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ELIANE CRISTINA DECKMANN FLECK,
ENTRE A CARIDADE E A CIÊNCIA:
A PRÁTICA MISSIONÁRIA E CIENTÍFICA
DA COMPANHIA DE JESUS
(AMÉRICA PLATINA, SÉCULOS XVII E XVIII)

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The educational, scientific and philosophical endeavours of the Jesuits have attracted the attention of a myriad of scholars over the past twenty years. Generally focused on the period before the papal suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773, the recent literature on Jesuit science has been particularly important for the historiography of early modern science. By documenting the Jesuits' participation in the scientific revolution, these works have largely contributed to challenge the Merton thesis on the emergence of seventeenth-century experimental science. In the broader history of Jesuit science, one of the most recurring themes is the circulation of knowledge between Europe, East Asia and South America.

For what concerns the history of medical practices in the Jesuit missions of Spanish South America, the work of Eliane Cristina Deckman Fleck has been invaluable. Published in 2014, *Entre a caridade e a ciência* testifies to her long-term commitment in studying the healing practices of the Jesuits in seventeenth- and eighteenth-

century former Province of Paraquaria. The book is divided into four thematic sections and it compiles a series of articles written along twenty-seven years of research, including two chapters from Fleck's doctoral thesis (1999) and fourteen published and unpublished essays (2010–2014), most of them written in collaboration with graduate students, namely Roberto Poletto, Mariana Schossler, Márcia Sueli Amantino, Tarcila Nienow Stein, Elisa Fauth da Motta and Samuel Cristiano Welter.

Entre a caridade e a ciência pays special attention to the description and analysis of primary sources regarding the history of the Jesuits in Paraguay and Río de la Plata, particularly the *litterae annuae* of the Province of Paraquaria (1632–1756), which roughly comprehended Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina, eastern Bolivia and south-western Brazil, and the renowned medical treatises *Materia médica misionera* and *Tratado breve de medicina*, written by Pedro de Montenegro (1663–1728) and Segismundo Asperger (Sigismundi Asperger, Aperger) (1687–1772), respectively. As Fleck points out, Montenegro and Asperger were pioneers in combining the native pharmacopeia and healing practices with the European coetaneous medical knowledge, being responsible for the introduction of novel herbs and resins. This book highlights the importance of the Jesuit colleges of Rio de Janeiro and Córdoba, and particularly their pharmacies, for the accumulation, systematization and circulation of medical knowledge in Spanish South America. Besides underlining the importance of the circulation of knowledge between the Jesuits and the *Guaraní* for the emergence of new medical practices, Fleck also points out that the Jesuits became responsible for healing the body and soul of the indigenous, which, in turn, favoured their missionary labours and the gradual incorporation of Christian principles on life and death in the *reducciones*.

Notwithstanding the unquestionable originality and impact of the research conducted by Fleck, there are some shortcomings that should be briefly mentioned. As the author refers, this book consists of a selection of works, written over twenty-seven years of research. Consequently, the sixteen chapters that constitute *Entre a caridade e a ciência* are quite heterogeneous in terms of length, complexity and relevance. For instance, the publication of a transcription of the large inventory of the pharmacy of the Jesuit college of Córdoba (pp. 320–426) was perhaps unnecessary, given that this important inventory had already been published in 2013. Similarly, the fourteen short biographies of Jesuit missionaries dedicated to the art of healing (pp. 216–228) should have been revised, considering its publication in a book. The inclusion of these

two chapters as appendixes would possibly be more suitable, since it would favour a more consistent reading. Since the first two chapters (pp. 48-148) were written in the 1990s, they would be of greater relevance for the modern reader if they had been rewritten, particularly considering the author's impressive track record on the subject. Finally, given the significance of Fleck's work in the broader history of Jesuit science, this book would probably have benefited from an overall conclusion and from a critical dialogue with recent monographs on the scientific practices of the Jesuits in Spanish South America, namely *Science in the Vanished Arcadia: Knowledge of Nature in the Jesuit Missions of Paraguay and Río de la Plata* (Boston: Brill, 2014), by Miguel de Asúa, and *Missionary Scientists: Jesuit Science in Spanish South America, 1570–1810* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011), by Andrés Ignacio Prieto. Despite these shortcomings, *Entre a caridade e a ciência* should be considered a valuable contribution for the history of Jesuit science, and its reading will definitely be mandatory for scholars interested in the history of medical practices in the Jesuit *reducciones*.