



Jeffrey Alan Erbig. *Where Caciques and Mapmakers Met: Border Making in Eighteenth-Century South America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020. 280 pp. \$24.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-4696-5504-8.

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Anthony Mullan on Erbig, *Where Caciques and Mapmakers Met: Border Making in Eighteenth-Century South America*

Jeffrey Alan Erbig's new book, *Where Caciques and Mapmakers Met: Border Making in Eighteenth-Century South America*, is a valuable, provocative addition to recent literature on the making and meaning of borders to indigenous populations. Although Erbig's work focuses on the Río de la Plata region, this book joins other recent publications that examine border development, society, and relations between metropole and periphery in North America and Southeast Asia such as S. Max Edelson's *The New Map of Empire: How Britain Imagined America Before Independence* (2017) and Marie de Rugy's *Aux confins des empires: Cartes et constructions territoriales dans le nord de la péninsule Indochinoise (1885-1914)* (2018, forthcoming in English). The latter book analyzes territorial construction by French, Chinese, British, and Siamese (Thai) officials and administrators around the turn of the nineteenth century. These books investigate various matters such as how European mapmakers acquired and used information from indigenous sources and what the creation of a border meant for indigenous people in various colonial settings in Latin America, North America, and Southeast Asia.

Where Caciques and Mapmakers Met is a slim but ambitious and complex book. A principal focus of this work is the interaction (conflict, rivalry, negotiation, and accommodation) between preexisting mobile communities of indigenous peoples and rival Spanish, Portuguese, and Jesuit settlements in the Río de la Plata region from the mid-seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century. At first, indigenous *tolderías* (mobile communities of between thirty and one hundred or more people organized around kin-based authority) were more numerous and populous and controlled more land and resources than their European rivals. Europeans, outside of their settlements, controlled little or no contiguous territory although Spanish Jesuits had established missions deep in the Río de la Plata region along the Río Uruguay, and the Portuguese had founded Colônia in 1680 directly across the Río de la Plata from Buenos Aires. Gradually, however, the Spanish and Portuguese increased settlement and power in the region. During this early period, the Spanish, with impetus from the Jesuits, sought to convert and make sedentary the indigenous population. After some success but many challenges, the Spanish point of view began to change. Captive-

taking, which had existed in Río de la Plata since at least the sixteenth century, only intensified as a practice, especially by the Spanish. Increasingly, captive-taking was considered a necessary and legitimate step to appropriate indigenous land and “to clean and order the countryside” (p. 139). By the early nineteenth century, the Spanish principally began to drive off, make captive, and extirpate many of the indigenous peoples of the region.

A second thrust of the book, interwoven with the first, is the struggle between Spain and Portugal to gain meaningful territorial control in the region, which, by the mid-eighteenth century, led to the Treaties of Madrid (1750) and San Ildefonso (1777). Both treaties provided for the establishment of joint border commissions tasked with creating marked borders along an approximately 5,000-mile stretch of land between the two Iberian powers in Latin America. Although Erbig briefly considers the work of the most southerly boundary commissions (tasked with a border bisecting the Río de la Plata region), the officers, and their records, his focus is not the history of the boundary commissions but rather what the various boundary commissions meant for the indigenous population and how *tolderías* interacted with the three boundary commissions, and what finally was the devastating impact on *tolderías* by loss of interest in a marked border by the earliest South American republics in the region.

The border treaties of 1750 and 1777 created “joint mapping expeditions to walk and measure a border together, something that had never been done before in the Americas, much less on a continental scale” (p. 73). At first, boundary commissions depended on the willingness of indigenous communities to permit Europeans to cross their lands and gain access to food supplies. The Europeans also depended on the indigenous for local guides who had practical knowledge of the land and who could translate indigenous toponyms. In marking the border after the Treaty of San Ildefonso (1777), the commissions created a

narrow strip of neutral land between the two lines. By treaty, Spain and Portugal had both agreed that the border should be closed and that no trade should be allowed to cross from one dominion to the other. Yet, as Erbig details, border creation lured several *tolderías* to relocate close by to take advantage of the neutral land. Both Iberian powers began to build a series of forts along the line and recruit settlers from Spain, Portugal, the Azores, and the Canary Islands. Imperial subjects embarked on occupying lands illegally and were often involved in smuggling. Although a status quo line of the early 1800s was agreed upon, the British invasion of the Río de la Plata (1806) and the French usurpation of the Portuguese throne caused border negotiations to be suspended. This only added to the woes of many inhabitants of *tolderías* who had been assimilated, run off, or extirpated, not unlike the fate of many Native Americans in North America.

An important aspect of the book that merits special attention is Erbig’s use of cartography. Based on GIS mapping software and on data carefully gathered from important archival repositories in Latin America, Portugal, and Spain, Erbig creates thirteen maps. Aside from the fact that the maps are relatively small, the “created” maps are revealing in ways that contemporary European and Jesuit maps are not. The first “created” map (map 2) visualizes in a way no contemporary European map did the archipelago of settlements and *tolderías* that made up the Río de la Plata. This map portrays numerous *tolderías* surrounded on the periphery by European and Jesuit settlements along coasts and rivers. Another “created” map (map 3) depicts the range of movement of four influential caciques prior to 1750. The map demonstrates the broad regional reach some caciques had who traveled widely within the Río de la Plata region from the Atlantic coast to the Río Uruguay and to Río Paraná. This suggests the influence that these caciques held with multiple *tolderías* in determining what access to resources should be given to Europeans. Still other maps

(maps 5 and 6) portray in schematized fashion the approximate itineraries of the Madrid and San Ildefonso boundary commissions, the locations of encounters with *tolderías*, and the proposed mission relocations. Maps 7 and 8 illustrate movement toward the proposed borderlines of 1750 and 1777 by showing locations of new Spanish and Portuguese settlements as well as locations of *tolderías*.

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