



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (177)

Title: *Indios Guaraníes y Jesuitas: Misiones de la Compañía de Jesús en el Paraguay (1610-1767)*

Author: Jean-Paul Duviols

Subject Areas: Latin American Colonial History, Indigenous Studies, Ethnology, Sociology of Religion, Utopian Studies.

I. Academic Justification & Context

Jean-Paul Duviols' *Indios Guaraníes y Jesuitas* provides a comprehensive ethnographic and historical analysis of the "Holy Experiment" in the Río de la Plata. Rather than solely focusing on the economic or geopolitical impact of the Jesuit missions, Duviols centers his study on the human relations and the concept of *alterity*—how the European evangelizers perceived, judged, and ultimately transformed the Guaraní people. For university courses, this text is indispensable as a primary source reader and critical commentary combined. It allows students to analyze the construction of the "colonial subject." Through the meticulously gathered letters, chronicles, and iconographic evidence of the Jesuits themselves, the text exposes the tension between a genuine utopian desire to build the "City of God" and the implementation of a paternalistic, culturally destructive system of colonization.

II. Core Thematic Axes for Lecture & Syllabus Integration

1. The Linguistic Conquest: Guaraní as an Evangelical Tool

Duviols highlights the revolutionary decision by the Jesuits (in line with the Council of Lima) to evangelize in the native tongue rather than in Spanish. This axis allows professors to explore the politics of language. Was the preservation and codification of Guaraní an act of cultural respect, or a calculated strategy to isolate the indigenous populations from the secular Spanish colony and maintain absolute ideological control?

2. Syncretism and the Subversion of Indigenous Cosmogonies

The text details how Jesuits selectively appropriated indigenous mythology to facilitate conversion. Students can analyze the semantic shifts imposed by the missionaries: elevating *Tupã* (a secondary thunder spirit) to the status of the Judeo-Christian Supreme God, and morphing *Aña* into the Devil. Furthermore, the indigenous quest for the "Tierra sin mal" (Land without Evil) was brilliantly co-opted to represent the Christian Paradise.

3. Paternalism and the "Good Savage"

How did the missionaries view the Guaraní? The testimonies reveal a contradictory gaze: the Indians were seen simultaneously as innocent children capable of perfect Christian devotion and as natural imitators devoid of true creative intellect. This axis invites a deep discussion on the nature of paternalism as a mechanism of colonial control, where equality in salvation does not equate to equality in earthly status (e.g., no Guaraní was ever ordained as a priest).

III. Classroom Discussion Topics

1. **Utopia vs. Exploitation:** Duviols presents the historical debate regarding the nature of the missions. Were they a communist utopia protecting the Indians from the brutal *encomienda* system and the *Bandeirantes*, or were they, as Félix de



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Azara and others argued, a system of polite slavery where 100,000 Indians labored for the sole benefit of the Jesuit order?

2. **The "Civilizing" Power of Art and Music:** The Jesuits marveled at the Guaraní's ability to imitate European architecture, sculpture, and polyphonic music perfectly. Discuss the psychological and cultural impact of replacing indigenous rituals with Baroque European aesthetics. What does "imitation" mean in a colonial context?
3. **The Expulsion (1767) and its Aftermath:** What happened to the "City of God" when the Jesuits were expelled by Charles III? Discuss why the missions collapsed under secular administration and what this reveals about the fragility of the Jesuit social structure.

IV. Research Prompts & Essay Assignments

- **Ethnohistory and Alterity Essay:** *"Analyze the concept of the 'Other' as documented by the Jesuit missionaries in Duviols' text. How did their European, Christian worldview shape their descriptions of indigenous customs, and how did this ethnocentric gaze justify their totalizing control over the daily lives of the Guaraní?"*
- **Political Science / Utopian Studies:** *"Compare the socio-economic structure of the Jesuit 'Reducciones' in Paraguay (communally owned land, lack of currency, highly structured time) with classical utopian models (such as Thomas More's 'Utopia' or Campanella's 'City of the Sun'). Discuss why this model succeeded for 150 years and why it ultimately failed after 1767."*

V. RELATED STOCKCERO RESOURCES

Southern Cone Collection: 6-Book Bundle. (Includes *Indios Guaraníes y Jesuitas* alongside *1804 - 1810 - Las Brevas Maduras*, *El Chacho - Ultimo caudillo de la montonera*, *Rozas*, *Ensayo Histórico-psicológico*, *Una Excursión a los indios ranqueles*, and *The Emancipation of South America*).

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