

# Problematic Issues in Conservation: An Example of the Jesuit-Guarani Missions in South America

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The Jesuit-Guarani Missions were established in the Guayrá area near the Paraná and Uruguay rivers in the heart of the tropical forest in the early 17th century. The system devised by the Jesuits was economically independent and comprised some thirty towns. These were located at strategic points in the region now found in Argentina (15 towns), Paraguay (8 towns) and Brazil (7 towns). After the expulsion of the Jesuits in the mid 18th century, the missions were taken over by other religious orders, but these could not follow the system and the missions fell into disrepair and abandoned during the border wars of the 19th century. Some of these sites, such as São Miguel das Missões in Brazil, La Santísima Trinidad and Jesús de Tavarangüe in Paraguay, and San Ignacio Miní, Santa Ana, Nuestra Señora de Loreto and Santa María la Mayor in Argentina, have been declared World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. The preservation of these sites is a challenge and although foreign support is forthcoming, in many cases it brings with it other problems. Some of the issues related to both material conservation and conservation management of these sites will be discussed.



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