



Masters and Students: Jesuit Mission Ethnography in Seventeenth-Century New France

Micah True

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The word "mission" can suggest a distant and dangerous attempt to obtain information for the benefit of the home left behind. However, the term also applies to the movement of information in the opposite direction, as the primary motivation of those on religious missions is not to learn about another culture, but rather to teach their own particular worldview.

In *Masters and Students*, Micah True considers the famous Jesuit Relations (1632-73) from New France as the product of two simultaneous missions, in which the Jesuit priests both extracted information from the poorly understood inhabitants of New France and attempted to deliver Europe's religious knowledge to potential Amerindian converts. This dual position of student and master provides the framework for the author's reflection on the nature of the Jesuits' "facts" about Amerindian languages, customs, and beliefs that are recorded in the Relations.

Following the missionaries through the process of gaining access to New France, interacting with Amerindian groups, and communicating with Europe about the results of their efforts, *Masters and Students* explores how the Relations were shaped by the distinct nature of the Jesuit approach to their mission - in both senses of the word.

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