

### Julia J. S. Sarreal

*The Guaraní and Their Missions. A Socioeconomic History.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014. Pp. xviii + 335. Hb, \$65.00.

Magnus Mörner's *The Political and Economic Activities of the Jesuits in the La Plata Region: The Hapsburg Era* constituted a milestone within Jesuit studies, but has become somewhat dated. Julia Sarreal's book therefore provides a much-needed update to and continuation of Mörner's work.

But her work has other merits as well. Following recent ethno-historical advances, exemplified in Guillermo Wilde's book *Religión y poder en las misiones de guaraníes*, Sarreal—in keeping with her title—takes an original approach by studying the structures of the Guaraní themselves rather than focusing on those imposed by the colonial authorities and the Society of Jesus. Another attribute of Sarreal's text that is worth highlighting is its chronological scope. Generally, studies of the Jesuit missions culminate with the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1768, one year after the Spanish empire issued its decree of suppression. However, even without the Jesuits, the missions continued to exist and remained home to many of the Guaraní. *The Guaraní and Their Missions* traces the history of the Indians who remained in their towns, carrying their story up to the dissolution of their *pueblos*.

The book consists of nine chapters divided into two parts. Chapter five, "Bankruptcy," serves as the hinge, connecting chapters one through four, in which Sarreal discusses the missions during their years of Jesuit presence, to chapters six through ten, in which she describes the towns after they came under the control of the Spanish colonial authorities.

Sarreal's study approaches the Guaraní through an examination of their economic life inside the towns and villages of the missions. It considers not only what they produced but how they produced it and how they distributed those products. The author provides an impeccable analysis of the existent economic data, available in the Archivo General de la Nación in Buenos Aires; behind every table can be perceived her meticulous review of every account book in that place. Under the rules of Jesuits' government, the missions were connected to the *oficios* [trade offices] in Santa Fe and Buenos Aires, as well as to other missions with which they exchanged products. The *oficios* organized all of the external economic operations of the missions, arranging both purchases and sales.

The expulsion of the order from the Spanish empire in 1767, implemented in the missions a little over a year later, triggered profound changes in the lives of the Guaraní. A large percentage of them abandoned the missions, intermingling with farmers or moving to flourishing cities, such as Buenos Aires. The author focuses on the Guaraní who remained in the missions rather than on those who left; she therefore has little to say about the changes that took place

in the latter societies after their migration. She does however highlight the fact that running away or staying were options that the Indians carefully evaluated and considered, often making their decisions based on the place they occupied in the social structure of the missions.

The internal organization of the missions changed greatly with the expulsion of the Jesuits. Moral and material care were no longer the charge of a single person, as there was now a civil administrator as well as a priest. At a more general level, the governor (or viceroy, after 1776) was joined by a general administrator, who oversaw all of the processes related to the economic transactions of the missions and whose salary was derived from the sale and purchase of products of and for the missions. The author notes that while some Guaraní were able to take advantage of the new situation, others were not. The population that was most adversely affected was the one that had lived in the missions practicing communal production, as that type of production disappeared after 1768. Previously established relationships among the missions also became nearly extinct, and the Indians who remained had to begin working primarily to produce exports, such as *yerba mate* and cow hides. Production once undertaken to satisfy internal colonial demand was now, after the free trade agreement and regulations of 1778, destined for Río de la Plata, as the Guaraní started providing goods for a global market.

The transition resulted from the clash of two logics of production, with the capitalist mode soundly defeating the communal, pre-capitalist one. Economic life of the Guaraní was gravely damaged. The general administrator and his employees single-mindedly pursued the trade of hides until the Indians had no more cows. After the resulting collapse, the colonial government dissolved the *pueblos de indios*, using the “freedom” of indigenous groups as its excuse. The policy could not be implemented immediately, however, on account of wars of independence that began in 1799; the Paraguayan *pueblos* thus remained in existence until 1848.

Julia Sarreal’s work is the first to address this process, focusing on the Guaraní and their economic relations and tackling both the pre- and post-Jesuit periods. In this sense, her book provides an original and fundamental contribution to our knowledge and understanding of Guaraní missions. Relating the decline of the missions to the globalization of the capitalist system opens new lines of research, inviting the study of various regions in a “local” key—even regions like Paraguay, long considered to have developed in complete isolation.

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