



The Santa Rita's Home in the municipality of Dourados: the origins of care and the 'civilizing etiquette' (1965-1982)

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ABSTRACT. The history of childhood abandonment and the initiatives to assist this population that demands social assistance and care, go back to the previous centuries, involving various institutions, both religious and state. This article is part of a completed research that dealt with the 'History of Santa Rita's Home and Child Care in Dourados MT/MS (1965-1982)' and aims to present aspects of this entity, from its origins and foundation, its facilities, the main characteristics of its structural organization, especially in the first administration of Santa Rita's Home, which comprised the period from 1965 to 1982, given that the institution has a long history and, until the present moment, is configured as a space that receives children with a history of abandonment in the city. We will make an approximation with the figurational sociology of Norbert Elias as a theoretical reference, to analyze the sources and institutional documents represented by minutes, diaries, registration books, children's lists, employee time books, invitations, letters. In addition, the documentary corpus comprises four interviews with subjects who were part of the institution's history within the listed time frame. As the results of the research, we infer that Santa Rita's Home was a necessary institution in view of the high number of abandoned children in the region, which can be evidenced in the analyzed documentation, and the institution was conceived at various times to welcome, assist, care and 'civilize children' around standards, norms and a behavioral etiquette that met the standards of society at the time, coincidentally the same group that financed and directed the institution in its first term, which were the women from Dourados belonging to 'good society', the 'ladies of charity'.

Keywords: childhood abandonment; assistance; education; Norbert Elias.

O Lar Santa Rita no município de Dourados/MS: as origens do atendimento e a 'etiqueta civilizatória' (1965-1982)

RESUMO. A história do abandono à infância e as iniciativas de atendimento a essa população que demanda assistência social e cuidado, vem desde séculos precedentes envolvendo diversas instituições, tanto religiosas como de Estado. Este artigo tem por objetivo apresentar aspectos de uma entidade filantrópica e de acolhimento, desde a sua fundação, mostrando suas instalações, as características principais de sua organização estrutural, enfocando especialmente a primeira gestão do Lar Santa Rita, que compreendeu o período de 1965 a 1982, haja vista que a instituição tem uma longa trajetória e se configura, até o presente momento, como um espaço que recebe crianças com história de abandono. Faremos uma aproximação com a sociologia figuracional de Norbert Elias como referência teórica, para analisarmos as fontes e documentos institucionais representado por atas, diários, livros de matrícula, listas de crianças, livros de ponto de funcionários, convites, ofícios. Além disso, compõe o corpus documental quatro entrevistas com sujeitos que fizeram parte da história da instituição, dentro do recorte temporal elencado. Como resultados da pesquisa, inferimos que o Lar Santa Rita foi uma instituição necessária frente ao elevado número de crianças abandonadas na região, o que pode ser evidenciado na documentação analisada. A instituição teve como concepção, em diversos momentos, acolher, assistir, cuidar e 'civilizar as crianças' em torno de padrões, normas e uma etiqueta de comportamento que atendessem aos padrões da sociedade do seu tempo: o grupo financiou e dirigiu a instituição na sua primeira gestão, quais sejam, as mulheres douradenses pertencentes à 'boa sociedade' – as 'damas da caridade'.

Palavras chave: infância abandonada; assistência; educação; Norbert Elias.

La casa de Santa Rita en la ciudad de Dourados: los orígenes del cuidado y la 'etiqueta civilizadora' (1965-1982)

RESUMEN. La historia del abandono infantil y de las iniciativas de atención a esta población que requiere asistencia y cuidados sociales se remonta a siglos atrás, involucrando a diversas instituciones, tanto religiosas como estatales. Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar aspectos de una entidad filantrópica y acogedora, desde su fundación, mostrando sus instalaciones, las principales características de su organización estructural, centrándose especialmente en la primera gestión de Lar Santa Rita, que abarcó el período de 1965 a 1982, dado que la institución tiene una larga trayectoria y se ha configurado, hasta ahora, como un espacio que recibe a niños con antecedentes de abandono. Nos acercaremos a la sociología figuracional de Norbert Elias como referente teórico, para analizar las fuentes y documentos institucionales representados por actas, diarios, libros de inscripción, listas de hijos, libros de tiempo de empleados, invitaciones, cartas. Además, el corpus documental comprende cuatro entrevistas a sujetos que formaron parte de la historia de la institución, dentro del marco temporal señalado. Como resultado de la investigación se infirió que Lar Santa Rita era una institución necesaria dado el alto número de niños abandonados en la región, lo cual se puede evidenciar en la documentación analizada. La concepción de la institución, en diferentes momentos, fue acoger, asistir, cuidar y 'civilizar a los niños' en torno a estándares, normas y una etiqueta de comportamiento que cumpliera con los estándares de la sociedad de su tiempo: el grupo financió y dirigió la institución en su primera dirección, es decir, las mujeres douradenses pertenecientes a la 'buena sociedad', las 'damas de la caridad'.

Palabras clave: infancia abandonada; asistencia; educación; Norberto Elías.

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Introduction

The social assistance actions were always present in the history of childhood care in Brazil in a bunch of different ways. Since the religious ways of charity, to the scientific assistance, concept that is fundamented in the actions of the doctors who used to represent the hygienist movement in the late XIX century and beginning of the XX century, that aimed to regulate and control the behavior of the poor populations in the country. Following this view, the bibliography of Rizzini (1990, 2011), Kuhlmann Jr. (2000, 2015); Kramer (1982), provide information on child's care in the first document on the subject published in the country, entitled 'History of child protection in Brazil' from 1500 to 1922, written by Dr. Moncorvo Filho. In this article, resulting from a completed research, we have different aspects to analyze, however we will make choices based on a specific historical place and time, which is the municipality of Dourados/MT/MS¹. In this context, we bring to the discussion aspects of an investigation that will tell the story of an institution called Santa Rita Children's Home, addressing aspects of its foundation, some initial proposals, as well as the care provided to children during the institution's first management, analyzing its civilizing practices in the period from 1965 to 1982.

The Santa Rita Children's Home was founded on November 12, 1965, as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). However, it was not always defined by this nomenclature. Its first corporate name was 'Shelter for Minors in Need of Dourados'; It was only in 1966, in one of the meetings recorded in Minutes, that it was named 'Lar Santa Rita de Cássia', in honor of Saint Rita – a reference of the Catholic Church. This institution continues to operate to this day, and has the capacity to accommodate 40 children, aged 0 to 12, of both genders. Today it even welcomes teenage girls and their babies, victims of abuse and teenage pregnancy, referred by the Guardianship Council, the Children's Court and the 9th Public Prosecutor's Office of Dourados/MS.

Our option highlights the time frame between the year 1965, as it was the date of foundation, and the year 1982 – the period in which the institution's first administrative management ended. Santa Rita Children's Home was created by a Judge and a group of ladies, the city's 'ladies of charity'. In the first phase it was administered by this group of women until 1982. After this date, it will be administered by the 'Loja Maçônica de Dourados nº 2015'.

Our article is organized with the intent of answering and narrating part of the entity's history in the municipality of Dourados, and focuses on some questions that also justified the development of the research: What were the motivations and who were the subjects involved in the founding of the entity? What was the priority in the children's care during the first administration from 1965-1982?

¹ We designate Mato Grosso (MT) as the state's situation before its division, as only with Complementary Law nº 31 (1977), we have the division to Mato Grosso do Sul.

The answers to such questions were sought in different documentary sources, including publications in the newspaper *O Progresso*. We highlight the edition of September 3, 1966, that notifies the founding of Santa Rita Children's Home by saying: "[...] congratulations to the Shelter's board of directors who carried out a great work, a necessity for any civilized city" (*O Progresso*, 1966b, p. 6). The note brings the concept of 'civilized society' and the need for an entity that would shelter 'less fortunate' poor children. The newspaper was emphatic in stating that for the good of civilization, children 'wandering' could not be tolerated through the city streets, as it was not a pleasant sight for people who had better purchasing power.

To debate these concepts of civility, we approached Elias's theory (2006) in order to understand the process of founding these institutions, which hoped to civilize the children to implement socially acceptable behaviors, formed from what the society of the period considered as being values to be achieved. These institutions, at the time, aimed to provide support and assistance to children, and also sought to define modes of control and behavior for children and adults.

For a broader research, in addition to documentary sources, we also resorted to oral history by interviewing subjects who were/are part of the entity's history, stating, with literature, that contacts with oral sources are necessary, "[...] valuing people's voices, life trajectories, memories, biographies, stories" (Sarat & Santos, 2010, p. 50-51). We selected people who experienced the Santa Rita Children's Home routine and were present during the period of the selected time frame, and thus we had access to 'stories within history' (Alberti, 2006) in the memories of these subjects.

The files found in the institutional collection contained photographs, documents, log books, statutes, history books of the entity, and we were able to locate this large volume of information that could also be explored in another proposal, and a collection of editions of local newspapers. In addition to all this material, the legislation of the time and a volume of photographs that are part of the collaborators' private archives were also the basis for documentary exploration.

We sought to cross-reference these different sources, because, as Mogarro (2005, p. 74) indicates, "[...] the information provided by these documents must necessarily be cross-referenced with data found from sources from another nature, presenting itself on varied supports and in different forms". Still regarding the photographic sources used during the research, we agree that in several aspects they enable the historian to go through the written document, since:

[...] the photo does not exhaust its usefulness or function through simple aesthetic contemplation. Except in some artistic photos, what captures our attention to the image is not just the appreciation of beauty, but the possibility of recognizing/knowing the real. We see ourselves transported through time and space, touching the past, immortalized by the mechanical action of the camera. In this sense, we could affirm that the importance of photography as a history source and the history of education would reside in its 'gift' of allowing us to visualize yesterday and other ones in their 'true' contours (Vidal & Abdala, 2005, p. 178, emphasis added).

Therefore, with these methodological choices and this documentary *corpus*, we want to narrate and understand the history of Santa Rita Children's Home in the municipality of Dourados, investigating the trajectory and care provided to children regarding assistance. We chose to highlight, initially, the period of the institution's origin and foundation, considering the time frame listed for analysis (1965-1982); and in the second moment, the characteristics of this first management of Santa Rita Children's Home considering its organization and operation, in this same period.

The history of assistance and service at Santa Rita Children's Home

Santa Rita Children's Home was founded in 1965, when the municipality of Dourados was going through a process of demographic growth that began two decades ago with the installation of the Dourados National Agricultural Colony (CAND) project, created by Decree Law No. 5,941 (1943). This initiative was part of several actions of the border nationalization policy, a perspective built around the Vargas regime of the Estado Novo and within the project entitled 'March to the West', which aimed at agricultural expansion and colonization (Naglis, 2014).

From this movement of people, countless migrants arrived in search of land and better living conditions. However, the location did not have sufficient infrastructure to provide adequate facilities for the population that was arriving and growing. This context of movement and lack of structure generates demographic imbalance and an increase in poverty, in addition to precarious conditions of service to the population. At the time, there were no children's care institutions or public support and assistance policies. In Brazil, the first

education and care initiatives for children under six years of age were carried out in the so-called pre-school – specifically in Dourados, confessional schools were created, such as the Erasmo Braga School and the Imaculada Conceição School, implemented in the last twenty years (1930-1950).

With this relative unplanned growth, abandonment numbers also increased, and in the 1960s there would be a large number of children in these conditions in the municipality, since, according to Gressler and Swensson (1988), in the absence of a caring place, they were left at the time's Judge's front door. There are reports of children who were dying of hunger, as follows: “[...] on November 1, 1965, Judge Rafael, with 5 children sheltered in his house, went out on foot from house to house, summoning old and young ladies for a meeting at the Forum” (Gressler and Swensson, 1988, p. 156).

In this meeting, according to the documents consulted, it is created the institution called ‘Santa Rita Children's Home’ (Lar Santa Rita). Its genesis lies in the movement of women who, seeking to carry out a charitable and philanthropic activity, and motivated by the convening of the General Assembly on November 12, 1965, at the Dourados District Forum, founded an entity to welcome these children in need. That meeting was attended by ladies who were part of Dourados’ society – the so-called ‘ladies of charity’ –, some philanthropists and jurists.

At the end of the Assembly, the first corporate name settled for the institution was ‘Dourados Shelter for Minors in Need’ and the election of the entity's first board of directors was established. The following were elected by vote among peers and sworn in: President, Geni Ferreira Milan; Vice-President, Maria de Lourdes da Cruz e Souza; 1st Secretary, Ymera Fedrizzi; 2nd Secretary, Maria Floreza Pessôa Carneiro; 1st Treasurer, Afife Bussuan; and 2nd Treasurer, Filomena Guimarães Gomes (History of the Santa Rita Children's Home, 2005).

The founding of the institution represented the proposal that demanded a civilized society, as we mentioned, and from the beginning numerous news were published in the newspaper *O Progresso*, which communicated the meetings, events and main facts involving the aforementioned institution. In the edition of November 27, 1965, there is a fragment of one of the meetings that emphasized the perception of this leadership group, at the time, about the reasons for opening an institution like that.

In the local press, poor childhood was highlighted as a problem to be solved by the community, as its presence was not compatible with a social group that entered the ‘portals of modernity and civility’, therefore it needed to be hidden from public view. Another aspect to be highlighted is the association of childhood with a utilitarian conception, in which the children should be prepared to become useful. The ‘roaming of bodies’ around the city could not be expressed as a civilizing ideology of the so-called ‘good society’, the newspaper reported:

All Dourados’ residents must support this Entity with a high philanthropic purpose, so that very soon we will stop seeing so many ragged and groomed children roaming the streets, uncared for; because, God willing, these children will have a home where they will receive all the appropriate assistance, where they will be able to attend classes, where, finally, they will learn to become ‘useful’ to themselves and to society (*O Progresso*, 1965, p. 6, emphasis added).

It is important to highlight the Eliasian perspective of good society, which removes from view and takes to the ‘bottom of social life’ whatever is considered repugnant, shameful, embarrassing, the dirty, the ugly, elements that do not match socially accepted etiquette. In the case of this scenario, “[...] ragged children wandering around the city” (*O Progresso*, 1965, p. 6). This situation is the result of the political decisions of the period, treated as aspects of a primitive city destined for barbarism, therefore requiring a new mode of behavior or standards with an “[...] increasingly strong tendency to remove the unpleasant sight” (Elias, 2011, p. 123).

In the course of what Norbert Elias treats as the civilizing process, social groups tend to create strategies for this to occur, and in the example of a society that begins to be constituted in the municipality of Dourados ‘All Dourados residents must support this Entity’ and are summoned to a collective effort towards civilization. Therefore, it would not be acceptable for abandoned children to be on display, revealing the inconsistencies of these ongoing social processes.

In this context, it would be essential that the repugnant was “[...] removed to the bottom of social life [...]”, as it is “[...] characteristic of every process that we call civilization, this movement of segregation, this hiding ‘out of sight’ of what has become repugnant” (Elias, 2011, p. 123, emphasis added), and thus the abandoned children became obstacles to the civilizing outbursts of the new Dourados’ society in constitution.

The entity, since its inception, welcomed children from newborns up to the age of 12. The institution began with sheltering six children, as the document informs us: “[...] President Geni Milan, after brief words,

demonstrated together with her husband the accounts and expenses of the Shelter and read a list of children numbering six” (Santa Rita Children's Home, 1966-1976, Book 01, p. 17-18)².

It is noted that its first address was provisional and was located in the building of the local Forum, a space that gave respectability to the institution and encouraged help from the city's wealthiest people as it was considered a serious action. Subsequently, Mayor Napoleão Francisco de Souza gave a land to the entity so that it could build its own building, located on the former Rua Espírito Santo – currently Toshinobu Katayama Street, where the institution is headquartered. The official inauguration of Santa Rita Children's Home took place on August 27, 1966, in its own building on that land.

The founding event of the Children's Home was reported in the local press through the newspaper *O Progresso*, in the edition of September 3, 1966. The report included a call for the population to visit the institution, make donations and collaborate in its operation. In the fragment, we again observe the emphasis as being a demand for civility in these child care facilities, as seen in this text: “[...] visit the home, and make your donation... congratulations to the board of directors of the Shelter that carried out a great work, necessary for any civilized city” (*O Progresso*, 1966b, p. 6). In other words, the sources inform the initiatives as being part of the ideology of the period and as promoters of civility, as it was necessary to remove abandoned children from the population's sight and give them an education that transformed their ways and customs.

This civilizing education based on control behaviors and etiquettes, as well as the standardization of rules, should be a collective effort and start in childhood. Institutions are perceived as important promoters of these civilizing proposals that are focused on regulating customs, controlling emotions, disciplinary forms of conducting rules, etiquettes and regulations for all individuals, but especially children, when “[...] the circle of precepts and norms is drawn so clearly around people, the censorship and pressure of social life that shapes their habits” (Elias, 2011, p. 140) and allows a change towards the intended social organization and behavioral changes.

In the case of foster care institutions, children with histories of abandonment required greater efforts in their education, as according to the same author “[...] a child who does not reach the level of control of emotions required by society is considered 'sick', 'abnormal', 'criminal', or simply 'unbearable', from the point of view of a certain caste or class and, consequently, excluded from the life of society” (Elias, 2011, p. 140, emphasis added). In this sense, in addition to the problems of an individual who is not socially included, children suffered from the abandonment of the minimum conditions of existence such as food, housing, protection, family care, basic and structural aspects for the individual to constitute themselves as a person.

The documentation analyzed informs that the institution's place in society at the time was an important space not only for children, but also for families that did not fit into the expected social models and standards. The institution also represented an opportunity for wealthier groups to make donations, volunteer work, and be at peace with their conscience, nurturing a feeling of helping others, an experience fostered by religiosity for a long time, especially in women's education.

The institution in its organization, guidelines and objectives established all measures in a Statute that was discussed and voted on during a meeting held on March 28, 1966, still in the city's District Forum hall. In the approved document, the purposes were explicit and involved everyone in the community:

Its purposes are: a) To provide general assistance to all minors in need in Dourados, ensuring their health, education, instruction and well-being in childhood and youth; b) maintain, as far as possible, as many houses, with defined names, governed by these statutes, as necessary, to ensure its purpose; c) proven to be in need, will receive and maintain newborns up to children under 12 years of age, of both sexes; d) ‘monitor, protect’ and place minors, who have left the shelter (Statute of the Shelter for Minors in Need of Dourados, 1972, Art. 2º, p. 1, emphasis added).

The first meeting was chaired by judge Rafael Arcanjo Arruda and, according to the report, after reading all the chapters of the statute led by him the document was approved by everyone present (Archive of Santa Rita Children's Home, 2005). Although its entire management was in the hands of women, and they have always been at the forefront of all activities since its foundation (1965-1982), the meetings were chaired by the Judge who created the institution's proposal, in addition to being held at the Forum of the city, a symbol of justice and local power.

At this point, we address the aspect of female leadership which is imposed only in private and domestic roles, although only women were in charge of all the work, at the decision-making moment of the meetings management was carried out by a single man and they took place in the public space of the Forum, at the time run mostly by men, as the number of women in the area of law was smaller.

² Inauguration of Santa Rita de Cássia Children's Home, 08/27/1966.

These characteristics of elite women are constituted in certain spaces, expressing social models expected for females. If we consider the Eliasian theory in which Elias (1994) addresses long-term processes, we will realize that the civility of customs, or the 'courtship of warriors', had a strong influence on women, as for men to become 'gentleman', polite and courteous, they had to adapt and contain their most primal impulses, their behavior and their emotions by changing their habits and learning new etiquette. The presence of women was fundamental in the process of learning these new social etiquettes. In front of women, the warriors needed to have control and self-control of their emotions, learn to dialogue, learn good manners, good manners and adapt to new rules of behavior. In the record in Figure 1 we observe this female presence at Santa Rita's Home, women who have actively worked in the entity since its foundation. Sociologist Cas Wouters, inspired by Elias, in his research on civility manuals, informs us that women dominated private spaces, and from there, controlled the 'balance of power', also influencing public spaces.

Although confined to the domain of their homes and the 'good society', women from the upper and middle classes began, more or less, to mobilize and organize the social sphere of the good society. The operations of this social formation took place, to a large extent, in women's private living rooms. To a certain extent, women began to play the role of 'guardians of the doors' of good society (Wouters, 2012, p. 553, emphasis added).



Figure 1. Women working at Santa Rita Children's Home.

Source: Dourados: nooks and stories (2002).

Regarding the education of these women, we can see that they came from wealthier contexts. The image expressed by the clothes, the hairstyles typical of the time, the furniture, the crockery, the social gatherings, all these elements inform their place and their formation in the group that has its own label. They are women trained to play a certain role since childhood with a specific civility:

The process of '*courtshiping the warrior*' in Elias' studies (1993-1994) does not directly include women and children, but there is a consensus that their presence was sustained behind the scenes and in private contexts. Wars and disputes between women, men and children have a privileged place in the domestic space and within family life in their organizational processes. [...] in the intimate spaces dominated by female groups, women impose rules and carry out their daily battles, however, they also need specific knowledge and skills that will be learned throughout their lives, starting in childhood. Although behavior, manners and social etiquette for public spaces have had similar patterns in Western and colonized societies from Europe, such patterns were regulated by specific attitudes towards women, emphasizing the domains of the private and the home (Sarat, 2018, p. 93, emphasis added).

Another aspect about the institution is the financing of activities. At first, all investment in Santa Rita Children's Home was made from donations and community participation. Subsequently, when organizing itself as an entity, it began to rely on funds derived from other fonts such as: monthly contributions (members), donations from the community and assistance from public authorities – federal, state and municipal (Statute of the Shelter for Minors in Need of Dourados, 1972, Art. 3, p. 1). With donations from the community and funds received, pavilions were built and renovated, equipped with a kitchen, bedrooms and external space. When opened, these places were named after their donors. The ceremonies were published in

the newspaper *O Progresso*, emphasizing the ‘charitable and philanthropic spirit’ of the people who contributed to the institution, and the periodical also highlighted the individuals as good examples of ‘Christians’. There was also the title of ‘merited member’, which was only given to individuals who made contributions of considerable amounts. Also for the awarding of titles, ceremonies were held and publicized in local newspapers inviting the population to come and celebrate. We found a record of one of the ceremonies in the newspaper *O Progresso*, appealing to the spirit of solidarity among Christians. One of the news items published in the October 11, 1969 edition had an invitation entitled ‘Philanthropic Causes’:

The current building was built with the capacity to house 30 children. Today, it maintains 59, no longer accepting, due to lack of space, as more and more children arrive every day, which we are forced to refuse as we have nowhere to put them. It is a calamitous situation, that of a helpless child. Wanting to solve this problem, we created a construction project that will house 300 minors, which is our ideal. Since we found resonance in our appeal, we turned to you, in the hope of obtaining help for the happiness and well-being of so many children, so early struck by bad luck, who have only now found a true home. If we obtain help, combined with the good will and ‘solidarity of Christians’, we will be able to achieve something good and lasting, because as Saint Francisco de Assis says – ‘it is in giving that one receives’ (Philanthropic Causes, 1969, p. 1, emphasis added).

The fragment clearly informs the community’s involvement with donations for all purposes: construction of its physical space, expansion, small renovations and even the maintenance of the entity. The documentation shows the activities carried out in favor of the Children’s Home, promotions and social events: parties, shows, auctions, raffles, contribution books, campaigns, etc. These movements are important, and open a discussion that we cannot expand on for now, as the debate about individual and community initiatives, as they expand, exposes the absence of public power in solving the population’s demands.

The events mentioned above were coordinated and organized by Ymera Fedrizzi, secretary of the institution during the period (1965-1974) (Archive of Santa Rita Children’s Home, 2005). Among the different events, we highlight the *Debutante* Ball, a very common event in the wealthy society of the period, and was held by the board to raise financial resources for the institution. The first *Debutante* Ball took place on August 27, 1966, as we can see in the invitation at Figure 2. At this event 23 girls debuted. Figure 3 shows us the day of the event and the names of the participants, daughters of the wealthiest families. For the occasion, tables were sold and the required attire was formal, as we see in Figure 3. The event was prominently publicized in the newspaper *O Progresso* in the following terms: “[...] On this occasion, *O Progresso* greets the management of Santa Rita de Cássia Children’s Home for the brilliant initiative in providing Dourados with an event which will be duly marked indelibly in our social annals” (*O Progresso*, 1966a, p. 6).



Figure 2. Poster advertising the 1st *Debutante* Ball.

Source: Personal Collection of Maria Eugênia Carvalho do Amaral (1966).



Figure 3. *Debutante Ball 1966.*

Source: Personal Collection of Maria Eugênia Carvalho do Amaral (1966).

The news above appeals to the aspect of donors being imbued with 'good will' and 'Christian solidarity', allowing us to infer in the debate between education and assistance that has become important in the history of aid and the history of childhood, taking us back to the concept of philanthropy, in its moralizing sense since "[...] it covered actions to prevent the 'evils caused by indigence': the recovery of prisoners, assistance to orphans and the insane, public hygiene, savings banks and societies of mutual aid were on the agenda of philanthropists" (Sanglard & Lopes, 2018, p. 282, authors' emphasis).

Still under this perception, Marcílio (1998) indicates that philanthropy was of interest to society's leaders as they were interested in maintaining control, seeking order, respecting regulations, resolving social conflicts, preserving families - all of these actions as part of philanthropic utopias. Furthermore, according to Souza (2018), there is a concern to scientifically substantiate assistance, with the aim of saving the child, their body, within the utilitarian perspective.

At the time of the creation of the Children's Home, we had the publication of the Civil Code that suggested repression as the way to find a solution to the 'problem', and there was a great concern about abandoned children in the history of assistance, in order to remove them from the community. Social. Kuhlmann Jr. (2015, p. 27) states that "[...] the history of assistance has also been the history of producing an image of the poor as a social threat to be controlled [...] when the poor child is identified as a street child, they become synonymous with "pickpocket", or "minor offender".

Women of charity: the first management of Santa Rita Children's Home (1965-1982)

Since its formation, the institution has had a female director, although the initiative for its creation came from a city male judge. The first president was Geni Ferreira Milan, who took over management but stayed for a short time, as she died on January 3, 1969, in a tragic event that marked the history of the entity and the municipality. Records of interviews and conversations in the city say that she was murdered in a kind of 'duel' in which she was publicly involved.

As a woman ahead of her time, she was very respected and combative, she discussed with people on an equal footing, she dressed and behaved differently from the standard expected of women and had great leadership in the municipality. Her attitudes, considered unfeminine, were characterized by her actively participating in the work and care of the family farms, riding horses wearing men's trousers, carrying weapons with a type of belt. In an interview with the author (verbal information), Roger Alexandre Milan Brochado, Geni's grandson, remembers a photograph in which his grandmother would be wearing such clothing: "[...]this photo, for me, is the photo that really marks her personality, where she is wearing a pump, a belt, a 38 (revolver/gun) on her waist, high boots, pants tucked into her boots, hat, really a farmer" (Interview..., 2022). The authors below also point out:

Anyone who lived in Dourados in the period prior to 1969 will certainly remember that interesting figure, whose boldness always placed her at a level somewhat above the natural, in the feminine mold. Her eccentricity resided in an unusual vitality. Her action involved a determinism that made her personality something out of the ordinary (Capilé Jr., Capilé, & Souza, 1995, p. 102).

In this accident, Geni Milan lost her life prematurely. This fact changed the configuration of the institution's first management, and from then on the board needed to reorganize itself and call on a new replacement, with Arlene Andrade Marques being elected and sworn in as president for the period from September 26, 1969, to November 17, 1969, with an extension of mandate.

Later, but still in 1969, we find the record of the election of Maria Florezia Pessoa Carneiro as president, who remained until March 1970. Still according to Minutes nº 144 of Book 01, on March 13, 1970 (Santa Rita Children's Home, 1966-1976), a meeting was held and a new board of directors for the entity was elected. On that occasion, Afife Macksoud Bussuan was elected president and remained in office until 1982 – the end of this first management. During the period (1965-1982), even with changes between the positions of secretary, vice-president and treasurer, only president Afife remained.

The board of directors of the Home, in its first administration, was made up of women, from its foundation until 1982. Based on the institutional Statute itself, in its Art. 4 (Statute of the Shelter for Minors in Need of Dourados, 1972, p. 1), from the administration, we find the designation and criteria for being part of the board, "b) The Board of Directors will always be elected at the General Assembly and will last for two years, made up of female elements". This perspective follows a trend of the period that will involve women from the so-called 'good society'. Camara (2017, p. 211) reports that the ladies of society at the time, "[...] projected themselves onto different fronts of action at various times [...]" as they were involved and had a presence in the so-called 'philanthropic causes'.

We worked with different documents as sources in a perspective of crossing sources and for the purposes of recording these children who were welcomed by the Home, we located in its collection the so-called 'Registration Forms': the first form in the institutional collection dated 1976, as we can see in Figure 4. They contained the personal data of the child and parents, a 3x4 photo, the date and time of entry into the entity, and a space entitled 'conditions of the child at the time of receipt' and observations.

In the observations mentioned in Figure 5, we found some reasons given by parents and guardians for leaving the child at the entity, including: poverty and lack of financial conditions, death of one of the parents, unemployment, health issues, need for work (there was not a daycare center to leave the children), marital conflicts (sent by the judge). Poverty and the death of a parent were frequent reasons in the forms for children entering the institution.

REGISTRO DE ENTRADA DE MENORES NO ABRIGO LAR SANTA RITA DE CÁSSIA

No do Ordem: _____

Nome: Maria Emeralda Batista do Nascimento

Antiga Residência: Ipanema - RJ. Telefone: 222.22.22

Idade: 13 anos. Data do nascimento: 20/05/60

Lugar do nascimento: Ipanema - RJ.

Sexo: Feminino

Nacionalidade: Brasileira

Cônjuge: Não tem

Religião: Católica

Altura: 1,33 m

Peso: 30 kg

Fotografia de 3x4: _____

Quando Pais Estrangeiros:

No da Carteira: _____ No do Registro Geral: _____

Casado com brasileira? Não. Nome do cônjuge: _____

Tem filhos brasileiros? Não. Quantos? 2 (dois)

Maria Emeralda Batista do Nascimento e Josévaldo B. do Nascimento

Data da chegada no Brasil: 10/10/76. Naturalizados: Não. Decreto: Não

Data da Admissão no Abrigo: _____

Horário de entrada: _____ Dia: _____ Mês: _____ Ano: _____

Entregue à Diretoria do Lar Sta. Rita de _____ de _____ de 1976

Data da dispensa: 5 - 10 - 76

Recbi os seguintes documentos que pertencem ao menor: Registro

de 10 de 1976

Afife Macksoud Bussuan
Presidente da Fundação

Figure 4. Entry Registration Form.

Source: Institutional collection of Lar Santa Rita (1976).

When children entered the Home, they needed to follow a routine, consisting of times for daily activities, according to the documentation "[...] a schedule was stipulated for the children as follows: 7 am coffee, 9 am

snack, 11:30 am lunch, 3 pm snack, 6 pm dinner, bath at 5 pm” (Santa Rita Children’s Home, 1966-1976, Minutes nº 146, Book 01, p. 193). Routines are important, but they can also constitute complex moments in the institution if we consider that, in general, they favor adults, to the detriment of children. On this topic, Barbosa (2000) tells us that this daily routine as part of caring for children is linked to rituals, habits that are repeated, associated with order and what adults expect from the education of children cared for in institutions.

Although we can understand its importance for educating the children, we also perceive its oppressive nature when establishing a form of discipline based on training modalities, in which “[...] the individual is trained to develop a very high degree of self-control and personal independence” (Elias 1994, p. 100). The elements present in routines, in the case of abandoned children, can make them even more complex and challenging.

Figure 5. Entry Registration Form.

Source: Institutional collection of Santa Rita Children’s Home.

In this way, the organization of the institution was also established as a control mechanism, as in addition to fulfilling social purposes, regulating behavior and implementing norms, it brought into its project all the civilizing ideas that advocated a 'good functioning of the entity' and was based on these aspects to be followed. In one of the Home's facilities, the construction of pavilions was planned to house male children aged 8 and over, and there was already a proposal for activities for these routines, in which “[...] the boys would learn services garden, orchard and farm and would continue their studies in the city, which would also depend on their own condition” (Santa Rita Children’s Home, 1966-1976, Minutes nº 218, Livro 02, p. 96). Regarding the space for boys in the activities mentioned above, we found no records of such movement. This proposal raises a debate on gender issues, a topic that will be explored in depth another time.

People from the first administration can be identified in one of the photographic records provided by Marisa Pereira dos Santos, who was also a student at the Home and had some documents and photographic images in her private archives. One of the aspects that draws attention is the number of children, since it was a municipality that, at the time, had been 30 years since its foundation (1935), therefore still very young for such a high number of children with stories of abandonment. We also observe the physical space and the first director in the fragments of the scene. Photography as a source has this affective value, it carries the sense of “[...] creator of memories and souvenirs [...]” (Le Goff, 1990, p. 211), and which was saved for posterity by a reason that only those who left it are able to list.

In Figure 6, recording made after a meeting. The children who live at the Children’s Home, boys and girls, are present, as well as two employees, one with a baby on her lap, and Mrs. Afife Bussuan, the president of the institution at the time, placed in the left corner of the scene.



Figure 6. Children from Santa Rita Children's Home gathered in the courtyard.

Source: Private collection of Marisa Pereira dos Santos (1977).

This record is remarkable in our research, as we can observe a significant number of sheltered children – around 67 children counted in this photograph –, demonstrating that there was a high demand of care for abandoned children in the city. The age range of children cared for, going from babies to children over 12 years old, is notable in the photograph as stated in the entity's Statute.

Such children could be adopted, but the adoption process would have to meet several detailed criteria. Initially, the couple who wanted to adopt went through an interview. Then, a form was filled out with the data of the family candidate for adoption, and then interviews were carried out with these applicants. In the interview, questions were considered about various aspects of their public and private lives, to verify the conditions of these people who wanted to adopt one of the children. After an analysis by the entity's board, the child could be adopted and the process was accompanied by a period of adaptation with the family that lasted around 30 days. At the end of this time, she could return to the Home if she so desired or confirm the adoption. To carry out the adoption, the judge of Law at the time signed a request, and this entire procedure was recorded in Minutes.

In one of the fragments of the Statute of the "Shelter for Minors in Need of Dourados", Article 20, addresses one of the requirements for the adoption to be approved by the board, "[...] to people who wish as long as they do proof of being civilly married, defined function, 'suitable' and with an 'unblemished reputation' and entitle, I mean, and guardian the minor" (Statute of the Shelter of Needy Minors of Dourados, 1966, Art. 20º, p. 4, emphasis added).

Such aspects reflect the conception of the time, that the appropriate family should be composed of a man and a woman, with good reputations, according to the evaluation standards of a given social group. It is interesting to highlight the still very conservative nature of the institution and the current legislation that underpinned the adoption procedures.

In the photographic records we have some aspects of the so-called school culture present in the use of uniforms by children, which sought homogenization in the sense of also promoting the aforementioned 'civilization' through the adoption of certain behaviors, imposition of norms, as well as directing models of conduct. For Elias (2011), there is an established standard of behavior and to be considered civilized, individuals need to act in accordance with this control, therefore it was essential for the institution to use norms that allowed all people to be placed on the same level and meet a specific model. It is not possible to explore all the possibilities of the document, but it allows us to see the extent of care for abandoned children, and the way in which it was organized.

Completing the history of the Children's Home during this period

Santa Rita Children's Home was the first institution founded in the city of Dourados MT/MS, whose purpose was to promote child care. The institution has been fully operational for over 50 years and currently also has the CEI Santa Rita's Home – an early childhood education school. This entity, since its foundation, had a significant relationship with the community, linked to charitable gestures and good deeds involving philanthropy.

In the survey and cross-referencing of sources, we analyzed the existence of an uncomfortable feeling on the part of society when observing children roaming the streets, therefore, there was a demand as a necessity to propose some type of service that would resolve the situation of continuous exposure of children and also the presence of news in local print media that, in some way, caused discomfort among the wealthier population.

In this way, combining a group of forces belonging to the wealthiest social leaders, Santa Rita Children's Home was founded, not only to serve children, but also to placate this aspect that referred to barbarism and the primitive, as the discourses of progress, civility, order, were present. However, it was not clear what particularly justified the initiatives of these people.

Removing children from the streets and providing a home for them was a joint action to resolve social problems, minimize poverty, but also there is a possibility that, as we have already mentioned, inspired by Elias, they wanted to push those disgusting, shameful, grotesque aspects, which is seeing children abandoned, into the background of the social scene or social life. However, such situations are unfortunately still present today, as we do not have enough homes to welcome all children, although we have legislation that minimally protects them, and we need to demand its compliance and the guarantee that children are respected as citizens with rights.

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Notes:

Priscila Demeneghi da Silva Vargas developed the research that resulted in a master's thesis, defended at PPGEdU/FAED/UFGD. She wrote the article in partnership with the supervisor, using data from the research developed and articulating the elements that required sending this article for publication, especially considering the fact that she was a CAPES scholarship holder, which is a commitment to the program and to the society for the return of the research.

Magda Sarat was the research advisor throughout the scholarship holder's training process. She supervised the dissertation that was defended, therefore, research completed. She corrected and helped organize the writing of the article, construct the text and analyze the data, as well as the entire dissertation work that inspired the article.