



**SO THAT THE YOUNG PARAGUAYAN MEDICS  
EXERCISE A DOUBLE MISSION, SCIENTIFIC AND  
PATRIOTIC”: THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE NATURALIST  
AND BOTANIST MOISÉS SANTIAGO BERTONI (LA  
CIVILIZACIÓN GUARANÍ, 1922-1927)**

**Eliane Cristina Deckmann Fleck \***

\* UNISINOS, São Leopoldo, RS, BRASIL  
ecdfleck@terra.com.br

**Abstract**

The swiss naturalist and botanist Moisés Santiago Bertoni was born in June 15th 1857 and passed in September 19th 1929. In 1883, still in Switzerland, he launched the *Rivista Scientifica Svizzeta*, which broached themes relating to the natural sciences, anthropology, sociology, geography, statistics and agriculture. He studied Legal, Physical and Natural Sciences in the Universities of Genebra e Zurich, being part of that host of scientists who, in the previous century, came to America, fascinated by the novelty, the exoticism and the possibility of performing investigations in the vast virgin territories of the continent.

However, differing from a Darwin or a Humboldt, Bertoni did not come to America as an explorer or an investigator, since he intended to put in place agricultural colony in the New World, which took place, at first, in the province of *Misiones*, Argentina (from 1884 to 1887), and, later in Paraguay (from 1887 to 1929), where, in 1894, he funded the colony *Puerto Bertoni*.

Throughout the almost four decades that he lived in these regions, Bertoni didn't neglect keeping in touch with the production from the biggest research centers in Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Guatemala and Ecuador, and with the studies about

Ethnology published in the *Annaes da Biblioteca Nacional*, in the *Revista Brasileira* and the *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*.

It was in *Puerto Bertoni*, in a region of Alto Paraná, localized ten kilometers from the border with Foz do Iguaçu, that he dedicated himself to the research of the native fauna and flora and the guarani indians, as well as the writing of his books – penned in six languages and published through his publishing house, *Ex-Sylvis* – and of scientific articles sent to various magazines and scientific libraries in America and Europe.

Other than the publishing house, he assembled, also, a library with over seventeen thousand works, experimental laboratories and a mail agency, through which he mailed his works to many countries. Among the most important are the *Analles Científicos Paraguayos*, the three tomes of *La Civilización Guaraní* and the work – unfinished – *Descripción física, econômica y social del Paraguay*, which guaranteed him invitations to represent Paraguai in many international scientific conferences, including the XX Congresso Internacional de Americanistas, in 1922, in Rio de Janeiro. In this edition of ICA, he delivered the conference *El futuro de la raza americana en América Latina*, in which he emphatically criticized the belief that the indian populations moved towards their complete extinction and sought to demonstrate that the “forgotten and beautiful *guarani* race” was a race whose biological superiority was reflected in the morals, in the alimentation and in the medicine they practiced.

This communication will focus, more specifically, in the Libro II of *La Civilización Guaraní*, entitled *La Medicina Guaraní*, which was dedicated to the “young Paraguayan medics”, with the expectation that “a few among them [would] see these studies as a double mission, scientific and patriotic.” (Bertoni, 1927, p. 143).