

The Bourbon Reforms and the Remaking of Spanish Frontier Missions

European Expansion and Indigenous Response

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The Bourbon Reforms and the Remaking of Spanish Frontier Missions

By

Robert H. Jackson



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Cover illustration: The Franciscan Church at Tancoyol (Sierra Gorda); The interior of the chapel at San Antonio de Pala (California); Neophyte Housing at San José y San Miguel Mission (Texas); Neophyte Housing at Santa Cruz Mission (California).

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General Series Editor's Preface

Over the past half millennium, from circa 1450 until the last third or so of the twentieth century, much of the world's history has been influenced in great part by one general dynamic and complex historical process known as European expansion. Defined as the opening up, unfolding, or increasing the extent, number, volume, or scope of the space, size, or participants belonging to a certain people or group, location, or geographical region, Europe's expansion initially emerged and emanated physically, intellectually, and politically from southern Europe—specifically from the Iberian peninsula—during the fifteenth century, expanding rapidly from that locus to include, first, all of Europe's maritime and, later, most of its continental states and peoples. Most commonly associated with events described as the discovery of America and of a passage to the East Indies (Asia) by rounding the Cape of Good Hope (Africa) during the early modern and modern periods, European expansion and encounters with the rest of the world multiplied and morphed into several ancillary historical processes, including colonization, imperialism, capitalism, and globalization, encompassing themes, among others, relating to contacts and, to quote the EURO series' original mission statement, “connections and exchanges; peoples, ideas and products, especially through the medium of trading companies; the exchange of religions and traditions; the transfer of technologies; and the development of new forms of political, social and economic policy, as well as identity formation.” Because of its intrinsic importance, extensive research has been performed and much has been written about the entire period of European expansion.

With the first volume published in 2009, Brill launched the European Expansion and Indigenous Response book series at the initiative of well-known scholar and respected historian, Glenn J. Ames, who, prior to his untimely passing, was the founding editor and guided the first seven volumes of the series to publication. Being one of the early members of the series' editorial board, I was then appointed as Series Editor. The series' founding objectives are to focus on publications “that understand and deal with the process of European expansion, interchange and connectivity in a global context in the early modern and modern period” and to “provide a forum for a variety of types of scholarly work with a wider disciplinary approach that moves beyond the traditional isolated and nation bound historiographical emphases of this field, encouraging whenever possible non-European perspectives...that seek to understand this indigenous transformative process and period in autonomous as well as inter-related cultural, economic, social, and ideological terms.”

The history of European expansion is a challenging field in which interest is likely to grow, in spite of, or perhaps because of, its polemical nature. Controversy has centered on tropes conceived and written in the past by Europeans, primarily concerning their early reflections and claims regarding the transcendental historical nature of this process and its emergence and importance in the creation of an early modern global economy and society. One of the most persistent objections is that the field has been “Eurocentric.” This complaint arises because of the difficulty in introducing and balancing different historical perspectives, when one of the actors in the process is to some degree neither European nor Europeanized—a conundrum alluded to in the African proverb: “Until the lion tells his tale, the hunt will always glorify the hunter.” Another, and perhaps even more important and growing historiographical issue, is that with the re-emergence of historical millennial societies (China and India, for example) and the emergence of other non-Western European societies successfully competing politically, economically, and intellectually on the global scene vis-à-vis Europe, the seminal nature of European expansion is being subjected to greater scrutiny, debate, and comparison with other historical alternatives.

Despite, or perhaps because of, these new directions and stimulating sources of existing and emerging lines of dispute regarding the history of European expansion, I and the editorial board of the series will continue with the original objectives and mission statement of the series and vigorously “... seek out studies that employ diverse forms of analysis from all scholarly disciplines, including anthropology, archaeology, art history, history (including the history of science), linguistics, literature, music, philosophy, and religious studies.” In addition, we shall seek to stimulate, locate, incorporate, and publish the most important and exciting scholarship in the field.

Towards that purpose, I am pleased to introduce volume 36 of Brill's EURO series entitled: *The Bourbon Reforms and the Remaking of Spanish Frontier Missions*. Authored by Robert H. Jackson and focusing primarily on Spanish frontier or borderland missionary activities in the New World from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, this study is an encyclopaedic historical examination of topics and issues by a pioneering proponent and researcher in this field that Latin Americanists call the “New Mission History.” It articulates and interconnects the history of European expansion, in general, and Spanish imperial reforms and missions in particular to themes that have interested the academy and society in the past and more intensely in the present: indigenous peoples and frontier or borderland societies, missions and missionaries, the “spiritual conquest” and native responses to it, and the historical and demographic impact and implications the Bourbon reforms and changes in missionary policy and built environment wrought on those societies and peoples.

In *Bourbon Reforms and the Remaking of Spanish Frontier Missions*, Jackson clearly sets this study in its chronological, geographical, and topical context – in the latter he deftly addresses, orients, and navigates the reader's understanding of Spanish religious and missionary activities and differences between those on the frontier and those in the center or *doctrina* and the apostolic colleges. Focusing on the Bourbon reforms, he argues and explicates how they produced major changes in the reorganization of Spanish frontier missions and drastic consequences for the indigenous peoples that were involved. One of his case studies, the Alta California missions and settlements, in particular, demonstrates how the Bourbon reforms interacted with institutional character of the missions that went beyond administrative changes and included their orientation and economic basis. The reforms also produced a social engineering project that incorporated novel architecture and built environment for new settlements with the intention of socio-cultural transformation and control of and over the indigenous peoples that were congregated and lived at those sites. Finally, Jackson's work makes interesting and fascinating comparative discussions regarding different economic and demographic patterns observed at multiple Spanish frontier mission locations and at different time periods that could produce variable levels of sustenance and suffered periodical demographic devastation and recuperation from disease and epidemics.

George Bryan Souza
University of Texas, San Antonio

Initial Thoughts

Over the last several years I have thought that I had concluded a research project that I started over forty years ago, but instead have found myself writing one more book. With this volume I finally conclude this intellectual odyssey, and offer a comparative synthesis of previous publications. The past year has been challenging as I have put pen to paper. The Covid-19 pandemic has killed several million around the world, and continues uncontrolled. This pandemic has shaken the belief in and has shown the limitations of modern medicine, but also allows us to reflect yet again on how disease has shaped human history. Historic studies of the effects of disease gain greater relevancy as humanity continues to struggle with Covid-19.

The viral apocalypse that began at the end of 2019 and continues offers lessons for understanding the past, but the past also illuminates the ways the pandemic has changed the world. The pandemic spread rapidly with the ease of communication around the world, and especially jet travel. As is discussed below, diseases such as smallpox and measles spread relatively rapidly through the Río de la Plata region on the river highways on river craft engaged in commerce, as well as with the cantonment and movement of troops on campaign. Geographic isolation, on the other hand, blunted to an extent the spread of contagion. A major lesson from the Covid-19 pandemic is how improved medical attention improved survival rates among those infected. The Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918-1919 killed millions, and caused higher mortality than Covid-19. In some instances, smallpox killed as many as 50 or 60 percent of the people living on the Jesuit missions among the Guaraní. The Jenner cowpox vaccine was not available until the 1790s, and the most effective response the Jesuits had was to quarantine the ill and those exposed to the ill. The Justinian Plague of the mid-sixth century and the Black Death of the mid-fourteenth century were even more catastrophic disease outbreaks. It is estimated that the Black Death killed as much as a third of the population of Europe. One major difference in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic was the ability of pharmaceutical companies to create what appears to be effective vaccines to cause safe immunological responses in the body and improve the chance of survival. With advances in medicine and the elimination smallpox and the control of other diseases humanity became complacent about the ability of modern medicine to cure, and particularly in the advanced industrial countries.

During the summer of 2020, there was debate in California over whether or not to remove statues of Fray Junipero Serra, the first Father-President of the California missions that are one subject of this study. The "Critical Mission Studies" network of the University of California system staged a virtual con-

ference that presented a perspective on the debate. Some of the participants in the conference made reference to the genocide of California's indigenous population, which is essentially a demographic issue. Ironically, the academic discussion of genocide and demographic collapse of indigenous populations has had and continues to have a foundation in a methodologically flawed approach that has characterized many studies of post-1492 demographic patterns among the indigenous populations of the Americas. The approach starts by estimating the contact population that, in reality, will never be known, and extrapolating the degree of depopulation over time based on the estimated base population. As I have argued in a number of studies, this amounts to an exercise in "fuzzy math." This study offers an alternative critical approach to documenting demographic changes to indigenous populations based on an analysis of parish registers and censuses that, in turn, can be used to calculate crude birth and death rates to document demographic collapse. This study is based on a synthesis of more than four decades of research and thought on the issue, as well as new research.

My intellectual odyssey has generated many debts of gratitude to family, teachers and fellow academics, and the journals and publishing houses that have seen fit to publish my musings. This study reflects, in part, a synthesis of more than 40 years of research and publication, and I would like to mention the presses and journals that have previously published my musings. The ones that I have cited are listed in the bibliography. The presses that have published my monographs include the University of New Mexico Press, the University of Nebraska Press, the Pentacle Press (Scottsdale, Arizona), ME Sharp, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, the University of Oklahoma Press, and of course Brill. I would also like to mention several academic journals that have published my articles: *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology*; *Journal of the Southwest*; *Historia Mexicana*; *Fronteras de la Historia*; *Desacatos*; *Memoria Americana*; *Boletín: Journal of the California Missions Studies Association* *IHS Antiguos Jesuitas en Iberoamérica*, and the *Journal of Jesuit Studies* also published by Brill, among others. I owe them all an eternal debt of gratitude. But I am particularly grateful to series editor George Bryan Souza and the excellent Brill editorial team. They have seen merit in and have done an excellent job in publishing several studies I have authored. My greatest debt of gratitude is to my wife Laura who has made it possible to endure the Covid-19 pandemic and all that it has brought.

Robert H. Jackson
Mexico City

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