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MISSÕES JESUÍTICAS COMO SISTEMA: UMA REVISÃO NECESSÁRIA

JESUIT REDUCTIONS AS A SYSTEM: A NECESSARY REVIEW

SANDRA SOSTER

ANJA PRATSCHKE

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**Sandra Schmitt Soster** is an Advertiser, Architect and Urban Planner, and has a Master's Degree in Architecture and Urbanism. She is a researcher at Nomads.usp, at LabAm-UFG, and at LavMuseus-UFG. She is a member of the ICOMOS-Brasil Documentation, Risk Preparation, and Interpretations, Education and Heritage Narratives Committees, as well as of iPatrimônio and REPEP. She studies digital media for cultural heritage management, heritage education, and participatory inventories.

soster.heritage@gmail.com

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/9177354683297726>

**Anja Pratschke** is an Architect, Doctor in Computer Science and Livre-docente in Architecture and Urbanism. She is an Associate Professor at the Institute of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, and the Graduate Program in Architecture and Urbanism of the same institution. She co-directs Nomads.usp, and she develops and guides research on design processes in architecture, cybernetics, and information organization.

pratschke@sc.usp.br

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/9669955733350604>

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INVITED AUTHORS

### Abstract

Part of this article was originally presented at the 1st International Seminar on Preservation of Cultural Heritage in the Trinational Territory, in 2018. The theme of V!RUS 22, "Latin America: You Are Here!", is an opportunity to re-introduce results of the master's research "Jesuit Reductions as a System", developed at the Nomads.usp and funded by the Sao Paulo State Agency for Research Funding, FAPESP. The thesis was defended in 2014 in the Graduate Program in Architecture and Urbanism, Institute of Architecture and Urbanism, University of São Paulo. To understand the historical importance of the series of Thirty Jesuit Reductions of the former Jesuit Province of Paraguay, the research carried out three chronological sections. 1. the **beginning** of the reductions, when they were a set of mutual assistance; 2. the **present**, when the material and immaterial remnants preserve regional memory and history, but the separation by international borders is at the origin of the lack of communication between the responsible national bodies and the little online dissemination of relevant and official information; and

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3. the **future**, identifying that regionally integrated dissemination and preservation can enhance the understanding and appreciation of the Jesuit reductions, including greater ownership of local communities. We understand that valuing the reductions heritage supposes to stimulate preservation agencies to work together and most of all, with local communities.

**Keywords:** Jesuit reductions, System, ICT, Latin America

## **1 Introduction**

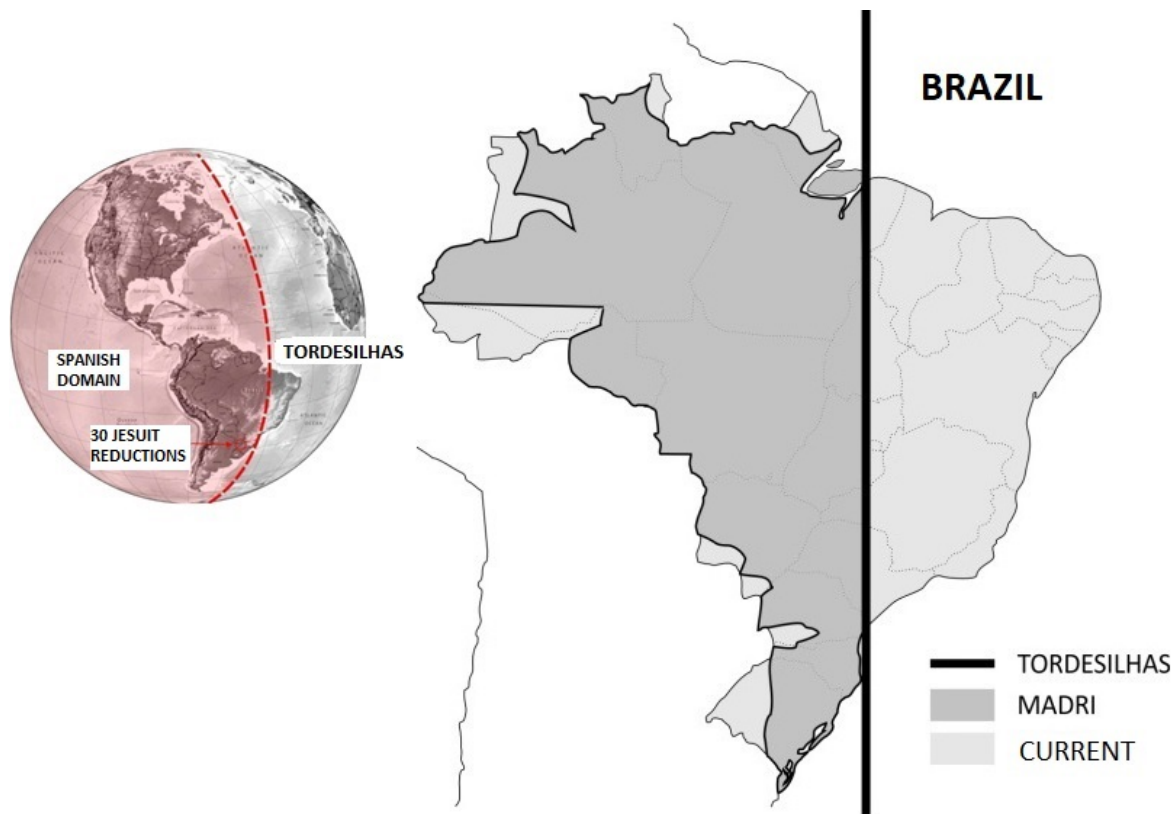
This article has been originally presented at the 1st International Seminar on Preservation of Cultural Heritage in the Trinational Territory, in 2018<sup>1</sup>. The results presented here stem from a master's research "Jesuit Reductions as a System", developed at the Nomads.usp and funded by the Sao Paulo State Agency for Research Funding, FAPESP. The thesis was defended in 2014 in the Graduate Program in Architecture and Urbanism, Institute of Architecture and Urbanism, University of São Paulo, Brazil. (Soster, 2014). A brief Internet search in June 2021 shows a growing international academic interest in the Jesuit Missions. This interest includes the review of intercultural aspects and the role of the Jesuit Missions in South America, in particular the former thirty original settlements that formed the Province of Paraguay, today distributed in the territories of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay, along the Iguazu River.

The historical experience of the Jesuit reductions of the former Province of Paraguay was analyzed in the master's research, based on bibliographical references. The time frame comprises the period between the implementation of the Jesuit reductions by the Society of Jesus (1549) and its violent expulsion due to the displacement of the dividing line between the Portuguese and Spanish territories (Treaty of Madrid, 1750). As a network of settlements connected by deep political, economic, and religious relationships, they were analyzed seeking to emphasize their complementarity as a set for mutual assistance. However, different reasons prevented the production of individual surpluses, and economic assistance between them never occurred. The Jesuit model was a mode of cultural imposition or domination over originary peoples and was not completely peaceful. On Portuguese territory (as on Spanish territory reached by the Portuguese flags), this model meant at the time the option of less physical violence compared to capturing for slavery.

In January 2013, technical visits were carried out to the three best-preserved historic sites – São Miguel, in Brazil, Trinidad, in Paraguay, and San Ignacio Miní, in Argentina. The goal was to gather information on administrative actions following the rediscovery of the ruins, two centuries after the expulsion of the Jesuits from the current Brazilian territory. Based on this material, we sought to understand the three national preservation policies concerning physical, immaterial, and human remains, with special attention to research, preservation, and dissemination activities. The representation and dissemination of the reductions heritage in a virtual environment, its consequences, and potential were then discussed. In particular, the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to organize the preservation of the Jesuit Reductions and demonstrate their character as a living system. Websites were analyzed, following their main features and their positive and negative points.

## **2 Jesuit Reductions in the past**

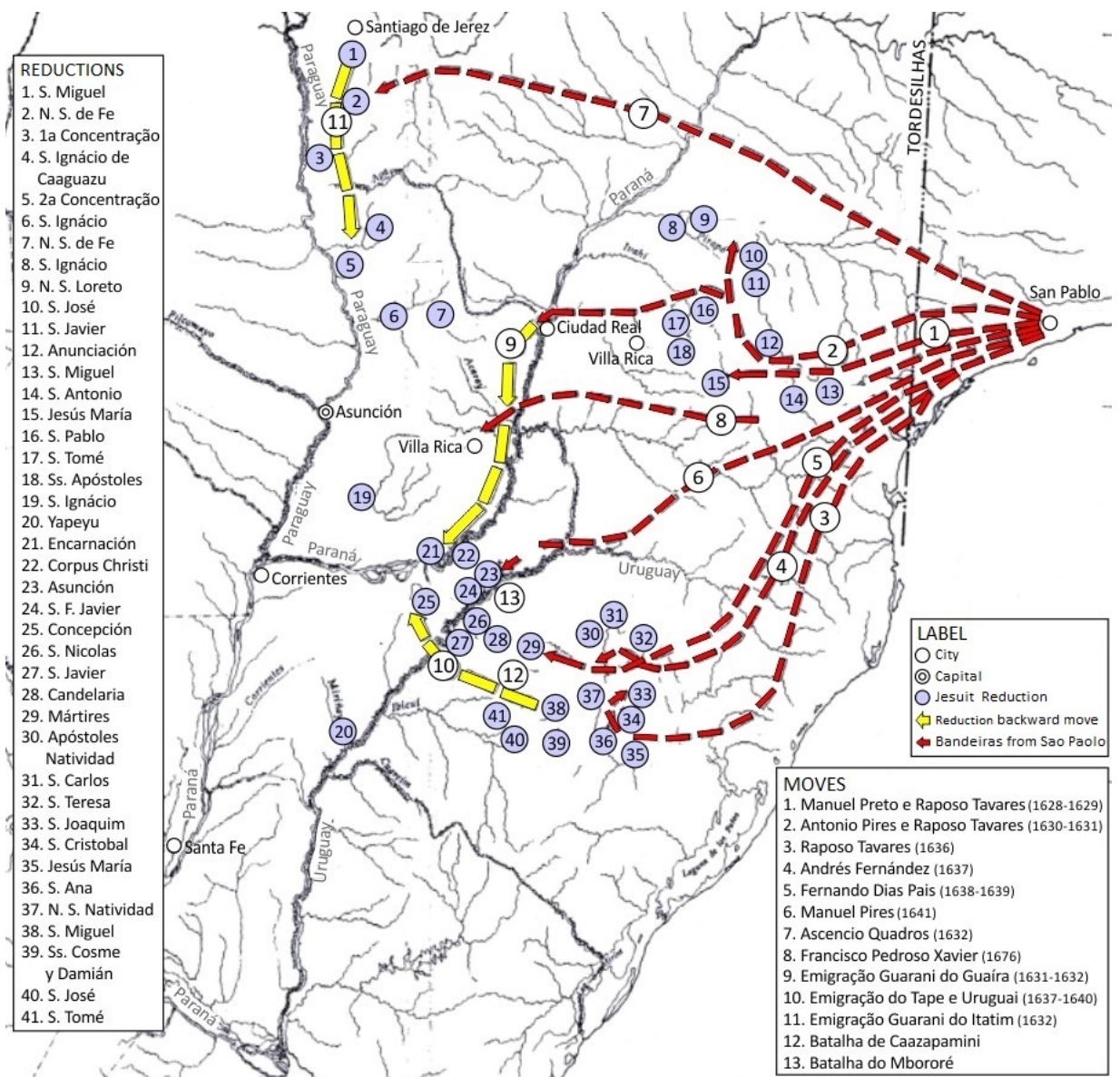
The territory of Brazil was the only one in the Americas that was divided between the Portuguese and Spanish Crowns (Figure 1), whose colonization was marked by two antagonistic phenomena: 1. the priests of the Society of Jesus, who sought the evangelization of indigenous peoples to create the villages called Jesuit Reductions; and 2. the so-called *bandeirantes*, from Sao Paulo, literally the "flag-carriers", that used to invade the Spanish territory to capture indigenous people for enslaving them (Figures 2 and 3).



**Fig. 1:** Left: The Treaty of Tordesillas meridian, showing the territory under Spanish rule and the location of the also so-called *Trinta Povos das Missões*. Right: Brazilian territory after the Treaty of Madrid. Source: Compilation based on Soster, 2014.



**Fig. 2:** The Thirty Jesuit Reductions situation with present day countries boundaries. Source: Soster (2014).



**Fig. 3:** *Bandeirantes* advances and Jesuits and indigenous peoples setbacks. Source: Maeder and Gutiérrez (2010, p.22, our translation, colors, and numbers) quoted by Soster (2014, p.30).

The arrival of Portuguese people to the Brazilian coast took place at a time when the inhabitants of the continent “[...] were perhaps 1 million Indians, divided into dozens of tribal groups, each comprising a conglomerate of several villages with between three hundred and two thousand inhabitants (Fernandes, 1949). It was not a few people, since Portugal at that time would have the same population or a little more” (Ribeiro, 1995, p.31, our translation). On the other hand, Jesuit Reductions were created in the Americas to be settlements “[...] the extended imperial borders of the Crown of Spain, which stretched – in the New World – from California and New Mexico to the River Plate.” (Gazaneo, 1997, p.75).

In the political sphere, the Thirty Reductions (Table 1) sought to develop local economy and increase border defense. According to the reports of the Jesuit Father Antonio Sepp (1980 [1697], p.12), “For over a hundred years, the Indians of the Thirty Reductions fought, for the Spanish Crown, in more than fifty battles”. In religious terms, indigenous people were “[...] they would be brought into the Christian Church and educated into a sedentary form of life” (UNESCO, 2013, p.3).

	Year	Name	Founder(s)	Current City
1	1609	San Ignacio Guazú	Marcelo de Lorenzana, Francisco de San Martín e Cacique Arapysandú.	San Ignacio _ Paraguai
2	1610	Nuestra Señora de Loreto §	José Cataldino e Simón Maceta.	Loreto_ Argentina
3	1615	Encarnación de Itapua	Roque Gonzales de Santa Cruz.	Encarnación _ Paraguai
4	1619	Concepción de la Sierra	Roque Gonzales de Santa Cruz.	Concepción _ Argentina
5	1622	Corpus Christi	Roque Gonzales de Santa Cruz.	Corpus _ Argentina
6	1626	São Nicolau	Roque Gonzales de Santa Cruz.	São Nicolau _ Brasil
7	1626/1767*	Santa María Mayor §	Cláudio Ruyer e Diego Boroa.	Santa María Mayor _ Argentina
8	1627	Nuestra Señora de los Santos Reyes Magos de Yapeyú	Pedro Romero, Roque Gonzales de Santa Cruz e Nicolás Mastrilli Durán.	Yapeyú _ Argentina
9	1629	San Javier	José Ordoñez.	San Javier _ Argentina
10	1630	Nuestra Señora de Asunción de La Cruz de Mbororé	Cristóbal Altamirano.	La Cruz _ Argentina
11	1631	San Carlos	Pedro Molas.	San Carlos _ Argentina
12	1632/1687*	São Miguel Arcanjo §	Cristóvão de Mendonça.	São Miguel das Missões _ Brasil
13	1632	San Ignacio Miní §	Roque Gonzales de Santa Cruz.	San Ignacio Miní _ Argentina
14	1632/1683*	Santo Tomé	Luis Ernot.	Santo Tomé _ Argentina
15	1632	San Cosme y Damián	Adriano Formoso.	San Cosme Y Damián _ Paraguai
16	1633/1637*	Nuestra Señora de Santa Ana §	Pedro Romero.	Santa Ana _ Argentina
17	1637/1665*	Candelaria	Roque Gonzales de Santa Cruz.	Candelaria _ Argentina
18	1638	Santos Apóstoles Pedro y Pablo	Diego de Alfaro.	Apóstoles _ Argentina
19	1638/1660*	San José de Ita-Cua	José Cataldino.	San José _ Argentina
20	1639	Mártires	Augustín Contretas.	Mártires _ Argentina
21	1647	Santa María de Fe	Manuel Berthod.	Santa María _ Paraguai
22	1651/1669*	Santiago Apóstol	---	Santiago _ Paraguai
23	1682	São Francisco de Borja	Francisco Garcia.	São Borja _ Brasil
24	1685	Jesús de Tavarangue §	Jerónimo Delfin.	Jesús de Tavarangue _ Paraguai
25	1687	São Luiz Gonzaga	Alfonso del Castillo.	São Luiz Gonzaga _ Brasil
26	1690	São Lourenço Mártir	Bernardo de la Veja.	São Lourenço _ Brasil
27	1697	São João Baptista	Antonio Sepp.	Entre-Ijuís _ Brasil
28	1698	Santa Rosa de Lima	Ranzonier.	Santa Rosa _ Paraguai
29	1706	Santo Ângelo Custódio	Diogo de Hasse.	Santo Ângelo _ Brasil
30	1706	La Santísima Trinidad de Paraná §	Juan de Anaya.	Trinidad _ Paraguai

\* Reduction which settlement have changed throughout history. § Listed by UNESCO as Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

**Table 1:** Jesuit Reductions with their foundation dates, their founders and current city where they are located. Source: Soster, 2014, p.36.

In the social field, the Jesuit project could be understood as an alternative to slavery (Snihur, 2007, p.236). According to the architect Ramón Gutiérrez (2004, p.17, our translation), the Jesuit Reductions

[...] were a cultural and social experience of remarkable magnitude. In a brief period, comprised between 1610 and 1767, numbers of indigenous people formed dozens of villages, organized a community and complementary economy, reaching standards of living, artistic and cultural development. This one, which transcends the material testimonies that still exist, is one of the clearest initiatives for the development of a solidary society in a theocentric vision, such as the one implemented by the religious experience.

As Argentine anthropologist Guillermo Wilde (2010) states, each of the Jesuit Reductions was a religious, cultural, and political space, where individual and collective adaptive interactions between native and Spanish cultures took place. This reciprocal interaction process was defined by the confrontation of cultural differences and ways of life. Negotiation, concession, and creativity culminated in a third culture: hybrid, mixed. The first complex and transcontinental cultural system of modernity, as stated by Juan Luis Suárez (2007), in a territory where a social organization was very antagonistic to the servant. The *Thirty Reductions Peoples* were independent from local colonial governments and at the same time, interdependent from each others, in a mutual assistance manner made possible by what the Argentine ambassador Mario Ibañez (2000, p.19) called "prodigious and efficient use of communication and information".

### 3 Jesuit Reductions in the present

As soon as borders were redefined, the fifteen Argentine reductions were demolished, the seven Brazilian ones were abandoned, and the eight Paraguayan ones received an exiled population from the Brazilian settlements (Susteric, 1999, p.157).

[...] The monolithic territorial, cultural and ethnic unity, which was characteristic of the Reductions, came into crisis with the advent of the expulsion of the Society of Jesus and then with the national revolutionary movements, in the early years of the 19th century [...].

Territorial disintegration, depopulation, political, institutional, and administrative disorganization were the decisive factors that dragged people into a state of architectural and urban ruin. [...] (Pozzobon, 2004, p.5, our translation).

The remnants of the Jesuit reductions were reduced by the action of time and men. The decrease in residents caused the deterioration of buildings, due to carelessness and lack of knowledge about maintenance techniques (Snihur, 2007). Some settlements ceased to exist due to plundering building materials, on others, cities or roads were built over their ruins. According to Brazilian architect Luis Antônio Bolcato Custódio (2014), the municipal government from São Miguel sold the material so that the settlers of the nineteenth century could build their houses. The Reduction became a real quarry, having its construction material sold or stolen. The price of stones varied according to the level of detail, being more expensive, with better finishes, or with ornaments. Two examples, built with material from the Brazilian Jesuit reductions are the Casa em Pedra, in the city of São Nicolau, RS (Figure 4) and a house in Entre-Ijuís, RS (Figure 5), which was demolished after having been legally protected.



**Fig. 4:** Stone House at São Nicolau. Source: IPHAE. Available at: [www.ipatrimonio.org/sao-nicolau-casa-em-pedra](http://www.ipatrimonio.org/sao-nicolau-casa-em-pedra). Accessed 04 June 2021.



**Fig. 5.** House at Entre-Ijuís built with building material extracted from a Jesuit Reduction. [Demolished]. Source: IPHAN.  
Available at: [www.ipatrimonio.org/entre-ijuis-casa-construida-com-material-missioneiro](http://www.ipatrimonio.org/entre-ijuis-casa-construida-com-material-missioneiro). Accessed 04 June 2021.

The best-preserved Jesuit reductions are currently São Migue, in Brazil, Trinidad, in Paraguay, and San Ignacio Miní, in Argentina (Figures 6, 7, and 8). Preservation and perception are connected to elements of two categories: 1. Heritage and 2. Agents and their interactions. Material heritage is the entire physical collection: ruins and other elements of sites (real estate) and works of art in museums, mainly statuary and musical instruments (movable heritage). Intangible heritage, on the other hand, is all the culture and history that permeate such objects. Meanwhile, the agents and their interactions involve government agencies, researchers, the local community, and other sectors of society.



# SÃO MIGUEL ARCANJO - BRASIL -



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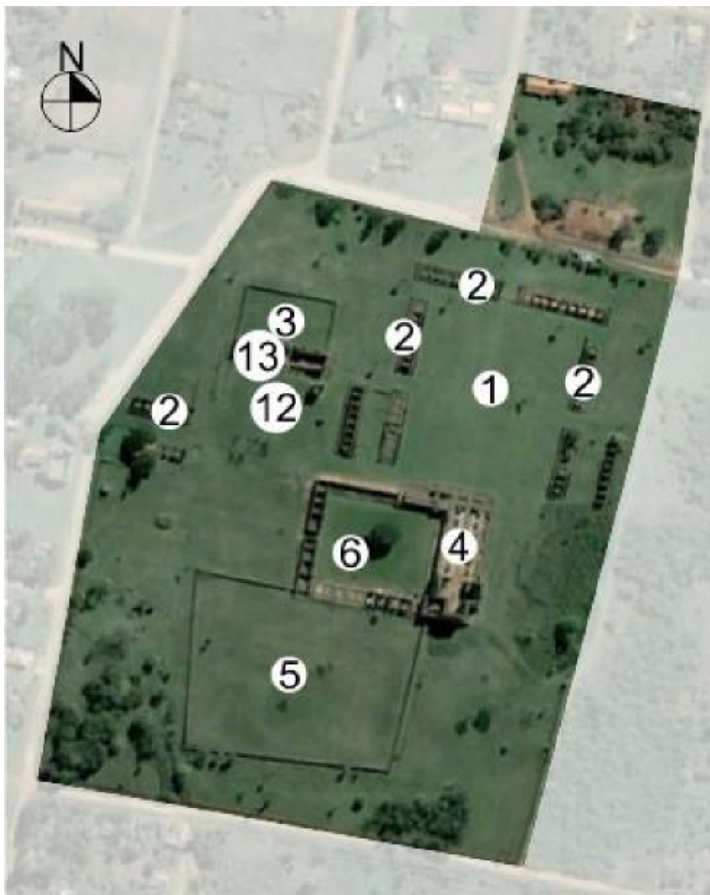
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**Fig. 6:** Ruins in the Brazilian city of São Miguel Arcanjo: 1. Square, 2. Indication of houses, 3. Cemetery, 4. Church, 5. Priests' Farm, 6. Priests' courtyard, 7. Courtyard with manufactories, 8. *Cotiguaçu*. Source: Soster, 2014, p.91.





# SANTÍSIMA TRINIDAD - PARAGUAI -



**Fig. 7:** Ruins in the Paraguayan city of Santísima Trinidad: 1. Square, 2. Houses, 3. Cemetery, 4. Church, 5. Priests' Farm, 6. Priests' courtyard and Courtyard with manufactures, 12. Belfry, 13. Second church. Source: Soster, 2014, p.92.

# SAN IGNÁCIO MINÍ - ARGENTINA -



6



Foto: MINISTERIO DE TURISMO, s.d., s.p.

2



Foto: Tótem no sítio histórico de San Ignacio Miní, 2013.

4

**Fig. 8:** Ruins in the Argentinian city of San Ignacio Miní: 1. Square, 2. Houses, 3. Cemetery, 4. Church, 5. Priests' Farm, 6. Priests' Courtyard, 7. Courtyard with manufactures, 9. *Cabildo*, 10. Jail, 11. Hospital. Source: Soster, 2014, p.93.

The architectural and artistic remains and the historical accounts of the Jesuit Reductions in the three countries complement each other. Each historic site is capable of representing only a portion of the history of the Thirty Peoples and the Society of Jesus. Therefore, to compose a historical, social, economic, and cultural vision of the experience of the Jesuit reductions, it is necessary to observe them together. This, in turn, requires integrated actions for the preservation and dissemination of heritage assets that involve all agents; in order to justify the permanence of this heritage through the appropriation of the local and international community.

However, in 2014 all actions related to Jesuit Reductions were carried out by each nation individually, under the responsibility of different government levels, as shown in Table 2. Even the production of knowledge within universities is not shared with preservation agencies. This demonstrates the little interaction between government agencies and researchers.

- INTERNATIONAL -			
<u>UNESCO</u> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	<u>WMF</u> World Monuments Fund	<u>ICOMOS</u> International Council of Monuments and Sites	<u>ICOM</u> International Council of Museums
<b>Level / Country</b>	- BRAZIL -	- PARAGUAY -	- ARGENTINA -
	<u>MinC</u> * Ministry of Culture		
<b>National</b>	<u>IPHAN</u> National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute	<u>SENATUR</u> National Tourism Office	National Committee on Museums, Monuments and Historic Places
	<u>IBRAM</u> Brazilian Institute of Museums		
<b>State / Province</b>	-	-	<i>Subsecretariat of Strategic Management of the Province of Misiones</i>
<b>Municipal</b>	Municipal Tourism Secretariat of São Miguel das Missões	-	-

\* Between 2019 and 2021, with the Presidency of Jair Bolsonaro, MinC was dismantled and IPHAN became part of different Ministries. At the time of writing this article, it is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Tourism (July 2021).

**Table 2:** Agencies related to the preservation of Jesuit Reductions. Source: Soster, 2014, p.120.

#### 4 Jesuit reductions, online

In the context of disseminating the remaining heritage of the Jesuit reductions, we understand that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) would be low-cost, speed and efficient. However, they are little used. Both the 2014 survey and the current survey showed that most of the content available online about the Jesuit reductions is found in blogs that portray personal journeys to these sites. Therefore, they are not information from official sources, which have not taken advantage of the enormous potential of online media yet. The official websites made available at the time of the research had two levels of coverage: global and local.

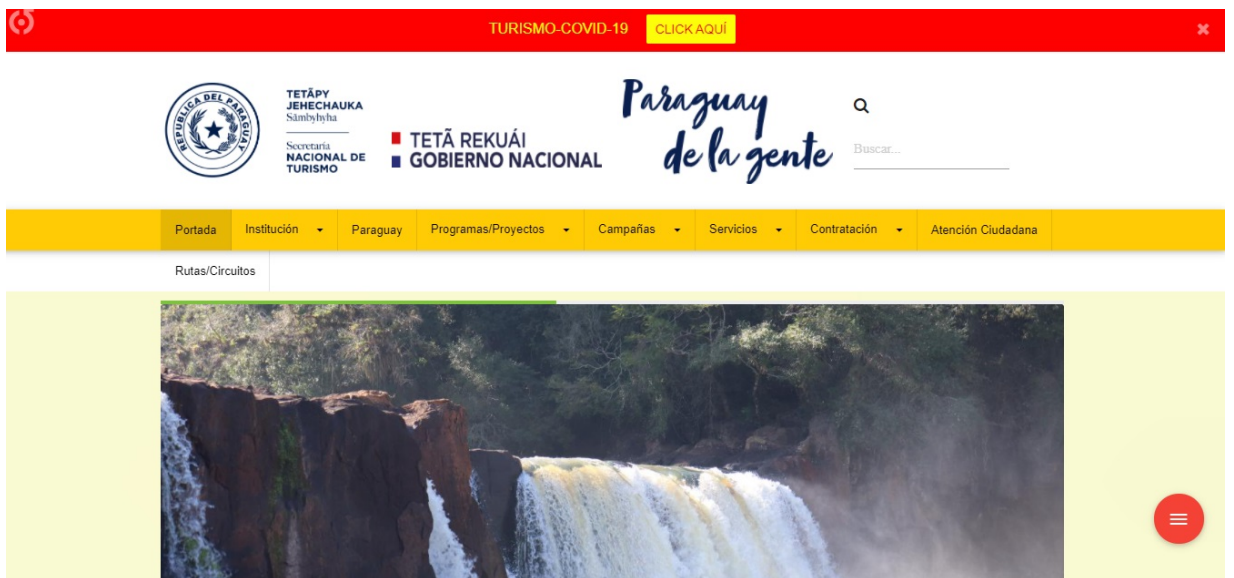
UNESCO provides two pages on the Reductions included in the World Heritage List. One about the protected under preservation laws in 1983 (Argentina: San Ignacio Miní, Santa Ana, Nuestra Señora de Loreto, Santa Maria Mayo, and Brazil: San Miguel) and another about protected settlements under preservation laws in 1993 (Paraguay: La Santísima Trinidad de Paraná and Jesús de Tavarangue). Both inform about history and implantation, with photographs, in addition to providing links to conservation and preservation reports.

In Brazil, the *Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional* (Iphan) hosts on its website a page about São Miguel, containing IPHAN's history, conservation status, and performance. There is also the *Rota das Missões* website (Figure 9), which is perhaps the best-structured page. Such websites are more aimed at promoting tourism in the region, with little information about the history and Jesuit missionary culture.



**Fig. 9:** Brazilian online dissemination through *Rota das Missões* website. Source: Rota das Missões. Available at [www.rotamissoes.com.br](http://www.rotamissoes.com.br). Accessed 04 June 2021.

In Paraguay, the SENATUR website (Figure 10) presented, in 2014, the material on the Jesuit Reductions in three pages related to tourism: one on tourism to historical sites and festivities; another on the region of Misiones, Itapúa, and Ñeembucú, with location and main local tourist attractions; and another on the National Museums and Monuments. The pages had a tourist dissemination bias. In the current research, such pages were not found.



**Fig. 10:** Paraguayan online dissemination through SENATUR website. Source: SENATUR. Available at [www.senatur.gov.py](http://www.senatur.gov.py). Accessed 04 June 2021.

About the Paraguayan Jesuit reductions, the website “Ruta Jesuitica: Discover the Patrimonios Universales de Paraguay” (Figure 11) continues to be the most complete and unique with a visual presentation inspired by the Jesuit reductions. It also has a touristic character and was created through a partnership between SENATUR and the governments of the Departments of Misiones, Itapúa, and Alto Paraná, with support from UNESCO and the IDB. The content is organized by department and, among the tourist attractions, are the Jesuit reductions, each with its own page with information about mobile and immovable remains. It provides the best-organized content, facilitating the acquisition of minimum knowledge of the missionary heritage of this country.



**Fig. 11:** Paraguayan online dissemination through *Ruta Jesuitica* website. Source: Ruta Jesuitica. Available at [rutajesuitica.com.py](http://rutajesuitica.com.py). Accessed 04 June 2021.

In Argentina, in 2014, there was a specific government website for the Guarani Jesuit reductions (Figure 12), which was the most complete among all, as it presented information on 1. location, public visitation, available airports; 2. Photographs; 3. history of Jesuit Reductions with an introduction, location, and spatial organization of the Thirty Reductions; 4. Light and sound shows; and 5. Misiones Jesuíticas program for the restoration, conservation, and dissemination of the Argentine Reductions. There was also a website for the Province of Misiones (Figure 13) with information on the preservation of San Ignacio Miní. In the current research, both are no longer online.



**Fig. 12:** Argentine online dissemination through *Misiones Jesuíticas Guarani* website. Source: Misiones Jesuíticas Guarani. Available at [www.misiones-jesuisticas.com.ar](http://www.misiones-jesuisticas.com.ar). Accessed 04 June 2021.



**Fig. 13:** Argentine online dissemination through the website of the *Ministry of Tourism of the Province of Misiones*. Source: Ministry of Tourism of the Province of Misiones. Available at [www.turismo.misiones.gov.ar/sanignacio.php](http://www.turismo.misiones.gov.ar/sanignacio.php). Accessed 04 June 2021.

It is concluded that the few existing websites deal with tourist issues of isolated Jesuit Reductions or of national specific interests, with a lack of online platforms with information about the whole set. Pages that have been online since 2014 have improved their content and aesthetics over time. If in 2018 most of them did not have their own visual identity because they were hosted on websites of national bodies; currently (2021), the statement is no longer true. Due to its touristic rather than historical-academic nature, each website presents basic information about the history and culture of the Reductions. In general, heritage education is hampered by the dispersion and incompleteness of information; what affects the appreciation and appropriation of the whole.

The use of ICTs to organize and highlight issues, needs and actions related to the Jesuit Reductions could cause them to be treated as a living system, where interactions between different agents and interaction with the cultural heritage could occur more effectively and justify its preservation in a *glocal* context. It is believed that it is necessary to retake the sense of a network of the set called *Trinta Povos das Missões*, through integrated inter-national actions for the preservation and dissemination of the entire missionary heritage as the set they comprise. This is one of the possible ways to strengthen them as a unique heritage of humanity, as was the experience developed by the Jesuits.

## 5 Review of strategies and proposal for the future

In 2014, at the end of the survey, it was proposed to create a virtual space for the inter-regional treatment of this heritage, where government agents, academics, and other sectors of society (involved in research, conservation, and dissemination of this heritage) could work in a collaborative way. An approach that acted as

[...] an integrative database of various centers, architectural heritage, and museums. Seeking to keep alive the cultural dynamics of the community, the preservation and physical and virtual access to such heritage, contribute to the appreciation of traditional cultures and reinforce the feeling of belonging and identity, consequently ensuring the permanence of this heritage for future generations (Pratschke; Santiago, 2006, p.1).

Among the current options for digital platforms, as pointed out by the Brazilian architect Ana Cecília Rocha Veiga (2018), WordPress is a web environment for the development of virtual museology. What can be directed to the case of the Jesuit reductions because it deals with the content of a similar character. Some of the main advantages pointed out by the author are 1. free and open source; 2. code update by the world community; 3. intuitive interface and user-friendly content editor; 4. semantic web and taxonomy; and 5. usability management and testing tool. According to her, 31% of Internet sites in 2018 were developed in WordPress.

A case that demonstrates the potential of WordPress in the field of cultural heritage is the iPatrimonio platform ([www.ipatrimonio.org](http://www.ipatrimonio.org)), created to geo-reference information on all listed properties in Brazil, in the four instances: global, national, state, and municipal. The uploads of this platform carried out by the first author of

this article made it possible to understand that the databases of official bodies are incomplete and that searches on their websites are inefficient. In addition, the population lacks a specialized, agile communication channel that delivers the requested information in a language accessible to the general public.

In this way, it is understood that there are possibilities to expand the dissemination of the Jesuit reductions as the set they composed. But, for this, it is necessary to open the preservation agencies of the three nations to work together among themselves and with universities and local communities.

## 6 Final considerations

In the past, the Jesuit reductions formed a complex whole: a solidary society of mutual assistance within and between villages. At present, its understanding is impaired because its traces were reduced by wars and plundering, by the action of time and the hand of human beings. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the whole to understand the historical experience. In other words, considering preservation as a system is also necessary due to the fragmented nature of its heritage. However, the current division into three distinct nations has led to the preservation and dissemination in separate ways or in national groups, disfiguring the network that has marked the Jesuit reductions for more than a century. Online information is punctual and national, directed to the tourist aspect. But despite the reduction in the number of sites between 2014 and 2018, the visual quality of the sites and the information made available between 2018 and 2021 increased.

We believe that an improved flow of information, dissemination without geographic limits, and the availability of communication channels between agents would promote a better understanding of the Jesuit reductions and make their social function of supporting memory and a basis for historical and social reflection be maximized. In October 2018, an integrated route of the Jesuit Reductions between Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Bolivia was approved by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), passing through 19 icons recognized by UNESCO as World Heritage (Bergamo, 2018). This demonstrates international attention, via Unesco, for the importance of the Jesuit Reductions as a whole. With this, it is expected that the integrated work will take place between the various countries that are guardians of this important heritage.

## acknowledgments

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