman Íria Álvares (fl. 1580-1600?) performed an *auto-de-fé* at the Cathedral of Olinda in the Captaincy of Pernambuco (figs. 1 and 2). She did so in front of a crowd of “the Visitor and his officials and assisting priests, and many other religious, and justices, and many common people” (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 1335, fol. 20<sup>r</sup>).<sup>1</sup> Afterwards, Íria, a *Brasilla*, or Indigenous Brazilian woman, went to the Visitor of the Portuguese Inquisition, Heitor Furtado de Mendonça, and declared that she had carried out all the obligations associated with her sentence. Having completed her penance, the visitor and his colleagues signed a document releasing her from further prosecution (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 20<sup>r</sup>).

**Figure 1: Catedral da Sé (Igreja de São Salvador do Mundo), Olinda, Pernambuco, Brazil**



Source: © Jessica O'Leary. The façade is an approximation of its appearance in the sixteenth century, following archaeological work in the 1960s. It was razed by the Dutch in the seventeenth century.

<sup>1</sup> “o s[enh]or visitador e seus officiais e os padres assessores e outros muitos relligiosos e justiças e muita gente e povo.” (All translations are by the author.)



**Figure 2: Frans Jansz Post, *Gezicht op Olinda, Brazilië* (1662)**



Source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Public domain. On the left on a hill a group of people stands near the ruins of the church. In the foreground are tropical plants, fruits and animals (armadillo, monkey, sloth, anteater, lizard) characteristic of the region.

Íria Álvares had been the subject of intense Inquisitorial scrutiny for close to nine months. In January 1595, Íria denounced her second husband for blasphemy, but Mendonça recognised her name from two previous denunciations made in the Captaincy of Bahia. The Vicar of Japasse (modern-day Madre de Deus), Bartholomeu Gonçalves, and Íria's son, Marcos Tavares, both accused her of different crimes, by far the most serious of which was her participation in a millenarian movement known as the *Santidade* of Jaguaripe in the 1580s (Trial of Marcos Tavares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 11080, 18<sup>o</sup>).

The *Santidade* of Jaguaripe was initiated by a Tupi-speaking Indigenous man named Antônio and his wife, Maria Mãe de Deus (Metcalf 1999: 1538). Antônio preached to a congregation in the *sertão* [hinterlands] near Jaguaripe while Maria presided over a temple in the same area. Together, the couple claimed that, through baptisms, smoking tobacco, and falling into trances, participants would enter a state of *santidade*. In this state, God would free the enslaved and those who did not believe in the sect would be transformed into birds and animals (Metcalf 1999: 1539). The sect spread quickly throughout Bahia and attracted Indigenous, African, and settler women and men. Soon, colonists began to complain that there were no enslaved Indigenous or Africans to work the mills, which concerned colonial and ecclesiastical authorities. As a result,

the sect was brutally extinguished following a plan devised by the governor of Bahia, and supported by the bishop, the city council, and the Jesuits (Metcalf 1999: 1539).

Íria was, by no means, a founder or even leader of the *Santidade*. However, she was accused of taking her son, Marcos, to one of the three-day ceremonies where she smoked tobacco, danced, and invited her son to believe in the syncretic cosmology of the *Santidade* (Trial of Marcos Tavares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 11080, 18<sup>r</sup>). Her participation came to the attention of the Inquisition by means of Marcos, who had been accused of sodomy in 1593 (Trial of Marcos Tavares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 11080, 30 fols.). Marcos, resident in Salvador, claimed that his mother had taken him involuntarily to the *Santidade* while they had lived in Bahia. However, the Inquisition did not question Íria until 1595 because, at some point, Íria had moved to Pernambuco to live with her daughter and son-in-law (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>). By the end of September 1595, she had been found guilty of “Gentile belief and superstition” (*crença gentílica e superstição*) after three rounds of rigorous interrogation (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 19v). Her penance was one of the last public punishments carried out under the supervision of the First Visitation of the Portuguese Inquisition to Brazil.

Íria’s unique case has escaped sustained scholarly attention, despite its length and significant insight into an Indigenous woman’s life in late sixteenth-century Brazil (see fig. 3). Her case is recorded in approximately 20 folios, compared to six and eight folios respectively for the *mameluca* [woman of Indigenous and settler parentage] women Luisa Rodrigues and Maria Álvares (no relation) and 14 folios for Felicia Tourinho, a freed woman accused of witchcraft and making a pact with the devil (Trial of Luisa Rodrigues, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 10714, 6 fols; Trial of Maria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 10754, 8 fols; Trial of Felicia Tourinho, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01268, 14 fols.). It is about the average length for *mameluco* men accused of heresy, blasphemy or idolatry, with notable exceptions such as the cases of Manuel de Oliveira and Domingos Fernandes Nobre with 93 folios and 105 folios, respectively (Trial of Manuel de Oliveira, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 02528, 93 fols; Trial of Domingos Fernandes Nobre, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 10776, 105 fols; see the appendix).<sup>2</sup>

Íria is the only Indigenous woman accused of participation in the *Santidade*. However, her trial record has been overlooked by prominent scholars of the *Santidade*. The principal studies of the *Santidade* of Jaguaripe are José Calasans’ *Fernão Cabral de Ataíde e a Santidade de Jaguaripe* (Calasans 1952) and Ronaldo Vainfas’ *A heresia dos índios* (Vainfas 1999). Both works are fundamental to understanding how the *Santidade* came to be and how it interacted with colonial institutions. However,

<sup>2</sup> Most women had shorter files since they ordinarily underwent fewer interrogations as a result of the presumption that they were less culpable than men as a result of their inferior intellect.

both Calasans and Vainfas do not mention her and she is mentioned only briefly by Anglophone scholars like Alida C. Metcalf (Metcalf 1999: 1540, 1579). This is likely because her trial took place in Pernambuco and Calasans and Vainfas focused their attention on cases between 1591 and 1593 when Mendonça was stationed in Salvador (Vainfas 1999). Although her participation in the *Santidade* was limited, the details are nevertheless important evidence of female involvement in the *Santidade* beyond its female leader, Maria Mãe de Deus (Souza, Laura de Mello e 1986: 87).

Moreover, her case not only merits attention for the light it sheds on an Indigenous woman's experience of *Santidade*, but also for its wider narration of Íria's life as a former enslaved Indigenous woman negotiating life in a Portuguese colony. Indeed, I am far more interested in what the small details about her motherhood, mobility and early childhood tell us about what it was like to be an Indigenous woman who lived as a child in the *sertão* and as an adolescent and adult in colonial society (Priori 2018). This is because there are very few historical studies of Indigenous peoples in early colonial Brazil and even fewer on Indigenous women.

The classic broad history of Indigenous peoples in the colonization of Brazil remains *História dos Índios no Brasil*, edited by Manuela Carneiro da Cunha and Francisco M. Salzano and John M. Monteiro's more specialised *Negros da Terra: Índios e Bandeirantes nas origens de São Paulo* (Cunha and Salzano 1992; Monteiro 1994). In addition to these books, there are numerous articles and dissertations on different aspects of Indigeneity, particularly catechisation. However, much of what we know of Indigenous culture and society is derived from anthropological studies, with some exceptions (Pereira 2000; Puntoni 2012; Oliveira 2014; Amoroso 2015; Resende 2015; see Santos 2016). For example, with respect to women, João Azevedo Fernandes' *De cunhã a mameluca: a mulher Tupinambá e o nascimento do Brasil* is an important contribution (Fernandes 2003). Even so, much more work is needed to understand what life was like for Indigenous women, particularly those who were enslaved and/or freed into colonial society (Miranda 2003; Capucho 2019).

This working paper uses the case of Íria Álvares to examine the themes of Indigeneity, conviviality and inequality in the First Visit of the Portuguese Inquisition to Brazil. It draws upon the twenty folios of Íria's original case file held in the Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo in Lisbon to investigate how Íria experienced colonial life through the lens of the Holy Office. I have made an extra effort to include extracts of her trial in order to give the reader a clearer idea of how Inquisition sources function. They are rarely linear and biographical details must be pieced together from different points of the trial: from denunciation through to sentencing. This kind of reading is in line with recent advances in colonial historiography, most notably Ann Laura Stoler's *Along the Archival Grain* (Stoler 2009).



In the following sections, I will briefly summarise the historical context and scholarship concerning the Portuguese Inquisition in Brazil followed by a synthesis of the timeline and prosecution of Íria. In the following two substantive sections, I gesture towards a methodology for investigating Indigeneity and gender on the one hand and conviviality and inequality on the other, using Íria as a case study. Finally, I will conclude by offering a review of the paper's primary interventions and possible future directions. The final section is an appendix of all Indigenous men and women prosecuted by the Inquisition between 1593 and 1593 based on sources made available through the Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo in Lisbon.

## 2. The Portuguese Inquisition in Brazil

The General Council of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Portugal, also known as the Portuguese Inquisition, was a formal institution established in 1536 to prosecute suspected heretics (Pereira 1984; Marcocci and Paiva 2013). It belonged to a larger group of inquisitorial institutions within the Catholic Church that began in twelfth-century France. Inquisitorial courts were established to eradicate apostasy and heresy during the medieval period, predominantly in France and Italy (Peters 1989). Beginning in the sixteenth century, the Inquisition expanded rapidly to Portugal and Spain where inquisitors mainly focused their attention on Jews or Muslims who were forcefully converted to Catholicism (Bethencourt 2009). Both Portugal and Spain operated inquisitorial courts in their overseas empires, which resulted in the Goa Inquisition, Mexican Inquisition and Peruvian Inquisition (Priolkar and Dellon 2008; Greenleaf 1969; Silverblatt 2004). The Portuguese Inquisition was eventually abolished in 1821 (Marcocci and Paiva 2013).

Brazil did not have its own Inquisition, so the Portuguese Inquisition periodically sent a Visitor to the colony to punish individuals who did not conform to Catholic orthodoxy (Wadsworth 2010: 636). The First Visitation of the Inquisition to Brazil occurred between 1591 and 1595 (Metcalf 1999: 1537). During this time the Visitor, Heitor Furtado de Mendonça, presided over a mobile Inquisition in Bahia and Pernambuco, taking confessions and hearing denunciations in the Portuguese colony of Brazil (Mendonça 1929, 1935). Baptised Christians could denounce or confess to crimes and receive appropriate penance (Peters 1989). Beginning in the 1980s, Brazilian social and cultural historians identified and analysed several targets of the Holy Office: Judaism, homosexuality, and Indigenous cosmologies, especially participants in the *Santidade* of Jaguaripe (Siqueira 1978; Vainfas 1999). Approximately 31 Indigenous women and men were tried: 27 *mameluco* men, three *mameluca* woman, and Íria, the only Indigenous person born in the *sertão* to Indigenous parents (see appendix).

The Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo holds the records of the Portuguese and Goa Inquisitions in Lisbon. The records are organised by *process*, that is, an individual's prosecution. Within each *process*, there are files that relate to different stages of the trial. In general, each *process* should contain either a denunciation or confession (or both) followed by the Visitor's decision, an interrogation, the charge, the defendant's response, the Visitor's decision and sentencing (if necessary) and the *auto-de-fé* (if necessary) (Peters 1989).

For example, in Íria's case, there are three denunciations, one made by her against her second husband, and two made by others against her, followed by the Visitor's decision, the interrogations, accusation, sentencing and *auto-de-fé* (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, 20 fols.). The structure of Inquisitorial records means that information can emerge at different stages of the trial, making it challenging for scholars to piece together biographical data. However, doing so can be especially rewarding as much scholarly research has shown.

Beginning in the twentieth century, historians have used records from the French, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian Inquisitions to access the lives and mentalities of marginalised individuals who ordinarily leave no trace in the written record (Kamen 1965; Peters 1989). The most common methodologies are cultural history and microhistories, made famous by Carlo Ginzburg who, in *The Cheese and the Worms*, examined the Inquisition trial of Menocchio, a miller from north-eastern Italy (Ginzburg 1976). Ginzburg found that Menocchio's eccentric and heretical worldview was not evidence of a widespread cosmology, but rather representative of different traditions of popular culture and peasant religions that are not ordinarily visible in the historical record.

Indeed, in Inquisitorial historiography, it is not uncommon to focus on one particular case, especially for subaltern individuals. For example, Ananya Chakravarti recently published an engaging study on "Gabriel", an enslaved Ethiopian who lived during the late sixteenth century (Chakravarti 2019: 5–34). Chakravarti used two trials from the (Portuguese) Inquisition of Goa to explore how Gabriel's religious and geographical identities were fluid and changed based on individual exigencies, rather than metropolitan centralisation and organisation (Chakravarti 2019: 33–34). Similarly, in her study of Fatima, a sixteenth-century enslaved *morisco* [Spanish Muslim who became Christian] woman, Mary Elizabeth Perry used a single inquisitorial document to flesh out the religious identity and mentalities of Fatima (Perry 2008: 151–167). In both instances, Chakravarti and Perry used wider primary and secondary sources to contextualise the lives of Gabriel and Fatima in a largely successful attempt to analyse not only the complexities of identities and vulnerabilities in disenfranchised individuals, but also the strategies they used to confront unequal institutions.

I suggest that such imaginative methodologies can be used to access the lives of individual women like Íria Álvares. I am particularly interested in using Íria's trial to investigate how Indigenous women negotiated the convivialities and inequalities generated by the processes of colonisation. Íria Álvares is a unique figure in sixteenth-century Portuguese inquisitorial sources, but she was one of many Indigenous women captured in the *sertão* and enslaved by settlers in Bahia. There is an opportunity to investigate both the idiosyncratic contours of her life and trial as well as make broader conclusions about converted Indigenous women. By seeking out relevant historical context in other primary and secondary sources, Íria's experiences can be used to hypothesise about how Indigenous women were integrated into colonial society and the tensions between their birth cultures and those of their masters. In so doing, I hope to add texture to current historiography of different women's experiences of colonial society.

### 3. The Life and Crimes of Íria Álvares

The long trial of Íria Álvares does not offer a linear explanation of her life. Instead, historians must read through all the documents – from her initial denunciation of her second husband, to denunciations made against her, to her final confessions and penance – in order to reconstruct her life. Like many inquisitorial documents, there is some limited insight via the formulaic introductions to each document, but Íria's fractured childhood means that she was unable to state clearly her age, birthplace, and names of her parents. Rather, details are interspersed throughout her denunciations and confessions as well as offered by her accusers. What follows is a summary of her life and a timeline of her Inquisition trial.

Íria was born in the *sertão* of Paraguaçu, presumably near the Paraguaçu River in Bahia (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>). She was enslaved as a young girl – *moça pequena* – and brought to the Captaincy of Bahia between 1553 and 1556, where she lived in the household of Bastião da Faria (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>). We are able to state these dates with relative confidence because Íria claimed that she was taken to Bahia during the tenures of Governor-General Dom Duarte da Costa and Bishop Pero Fernandes Sardinha. Da Costa was in office between 1553 and 1558 while Sardinha was in office between 1551 and 1556 (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>). Based on the historical use of the word *moça*, we can presume that she had already begun menstruating (Bluteau 1789: 522). That being said, the use of the adjective *pequena* suggests that she may have been a bit younger. A reasonable assumption is that she was around ten years old when she was enslaved in or around 1555. This made her approximately forty years old in 1595 when she appeared before the Visitor in Olinda.

These details are broadly taken from the opening lines of her denunciation of her second husband, the Frenchman Simão Luís:

On the eighteenth day of January in the year one thousand five hundred and ninety-five, in this town of Olinda, Captaincy of Pernambuco, in the residence of the Lord Visitor of the Holy Office, Heitor Furtado de Mendonça, appeared before him a woman named Íria Álvares, who, wishing to report matters concerning the Holy Office, took an oath on the Holy Gospels, placing her right hand on them, in which she promised to tell the truth in all things. She stated that she was a Brazilian Indian woman, born in the hinterland of the Captaincy of Bahia, the daughter of a gentile father and a gentile mother who later became Christian. She was brought from the hinterlands to the said Bahia as a young girl and was baptised and became a Christian there. She is now of an age that she cannot accurately declare, but she mentioned that when she came from the hinterland to Bahia as a young girl, [it was] during the time of Governor Dom Duarte and Bishop Dom Pe[d]ro Fernandes, whom the gentiles ate. [Now she is], the widow of Pero Dias, who was a blacksmith, and she resides in the house of Martim Nunes in the parish of Igarassu. She was freed by a man named [Se]bastião Álvares, who was the father of [Se]bastião de Faria in Bahia (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>).<sup>3</sup>

She then described her two marriages:

And in her denunciation, she said that while she was married to her aforementioned husband, he went to the hinterland. After being gone for about two years, news came that he had died there. As a result, she, following the order of her aforementioned Lord, considering herself a widow, she was married for the second time to Simão Luis, a Frenchman by nationality, who has no profession and resides in the aforementioned Captaincy of Bahia. She does not know the exact location of where he currently is. She was married to him in the said Bahia for a year and a half until certain news arrived that her aforementioned husband had gone to Lisbon and fell ill there. As a result, under the spiritual authority of the Bishopric of Brazil given to Dom Antônio Barreiros, she separated from the aforementioned Simão Luis, and she came to this Captaincy while he remained

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3 "Aos dezoito dias do mês de Janeiro de mil e quinhentos e noventa e cinco anos nesta villa de Olinda Capitania de Pernambuco nas casas da morada do s[en]hor visitador do Sancto Officio Heitor Furtado de Mendonça perante ele pareço se[m] ser chamada Íria Álv[a]res e por querer denunciar cousas tocantes ao Sancto Officio recebo juramento dos Sanctos Evangelhos em que pos sua mão direita sob cargo do qual prometeo dizer em tudo verdade e dixe ser India brasilla Natural do sertão da Capitania da Bahia filha de gentio de mai gentia que depois foi christã do cal sertão foi trazida pera a ditta Bahia sendo moça pequena e na Bahia foi baptizada e feita Christã et ora he de ydade não sabe declarar quanto mais que quando veo do sertão pera ha Bahia sendo sendo moça pequena e no governador Dom Duarte, e Bispo Dom Pero F[e]r[nande]z a que comerão os gentios, veuva molher que foi de Pero Dias serralheiro moradora em casa de Martim Nunes na freguesia de Igarasu forra que [h]a forrou muitos anos ha Bastiam Alv[a]res pai de Bastiam de Faria na Bahia."

in the said Bahia. It has been eleven years since their separation and divorce in the said Bahia, during which time they were married in Peroabsu [Peruaçu] (Trial of Íria Álvares. ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>).<sup>4</sup>

And finally the crime her second husband had committed:

One day in the afternoon, at her house, she doesn't remember the exact day, the aforementioned Simão Luis, while walking, said that he did not know why people bow to the cross since our Lord died on it. Then the woman denouncer, who was the only one present, replied to him that people bow to the cross because our Lord died on it. Simão Luis then responded that he would rather bow to a stump than to the cross. At that moment, the woman denouncer reprimanded him, telling him to watch what he was saying, and he remained silent. Since she remained silent, it was asked if he was drunk or out of his mind. She replied that he was in his right mind and not upset. When further questioned, she said she did not remember the context in which he made those remarks, but she was scandalised by them. She stated that she had never heard him say or seen him do anything that seemed wrong to her. Regarding their usual behaviour, she mentioned nothing more than the fact that they had been married for a year and a half, as previously mentioned. She asserted that this denunciation was made in truth and, following the instructions given to her, she promised to keep it a secret under the oath she had taken (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fols. 2<sup>v</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>).<sup>5</sup>

From these extracts, we can ascertain that she was married twice and had at least two children. Her first husband was a white blacksmith named Pero Dias who went to the *sertão* and never returned (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 3<sup>r-v</sup>). After two years, Íria claimed that she and other members of the Álvares household

4 "E Denunciando Dixe que sendo ella casada com ho ditto seu marido elle se foi ao sertão e despois de seer ydo alguns dous anos vierão novas que ele era laa morto pello que ella per ordem do ditto seu S[enh]or parecendosse seer veuva se casou segunda vez com Simão Luis françes de nação que não tem officio morador na ditta Capitania da Bahia não sabe lugar certo onde ora esteja com o qual esteve casada na ditta Bahia anno e meo ate que vierão outras novas certas de como o ditto seu marido fora fez a Lixboa e laa ficava doente no espirital pello que per mão dado do Bisp[ad]o deste brasil Dom Ant[oni]o Barreiros se apartou ella do ditto Simão Luis et ella se veo pera esta Capitania et ele ficou na ditta Bahia e aveva ora onze anos que se fez o dito apartamento e divorcio entre elles na ditta Bahia e no ditto tempo que estiverão casados em Peroabsu."

5 "Em sua casa estão do hum dia a tarde não lhe lembra qual o ditto Simão Luis paseando disse ele ditto Simão Luis que não sabia pera que a gente fazia mesura a cruz pois nello morreo Nosso S[enh]or então ella denunciante que some[n]te presente estava a lhe respondeo que por isso se fazia mesura a cruz por que nella morreo Nosso S[enh]or e o ditto Simão Luis lhe respondeo então que antes ele fazia mesura a hum Çepo que a Cruz, então ella de- ella denunciante ho reprehendeo que olhasse o que fallava et elle se calou e por não dizer mais foi perguntado do se estava elle bêbado ou fora de seu juízo, Respondeo que elle estava em seu siso sem nenhu[m] agastamento e perguntado mais dixe que não lhe lembra a que proposito ele dixe as ditas palavras e que ella se escandalisou dellas e que nunca lhe ouvio dizer nem vio fazer outra cousa algu[m]a que mal lhe parecesse e do costume dixe nada mais se não que esteve casada com elle o ditto anno e meo pello modo sobre ditto e que faz esta denunciação na verdade, e foi lhe mandado fez segredo e e assim o prometeo pello juramento que recebeo."



presumed that he was dead (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, f. 2<sup>v</sup>). Therefore, her master ordered that she remarry (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, f. 2<sup>v</sup>). She married the Frenchman Simão Luis, who possessed no trade, and lived in the Captaincy of Bahia. A year and a half after their marriage, Íria learned that her husband had travelled to Lisbon where he had become unwell (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, f. 3<sup>r</sup>). Íria assumed that her husband had died and sought permission from the bishop, Antônio Muniz Barreiros, to separate from her husband and travel to Pernambuco (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, f. 3<sup>r</sup>). Presumably, she was free or freed by the son of her master, Bastião Álvares, prior to travelling (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, f. 2<sup>v</sup>).

Permission to separate and divorce was granted in 1584 and Íria travelled to Olinda, where she lived in the house of her son-in-law, a sugarmill owner, and her daughter, Isabel Álvares (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, f. 5<sup>r</sup>). This was a considerable distance and raises questions about female mobility for which further research is needed to produce some preliminary answers. We know of Íria's mobility from the denunciation made by the Vicar of Japasse, Bartholomeu Gonçalves. He wrote: "She is currently in Pernambuco, at the house of her son-in-law, who is a master of sugar production and is married to her daughter Isabel Álvares. When Íria Álvares told her son-in-law about the said Frenchman, she was already separated from him" (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 5<sup>r</sup>).<sup>6</sup>

In January 1593, Gonçalves accused Íria of bigamy because he had learned that Pero Dias was, in fact, alive and living in Lisbon at the time of her second marriage to Simão Luis (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fols. 4<sup>v</sup>). Gonçalves explained:

*He further denounced* that the said Íria Álvares was married in this Captaincy to the aforementioned Simão Frenchman, and they lived as a married couple. While they were married, news came from Portugal that her first husband, a white man whose name he does not remember, was alive there. Upon receiving this news, Íria Álvares separated from the aforementioned Frenchman, her second husband, with whom she was married at that time (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fols. 4<sup>v</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>, emphasis in the original).<sup>7</sup>

Gonçalves also claimed that she had participated in blasphemous behaviour, including the consumption of meat on Fridays (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 4<sup>v</sup>). Gonçalves does not specify whether her daughter was from her first or

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6 "Esta ora em Pernãobuco em casa de seu genro mestre de açuques casado com hu[m]ja sua filha Isabel Alv[a]res e quando a dicta Íria Alv[a]res lhe contou sobre ditto do dicto Françes já estava apartada dele."

7 "Denunciou mais que a ditto Íria Alv[a]res esteve casada nesta Capitania com o dito Simão Frances fazendo vida de casados e que estando assim casados vierão novas de Portugal de como laa estava vivo ho seu prim[o] marido que era hum hom[em] branco cujo nome lhe não lembra e que com estas novos se apartou se apartou ella então do ditto françes seu segundo marido com que estava casada a qual Íria Alv[a]res."

second marriage, nor does he mention the existence of her son, Marcos Tavares (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 7<sup>v</sup>).

In July 1593, Marcos Tavares accused his mother of taking him to the *Santidade* of Jaguaripe in the 1580s. Tavares claimed that Íria had taken him to the *Santidade* for three days to witness the dancing, smoking, and fasting of the participants (Trial of Marcos Tavares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 11080, 18<sup>r</sup>). Although he did not want to go, Íria insisted and, when he refused to believe in the claims of Antônio and his wife, Maria Mãe de Deus, he was not allowed to sleep at their home for one month (Trial of Marcos Tavares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 11080, 18<sup>r</sup>). In his (mediated) words:

He said that when it had been seven years that the heresy and idolatry called 'sanctidade' arose in this Captaincy, his mother, the accused Íria Álvares, a black Brazilian woman who is currently in Pernambuco, believed in this heresy and gave credit to the black followers of it. During that time, his mother urged the accused to believe in the said aforementioned 'Sanctidade', telling him that it was good and true. However, the accused never wanted to believe in it and always understood it to be an abuse and falsehood perpetuated by Black people. Because the accused refused to believe in the said aforementioned abuse, his mother became upset with him and refused to let him stay at home for over a month (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 9<sup>r</sup>, emphasis in the original).<sup>8</sup>

Tavares made these claims during the second interrogation of his own trial, perhaps hoping for some leniency as he was accused of sodomy.<sup>9</sup> Although he was unsuccessful – he was sent to Lisbon for punishment – the accusations he made were transferred to Pernambuco and used against Íria.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, by the time Íria appeared before Mendonça to denounce her second husband in January 1595, she had already been denounced herself by her son and her former vicar two years earlier.

However, her file is not organised in the chronological order I have presented above. Instead, her trial record begins with the denunciation she made in January 1595. Her denunciation is followed by the copies of the two denunciations made against her in January and July 1593, which were transferred from Bahia. The record then

8 *"e dixе mais que quando nesta Capitania se allevantou a erronia e ydolatria chamada sanctidade aveva sete annos sua mai dele Reo Yria Alv[al]res negra brasilla que ora esta em Pernãobuco. Creio também na ditte erronia e dava credito aos negros seguidores della E nesse tempo dizia a ditte sua mai a elle Reo e ho indiussia que cresce na ditte chamado Sanctidade dissendo lhe que era boa e verdadeira porem elle Reo nunca quis crer nella e sempre entendeo que era abuso e falsidade dos negros e por elle Reo não querer crer na ditte abuso a ditte sua mai lhe teve aborrecime[n]to e ho não quis recolher em casa algum mês e meo."*

9 Sodomy was a very serious offence, and Tavares was punished with extradition to Lisbon, where he was subject to capital punishment (a fate he avoided) (Metcalf 2005: 267).

10 Metcalf 2005: 323.

jumps to June and July 1595 – her interrogations – and ends in September 1595. The final documents record the verdict – guilty – and the crimes: *superstição* and *crenças gentílicas*. She was sentenced to perform penance in an *auto-de-fé* with a lit candle in her hand in the public square of the Catedral da Sé in Olinda. She also had to compensate the tribunal for the costs of her trial (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 17<sup>v</sup>).

To aid the reader, I have provided a chronology of her trial (see section 7), which I summarise: In 1591, Heitor Furtado da Mendonça, the first Inquisitor of Brazil, arrived in Salvador. In January 1593, Father Bartolomeu Gonçalves, vicar of Japasse denounced Íria for bigamy. In July 1593, Marcos Tavares, son of Íria, denounced Íria for her participation in the *Santidade*. In September 1593, Heitor Furtado de Mendonça arrived in Olinda, Pernambuco. In January 1595, Íria accused her second husband, Simão Luis, of blasphemy. In June and July 1595, Íria was interrogated; she confessed to her crimes in late July. In September 1595, Íria performed her penance at the *auto-de-fé*, and the Visitor signed a document confirming the conclusion of her sentence.

Before proceeding to the substantive analysis of her trial, it is worth pausing briefly to consider why Íria decided to denounce her second husband and expose herself to the Inquisition. The Inquisition arrived in Salvador in 1591 and Mendonça heard denunciations and confessions until September 1593. Between September 1593 and 1595, he did the same in Pernambuco. Therefore, Íria appeared quite late in Mendonça's investigations to denounce a spouse that she claimed to believe was dead. Did she learn of the denunciations against her and tried to anticipate a potential trial by offering her own denunciation? Was she aware of her first husband who was still alive at the time she moved to Pernambuco? These are questions to which we do not have answers, but they are useful starting points for thinking about how an Indigenous woman negotiated her agency and mobility in colonial society.

#### **4. Indigeneity and Gender in Sixteenth-Century Colonial Society**

Although Íria was also accused of bigamy, the majority of the trial documents focused on her role in teaching her son Indigenous practices. Mendonça's three interrogations barely question whether or not she was aware that her first husband was alive at the time of her marriage to her second husband. Rather, they centre on Íria's three-day participation in the *Santidade* and, crucially, whether or not she insisted that her son join her and believe in the heresy. In the first two interrogation sessions, Íria refused to confess to having pressured her son to participate. It was only after significant admonishment and probable exhaustion – she admitted that “it hurt a lot, reliving your life through memory” (*dou muito configuo correndo sua vida pella memoria*). (Trial

of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 15<sup>r</sup>) – that Íria finally satisfied the Inquisitor and confessed that she: “She tried to persuade her son Marcos, who was then a young man, to believe in the said aforementioned ‘Sanctidade’ telling him that it was good and a divine matter (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 15<sup>v</sup>).<sup>11</sup>

Indigenous motherhood during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was exceedingly common on account of the low migration of European women to the colonies.<sup>12</sup> There were repeated attempts to increase the number of white women through the arrival of female orphans and the exile of Christians accused of witchcraft and other heresies in Lisbon and Évora, and very low rates of white women leaving the colonies to return to Europe.<sup>13</sup> However, there were not enough Old Christians to marry white settlers and Indigenous women became mothers to mixed race children. Íria seemed to speak Portuguese well enough for it to merit inclusion in her trial – *falla muito bem portugues* – which suggests that many Indigenous women were not fluent speakers (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 5<sup>r</sup>). Indeed, sixteenth-century Jesuits complained that women attended confession through interpreters, which was risky on account of the way that one’s native language shapes one’s mind (Leite 1956: 361). They claimed that as long as Indigenous languages were spoken, Indigenous Brazilians would never leave their cultural practices behind (Leite 1956: 362).<sup>14</sup>

Although motherhood can and has been historicised, it is not unreasonable to assume that representatives of Catholic institutions, like the Jesuits and the Inquisitor, feared that Indigenous mothers would raise children who believed in heretical practices. Their fear is evident in the preoccupation with Íria’s role in her son’s exposure to the heresy, but also in other sources. For example, I have shown in other research that members of the Society of Jesus were particularly concerned with the role of older women in Indigenous societies (O’Leary 2023). They called such women witches and decried the influence that matriarchs had over their husbands and younger men. Although these women did not perform spells, at least according to the Jesuits, they were very knowledgeable about botany and horticulture, and the plants they cultivated not only formed the basis of Indigenous and colonial alimentation and medicine, they also

11 “procurou persuadir ao ditto seu filho Marcos que então era moço que creesse tambem na ditta chamada Sanctidade dissendo lhe que era boa e cousa de deos.”

12 Migration was so low that the Portuguese Crown famously sent orphaned girls to Brazil in response to repeated requests from missionaries and city councils (Costa 1950). See Arquivo Público do Estado de Bahia (APEB), Governo Geral, Governo da Capitania, maço 264, fols. 42<sup>r</sup>-45<sup>r</sup>.

13 See Polónia (2001). There are various instances of Portuguese women sent to Brazil in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by the Inquisition. For example, Trial of Florença de Castro, ANTT, IL 25, process n. 02112-1, 48 fols. Equally, registers, like those held in the Arquivo Público do Estado da Bahia, of colonists seeking permission to depart, are overwhelmingly male with rare exceptions: APEB, Governo Geral, Governo da Capitania, maço 437.

14 Pedro Fernandes to Simão Rodrigues, July 1552, Baía.

were vital to ceremonial practices in Tupi-speaking communities (O'Leary 2023). It is possible that Mendonça, like other religious men, saw Indigenous mothers like Íria as risks to their children's faith.

We have some insight into what most concerned Mendonça in annotations made to the trial documentation. In Tavares's second interrogation, there is a series of marginalia that highlight important passages. After confessing to the act of sodomy, Tavares, seemingly without prompting, informed the Inquisitor that his mother, "Íria Álvares, a Black Brazilian woman who is currently in Pernambuco" (*Íria Álvares, negra brasilla que ora esta em Pernãobuco*) had taken him to the "Idolatry called 'Sanctidade'" (*ydolatria chamada Sanctidade*) when he was seven years old (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 9<sup>r</sup>). The scribe has underlined the first three lines of this section, including the words "*ydolatria chamada Sanctidade*" and Íria's name. The scribe has also drawn a straight line down the right-hand side of the page to highlight the most damning piece of evidence.

This is the only section of Tavares's second interrogation that contains marginalia. The other sections, including the descriptions of sodomy and the heresies, do not contain annotations, despite it being a crime that carried the death penalty. It is telling that the scribe has drawn attention to, first, the role of his mother in bringing him to the *Sanctidade* and, secondly, her insistence that Tavares believe in the heresy. It could be that the section is underlined to highlight the introduction of another person of interest to the Inquisition, but, in the Vicar's denunciation against Íria, the inclusion of a second accused, a blasphemous woman named Maria, is not underlined or highlighted. It seems that Íria's involvement in the *Sanctidade* as a follower and an instigator was deeply concerning to the Inquisition and merited further investigation.

At this stage, it is worth discussing the accusations of *superstição* and *heresia* made against Indigenous women and men in the First Visitation of the Inquisition to Brazil. I have identified three *mameluca* women in addition to Íria, as well as 27 *mameluco* men who appeared before Mendonça between 1591 and 1595 (see appendix). None of the women were accused of *heresia* and none of the men accused were of *superstição*. Women were also accused of *crenças gentílicas* and men of *idolatria* and *proposições heréticas* (heretical propositions). It is evident that accusations of heresy and superstition were gendered: men were active producers of heresy while women were passive believers or practitioners of superstition. Men created new heretical beliefs while women followed them or existing practices.

The division along gendered lines is broadly representative of ecclesiastical perceptions of male and female capacities. Women were seen as "simple" and less capable of rational thought. This was derived from Aristotelian and Aquinine thought which claimed



that women were incomplete men and inherently subordinate to men in wisdom, virtue, and reason (Wiesner-Hanks 2008). Moreover, the Indigenous peoples of Brazil were perceived to be less intelligent than other civilisations that Catholic missionaries had encountered in the early modern centuries. The Jesuits, for example, clamoured to work in East Asia because they interpreted the literate cultures of Japan and China to be superior to the oralities of Indigenous peoples across Latin America (Russell 2022). Therefore, Indigenous women were disadvantaged twice over on account of their race as well as their gender (Smith 2017).

Before returning to Íria's trial, belief in women's simplicity is present in other Indigenous women's cases. For example, in the sentencing for the trial of Maria Álvares (no known relation), on 30 July 1593 in Bahia, the *Mesa* granted Maria leniency on account of being "*mamaluqa simplex*" (Trial of Maria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 10754, fol. 5<sup>v</sup>). Maria was aged forty at the time of trial and was the daughter of Caterina, an Indigenous woman, and Diogo Álvares. She had confessed to participating in the *Sanctidade* at the age of twelve years old when she lived in the house of Álvaro Gonçalves, that is, as an enslaved person (Trial of Maria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 10754, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>). She said that the other "Baptised Brazilian Black Christians"<sup>15</sup> all participated in the *Sanctidade* and, it is presumed, she accompanied them (Trial of Maria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 10754, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>). They practiced their faith in the evening until they were caught by their master and punished (Trial of Maria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 10754, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>). She confessed to the Jesuit fathers and they absolved her of her sins (Trial of Maria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 10754, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>). She finished her confession by claiming that she was simply caught up in what she thought was a Christian practice since she was a "simple girl" (*moça simplex*), who always "had faith in her heart" (*em seu coração teve a fee*) (Trial of Maria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 10754, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>-3<sup>v</sup>). The *Mesa* accepted her claims and she was only sentenced to spiritual penance, without payment of costs.

Maria's relatively straightforward trial and lenient sentence sits in stark contrast to Íria's accusations and resulting sentence. Comparing the evidence, it seems that Íria attempted a similar rhetorical strategy to Maria that relied on exploiting the gendered and racialised expectations of the Inquisitors, but she was not as successful. Throughout her three interrogations, Íria describes herself as a "simple woman" (*molher simples*), and claimed, three times, that it was ignorance that led her to take place in the *Sanctidade* (Trial of Íria Álvares, ANTT, IL 28, process n. 01335, fol. 14<sup>r</sup>). According to a contemporary dictionary, *simples* and *ignorancia* were defined by their relation to an absence not only of knowledge, but also of an incapacity towards rational thought and cognitive reasoning (Bluteau 1789: 42–44; 648–649). Despite both words being

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<sup>15</sup> "negros brasis cristãos batisados."

strongly associated with women, Íria's past actions and present behaviour had raised the suspicions of the ecclesiastical men who investigated her. The Vicar of Japasse said she was a woman of "*bom entendimento*" while Mendonça himself called her "*ladina*" in the transcript of the first interrogation.

According to an eighteenth-century dictionary, *entendimento* did not merely refer to Íria's ability to understand the Portuguese language. It specifically referred to cognitive and rational abilities, most commonly found among men (Bluteau 1789: 509). Meanwhile, *ladino* was an adjective used to refer to an Indigenous or African person who spoke Portuguese and behaved as if they had assimilated into colonial society (Bluteau 1789: 3). In other words, the ways in which Íria spoke, behaved, and reacted resembled settler women to such an extent that it merited inclusion in her trial. In this way, Íria clearly had understood the nuances of colonial convivialities, but her racialised and gendered self subjected her to substantial inequalities.

## 5. Conviviality and Inequality in Inquisition Trials

Recent advances in conviviality studies have led to fruitful methodological interventions in a diverse range of fields, including sociology, cultural studies and history (Costa 2019). Scholars have focused on the quotidian aspects of living together in unequal circumstances and analysing the tensions, conflicts, and contradictions that such configurations yield (Heil 2019). The Portuguese Inquisition is a relevant locus for a conviviality-centred analysis because its existence was predicated on the maintenance of certain quotidian convivial configurations that were structured around inequalities. That is, it was designed to identify practices that contracted Portuguese and Catholic social and religious mores and to punish and suppress them.

Inquisition trial documents were not designed to maintain a record of colonial convivialities, but offhand comments can reveal much about what sort of conflicts were generated by inequalities and how tensions simmered or were inflamed by the imposition of European and Christian values on Indigenous and African individuals. An example of such convivialities in action is in naming. Íria Álvares is almost certainly not have the birth name of the individual who grew up in the *sertão* in an Indigenous village. Álvares is the surname of Íria's former master while her Christian name was also likely given to her by either her owner or missionaries. The use of a Christian and Portuguese name was a convivial practice that proscribed the use of Indigenous names to promote a false sense of cohesion in the colony among different groups and constrain the expression of Indigenous language and customs.

The interrogation of Íria and of her son, Marcos, emphasises the preoccupation with the performance but also, importantly, the transmission of Indigenous customs from

mother to son. It is perhaps no coincidence that all the *mameluco* men and women prosecuted by the Inquisition had Indigenous mothers who likely raised their children speaking their native language, rather than Portuguese. Indigenous mothers who did not speak Portuguese and who did not conform to European or Christian social norms were a threat to the fragile convivialities in colonial settlements and it is striking the degree to which the Inquisitor sought to obtain details of the knowledges that Íria either transmitted or to which she exposed her son and the extent of her involvement in doing so.

In Íria's first interrogation, the Inquisitor underlined several lines that exposed Indigenous practices:

It had been about eight years that, among the gentiles and Christians, there circulated an abusion [falsification or deception] called 'sanctidade'. While she was in Matoim, on Pero D'Aguiar's farm in Bahia, there were also Christian Brazilians who practiced the said abusion and performed its ceremonies, which involved dancing, playing with their fingers, and inhaling the smoke of a plant they called 'erva sancta' (sacred herb) in Portugal. They claimed that this abusion was a divine thing. During that time, for about three days, she, being young and naive, engaged in this abusion by dancing and participating in the said festivities with her fingers, and she inhaled the smoke on two occasions. She believed and thought that it was something holy and divine, as the participants of the said abusion claimed. However, she didn't see them making idols or doing anything else besides dancing, playing, and smoking the tobacco (Trial of Íria Álvares. ANTT, IL 28, process no 01335, fol. 11<sup>v</sup> and 12<sup>v</sup>, emphasis in the original).<sup>16</sup>

In particular, the Inquisitor focused on the ceremonies that featured dancing and tobacco smoking. The remaining two interrogations, the accusations are repeated, and emphasis was again given to dancing and tobacco smoking. However, it was only in the final interrogation that Íria admitted to inducing Marcos to participate in the dancing and tobacco smoking, in line with contemporary expectations around female leadership in Indigenous villages.

16 "e que foo lhe le[m]bra que aveva alguns oito annos que ne habia andou entre os Indios gentios e também christãos hu[m]a abusão a que chamavão Sanctidade e estando ella em Matoim [a place in Bahia] na fazenda de Pero da Guiar na mesma fazenda avia tambem brasis christãos que tinham a ditta abusão et faziam as ceremonias della que era o bailar e jugar apontando co[m] os dedos e tomar os fumos da erva que chamão em Portugal erva sancta e dessiam que a quella abusão era cousa de deus no qual tempo o ella parvo a mente alguns tres dias andou co[m] esta ditta abusão bailando e fazendo os dittos folgares co[m] os dedos e tomou duas vezes os fumos sobre dittos, creendo e cuidando que a quillo era cousa sancta e de deos como os da ditta abusão dessiam mas mas ella não lhes vio fez ydollos ne[m] fazer nada mais que fazer os dittos bailos e folgares e tomar os dittos fumos."

Sixteenth-century traveller and Jesuit accounts make it clear that women were highly involved in Indigenous rituals, at least in Tupi-speaking villages that men like the German mercenary Hans Staden and the Canarian Jesuit José de Anchieta visited (O'Leary 2023). Staden was captured by a group of Tupinambá men and briefly enslaved in the Captaincy of São Vicente. When he returned to Germany, he published his memoirs as *Warhaftige Historia vnd beschreibung eyner Landtschafft der Wilden/ Nacketen/ Grimmigen Menschfresser Leuthen, in der Newenwelt America gelegen [...]* in 1557 with a series of woodblock illustrations depicting different elements of Indigenous life. One of these images was the leadership of women in seasonal festivities through the production and distribution of the sacred drink *cauium* (Staden 1557: 143).

It is unclear whether Mendonça had an intimate knowledge of customs among Tupi-speaking Indigenous peoples, but it is clear that he was aware of Indigenous rituals that involved tobacco and dancing. Even though the *Santidade* had taken place in the 1580s, at least five years' prior to Mendonça's arrival, the event had marked colonial society enough that the impact of the ruptures it caused were intensely felt by the Inquisitor. He identified Íria, as the mother of a young mixed boy, as especially culpable, presumably because of the influence she had over her son. Ten years after the *Santidade*, he interrogated Íria in three tiring sessions until she confessed to what he wanted to hear: she used her role as a mother to teach her son Indigenous, pagan rituals that ran contrary to colonial convivialities: European, Christian.

Further research is needed to explore the intersections between motherhood and conviviality in colonial contexts, and to compare and contrast the experiences of Indigenous, African, and settler mothers. Íria's case suggests that colonial and ecclesiastical authorities believed that mothers were a critical part of the colonial project and when they deviated from burgeoning settler customs and values, they had to be punished. Future analysis should attempt to compare and contrast different groups of mothers and the extent to which their mothering was accepted or regulated.

## 6. Conclusion

Íria Álvares lived among colonists as a baptised Indigenous woman, initially enslaved and later freed. She attempted to follow common social practices, to such a degree that she was caught by the Inquisition when, in all likelihood, she probably could have avoided its oversight altogether. She is a unique figure in the Inquisition records, being the only Indigenous woman born to Indigenous parents in the *sertão*. Although we do not have access to her childhood, we know that she was brought to colonial settlements at a young age and learned the Portuguese language and customs to such a high standard that it merited remarks by two ecclesiastical representatives.

However, the inequalities she experienced as a result of her social status and gender are also visible: enslavement, forced marriage, and illiteracy. We do not know why she was brought from the *sertão*, but it was either through missionaries or through slaving trips made by settler men. She was brought to the Álvares household and seemingly had limited agency: she did not choose her husband(s) and it was only once she was freed by her master's son that she gained the ability to travel and seek out relatives who seemingly offered her protection. Despite what must have amounted to traumatic experiences, she was able to leverage the prejudices that led to her enslavement, marriages, and eventual interrogation to avoid severe punishment. That is, she relied on the Inquisitors' assumption that all women were simple, especially Indigenous women, to avoid a heavier punishment.

Finally, the biographical details, motherhood, and her mobility offer tantalising clues that merit further investigation and cross-examination with other primary and secondary sources to flesh out the experiences of women in sixteenth-century Brazil. It is worth investigating other possible narrative sources to determine whether African and settler women faced similar levels of scrutiny for the lessons they imparted on their children, particularly boys. Further, if possible, finding other examples of Indigenous women who travelled outside of the villages in which they were born, and to what extent, will help us answer questions about female mobility that traditional historiographies assumed did not exist. In short, reading sources, like those belonging to the Inquisition, against the grain and within their historical context can help expose new stories that may have hitherto been previously invisible to previous generations of historians.

## 7. A Chronology of Íria Álvares' Life Based on Her Trial Records

- c. 1545: Íria is born in the *sertão* of Paraguaçu.
- 1553-1556: Íria is enslaved and brought to the Captaincy of Bahia.
- c. 1560?: Íria is married to Pedro Dias, a locksmith.
- c. 1570s?: Pedro Dias disappears, Íria remarries Simão Luis.
- 1570s: Gives birth to Marcos Tavares.
- ????: Freed by Bastiam [Sebastião] Álvares, Father of Bastiam de Faria.
- c. 1585: Participates in *Santidade*.
- c. 1590: Separates from Simão Luis and goes to live in Pernambuco with her daughter and son-in-law.



- Jan 1593: Denounced by Vicar of Japasse for bigamy. The denunciation took place in Bahia, while Íria was in Pernambuco.
- Jul 1593: Denounced by her son in Bahia for bigamy, superstition and “gentile beliefs.”
- Jan 1595: Denounces Simão Luis for blasphemy.
- Jul 1595: After three interrogations, Íria confesses and is sentenced to an *auto-de-fé* and payment of costs.

## 8. Archival Sources

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