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EXTINCTION OF THE PRAISES TO THE  
VIRGEN OF CONCEPCION IN SUMPANGO\*

*Gonzalo Mejía Ruíz*

**What thou lovest well is thy true heritage**

*Ezra Pound*

**1. Sumpango**

To forty-two kilometers of the Guatemala City, in the valle of the virgen, San Agustín Sumpango is a township of mud that it is spill between the proximity of Sacatepéquez.

Its foundation vanishes in any corner of Toltec space. Its surname Cakchiquel told us about Cerro de la Barriga", or del perchero de las calaveras" if we called it in mexican<sup>1</sup>. San Agustín" already suggest of conquest violence and the colonial predation.

To North takes to Santo Domingo Xenacoj and the East it finds with Santiago Sacatepéquez. To South is Pastores and Jocotenango and the West is San Lorenzo El Tejar.

Sumpango current has a population of 12,000 inhabitants

- This job is the result of an investigation directed by the folklorist Ida Bremmé de Santos in the course about Introducción al Folklore which teaches in the Facultad de humanidades of San Carlos de Guatemala University.

1. In Mexica its roots seem to be tzompantli. These facts had been obtained in Alvarez-Lobos, Alfonso, **Monografía de Sumpango**. Inédita.

its majority indigenous Cakchiqueles<sup>2</sup> Christianized by the Dominicans<sup>3</sup>.

In the XV century the European universities had sworn the defense of the *limpia Concepción* de María. (In the XVIII century will make the own the American universities include the San Carlos de Guatemala University).

## 2. The Virgen de Concepción

It was not until the Council of Efeso (431) that image of María takes a true theological importance within the Christianity. In Efeso was defined the Divine Motherhood<sup>4</sup>. Thereafter and we based in this dogma the theologs elucidate the magnificent to the Virgen.

It was San Juan Damasco (749) the first that clearly expose the idea of the Inmaculada Concepción. However, it was until in the average age, during the great Marian outburst in the West, that starts to discuss about such subtlety. (Around 1175). It corresponds to Franciscan School in Oxford to have taken things to such an extreme that the hierarchy had no choice but to accept something that seem look evident.

The fundamental objection that it opposes was such thing was incompetent with the universality of redemption; thus, Christ redeemed **all** humanity.

The Franciscan Duns Scoto (1308), the principal ombudsman to the belief, he solves the problem. His doctrine can be summarized as follows:

Christ is the most perfect redeemer. Right now, one redemption that preserve of sin is most perfect that it free of him. Respect to personal sins, this is universally recognized. Right now, the capital end of redemption is deleted the original sin and only second term the personal sins. Then the redeemer of original sin appears of most perfect and direct way, it is to wait that exercise almost once this perfect act of redemption.

2. Cfr. Alvarez-Lobos, op.cit. Of ethnologist population I do not have an exact fact. I based in my own observation.

3. Quote in Alvarez-Lobos: Ximénez, Francisco, *Historia de la Provincia de San Vicente de Chiapa y Guatemala*, Cap. 82, p. 264.



*Praise of indigenous. Ciudad Vieja, Sacatepéquez.* (Photograph: Mauro Calanchina).

He argued such thing based in the Franciscan Guillermo de Ware who teaches before 1300 the Inmaculada Concepción about his famous principle: **potuit, deuit, fecit**.<sup>4</sup>

Since the Franciscans dedicated with ardently to spreading of belief in that mystery which devotion it is infiltrate and grew up in the township. To them they strongly oppose, the Dominicans based in the affirmation of Santo Tomás.

4. Pudo was convenient, then he does it. Cfr. Graef, Hilda. María págs. 291-293.



*Praised showed in Ciudad Vieja, Sacatepéquez. (Photograph: Mauro Calanchina).*

In 1621 the Franciscan Order declare to the Inmaculada Concepción a principal patron of Order. In 1760 is declared patron of Spain and her Indias. The township grew in enthusiastic about ministry enriching the celebration with its competition.<sup>5</sup> Finally, in front of overwhelming requests, Pío IX on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1854 declare dogma of faith to until pious belief”.

5. Cfr. Correa y Cannon, La loa en Guatemala.

### 3. The brotherhood of Virgen de Concepción

In Sumpango exists or must be exists, several brotherhoods: the *del Rosario*”, the *de las Animas*”, the *de San Agustín*”, the *de los Jesuses*”, the *de San Pascual*”, the *del Santísimo*” and *de la Concepción*”<sup>6</sup>. Of these I had find three: the San Agustín” (which celebrate to patron of township on August 28) and the del Santísimo” (which celebrate the **Corpus** and Holy Thursday) both are indigenous. The de la Virgen de Concepción” (which celebrate on December 8<sup>th</sup>, and the month of May) is of the ladinos.

It is not to surprised find one numerous and enthusiastic brotherhood of the Virgen de Concepcion in an evangelized township by Dominicans<sup>7</sup>. It is do to suppose that is a relative new devotion in the township. Even the images. Thus, there are two, that are venerated in the church, these are typical carvings from Guatemalan XIX, same that image of the brotherhood.

This brotherhood is the one that celebrates happiest” feast, even the de San Agustín (C.B.). The feast shows two positions: one in the church, of liturgical ceremonies and the another in the brotherhood in that one that made the popular feast and it where came out the prayer the night on December 8<sup>th</sup>.

### 4. The praise

The praise is a dramatic form of short duration that represent during one religious procession in honor of saint celebrated. The praised teaches, praised or entertain<sup>8</sup>.

This is naturally a peninsular genre transplanted to America, current conserve only in Guatemala for entertainment” of Spanish and creoles<sup>9</sup>. In the metropolis the praise was almost always the prologue and introduction of one

6. Alvarez-Lobos, **op.cit.**

7. It is not the only township in which occurs a phenom like this. Mixco is another township that serve as example.

8. Cfr. My article. “La Loa: Teatro popular de Guatemala” en **Estudios No. 5, o en La semana No. 45, abril de 1972.**

9. Both assertions contradict what was said in my article quoted. In this article, take information of Correa and Cannon assume the existence of praises in other countries. Right obtained certain information of INIDEF, we know of its existence only in Guatemala.

In other hand, I had supposed evangelization and conquest theater (of way that is evident is the **Conquest dance**), but, its absense in the indigenous world, such as conserver, front its presence in the ladino world I has think another thing. Verify this idea the fact of until right now there are not found previous praised to XVIII century.

major work with profane character<sup>10</sup>. Of here evolutions to lose parts without apparent connection with its comedy", to the manner of the **interludes**. Also bring to produce **interludes praises** entirely independent.<sup>11</sup>

The religious sense absorbed it, the praise to came in touch with the **sacramental play** to precedes as any **comedy**<sup>12</sup>. The religious **praises** of Lope and Calderón are famous that belong to its **plays** with those who are related by its sense and separated by the argument.

The genre must have arrived to Guatemala at the end of XVIII<sup>13</sup> century. Currently the praise survives as single and autonomous work of religious sign. It functions as a type of **interludes** within of one communal dramatic action that is the procession. It is a theater not institutional but empiric, traditional and anonymous. Nowadays, in Guatemala show in two situations: in the procession of Saint patron and in the prayer. The prayer are processions of the Virgen during the cycle of Christmas. (Sunday before to February 8<sup>th</sup>.) these prayers are preferably nocturnal and cover big gallery. In the prayers to it is engage *dances, challenges* and another dramatic forms it obtained its major develop the **praise**, being absorbed, overall, for the pray of Concepción.

## 5. The praise in Sumpango

Twice a year with purpose of removing **praises**" in Sumpango: the pray of Concepción, on December 8<sup>th</sup> and the Guadalupe on December 31<sup>st</sup>. (Inf. C).

The praises are put in stage by a direct who is also the producer (C,B). This, enthusiastic, is responsible to obtain the or the **praises** to show. With this purpose should to travel to other locations where he pays large sums to obtained them. In Dueñas for example my son pays five quetzals even only to copy them." (A).<sup>15</sup>

10. Cfr, Bleiberg y Marías, *Diccionario de literatura española* p. 463

11. Cfr. Bergman, *Ramillete de entremeses y bailes*, p. 11.

12. See note 9. (It is not finding praises that exceed the XVIII century).

14. Cfr. My quoted article.





Stage for praise. Sumpango, Sacatepéquez. (Photograph: Mauro Calanchina).

The director-producer requests several persons of his community for help him to show. The devote" people that accept to participated, he gives them a document with two months of anticipation" (A).

The day of show it assemble the stage" (platform) about the represent the **praise**. The show does when the pray stop in front of stage (B). The people make a lot of noise and it is not understanding the actors said (D). But, at least, the publish enjoy the show, which is consider the most successful, is when the publish laughs (B, D).

15. The list of praises dedicates to the Virgen de Concepcion that now the informer C has is the follow:

**Praise dedicates to Purísima Concepción.**  
**Praise of one native man and native woman.**  
**Praise for two children and one child**  
**Praise of tres potencias.**

## 6. Function of the praise

The praise pretends first of all honor to patron which is celebrate. The direct-producer moves with compelled enthusiast by the devotion, he full of this religious spirit act out in a folkloric theater all his emotion. The same can said of actors and all of them that selflessly" (they spare no expense or effort) they contribute the major success of the praise.

In second term the **praise** fun", distract" (relax the tension) to publish that for several motives (include religious or loving) accompanies to pray. The Praise grab the attention of publish, moving them away from the center where they had been fixed (the pray). It causes an alive or break. This relaxation take advantage to move the spirit for a major devotion or to make laugh.

Remains in the background the educational function of the **praise**. It warns, overall, in the moralizing zeal or instructive of history or apologetic, that reveal the text used to teaching the **praise**.

## 7. Conclusion

The last person who removing" **praise** in the pray of Concepción in Sumpango has been the Mrs. Rosalina Ortiz. She has two years of it do not remove them". (C). The **praise** to Virgen de Concepción has disappeared in Sumpango. However, it can find some few in the pray of Guadalupe. (December 31<sup>st</sup>).

The fundamental reason Mrs. Rosalina gives to suspension of the **praise** is economic:

- The large cost of copy of **praise**;
- The large cost that meaning to do a new stage every year, at least it difficult that is it assemble;
- The expensive that made the decoration of dress again.

Mrs. Rosalina, as direct-producer, must cover all those expenses. There exist other motives that contribute to the loss of enthusiasm in Mrs. Rosalina there are not found characters", she gives the document to them and they return it". The people do not want to participate in the



removing" of one **praise**. If this not occur, the Mrs. Ortiz would be willing to cover the costs year after year.

These social motives make to think in deep reasons. It is possible that the **praise** has lost its function. This includes a religious change in the township, whether by loss or transformation. (I believe by other hand, that the ecclesiastic opposition to these demonstrations it does not can attribute all the blame such as in Villa Nueva because the pray is absolutely independent to the priest authority).

In Guatemala one way or another the religiousness had been bound to the Catholic church in the last four hundred and fifty years ago. It is curious to look as since of last reforms in the church, the number of Protestants has increased enormously in Guatemala.

In Sumpango, in 1962, there is only a chapel of Protestant cult. Nowadays there are ten (A). This speak of one variation in the religiousness. A loss of above devotion and faith. The **praise** there is not have sense.

If all this is true, prompt appears other folkloric forms of demonstrate a new religious spirit.

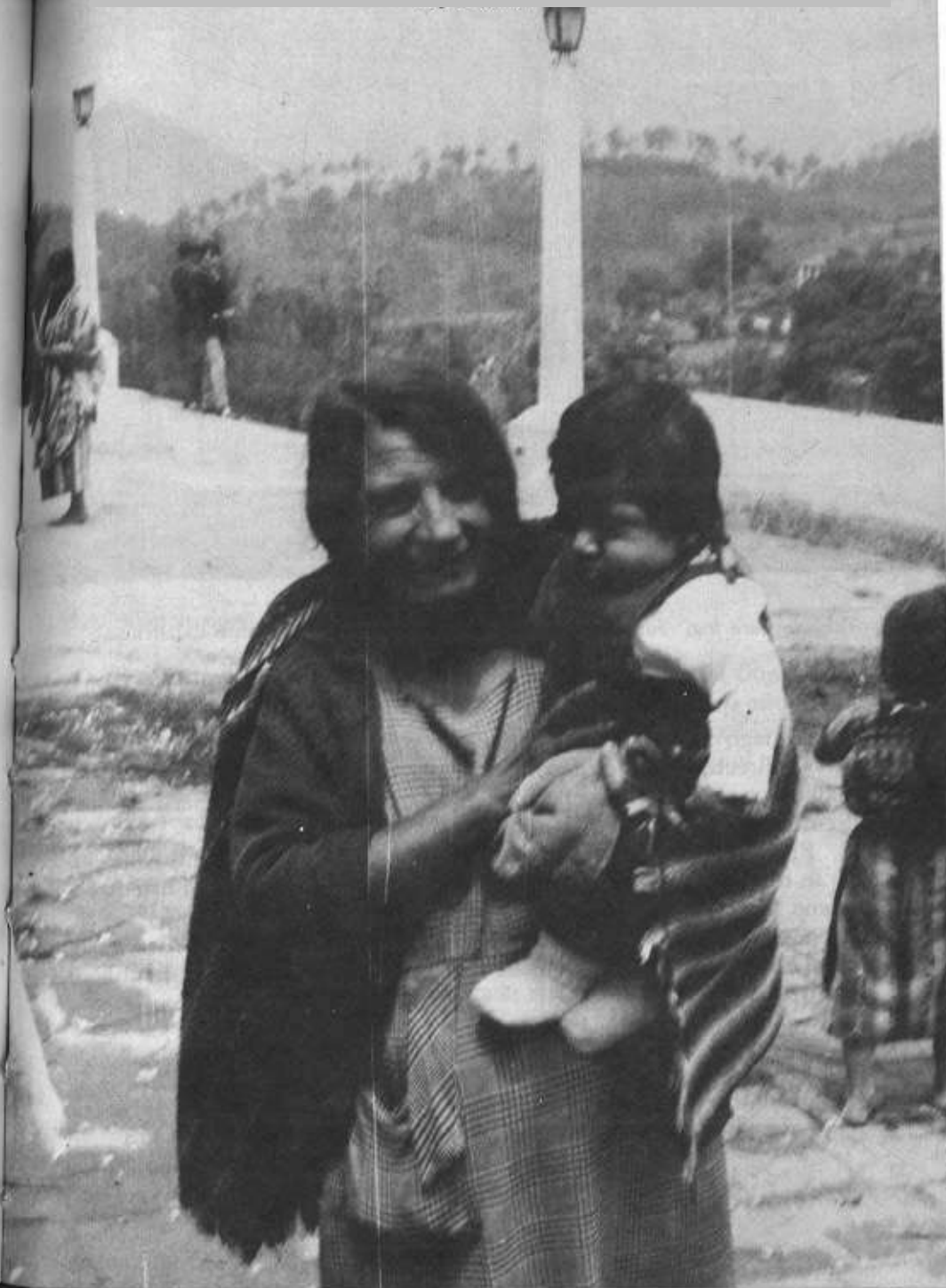
## 8. Informers

(The technique used in this work was the direct interview. It used the notepad to point textually" it was necessary).

- A. Licenciado (Guatemalan degree) Alfonso Alvarez Lobos. Attorney and Notary. Trial judge for civil cases. 30 years old. (Guatemala City).
- B. Juana Francisco Mejicano, housework in house of president of brotherhood of Concepción in Sumpango. 20 years old.
- C. Rosalina Ortiz, pig farmer, 56 years old. (Sumpango).
- D. Mr. Julian Toribio, pyrotechnician, 60 years old. (Sumpango).

All are copied in Dueñas in 1948.

The informer C show her praise only in the pray of Concepción because this is her devotion inherited by her parents. Her same grandparents give to the church one image of Inmaculada Concepción that has.







Stage for praise. Sumpango, Sacatepéquez. (Photograph: Mauro Calanchina).

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## PRAISE

Dedicate to Purisima Concepción 7 princes by virtue are 7 that bright three princess and four princes. (\*)

Esther	Oh! Nobleness of sky and earth, and the man the alliance, the hope confirm and your heart enclose it. You are the iris of the sea and you don very deep, admiring the four parts of world and one thousand marines; the lily between flowers and fragrance roses
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- This is a transcription of easily script by the informer Mrs. Rosalina Ortiz. Therefore, it has respected the graphic structure: it does not rebuild the poem that demonstrate in the text. It has kept the punctuation and orthography that the text offers. Either it puts clear notes that enriches the appreciation of this praise.

sturdy and shining light, your polite and lovely face; white lily of love and your shining words are the prudence star guided of worthy embarrassment; you are to the majestic world for your empery and dominion powder of Evil, butterfly banner; by happiness you are the guide, of eternal mysteries, nothing was modern to her bullfighter of *alelia*.

Princess  
Elizabeth

Oh! Flashlight mother of God son, she elects of prophets, thus, all projected of wise San Elijo; of centuries you are patent of heavenly mansion, you are the balm extreme unction for your wise bullfighter; all brilliant orb; sing the sweetness harmony of Christian the heart, the diamonds spill out; it does no keep my thoughts preaching your wonders, by elect Sacrament and starts firmaments; thus, the converted world, sing the sweet harmony, of the songs the waywardness, it is of convinced man; the beasts and their palace and fool understanding, save their food, adoring in his preface; the intrepid Mohammedans of their laws are except, they do not allow your embassy, nor the gift of being brothers.

Rutina

Oh! Iris full of grace, iris and divine virtue in where the youth, thus, adopt your fragrances, you are the universal remedy, you are the author and comfort, we adore you with care until the general act; between the seas, marine by power and empire, you are the divine mystery in the earthly world; you are the Dawn of the day of the stars protect, Oh seductress Virgin and man the waywardness, the Mahommedans spouses, sub leagues of the mystery, they are hemispheric abysses and of your sovereign name; those schismatic kingdoms and the iniquity example, Oh, queen have mercy of that mathematical order; the unblemished lamb and the true sacrament, where all firmament is documented faithful; of the centuries your words, thus, of sky you are issued confirmed divinity thus, the men are *adarmes*.

Esther

You are the tall mystery of divine Sacrament consecrate your worthy belly, the rigor of all empire. All kingdom stay submerged to the bullfighter of God the Father for you or nothing is alarmed, entire world was anointed; you are the same elected providence by the Saint Spirit, you are the wife sweetness enchanted and the man of belief; who the world by fortune, imagine your power, mother of Supreme being, thus, you are the beautiful creature, you are reliquary of divinity and the East crowds, thus, your servants in the mountain adore you dignified humility, open your pious arms above all be an abyss and receive baptism by the lovely lamb. (Kneels)

Isabel

But, they have been submerged by your sovereign empire, thus, pardons to the villagers of God will be blessed, that illustrious auditorium with illuminated candles accompanies you, you have mercy on its fragrant victories of love, pious all empire worship of every mystery. Thus, you are the Mother of Creator, you will be of spills water spread Providence, the man is by the science by your enshrined belly, you are become in mysteries in every part of world, you are the deep man for your wizard mantle try, thus, marines with their steamboats, thus, they adore you fervently, by the first stars; Jupiter, Saturn and Summer in its ended bullfighter by its dominant destinations, until foundations of sea, who could disturb that powerful order is every glorious empire for the Sacrament of the altar. (kneels)

Rutina

Become to the pagans of that dark light, thus, you Queen is elected until the death we praise you of the order of seraphim you are the angelical voice, you are the maternal dew of the fields and gardens. God made me shining in the heavenly mansion, thus, my light on earth I am assertive I admit I am constant, deity to happy world I was where all those stay saved by the Holy Trinity; the humanity extremes, it is of confirm law all of you are sacramented by the same Divinity; the churches are testimonies of Pasion of lamb, it is only true God, in the marriages souls, Wife you are virginal of the big being and patriarch save and divine area of your earthly sons. (Kneels)

- Abel Save Oh, Pure Virgin, inspire of roman world you are dawn of the Christian. Delirium beautiful creature of the stars all mystery by the powerful order, thus, you are very mystery you have the talent of hemisphere your sacrosanct name of world the Christian the Sacrament the baptism of martyrdom, sorrow and tears of those unbelieving kingdoms, their delights empowered by divinity forgiven by your prudent mercy, Muhammad for you decreed that all their Protestant sayings were diamonds by your order and precept the decree to be roman signed your Sacraments, thus, you signed the commandments of world human genre in the Noe's ark, the Patriarchs confirm, , the judgements counter the Princes by the faith.
- Raquel Raquel I blessed your commandment, by your faculty being. Where the Supreme God from the altar the Sacrament since the instant your power was elected, thus, the world has believe the martyrs very fragrant is the badge and the true of your decreed project, thus, all is declared for your destiny and loyalty in the Nativity scene portal the kings were formed for a beam was banished of the bullfighter of Jerusalem this worthy delicious step of this shining light to our very excellent of Christianity being happy the infant Sacrament for your divine empire form worthy mystery.  
By the worthy patriarch elected. These beings from other planets consecrated light uniform, thus, the cross where the stars are subject.
- Benjamin Oh Divine recreation of Heaven, Divine Being, Radiant recreation, thus, they celebrate you with desire; sweet diamond brush, fragrant man of the world, worthy faces illuminating, worthy light of the errant stars, you are empire by the Divine Redeemed, in your chest I saw the love of the Sacrament, the Mystery, thought from the heights to the depths of the sea, your sweet song, oh divine and worthy creature, thus, Christian adore

- you with the martyrdom of pain, they praise you with great fervor and also, mounts and villagers, of the night darkness you are worthy comfort aurora of divine flight, thus, being highlight against these tombs of recreation every empire will goes, it made firm to exist the light of spheres this globe very penetrating of single system of delirium of the sea your decorum be constant.
- Sadin Oh! Fragrance rose of mystery love of Trinity given one triumphal step mirror of our God, you are the tree of life, the life of Christian world, they praise you human genre, thus, he found moved of your crown the empire of every kingdom Mohammedan, for your scepter and Roman power the mystery was confirmed, the archangels and prophets, seraphim and patriarchs is of your kingdom the ark to the world is subject; thus my ears penetrating, this titular song, thus, the man has succeed, thus, the kingdoms confirm the delicious of your globe, without the original stain, the celestial sacrament, all exist to your order; who could deny, the mystery very patent, thus, all you are prudent, in your cradle worthy altar. (She comes in for a moment).
- Abel The prophets and archangels, the kingdoms in its court bullfighter in its flow. They were sign in their orchard of world of the four parts duplicate their virtues, they are the diet requests of pavilions and banners; sky and earth humiliated by the majesty elected, for the piety, every being are confirmed, Oh mother of the omnipotence, Mother of eternal verb, who in such modern and of man all science, these globes such present, are shining lights, are diamonds witnesses and the sun such shining; this moon such dominant bullfighter are the freights, thus, dominate the spouses in your worthy comfort, publish the true for one Sacrament God and in mystery of Trinity, thus, I am faculty worthy; pure virgin and consecrated, is all illustrious thought, you are Sacrament of Jesus crucify. (kneels for a moment).
- Raquel Every stay in salvation, for the conceived the womb, thus, the

womb sky for the Divine Concepción; this is the Queen without the original stain, it is the celestial globe and of seas in the boat, reign the planets all eternity elected, for word Trinity every star stay elected; divinity mother crowned from Saint Spirit, you are of world charm and the soul forgave; you are sound charm, Mother of God son, it is the dawn of prodigal wife of Saint Spirit; my understanding not reach my compliments, of your chest became, thus, you are queen of hope; this sound instrument of the angelical God, you are the Celestial Queen and of world firmament; complimented be proceeding from your order the pronoun, you are the mercy of the sacred man Supreme being;

Benjamin

You spill your blessed in the earth that God emanates, thus, every human being issued to the man inexperience; who could wondrous with affection and the cry of your mantle sweet charm and of one God very powerful, this iris that accompanies you and with sound instrument, it is the big firmament for the center nothing deceive, pass morning star pass queen of heaven, of Christian all comfort thus, they accompanies with waywardness worthy stars trims worthy prophets and charms, wife of Saint Spirit decorated candles of angels; Sadin goes prompt to praise the consecrated mystery, where every accomplished of cross premeditate; you are of tall divine illusion and of your powerful empire, my heart and happy soul give us your blessing. (kneels for a moment and request music).

Sadin

God save Queen and mother, full of mercy, harmony of fishermen, and alarm of the unworthy; you are our hope on earth, we praise you, thus, of the sky if we reach of your pious our alliance blessed be your purity and in every modern age revoke crime to hell, thus you are sweet rapture; Mohammedan and gentle confirm your decrees all in these decrees with subtle thoughts; all bullfighter chance praise your divinity, by the death all ends of law the commandments the articles of faith were in the Noe's ark consecrated the sacraments and thus, faithful brothers

accompanies with loyalty to our Mother and Majestic; the blessing of your hands; goodbye empress of heaven, goodbye Queen elected for us preferred; Mystery and Divine comfort. (Kneels)

## Song

From: Esther, Isabel and Rutina:

Oh, Queen among a thousand chosen of stars  
Crowned with voice of pitfalls preserved in  
seas of life  
You are shining of beauty  
Of every model virtue  
Flower carried of flight  
To shining in the heights

Esther

God save you Blessed María and humble and violet, Dios save you Mrs. and Queen of universe illuminate planet,

Isabel

God saves you white pigeon, whom the praised sky admires  
fragrant lily of delicious scent Eternal mirror where God admire himself.

Rutina

Blessing your belly between every women cup of chastity, fruitful tree, blessing you that the humble prefer to the arrogance; vanity of world.

Abel

The moon kisses your foot; the sun adores you the iris festoons  
are trucks that shines your eyes the stars and your lips there are dawn of aurora.

Raquel

Thus, to cross the large firmament your hands are Jazmin your  
plants are roses, your sunrise is honey and orange blossom your  
breath is love; your elected and music, your name.

Benjamin

Our souls  
That the day became

of tribute praise  
to the Inmaculada María  
which Beautiful and White cloud  
that goes by the fields  
you Will see shining  
for the streets of your Pray

With arch of beautiful stars  
Decorate your throne of glory  
For always your memory  
Conserve souvenirs of them.  
(farewell of everybody)

Goodbye Queen of heaven follows your Praise; we linking go  
the seven that shining and that live forever your name María.

Sumpango, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1948.