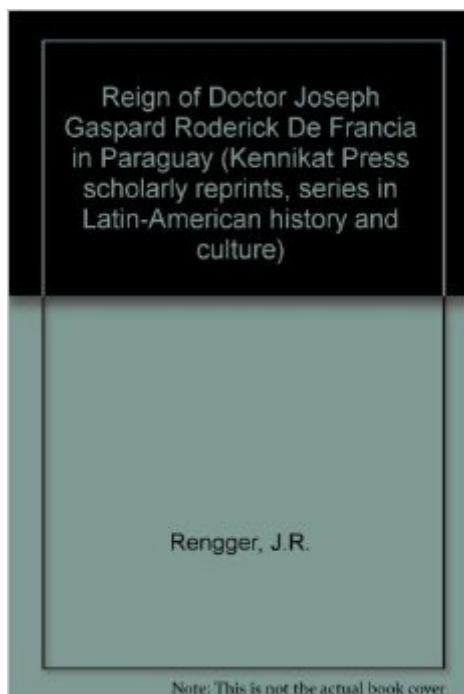


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Reign Of Doctor Joseph Gaspard Roderick De Francia In Paraguay



Synopsis

Book by Rengger, J.R.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book was originally published in 1827. The authors, Rengger and Longchamps, were two Swiss nationals who had visited the South American nation of Paraguay in 1819. For various reasons, they couldn't leave the place until 1825. At the time, Paraguay had just won its independence from Spain and defended it against Argentina. The government was headed by Dr. José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia, a self-styled Dictator and president for life. What makes Francia's rule so interesting is that it was an early attempt to create something akin to socialism. While Francia admired Napoleon, the Jacobins seem to be a more relevant source for his ideas. Rengger and Longchamps intensely disliked Francia, but several interesting facts nevertheless emerge from their narrative. Before independence, Paraguay had apparently been a typical colonial monoculture exporting tobacco and "the herb of Paraguay", and importing basic foodstuffs. The authors blame this on the indolence and stupidity of the locals, when in fact it's a classical colonial situation. Francia, upon taking power, isolated the nation from the outside world and turned the cash crop plantations into agricultural land, thereby boosting domestic food production. Rengger and Longchamps marvel at the fact, that Francia managed to turn the lazy inhabitants into such efficient agricultural labourers! Francia also imposed a state monopoly on foreign trade, compulsory militia service and corvée. According to the book, the population of Paraguay was divided into several "castes". Of these, the Spaniards had been the most influential before independence. There was also an elite group of Creoles (Mestizos). Francia overthrew the Spaniards and gradually confiscated their property.

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