

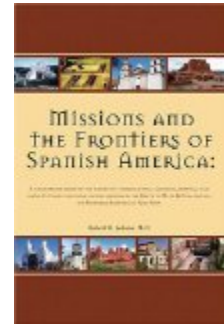
H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Robert H. Jackson. *Missions and the Frontiers of Spanish America: A Comparative Study of Environmental, Economic, Political, and Socio-Cultural Variations on the Missions in the Rio de la Plata Region and on the Northern Frontier of New Spain.* Scottsdale: Pentacle Press, 2005. xxii + 568 pp. \$44.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-9763500-0-2.

Jonathan D. Steigman. *La Florida del Inca and the Struggle for Social Equality in Colonial Spanish America.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005. ix + 125 pp. \$19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8173-5257-8.

Reviewed by Tamara Spike (Department of History, Florida State University)
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Recent Titles Relative to Spanish Florida

While neither Robert Jackson's *Missions and the Frontiers of Spanish America* nor Jonathan Steigman's *La Florida del Inca and the Struggle for Social Equality in Colonial Spanish America* focus directly on Florida, each will be of interest to historians of Spanish Florida for very different reasons. Jackson's work, a comparative study of frontier mission regions of the Spanish Empire, offers insight into how Spanish royal officials and friars were differently constricted by the environment and socio-cultural variables of various mission regions. Although Florida is not included in Jackson's comparison, future works inclusive of Florida could easily spring from this study. Steigman's monograph offers a cross-disciplinary view of a well-known source, El Inca Garsilaso de la Vega's chronicle of the de Soto expedition, *La Florida del Inca*.

Robert Jackson has long been a well-known name within the field of Borderlands history. *Missions and the Frontiers of Spanish America* is his tenth book, and the study capitalizes on his long experience in the field. Although the title is inclusive of all Spanish frontiers, the work concentrates on two regions: the Rio de la Plata region of South America, and the missions of the Mexican northern frontier. Here, Jackson devotes much of his attention to the missions of California and Baja Cal-

ifornia, although he occasionally broadens the region to include New Mexico and Texas. The basic purpose of this work is to better understand how Spanish plans for the frontier regions, built on experiences from the regions of Central Mexico and Peru, underwent change and adaptation on the frontier. Jackson argues that the changes to this "mission blueprint" can be accounted for because of "environmental differences among regions and socio-cultural variations among indigenous peoples" in the regions of the Rio de la Plata and on the Northern Mexico frontier. This in turn "changed the outcome of the mission programs in ways that the missionaries and the royal officials did not always anticipate" (p. 24).

Here, Jackson effectively demonstrates one of the strengths of borderlands and mission history: the successful integration of anthropology and history. Within this thesis, Jackson takes the archaeological idea of the "mission model" of predicting how the physical mission would be laid out and what kinds of structures would be present on the mission and enlarges it to include historical concerns, including governmental structure and economic policy. Jackson contends that one of the ultimate goals of the Spanish in establishing these missions was to create stable communities that would form the foundation for a colonial regime of indirect rule through tribute

and labor services to the Crown.

As a comparative history, much of Jackson's source base is comprised of secondary sources. He utilizes data from his own past studies, including demographic data from the California missions, as part of the framework of the study. Jackson also draws from evangelical sources, including the rich corpus of letters from the friars to the Crown and to royal officials. Although Jackson's footnotes are thorough and exhaustive, the work concludes with a selected rather than complete bibliography. This is probably a reflection more of editorial decisions rather than any decisions on the part of the author.

For those unfamiliar with mission history, Jackson's introduction provides a good summary of the state of the field, its current concerns, and its future direction. Chapters 1 through 3 provide the history of the foundation of the frontier mission system in California, the Rio de la Plata, and other frontier locales. The study then goes on to explore accommodation, resistance, and cultural change on the missions (chapter 4), demographic patterns on the missions (chapter 5), and the demise of the missions (chapter 6). Jackson's conclusions focus on the comparison of mission conditions and Spanish and native adaptation across the mission frontier, focusing on the Rio de la Plata and the Californias.

Overall, this work is a valuable contribution to the field of mission history, as it represents a first attempt in understanding the Spanish practice of missionization as a whole, rather than studying each region in discrete units, the standard practice in the Borderlands field. Although Jackson does not include Florida as one of the comparative subjects, those familiar with the Florida missions will easily be able to interpolate Florida's unique environmental and socio-cultural factors into Jackson's thesis, gaining an idea of where Florida fits into the overall picture of frontier missions.

Jonathan Steigman's *La Florida del Inca and the Struggle for Social Equality in Colonial Spanish America* is much more closely tied to Florida studies. Steigman, a visiting assistant professor of foreign languages and literature at Auburn University, seeks to re-examine El Inca Garsilaso de la Vega's *La Florida del Inca* on the 400th anniversary of its publication. El Inca's chronicle is one of four narratives of the de Soto expedition. Florida historians should note that although the volume deals with a well-known Florida source, the author's examination of the book is much more concerned with the work's influence on the larger Spanish world than how it reflects upon Florida and its inhabitants.

Steigman's interpretation focuses around the fact that El Inca, as an early *mestizo* writer, was one of the first and foremost representatives of the *mestizo* voice in Spain and Latin America. Throughout the corpus of his works, El Inca strove to become the voice for the Inca in Spain. The author contends that the text of *La Florida del Inca* fits well within this pattern. Steigman argues that El Inca was trying to influence events and attitudes in the New World and in Spain by influencing the discourse of how Spaniards talked about Indians. *La Florida del Inca*, Steigman contends, promoted a discourse inclusive of the ongoing hybridizing process in the New World. El Inca himself functioned as a living, breathing example of this new plurality. Thus, Steigman states, "El Inca is an interpreter of reality as well as a historian" (p. 111).

Steigman argues that through El Inca's use of the de Soto expedition as an "object lesson," the author tried to create a new paradigm for European-Indian relations. De Soto failed in his mission time and time again, according to El Inca, because he had not learned lessons from past conquerors. Specifically, de Soto's failures "resulted from insolent and abusive behavior by the Spanish towards the Amerindians" (p. 36). Moreover, El Inca attempted to further his goal of a plural, tolerant discourse through his constant positive characterization of the Florida landscape and the Florida Indians. For example, Steigman illustrates, El Inca praises Native Americans on a level almost equal to that of the Spaniards, calling the Indians "*nobles y caballeros*" as he does the Spaniards.

The volume is well written and solidly researched. The early chapters cover the life of El Inca and his other publications and writings. Steigman then turns to the purpose, style, and themes of *La Florida del Inca*: the how and why of the work. Finally, the meat of the argument is found in Steigman's analysis of El Inca's Native Americans and La Florida's Ideal Conquistadors.

From a historical point of view, however, Steigman's argument is a bit problematic. The author switches back and forth constantly in identifying El Inca as both *mestizo* and as Indian, equating and conflating the two identities. Additionally, these identities of "*mestizo*" and "Indian" are never well explored, perhaps because the author is concerned only with El Inca's voice as *mestizo* and Indian, not with how he self-identified. Moreover, in asserting that El Inca praises Florida Indians (and other indigenous peoples) as a means of furthering the Inca cause, he assumes a pan-Indian identity that did not emerge for hundreds of years after the publication of *La Florida del Inca*. Overall, however, the volume is well worth reading and

offers a critical reexamination of a familiar source from a cross-disciplinary viewpoint.

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