H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Robert C. Galgano. *Feast of Souls: Indians and Spaniards in the Seventeenth-Century Missions of Florida and New Mexico.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005. xii + 212 pp. $37.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8263-3648-4.

Reviewed by Robert Jackson (Office of Federal Acknowledgment, U.S. Department of the Interior)
Published on H-AmIndian (January, 2007)

Franciscan Missions in Seventeenth Century North America

I am an advocate of comparative history, and the book reviewed here purports to offer a synthesis of the historical experience of natives living on Franciscan missions in Spanish Florida and New Mexico. The book has as its primary audience students; it also has, among others, the goal of translating history into teaching (pp. xi-xii). The author lays out the themes in the book in a short introduction, and then examines several chronological/thematic issues. Galgano provides an overly broad overview of native and Spanish religious beliefs, as one element of an interpretation that can best be summarized as mutual understandings, misunderstandings and accommodations that at times were less than accommodating. While there is a certain logic in comparing contemporary Franciscan missions in Florida and New Mexico, the author does not present a compelling reason for why he limits the scope of the book or why he does not examine the experiences of Franciscan missionaries and natives on other frontiers.

This short book (155 pages of text) is divided into six thematic/chronological chapters in addition to the introduction. The first chapter outlines, in a general way, the religious beliefs and practices of the major players in the story. This includes the Spanish and Franciscan missionaries, as well as the different native peoples the Franciscans attempted to convert. These were the Guale, Timucua, and Apalache in Florida, and the different Pueblo peoples in New Mexico. While Galgano attempts to draw interesting parallels between the belief systems of Iberian Catholicism and the natives of Florida and New Mexico, the discussion is too general to be of much utility, other than to provide a general sense of religious beliefs, without providing many specific details to distinguish between the practices of the Florida and New Mexico natives, or to explain how Iberian Catholicism evolved from the late medieval period through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As the author points out, religion certainly became a point of dispute during the seventeenth century, as seen in efforts to quash the *kachina* religion in New Mexico and the ball game in Florida–an athletic competition between villages that had religious overtones. Native leaders in Florida cooperated with the effort to suppress the ball game, whereas New Mexico natives took the *kachina* religion underground and used it as a point around which to organize resistance.

The next four chapters explore different aspects of the interactions between the Spanish, missionaries and native peoples in New Mexico and Florida. The task of the missionaries was difficult because of the contending interests of Spanish settlers, soldiers, and, particularly, civil/military officials. Relations between the Franciscans and several governors of New Mexico were tense, to say the least, as the missionaries and the representatives of the state clashed over control of the Indians, the primary source of wealth in the province. Governors resented the influence of the Franciscans, as well as competition over Indian labor and commodities that could be exported to the south for profit. The Pueblo peoples found themselves caught in the middle of this conflict that simmered for decades. Dissension in Spanish ranks contributed to resistance by the Pueblo peoples, which culminated in the 1680 uprising that successfully drove the Spanish out of the province for more than a decade. Relations between Franciscan missionaries and soldiers and settlers in Florida were not problematic, as they were in New Mexico. Florida natives also resisted Spanish domination, but not with the same frequency as in New Mexico. The Timucua, for example, revolted in the 1650s in a movement that attempted to fortify chiefly prerogatives. However, not all resistance was overt and violent. Natives in both New Mexico and Florida preserved cultural and some religious practices, such as burial practices, while ostensibly adopting Christianity.

The Spanish were not the only Europeans present in North America, and the establishment of missions and colonial rule also modified relations between those na-

tives who sided with the Spanish and those who did not. War between Spain and England in the first decade of the eighteenth century led to devastating attacks against the Florida missions by English colonial militia from South Carolina and their Indian allies. Apache groups alternatively traded with and raided the Pueblo communities in New Mexico, and sided with the Pueblo peoples in 1680. Different native groups in the southeast either sided with the Spanish or the English.

In the end, the question remains: how can the Franciscan missions be judged, and how did the lives of the native peoples change under the influence of the Spanish and the Franciscan missionaries? Native populations experienced drastic demographic change resulting from the new diseases the Europeans brought, and the status and authority of traditional political and religious leaders declined. Moreover, the Spanish created a colonial society predicated on the exploitation of native peoples and the extraction of surplus wealth and labor. English attacks during the War of Spanish Succession (1701-13) and demographic collapse doomed the Florida missions, whereas the 1680 uprising in New Mexico forced the Spanish and particularly the Franciscans to modify their approach to colonization. The Spanish reasserted authority in New Mexico, but not to the degree of the seventeenth century. The uprising forced the Franciscans in particular to become relatively more tolerant.

Galgano presents a useful summary and synthesis of the historical processes during the seventeenth century in the Florida and New Mexico missions, but at a general and rather superficial level. The reader will find very few details about specific native groups and how they responded to Spanish domination. This book is suited for undergraduate students in survey courses, but has little to offer specialists or informed general readers.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the list discussion logs at:
http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl.

Citation: Robert Jackson. Review of Galgano, Robert C., *Feast of Souls: Indians and Spaniards in the Seventeenth-Century Missions of Florida and New Mexico.* H-AmIndian, H-Net Reviews. January, 2007.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=12695

Copyright © 2007 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu.