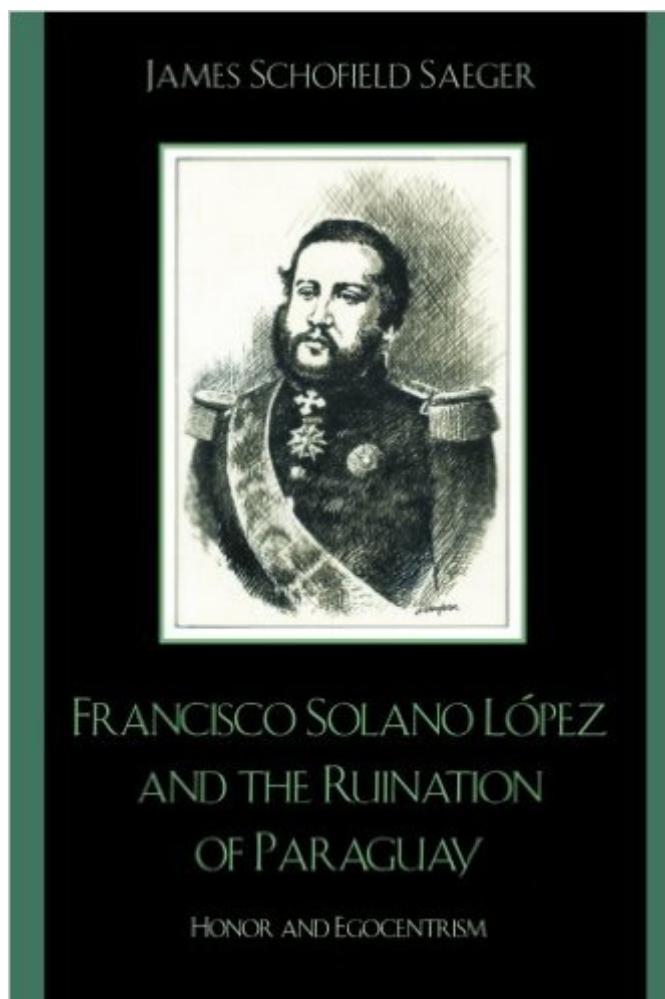


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Francisco Solano López And The Ruination Of Paraguay: Honor And Egocentrism (Latin American Silhouettes)



Synopsis

The first serious biography of Francisco Solano López in English for decades, this richly researched book tells the dramatic story of Paraguay's most notorious ruler. Despite the heroic stature he gained after his death, López was a monumentally flawed leader who made the disastrous decisions in 1864 and 1865 to invade Brazil and Argentina, initiating the most devastating interstate conflict in South American history. Drawing on a trove of primary sources, James Saeger offers a critical analysis of Paraguayan politics and López's life and erratic rule in this meticulous study.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A decent portrayal of the history of Paraguay, with emphasis on the character of Lopez; pretty well researched and easy reading.

James Saeger provides a critical look at one of the more brutal dictators in Latin American history and how this Caudillo changed the direction of his country. Francisco Solano Lopez was the only dictator in Latin America to succeed his father and his reign was categorized by extreme paranoia and brutality. This book also goes beyond Lopez to address a variety of issues related to life in Paraguay and explore the concept of honor and how it fits in Life in Latin America. Overall this is a very interesting look into life in Paraguay under Lopez and a great place to start for those interested in the subject.

General Lopez was a megalomaniac who brought his country into war with its giant neighbors and eventually lead to the deaths of half the people in his country for which it has never really recovered. He styled himself a Napoleon of South America and decided to ally himself with a party in the civil war in Uruguay. Soon he was fighting one of the first 'modern' wars in South America against giant enemies. The Brazilian army, composed of black conscripts, threw its entire weight into the war and eventually vanquished the Paraguayan foe. Lopez had many flaws, but it was not just him that ruined his country. The enemy had something to do with it as well. He persisted and declared "I die with my country". It was almost true, for a generation or more there would be far more women in Paraguay than men. Seth J. Frantzman

I really wanted to like this book. Solano Lopez is such an interesting character, as bad guys so often are. Unfortunately, Saeger doesn't add much to what is already out there. In fact, I own almost all the books he references in his volumes of footnotes (and they are all available from). The book comes across as a fairly interesting monograph on the psyche of a dictator that was padded to book length through repetition of both assertions of Lopez's defects and factoids that were interesting the first time they came up in the text. A minor nit-pick is that there are some snarky comments about Thomas Whigham letting Lopez off easy in his book (although that doesn't prevent Saeger from citing Whigham's work frequently).

but a slow read with much of it being redundant or repeating itself. There are better books on this period.

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