

***Frontiers of Evangelization: Indians in the Sierra Gorda and Chiquitos Missions.* By Robert H. Jackson. Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 2017. Pp. 208. 34 Illustrations. Two appendixes. Notes. Index. \$36.00 cloth**

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“The challenge for the missionaries was to develop methods of evangelization and organizational structures that would attempt the religious conversion of sedentary and not sedentary peoples on different mission frontiers” (3).

Taking off from this stance, this is a book of scholarly erudition that draws on more than 30 years of research on missions across Spanish America. The author convincingly argues that successful evangelizing strategies were due to a combination of the natives’ pre-existing social organization and the ability of missionaries to adapt their organizational structures to that social environment. Jackson does so by analyzing the historical context on both sides of the Atlantic (royal reforms, civil officials’ implementation of policies in the Americas), demographic data, and iconographic evidence. Additionally, the author refers very occasionally to archaeological excavations (20, 85–86), although a more thorough engagement with archaeological data from mission excavations would have significantly enriched the argument.

In four chapters, the author compares the evangelization program in two regions: the Sierra Gorda missions in New Spain (today Mexico) and the Chiquitos mission in the lowlands of Eastern Bolivia. Drawing on his extensive archival investigations and previous publications, Jackson brings to the discussion the mission dynamics in California, Baja California, and Paraguay by skillfully reconstructing a more comprehensive narrative. Chapter 1 introduces the Sierra Gorda missions in Mexico and details the doctrinas and visitas established beyond the Chichimeca border. In the last section of the chapter, Jackson focuses on the Chiquitos missions in the Paraguay province and the Moxos missions in eastern Bolivia. The author briefly explains the characteristics of those missions, especially organizational structure and native composition (ethnic and language background, livelihood, and demographic patterns of sedentary and non-sedentary groups).

Chapter 2 sets about explicating the mission program. Firstly, Jackson explores the urban planning of the missions and their surroundings in order to better assess the mobilization of indigenous labor. In a discussion of the urban layouts, one would expect to find architectural diagrams and mission maps to visualize what the author is describing. However, these graphic references are lacking, unlike the author’s book *Pames, Jonaces, and Franciscans in the Sierra Gorda* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017). A comparison of archival architectural diagrams and mission maps with archaeological drawings of mission plans would have provided meaningful insights on the development of missions’ urbanization throughout time. A second section in this chapter analyses the methods of evangelization. The author proficiently balances both missionary and indigenous agencies in dealing with evangelization strategies and natives’ responses. Iconography plays a crucial role in demonstrating the persistence of pre-Hispanic beliefs despite the missionary efforts. The last part of this chapter deals with the economy of the missions and the control of the native population’s productivity.

The third chapter analyzes demographic data. A closer look at population demographics in the Sierra Gorda, Paraguay, and Chiquitos missions serves the author to assess birth and mortality rates

according to sedentary and non-sedentary patterns. In sedentary communities, mortality rates were high but so was the birth rate, especially among the Paraguay missions. By contrast, non-sedentary communities, like the Pames and Jonaces of the Sierra Gorda in Mexico, could not reproduce themselves quickly enough to overcome epidemics and higher mortality rates, leading them to eventual collapse.

The two appended demographic indicators are very helpful in visualizing population dynamics. A table indicating the different missions and their founders in Sierra Gorda and the Chichimeca frontier in the first chapter would help readers keep track of the information provided. In sum, this is a scholarly work in which Jackson brilliantly combines the critical analysis of missionary sources with iconographic evidence to offer a better understanding of economic, social, and cultural dynamics on the evangelization of the indigenous borderland communities in the Spanish Americas. This reasonably priced book provides a rich source of evidence and historical discourse for the graduate classroom and for scholars working on history and indigeneity.

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