

Towards a New Interpretation of the Colonial Regime in Sonora, 1681–1821

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One of the central postulates of contemporary historiography is the focus on the so-called Other, a concept that requires a deconstructive approach to history. Moving towards such a line of inquiry, in this essay we attempt to rethink some of the taken-for-granted historical discourses on the political entity we call Sonora. Our objective is to deconstruct it along the analytical axis of the Other, a category that, in this case (and in Latin America more generally) includes the indigenous, the poor, the oppressed, and the excluded (Dussel 2004: 9–10). Focusing on the poor, the dominated, and the excluded provides an analytical entry point for decentering and deconstructing the entity called Sonora and its historical representations. We do so by recognizing these people's participation in history; that is, by tracing their tracks, their responses to events, the great breadth of their resistances, and the perceptions and representations that these have prompted in historiography. The history of the territory we call Sonora is thus explored as a collective yet conflictive construction.¹

Prevailing discourses of Sonoran history have long circulated in the popular media and have become increasingly shrill in political campaigns. While they have many characteristics, they share in common their instrumental role in social control; their prosaic use for legitimizing the status quo; their focus on individuals and singular events (as opposed to processes and dynamics); their efforts to disfigure and obscure “the uncontrolled forces at work” in any given event (Peretti 2004: 97); their uncritical use of colonial-period categories of human groupings within

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the space of “Sonora”; and, finally, their fusion into a collection of epic legends full of regional pride and xenophobia. Indeed, such discourses would appear to be part of a deliberate effort on the part of individuals and families, or of political pressure groups, to manipulate and mobilize public opinion. We, on the other hand, argue that the course of past and present events “cannot be understood as a unitary process unfolding through a meta-narrative of control” (Žižek 2004: 259).

If knowing and/or interpreting the Other is indeed part of a complex collective learning process, in this essay we discuss three primary aspects of Sonora’s colonial period that we hope will contribute to this effort. These are aspects that we interpret with a view towards rendering visible those whose acts and lives have been erased in historiography. We begin with a critique of representations that idealize and exaggerate the dimensions of certain actors, and of manipulations of discourses concerning the past. We recognize that our efforts are but an initial exploration, that we remain at an analytical threshold. Still, this essay represents an enthusiastic first step toward reframing the interpretation of the past. In what follows, then, we draw from the historiography on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to begin this reframing along the following three general lines: (1) revisiting the breakup of the missions in the provinces of Sonora and Sinaloa, 1681–1767; (2) a revalorization of the role of indigenous societies during the Hispanic monarchy; and (3) a fresh look at Sonora’s colonial civilian and presidial populations.

THE BREAKUP OF MISSIONS IN THE PROVINCES OF SONORA AND SINALOA, 1681–1767²

Sonoran and Sinaloan missions run by the Society of Jesus underwent a process of deterioration that began in 1681. The true dimensions of this process were obscured by the Jesuits’ expulsion in 1767 and the resultant discourse of heroism in the face of political persecution and victimization. Following a trend in historiography, local and regional chroniclers have often employed this interpretation of victimization, etc., to dramatize the 1767 Jesuit expulsion as a catastrophe for the missions of Sonora, Ostimuri, and northern Sinaloa, as well as for the broader population.

The missions’ objective, nevertheless, was always “the conversion of Indians into good Christians, and into subjects useful for the King.” In

other words, “their work did not develop in opposition to the secular conquest or as an alternative to this process.” The missionaries “were aided by the diverse military institutions of the colonial state [and they were] an integral part of Spanish colonialism.” This dynamic of military support “acquired special relevance in areas where the means of conquest remained insufficient [for example, in] Mesoamerica or in the Andes,” becoming an “institution of discipline, re-education, and acculturation of the dominated Indians,” who were established in precolonial settlements where missionaries “could never do without an ample array of methods for control and repression” (Hausberger 2000: 614–17).

From 1681 onward, however, the mission regime of northwest New Spain remained periodically strained by interethnic rebellion. Mission and ex-mission Indians, as well as those completely outside the system, increasingly came into conflict. The scale of such rebellion suggests that significant numbers of Indians escaped the missionaries’ control, becoming mobilized and often allied with regional actors in conflict with the Jesuits.³ Likewise, the crosswinds of two processes battered the mission regime from different directions. On the one hand, the regime was confronted by the complexities of an indigenous rebellion regaining strength.⁴ On the other, Indian authorities within the mission towns saw their influence grow. Colonists and civil, military, and ecclesiastic authorities also constantly challenged north and northwest New Spain’s mission regime, as it became increasingly hemmed in by presidios, ranches, and mines, as well as by the Apache and Seri.⁵ Between 1748 and 1788, constant assaults by “barbarous” Indians along New Spain’s northern border created enormous pressures for the colonial regime, drawing increased attention to the region by crown authorities.⁶

The colonial government’s expulsion of the missionaries in 1767 was, therefore, a final blow in the rather prolonged agony of the precarious Jesuit regime in northwest New Spain. In some respects, this slow deterioration contained elements of cruelty and arbitrariness. Yet, in other ways the system had simply become corrupt and dissolute by virtue of its own laxity.

The dynamic of deterioration that we describe herein includes several factors associated with the missionaries themselves. Communication, for example, had become hampered by their failure to sufficiently grasp indigenous languages. Translating and transmitting the mysteries of Christian belief and the “European social order”⁷ had become enormously difficult. Missionaries, likewise, felt weighted down by the desert climate and by

the Indians' harsh physical surroundings more generally (Hausberger 1997: 67–85). The powers—both beneficial and detrimental—that the missionaries attributed to sorcerers is an indication of the beliefs and practices that they actually shared with their indigenous subjects. Yet, this also suggests the fear and contempt the Jesuits felt for their practices.⁸

We also see that members of the Society of Jesus became morally lax (by their own standards) in the area of commerce, such as the production and sale of mescal and the traffic in precious pearls. There was also “the accusation that some [missionaries] had spent much time with women,” prompting one religious superior to lament, “in no other province have I had so many denunciations or repeatedly irritating and indecorous tellings . . . as in Sinaloa; and in no other thing have I seen my own inexperience as I have here.”⁹

Proof of missionaries' failure to fully educate the Indians in the ways of Christianity is the fact that Sonora and Sinaloa had remained mission provinces for a half-century and a full-century, respectively, after the missionaries' arrival, despite the ecclesiastical policy of granting ten years of mission designation status before transition to parochial status (Navarro García 1992: 191).

Yet, interethnic rebellions are what truly reveal Indians' organized rejection of the mission system—indeed, the entire colonial regime—and its superficial Christianization effort. Here, the killings of missionaries and the destruction of churches and other Christian symbols are quite significant. At the same time, the instability of the mission Indian population accelerates as they see their opportunities for mobility increase. Factors external to the mission regime also figure into the interethnic rebellions. One such factor is the extremely repressive and cruel campaign that Governor Juan de Mendoza carried out against the Seri and Pima between 1755 and 1756, which prompted the union of the two indigenous nations (Mirafuentes and Máñez 1999: xli–xliii, 106).

The year 1681 can be viewed as an important temporal break in the region's periodization. It saw an interethnic rebellion that was promptly, brutally, and bloodily suppressed. Ópatas from various mission towns and from the outer Conchos participated, apparently influenced by the triumphant Indian rebellion of 1680 in New Mexico, which showed them that defeat, death, and expulsion of the Spaniards (including the missionaries and their symbols) was indeed possible (Mirafuentes Galván 1993: II:11; Navarro García 1992, 233–43; Gutiérrez 1993: 179–93).

The next interethnic rebellion to occur in the region was that of 1690, a guerrilla war that traversed both sides of the Sierra Madre and lasted until 1697. It is more significant than previous rebellions for its broad territorial sweep, its multiethnic nature (it brought together more than seven Indian nations), and its long duration (González Rodríguez (1993: 237–92).¹⁰ Following on its heels was the Lower Pima and Seri occupation of Cerro Prieto, a strategically important mountain chain north of Guaymas and south of Pitic. This marked the beginning of a war that would run from 1726 to 1771, and again between 1777 and 1784. The 1734–1735 rebellion of Pericués, Guaycuras, Callejúes, and Huchitíes on the Baja California Peninsula included the stoning to death of two missionaries and the systematic destruction of Christian symbols, including chapels, ornaments, and crosses (del Río 1984: 207–22).

The 1740–1741 rebellion extended into the lower basins of the Yaqui, Mayo, and Fuerte rivers, and included neighboring ethnic groups such as the Lower Pima. To this day it remains the emblematic rebellion of mission Indians in northwest Mexico in the historical record, though we remain mindful that it was not the only great ethnic rebellion in the area under study here.

The Upper Pima revolt of 1751 is the last of this cycle that, we propose, was interrupted by the end of the Jesuit mission regime and the militarization of the northern border. Once under Franciscan control, the mission towns developed a more lax social order, which includes growing exchange with the non-Indian population and increased mobility for the Indians. Local authorities no longer attempt to obstruct the Indians' movements.

We suggest that the missions established by the Jesuits in northwest New Spain complemented the presidios. Missions and civilian settlements would maintain this complementarity in subsequent years, much more so than the antagonism that some local scholarship highlights. The migration of the indigenous population into and out of the missions was greater than is commonly appreciated in the historiography. Beginning in the seventeenth century, one finds records of Indians from the lower Yaqui, Mayo, and Fuerte river valleys settling in mining camps, haciendas, and towns beyond the eastern flank of the Sierra Madre Occidental, for example in and around Parral. Their contiguity with groups of “irreducible” Indians—such as the Seri and Apache—lends to the northwest missions a certain permeability and fluidity, as many Indians remained only temporarily in mission towns. In the following sections we elaborate on these themes.

I. Coercion

Scholars have viewed coercion as a critical component of the Jesuit regime in northwest New Spain, and as such have viewed the relationship between missions and presidios as complementary. Missionaries often exercised coercion both directly and less obviously in underhanded ways (Bolton 1974: 197–99, 201–2; Hausberger 1993: 38–39). According to Bolton (1974: 200), Indians’ “religious, moral, social, and industrial” discipline remained at the heart of the mission system. Discipline was, for the missionaries, an indispensable part of the Christianization effort. As such, even mission design and layout had a particular physical and temporal distribution that supported discipline (Reff 1991: 253). The implantation of the mission regime lent itself to a broader program that blended entirely novel technologies, animal species, and cultivars with submission to missionary discipline. The new crops, cattle, horses, and agricultural techniques; the Christian calendar and ceremonies; and Europeans’ gifts were, as far as we know, broadly accepted by Indians, who were attracted by this facet of the mission regime as an alternative to outright extermination.

Yet Indians continued to reject, in diverse ways, Europeans’ ideals of monogamous, unbreakable marriage bonds; fixed residence; persecution of witchcraft; and prohibition of dances, indigenous ceremonies, and healing practices (Hausberger 1993: 34–35; Spicer 1994: 10–34; Reff 1991: 264–71). Some scholars have thus argued that “physical repression played an important role from the very first moments of contact between indigenous peoples and the fathers (who represent colonial power), and remained in place from then on.” Obedience to a regime superimposed through conquest was both forced and voluntary, often including episodes of outright rejection. Repression as a way to dissuade certain behaviors or teach important lessons thus included corporal punishment as a part of everyday mission life (Hausberger 1993: 27, 36–37). Missionaries often delegated the task of meting out such punishment to soldiers or indigenous authorities, only to subsequently intervene and cut short the castigation at the punisher’s rehearsed protestations. Priests would often “prepare punishers beforehand on how to act [in such situations]” so that the former would emerge looking like compassionate mediators. This type of subtle intervention, according to Francisco Xavier Clavijero, was practiced in the Baja peninsula missions. According to Ignaz Pfefferkorn, it became systematic in the

Sonoran missions (Jackson 1998: 79; Pfefferkorn 1983 vol. II: quotation on p. 138).

The methodical use of physical punishment suggests that the utopian character (or the notion of consensus and voluntary submission) popularly attributed to the northwest's mission regime is but an idealization. Such a vision is, moreover, inconsistent with the documentary sources penned by the missionaries themselves. Here, we wish to focus on the consequences of regular corporal punishment in the daily life of the missions. Among the commonly mentioned causes of the 1690 and 1740 interethnic rebellions and the Upper Pima revolt of 1751, we find missionaries engaged in a contest with indigenous leaders who refused to be docile subjects; Jesuit priests resorting to corporal punishment in such conflicts; and, finally, struggles between missionaries and colonial authorities. Many of the rebellious indigenous leaders, it is worth noting, had been *gobernadores* or captains-general of their nations, following a longer trajectory of colonial office holding. They had enjoyed the support of the very same royal authorities with whom the missionaries remained in conflict.

In the case of the Yaqui, signs of missionaries' deteriorating authority began to multiply beginning in 1735. This deterioration crystallized with the ultimate rejection of father Diego González's bid to take charge of the Yaqui pueblos of Ráhum, Pótam, and Guírivis. Among the reasons for this rejection was González's accompanying group of *coyotes* and their families from the Río Fuerte area, who had usurped the Yaquis in official indigenous offices (Mirafuentes Galván 1993: 124–25).¹¹

One particularly poignant situation, in November 1735, captures the tyranny of the times. Diego González beat Juan Ignacio Usacamea, or "El Muni," with his own consecrated hands, the missionary "hitting him repeatedly with a stick and with belts to the nose, leaving him bathed in blood, and, not satisfied, in his outburst of anger, he [further] ordered [his underlings] to beat Muni while he was tied up."¹² González's beating (with bare fists and sticks) the Yaqui chief Muni, followed by having him whipped, appears to have been intended as a broader lesson.

Nevertheless, such punishment was not necessarily exceptional. Mission documents are full of accounts of whipping being used in a large variety of circumstances: forcing confessions from a sorcerer or from the man accused of stealing eggs from Father Felipe Segesser in the Pimería Baja, to cite just two examples (Hopkins Durazo 1991: 29–30, 44). There are many other cases of public violence at the hands of missionaries, such as

Jesuit Daniel Januske's slapping of an Indian *gobernador* in front of the *alcalde mayor* and *visitador* Captain Juan Fernández de la Cavada, in 1723. Another instance occurred in 1710, when Arizpe's Jesuit Superior Francisco Javier de Mora frightened Indian Juan Gorona, bearing down on him with a red-hot branding iron (Hausberger 1993: 42).

In the investigations following the Upper Pima revolt of 1751, several of those who were interrogated and prosecuted mentioned corporal punishment. Witnesses suggested that the Upper Pimas had beaten and killed missionaries Tomás Tello and Enrique Ruhen with sticks rather than with arrows and clubs, as they had with other *gente de razón*.¹³ This was in retribution for the missionaries' (particularly Tello's) predilection for condemning people to the stockades (in one instance including a pregnant Indian woman), and for recommending lashings and even hair cropping, the latter quite a humiliating punishment for the natives. In 1734, 1735, and 1742, we see that Indians fled the Upper Pima towns en masse to escape from this environment of violence and corporal punishment.¹⁴

2. *Physical and Symbolic Violence*

These events point out that physical and symbolic violence as a means of disciplining Indians remained a crucial feature of northwest New Spain's mission regime. Its visibility and reiteration in the sources suggest that the regime entered into a state of decay by at least 1681. The regime began to seriously collapse around 1735 with the rise of successive multiethnic coalitions carrying out specific attacks, uprisings, rebellions, and conspiracies with varying degrees of success and scale.

It appears that in terms of the overall mission chronology there was an initial period, between 1591 and 1680, of adjustment in which Indian communities—confused and terrorized by death and disease—were grouped into mission pueblos founded in pre-Hispanic settlements. But from 1681, there are constant reports of armed incursions carried out by mission or ex-mission Indians. These reports reveal the considerable spatial mobility of Indian groups and the mission regime's inability to control the erstwhile "reduced" Indians.

This loss of control can be seen, for example, in a massive, multiethnic rebellion in 1737. That year, Yaquis and Lower Pimas, under the leadership of a Guayma Indian prophet named El Ariscibi, had established an encampment at the foot of Cerro Prieto, outside Guaymas (since 1726 an

impregnable bastion of rebellious Indians) (Mirafuentes Galván 1992b: 123–41).¹⁵ The conjunction of rebellious mission and ex-mission Indians (such as the Lower Pima and Seri, respectively) in the rugged mountain topography of Cerro Prieto for more than half a century remains a critical problem for mission historiography, one that has eluded historians for some time. This level of cooperation and coexistence suggests a greater instability in the mission population, as well as a greater degree of communication among the Indian nations of northwest New Spain, than are currently accepted. It also calls into question the character of colonial domination in the social-political space under consideration here, suggesting a more tenuous control, whether at the hands of missionaries, royal authorities, or *vecinos*.

The Jesuits' weakened authority over the Yaquis is made manifest in 1737, when Governor Manuel de Mena's deputy in Pótam places Juan Ignacio Usacamea "El Muni," *gobernador* of Ráhum; Bernabé Basoritemea, *gobernador* of Guírivis; Vicente, Muni's father; and five other rebel "leaders" in the community stockades. The missionaries had accused the men of attempting to revolt. The Jesuits' actions provoked an angry response, as "all of the people of the pueblo of Pótam as well as Ráhum rose up in arms" to free the prisoners by force, if necessary. Neither the presence of an "entire squadron" guarding the prisoners nor the exhortations of three missionaries could dissuade the angry mob. The latter responded by shouting epithets at the authorities and shooting arrows over the head of Father Pedro Reynaldos (who had been in Tórim for sixteen years, and who spoke Yaqui). They finally convinced *teniente* Mena to free the men.¹⁶ According to Juan Salas, a military man, this account, written by a missionary in 1744, leaves out a critical fact: more than two thousand Indian rebels, "with their flags, officers, and sergeants," had come together under the command of Luis Aquibuamea and at the behest of Muni (Navarro García 1966: 29–30). A few months later, on September 17, 1737, the father-rector of the Yaqui missions, Pedro Reynaldos, died in Pótam of dropsy (edema). Subsequently, Vícam's missionary "made the decision and gave the order" that the Indians of Pótam carry Reynaldos's body on their shoulders to Vícam whence, in turn, Indians from the latter pueblo would take the corpse further on to Tórim. But,

the Indians of Pótam were so irreverent, so little devout, so disobedient and impudent, that they [openly] revealed their true intentions, [also illustrating] the effects that the impunity [seen in]

the case [of Muni and the others] had produced; at a half league or less of having carried the corpse, they put it down in the middle of the road and returned to their pueblo and their homes.¹⁷

3. *Labor Demands*

Interpretations of the remote roots and proximate causes of the great 1740 rebellion have tended to emphasize the heavy labor demands imposed on the mission Indians; the extraction of surplus wealth for the California missions, provincial religious coffers, and provision of colonists (often scandalously at the expense of mission Indians' supplies¹⁸); the demographic growth and the strengthening of indigenous positions of authority (in particular that of the town *gobernador*¹⁹); the cultural gap of the missionaries (the generation of missionaries in the region between 1730 and 1742 is characterized by its cultural distance from the Yaquis); and, finally, the growing conflict between missionaries and civilian colonists over local political power, indigenous labor, and mission lands. One fallout of this conflict is the incessant demand for secularization of the missions by *vecinos* and royal authorities, a demand dating from the seventeenth century.²⁰

On June 25, with the 1740 rebellion in full swing, missionary Valadares attempted to speak with the hundreds of bellicose Indians surrounding the Río Fuerte town of Tehueco. He was left alone with the rebels after a contingent of thirty-six armed Spaniards broke through the Indians' circle and fled for El Fuerte. The Indians, after taking away his cassock and clothes, dressed him in a *calzón* made of chamois and a jerkin in order to take him into the bush, where they mocked him with slanderous statements "and with dances so impure and indecent that he had to cover his eyes with his hands, which they forced back so that he could witness the obscenity." They then took the missionary to the Jesuit Mazariegos, in Mochicahui, making fun of him all along the way (Navarro García 1966: 102–3).

The scene is rich in symbolic acts and reminiscent of a similar incident of humiliation that also took place in 1740, this time in Santa Cruz del Mayo, on the lower Río Mayo. Here, a group of rebels disarmed a troop of Spanish soldiers and *pardos* and, with church bells pealing in the background, forced them to pray before effigies of Mary and Jesus. The men were subsequently taken to the Río Mayo town of Etchojoa,

stripped naked, then returned once again to Santa Cruz for interrogation, flogging, and finally, release. These stories speak to the Indians' creative employment of a broad repertoire of rituals and gestures that depart from intended Christian meanings.

The 1740 rebellion is alluded to several times in the *Manifiesto de la conducta de Beleña*, of 1772. The author, Eusebio Bentura Beleña, records the multiethnic dimensions of Indian participation in the rebellion and argues that their degree of connection with the missions made little substantive difference. The 1740 rebellion is considered a milestone, after which "the Indians of *reducción* pueblos" rose up with some ease in the jurisdictions of Sonora, Ostimuri, Álamos, and El Fuerte (Beleña 1772, paras. 166, 176, 181).

Within this breakdown, two executions carried out in 1741 hold both real and symbolic significance. Authorities had charged Yaqui *capitán general* Juan Ignacio Usacamea (El Muni) and Yaqui *alférez* (second lieutenant) Bernabé Felipe Basoritemea of planning a rebellion for the upcoming June 23 feast day for San Juan Bautista, a celebration of the coming agricultural cycle and the beginning of the summer rains. Both men had been *gobernadores*, of Ráhum and Guírivis respectively, and both had conducted diverse negotiations with royal authorities: in 1736, in Río Chico, before *alcalde mayor* Quirós, and in Conicárit, before the *teniente de gobernador* Fernández de Peralta. Likewise, in 1740 they had traveled to Mexico City and had been received by the viceroy and archbishop, Juan Antonio de Vizarrón y Eguiarreta, who granted them their political offices and had gone so far as to satisfy the fourteen different demands that the two indigenous leaders had presented him with. Usacamea and Basoritemea were caught by surprise nine days before the planned uprising, on June 15, 1741. Authorities apprehended them in their homes by night and immediately hauled them away to the presidio in the pueblo of Buenavista, where they were executed. (Figueroa 1994: 267; see also Mirafuentes Galván 1993: 117, 136–37; Navarro García 1966: 25–37).²¹

The execution of Muni and Bernabé is a pointed expression of how Jesuit missionaries sought to eliminate one of the causes of the 1740 rebellion to ensure that the events would never be repeated. The execution became an exemplary elimination of indigenous authorities who had refused to be docile and who had received the support of Governor Manuel Bernal de Huidobro, making evident the distance separating the missionaries from the Yaqui population (Mirafuentes Galván (1993: 137–40).²²

Muni and Bernabé were executed despite their protestations of innocence; they were decapitated, their heads impaled on poles stuck in the ground in their hometowns. Another forty-three Yaquis and Mayos were subsequently punished, ten of whom were finally executed. The latter included *jefes* Juan Calixto Ayamea and Agustín “El Siboli,” whose body was hacked into four separate parts and put on display on roads and other public areas as a warning to potential rebels. Others were taken to California, while fifteen more were condemned to forced labor in the construction of new presidios. Still others were publicly flogged (Navarro García 1966: 152–55; Spicer 1994: 54–55).

On June 24, 1767, twenty-six years after these executions and the punishment of the other forty-three Indian rebels, Spanish authorities began apprehending Jesuits for deportation to Europe (Kessell 1976: 13). Sonora’s thirty-one missionaries were rounded up and taken to Mátape; the twenty in Sinaloa were taken to the presidio of San Carlos de Buenavista, where Muni and Bernabé had been executed with the full approval of members of the Society of Jesus.²³

4. *Jesuit Expulsion*

Several factors, taken together, may explain why the Jesuits’ apprehension and expulsion provoked so little protest in Sonora, Ostimuri, and Sinaloa, even though fifty of the missionaries remained locked up in Guaymas for a year, suffering quite inhospitable conditions.²⁴ To begin with, the widespread demand for mission secularization had been reiterated since the first half of the seventeenth century and was stimulated by the ongoing struggle to secure Indian labor and lands. Indians, moreover, either rejected the mission regime outright, or at least remained indifferent to it. Finally, New Spain’s northern frontier had also undergone a period of intense militarization.

From the seventeenth century we begin to see wide and often quite bitter differences between the missionaries and civil and military authorities versus the *común*, or general population of Europeans, and criollos.²⁵ The missionaries penned articulate objections to vecinos’ written demands for mission secularization and, thereby, access to Indian labor.²⁶

One decisive element explaining the change in official attitudes towards mission secularization in the eighteenth century is the rise of the doctrine of regalism, which argued in favor of “the rights and prerogatives of the Crown, as patron of the American Church.” The royalists were “insistent

on elevating the Crown's authority over that of the Spanish Church." Regalism had indeed by this time become quite popular amongst royal functionaries and the secular clerical hierarchy: the Fourth Provincial Council of the Catholic Church in New Spain, convened in 1771, was celebrated in this same tenor (Brading 1993: 534–38).

Nothing better captures the essence of the changes that New Spain's northern frontier was undergoing at the behest of the Bourbon reformers than the spectacle and metaphor of the dragoons' arrival and the missionaries' departure from the port of Guaymas in 1768. The northwest missions had finally been secularized, at least in part. The temporal government of dozens of mission pueblos would no longer remain in the hands of regular clergy. That these pueblos were still mission provinces 176 years after the arrival of the first missionaries—that is, for seven generations (1591–1767)—can be interpreted as a failure of the Jesuits' pastoral program (Navarro García 1992: 191–97).

On March 10, 1768, four squads of the Regimiento de Dragones de España arrived in Guaymas via land. They had been riding for fifty-eight days after leaving the military barracks at Guaristamba (near Tepique). There were 102 dragoons and ten officers. On May 2, 1768, they were joined by two companies of Catalan volunteers sent from Mexico—one hundred soldiers and four officers—who had arrived in Guaymas on the passenger ship *La Laurentana*. Another squad, the Regimiento de Infantería de América, arrived in Guaymas three days later on the ship *El Príncipe*. This unit included fifty-one soldiers and three officers. Finally, on May 10, 150 soldiers and four officials of the Compañía de Fusileros de Montaña arrived on the brigantine *San Carlos*, recently constructed in San Blas. On May 20, 1768, the *Príncipe* set sail with fifty missionaries from Sonora, Ostimuri, and northern Sinaloa (Mirafuentes and Máñez 1999: 6–15; Navarro García 1964: 153).

For a time following the Jesuits' expulsion, Sonora experienced economic difficulties. The interim commissaries in charge of mission properties performed poorly at their tasks. The combination of the Sonora expedition, José de Gálvez's official visit, and the campaigns against the Seri during the 1770s, meanwhile, continued to drain away the available resources (Spicer (994: 156).²⁷

The view during the years 1778 to 1819 is more ambiguous. The ex-mission pueblos in the Yaqui Valley and those in the Pimería Alta (now under Franciscan control) enjoyed a period of prosperity facilitated by a laissez faire atmosphere following the expulsion of the Jesuit order.

However, some problems remained. Seris and Lower Pimas reoccupied Cerro Prieto and continued to taunt authorities. Apaches, likewise, continued their raiding, although now with less frequency and on a smaller scale.

Thanks to agreements that included the periodic distribution of rations among Apaches, during the years 1789 to 1821 the presidios of Bacoachi, Bavispe, and Tucson enjoyed moments of peace. During the same period, artisans from central New Spain collaborated with Sonoran authorities, local indigenous laborers, and Franciscans to construct churches at San Xavier del Bac, Caborca, and Pitiquito, introducing new building technologies into the region, including burnt brick and lime-plaster *mezcla* (Kessell 1976: 174).

The Jesuits' 1767 expulsion accelerated processes already in motion for various generations. One of these was the strengthening of indigenous authority, or the political expansion that Spicer (1994: 56–66) describes. Other processes included increased spatial mobility and contact between different ethnic groups; the expansion of Sonora's non-Indian population; and the use of individual titling and parcelization as a means for occupying indigenous lands by Europeans, *criollos*, mestizos, and Indians themselves (Medina Bustos 2005).²⁸

These events, however, did not represent a catastrophe either for the settled mission Indians or for anyone else involved. Rather, they merely accentuated processes that had begun to crystallize around 1690 and that converged with the restructuring following the missionaries' removal.

**NEITHER SO BARBAROUS NOR HELPLESS:
TOWARDS A RE-EVALUATION OF THE ROLE
OF SONORAN INDIGENOUS SOCIETIES UNDER
SPANISH RULE**

In this section we explore the manner in which scholars have begun to re-examine the experience of indigenous peoples during Spanish rule of the space today known as Sonora. We base this discussion partly on our observation that indigenous groups located within the state of Occidente (1825–1830), and later Sonora (post 1831), appear in many archival sources along with their *gobernadores* and *capitanes generales* as participants in violent rebellions. They rebel either independently or in alliance with other factions of indigenous elites engaged in power

struggles. They likewise emerge in the archives directing petitions to non-Indian authorities at the local and national levels, requesting that the latter respect their lands and forms of self-government. During those years, then, Indian groups still maintained some semblance of communal land, indigenous government, and capacity for political action. This, however, runs contrary to those analyses that have been rendered “common knowledge”²⁹ in Sonoran historiography and that view the Indians as rather passive subjects to religious authority.³⁰

Recent years have seen the formulation of alternative interpretations based on fresh readings of previously analyzed documents, as well as research with new primary sources (including those of an archaeological nature). This has provided us with a better understanding of relations between indigenous peoples and Spanish *conquistadores*, as we have developed a stronger sense of the roles of indigenous groups themselves. As a result, we have begun to formulate new sets of questions.³¹

Daniel T. Reff (1991) initiated the debate with his re-evaluation of indigenous societies and the relationships they established with Jesuit missionaries. His point of departure is the idea that indigenous societies had already been severely affected by Old World diseases by the time of Europeans’ arrival in northwest Mexico at the end of the sixteenth century. The spread of disease, moreover, had already begun to stress indigenous political, economic, and social organization, as well as significantly challenging their basic understandings of the world. By the seventeenth century, then, missionaries’ accounts were merely describing what were actually remnants of earlier, more complex indigenous societies. According to sixteenth-century explorers, the latter could be likened to “kingdoms and cities” with large populations.

Despite the epidemics, however, Reff argues that these societies nonetheless maintained traces of their previous developments: the concentration of populations in the river basins, irrigated agriculture, caciques with authority over several towns, a certain level of social stratification, and frequent warfare over resources and goods. Reff argues that these elements have been overshadowed by the characterization of Sonoran agricultural societies at the moment of contact as numerous small, scattered nucleations of “*ranchería* peoples,” a term that Edward Spicer popularized (1981: 14).³² The “*ranchería*” characterization is in fact sustained in some observations recorded by missionaries, which suggest that Indians were organized within small, dispersed groups, with no fixed settlements, just semipermanent *rancherías*. The top of the politi-

cal hierarchy revolved largely around the most accomplished warriors, but their authority was thought to last only as long as the particular battle at hand.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that *ranchería* was a term taken by Jesuit authors such as Andrés Pérez de Ribas from Juan de Solórzano y Pereyra's work, *Política indiana*. It is associated with the usage of the word *barbarous* to describe the savage "other." Likewise, the *ranchería* settlement system became a justification for Hispanic spatial dominion through a program of "civilization." Its central goals were to "reduce" Indian populations into settlements wherein they would "learn to be men" as well as good Christians (Solórzano 1979 [1647]: 184–85). Rather than describing the actual state of things, then, the term *ranchería* actually informed the otherizing notion of Indian barbarity.

This does not mean, however, that we should overlook the fact that many of Sonora's indigenous groups followed a long-standing pattern of seasonal nomadism at the time of contact. Constant movement was the best way to take advantage of available resources. Instead, we are arguing in favor of a more complex understanding of nomadism and sedentarism as endpoints on a continuum in precontact indigenous life (rather than focusing exclusively on nomadism). Doing so, moreover, allows us to appreciate a set of historic events that today would otherwise appear rather unconvincing.

A Jesuit-centric view makes it difficult to understand processes such as the indigenous acceptance of congregation within towns under mission influence. Until recently, the most common explanations have tended to portray the Jesuits in a beneficent light, highlighting the ways new crops, livestock, and European technologies allowed Indians to sustain themselves in the *reducción* towns. As one missionary described it, "These Indians have taken in the gospel and the faith through the mouth, and it will be maintained through the mouth" (Faria 1981: 65).

Without trivializing the importance of increased food availability, we argue that the traditional point of view fails to recognize that indigenous groups enjoyed bountiful harvests on a fairly regular basis, utilizing the water from the rivers, as well as the forest products of the *monte* so demonized by the missionaries. The latter provided animal protein, medicinal and edible herbs, and other resources that complemented basic cultivars. Taking into consideration Indians' continued dependence upon wild harvests lends more complexity to our comprehension of the ways they adapted to the otherwise radical changes Jesuits introduced, such

as reduction from dispersed to concentrated settlements (Reff 1991: 12–13, 254–59, 266–67).

The Indians' acceptance of *reducción* may indeed have other explanations, such as Reff's (1991) argument that they probably also appreciated missionaries' repertoire of Catholic rituals to deal with disease. In this sense, we see that Indians sought out the fathers' counsel as if they were the new shamans, or *hechiceros* (a term Jesuits used to describe indigenous healers who had magico-religious knowledge). The priests, moreover, were seen as immune to disease and as having at their disposal some means to deal with it.

We should also recall that the European process of indigenous resettlement did not signify a radical break with the agricultural practices and relative sedentarism of the Cáhita, Pima, and Ópata. This point is easily lost if we fail to question the missionaries' portrayal of such groups as having lived in a state of barbarism in their dispersed *rancherías*, without either "law or king." The relative success of missionization with these groups—whose lifeways may indeed have lent themselves to a greater degree of settlement—contrasts sharply with its failure among Sonora's hunter-gatherers, such as the Seri.

In line with the Jesuit-centric vision, some have suggested that indigenous leaders functioned as "mere extensions" of missionary authority (Ortega Noriega 1993b: 69). Yet Pérez de Ribas often describes the existence of indigenous leaders who are differentiated from their followers by their manner of dress, blood ties, and the agricultural labor rendered to them by other Indians. These men truly showed their leadership at the very beginning of Jesuit rule when, after congregating together their people in villages, they oversaw the clearing of pathways for the fathers' arrival, and the building of ramadas for worship and quarters for the priests (Pérez de Ribas 1985).

Historiography has begun to re-evaluate the role of indigenous leadership during the early decades of Spanish conquest in Mesoamerica. Indian leaders, we now understand more clearly, put at Spaniards' disposition the organization of pre-Hispanic tribute. Without this support, the relatively small contingent of *conquistadores* would never have achieved such a level of domination so quickly (García Castro 2002: 141–43). Taking into consideration differences in scale, we therefore need to ask whether, in the space we now call Sonora, indigenous leaders did not make Hispanic dominion possible through such means as formal agreements (then referred to as *parlamentos*) and the establishment of mission

towns. Sources from the period of contact, such as Pérez de Ribas and Juan Mateo Mange (1985), highlight indigenous leaders' willingness to negotiate the parameters of Hispanic domination within Spanish juridical forms and practices. These include political recognition through the forum of the República de Indios, the indigenous counterpart of the Hispanic *cabildo*, made up of elected officials charged with dispensing justice in their pueblos, organizing collective labor, setting up the structure of forced labor through *repartimiento*, and recruiting militias to confront Indians who refused or rebelled outright against the process of *reducción*.

If the documentary record on the Repúblicas de Indios for this period remains spotty, that for missionaries is replete with sources in which they appear as the true focus of political power in mission towns. The missionary is the one with the authority to command and punish Indians and *gobernadores*. When Indians rise up against mission discipline, however, they do so as individuals with official positions—civil, military, or religious—within the República de Indios structure. This suggests that behind the figure of the powerful missionary that we so often see in the extant documents, there were Indians with posts of sufficient representative authority to lead rebellions. The latter, moreover, are also quite amply documented (González Rodríguez 1992; Navarro García 1966; Mirafuentes and Máynez 1999).

A final point here refers to the impact that the Jesuits' 1767 expulsion had on indigenous communities. If such communities were indeed made up of barbarous semi-nomads lacking a work ethic and having no notion of property, we would expect to find that, in the absence of their protectors, they would once again disperse, abandoning the *pueblos de indios*. In this sense, expulsion has been interpreted as a radical and negative transformation for the indigenous community, one that opened the door to their exploitation and dispossession at the hands of non-Indians (del Río 1993: 270).

Why, at that time, did Sonora's indigenous population fail to come to the aid of the Jesuits or protest their expulsion? Indeed, the latter remained imprisoned for a year in Guaymas, in deplorable circumstances. Why, moreover, do we see in the wake of the Jesuits' expulsion a period of relative peace within the groups of indigenous cultivators, a peace broken only when post-independence liberal governments begin an offensive against indigenous government and resources?

One answer might be that Indians failed to view the Jesuits' expulsion as an attack on their interests. On the contrary, it appears that they saw

the missionaries' absence as a way to reassert their preconquest freedoms, as there would have been no official power in the vicinity with the means to regulate their lives. On the other hand, the loss of outside control over Indians' resources seems to have been mediated and slow rather than abrupt and radical. Indeed, the loss of control had already begun under the Jesuits, as Pedro Tamarón y Romeral, the bishop of Durango, had reported in 1765 (Medina Bustos 2004).

Moreover, the Jesuits' absence did not signify a complete disappearance of the mission regime. Rather, under the aegis of the Franciscans of the Colegio de Querétaro, there was a new phase of expansion in the Pimería Alta. We see this in the construction of monumental churches compared with the rather plain architecture still in use in the region at the time. Yaqui pueblos, meanwhile, experienced an economic boom under the direction of the priest Joaquín Valdéz. *Repúblicas de Indios* maintained even greater importance in the organization of labor, worship, and the meting out of justice. During this period we also see greater indigenous participation in the election of *república* offices.³³

In summary, we are simply saying that we can and must move well beyond a portrayal of the Jesuits as the nearly sole historical protagonists during Sonora's colonial period. We need fresh interpretations of secondary and primary sources that far better illuminate the role of indigenous societies, interpretations that take as their point of departure the weight of Indians' actions in the colonial world. Such fresh approaches, in short, should abandon the Jesuit legacy of "paper Indians," of representing Sonora's native peoples as barbarous and incapable, as a people in need of civilization and protection (Rozat 1995: 163–80).

**THERE WERE MORE THAN MISSIONS IN SONORA:
A FRESH LOOK AT THE CIVIL AND PRESIDIAL
POPULATIONS IN COLONIAL SONORA**

Despite scholarly fascination with the mission regime, from the beginning of colonial settlement, alongside the missions arose a network of colonists and indigenous people subordinated to them. We argue for the importance of re-examining these comparatively neglected networks and actors, in order to develop new directions in historiography. In other words, we should work to revive interest in other actors—e.g., mining and military—that occupied this space alongside the missionaries, pay-

ing particular attention to the ways in which they exploited Indian labor and natural resources.³⁴

Civilian Settlements

The discovery of rich ore deposits in Parral, Chihuahua, in 1630, attracted waves of settlers and fueled the Spanish desire to discover new sources of mineral wealth. In 1640, Viceroy Cadereita and Don Pedro de Perea, captain-general of Sinaloa, reached an agreement for colonizing the territories north of the Río Yaqui. Under it Perea became the first *alcalde mayor* of the newly created province of Nueva Andalucía, which was completely independent of Sinaloa.

The move precipitated broader changes in the colonization process: the first nonreligious settlement in Sonora was founded; the ever-mobile northwestern border pushed farther northward, establishing what would later become Sonora's northern border; and the first vecinos arrived in the province. Perea brought with him his wife, María Ibarra, son Pedro, son-in-law Juan Munguía Villela, Miguel Casanova, Laureano Bascon de Predo, Diego Valenzuela, Francisco Izaguirre, Rodrigo de Aldana, Juan de Oliva, and the eight members of the Pérez Granillo family (Borrero Silva 2004: 52).

More settlers soon arrived, attracted by work in the rich mines and by the prospect of developing agriculture and ranching and exploiting the saltworks, forests, and rivers. They structured the region's economy, building a society quite distinct from—although in constant interaction with—that of the missions. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, moreover, saw the development of a number of *reales de minas*. In 1657, for example, rich veins of ore were discovered in what would become the Real de San Juan Bautista de Sonora and eventually the residence of the *alcalde mayor* of the province. Other important discoveries included Nacozari, and the mines at Río Chico, San Ildefonso de Ostimuri, and Baroyeca to the south. These settlements gave rise to a new *alcaldía mayor*, Ostimuri. Yet, the most important discovery was the real de minas de Nuestra Señora de la Concepción de los Álamos, giving rise to a stable settlement that lasted the entire eighteenth century.

By the mid-eighteenth century, Sonora's population was largely located in the *reales de minas* and in mission pueblos. There was a highly differentiated spatial structure: "on the one side [were] missions run by Jesuits and on the other the reales de minas, located in the valleys and

mountains where Spaniards and Indians, who reject[ed] the missions, mingle[d]—[this would] give rise to cultural frontiers still appreciable in the present context” (Almada 2000: 83).

Those who occupied government posts largely hailed from the population settled in these *reales de minas*. Vecinos became the *alcaldes mayores*, but only in an interim capacity. Given that in the majority of cases *alcaldes* came from outside the province and were named by the governor of Nueva Vizcaya, the Audiencia of Nueva Galicia, or the king, this designation of interim *alcades* reflects a dynamic of social groups with distinct interests in conflict with one another. Occupying the post of *alcalde mayor* entailed having in one’s hands the power to administer justice over not only Indians but Spaniards as well.

Recent research has also shown that within the province of Sonora two antagonistic social groups had emerged in the eighteenth century: Basques and non-Basques.³⁵ The Basques acted as a unified group for the first time in 1720, when they accused the captain of Fronteras, Gregorio Álvarez Tuñón, of failing to defend the province and expressed their opposition to the naming of José Joaquín Rivera as *alcalde mayor*.³⁶ The Basques believed their political and economic future would be jeopardized if the office of *alcalde mayor* were to be occupied by someone outside of their social group who was close to the captain of Fronteras, Don Gregorio Álvarez Tuñón, who had clearly demonstrated his economic and political power in the region.³⁷ Among the Basques a handful of leaders stood out: Juan Bautista de Anza (the elder); General Antonio Becerra Nieto, captain of the presidio at Janos (and father-in-law of Juan Bautista de Anza the younger); and the governor of Nueva Vizcaya, Francisco Barrutia.

In the absence of municipal councils, it became commonplace for vecinos living in *reales de minas* to meet on a regular basis. At such meetings vecinos made known their demands or obtained information on community matters. They were nearly always convened by *justicias reales*, such as an *alcalde mayor* or one of his lieutenants. *Vecinos principales* at times also convened these community gatherings. Amongst the many concerns brought up at these meetings, conflicts between Basques and non-Basques and opposition to the mission regime figured prominently.

A significant example of such conflict can be seen in both the public and secret meetings that Alcalde Mayor Rafael Pacheco Cevallos and Captain Álvarez Tuñón convened in 1722. The meetings allowed for the venting of a demand with deep roots in the province, a desire that

had been developing among Sonora's vecinos from the days of the first settlers moving into the *serrano* and valley regions: mission secularization (González Rodríguez 1977: 125–43). Aside from demonstrating the diverse array of authorities and jurisdictional conflicts in the region, these meetings allow us to identify how, amongst the many different civilian groups, two opposing camps emerged to dispute military and government offices. Such challenges became means of protecting economic interests.

Another occasion where we see Basques acting as a cohesive group is when they joined forces with the Jesuits to remove provincial governor don Manuel Bernal de Huidobro from power, in 1741. They went on to do everything within their power to convince authorities that the ideal person to occupy the vacated post would be don Agustín de Vildósola, from Vizcaya, a man close to the Jesuits and included in de Anza's circle (Borrero Silva 2004: 153–61).

These episodes illustrate how vecinos formed alliances around different political conflicts, economic interests, and religious devotions (it was common for Basques to belong to the *cofradía* of Nuestra Señora de Aranzazú). Likewise they demonstrate the ways in which these groups “presented their problems in meetings and signed documents known as *representaciones*” (Medina Bustos 2006).

The Presidios

One cannot understand Sonora without taking into account the institution that most embodies its frontier character and its history of violent conflict: the presidio and, by extension, its soldiers. From the moment when Spaniards first entered the northernmost reaches of New Spain, the life of the European population in these provinces took on a military character. Military activity played a prominent role in the everyday lives of settlers, and thus must not be approached as an isolated phenomenon.

The works of Bancroft and Bolton, in particular, portrayed the presidios as subordinated to missions; that is, they saw the presidio as a mechanism for protecting missionaries' achievements and interests (González de la Vara 2001: 74). We need to move beyond this vision, however, and recognize what the presidios meant to the province of Sonora beyond their roles—and accomplishments and deficiencies—as defensive entities. Presidial military companies enjoyed considerable influence, as presidios themselves became nucleated communities and markets for products from

nearby ranchos and missions. Ongoing warfare in the area that would become Sonora meant that defense of the province would become royal authorities' primary concern. As a result Pedro de Perea arrived with twenty-five soldiers, constituting the first flying company in the frontier area. Another military detail was located in El Fuerte de Montesclaros, in Sinaloa (today known as El Fuerte).

These were the first garrisons in northwest New Spain and formed part of the conquest phase of colonial settlement. These soldiers, in short, provided protection for both missionaries and settlers arriving in the region. In 1690, the company established itself at Fronteras, thus giving rise to the presidio of Santa Rosa de Corodéhuachi. The eighteenth century would see the establishment of additional presidios at strategic locations, some of which locals had requested. Others were built on the orders of crown authorities.

A second phase in the construction of military sites is associated with an upswing in violence in the province of Sonora, an increase which necessitated the intervention of royal authorities. In 1724, Brigadier Don Pedro de Rivera began his *visita* of northern New Spain's presidios. His primary objective was to analyze the state of internal and external defenses in the viceroyalty. With the promulgation of a *reglamento* published in 1729, Rivera set down the basic outlines of a serious military reorganization of all of northern New Spain's presidios.³⁸ The *reglamento* established that the presidio of Fronteras should focus on the pacification of the Seri, and that whenever the captain of Fronteras inspected the Pimería Alta, he was to do so with all manner of special attention to the Indians. Fronteras presidio was also charged (with the help of soldiers at Janos and El Paso) with forming a detachment for pursuing the Apache, who had taken the borderlands hostage. Juan Bautista de Anza had become the captain of Fronteras in 1729, following the political fall of Álvarez Tuñón in the wake of Rivera's *visita*. People said of Álvarez Tuñón that "he had been captain in name only, [as] never in the eighteen years of command did he ever reside in the presidio."³⁹

Towards the mid-eighteenth century, however, the presidios were failing to contain the indigenous rebellions, which were expanding in area, duration, and success, particularly since the 1725 Seri uprising. The Lower Pima rose up in 1737, followed by the great multiethnic rebellion of 1740, which threatened Spanish control in the region. The Seri rose up again in 1749, and in 1751 a generalized Upper Pima rebellion served to weaken Spanish defenses against the Apache.

The crown responded to the spike in violent rebellion by creating new presidios, one at San Pedro de la Conquista del Pitic in 1741 and another at Terrenate in 1742. Altar and Tubac were built in 1753, and in 1765 Spaniards founded the presidio of San Carlos de Buenavista. The increase in the number and importance of presidios is a clear indication of the rise in the level of violence, which continued apparently unabated despite the greater territorial coverage that larger numbers of presidios ought to have provided.

This array of presidios remained in place during the entire eighteenth century. Some were relocated, as was the presidio of Tubac, which was moved to Tucson in 1776. They were also reinforced with military detachments, such as the flying companies created by Visitador General Don José de Gálvez in 1767, and the *compañías de indios* in Bavispe in 1781 (made up of Ópatas), and in San Ignacio in 1783 (made up of Upper Pimas). Another company of Ópatas was formed in Bacoachi in 1784.

This ongoing condition of frontier warfare created a society that revolved around the needs of settlement and battle, one in which colonizers took on the responsibility—as either soldiers or militiamen—to defend their territory. And because of the immense weight of this task, the crown adopted a series of methods that it hoped would render the area more attractive to colonists. Among other things, these included tax exemptions and permission to carry arms for people (such as mulattoes, blacks, and mestizos) who ordinarily were barred from doing so. The crown gave primary importance to promoting civilian colonization surrounding the presidio as a way to combat rebellious Indians and provide the necessary goods to the troops. Presidio wages also enabled a dynamic economy that attracted civilian colonists, in particular artisans and merchants.

Reporting on the findings of a *visita* to Sonora's presidios in 1767, Nicolás Lafora mentioned that it was common to see a sizeable civilian population in presidios. In Fronteras, for example, aside from the fifty-one presidial officials, "there were 50 vecinos who could handle weapons." There were three hundred people living in Terrenate at the time, fifty-one of whom were soldiers, with another nineteen vecinos. In San Miguel de Horcasitas, aside from the soldiers there were sixty vecinos and a few Indian families (Lafora 1939: 121–38). To live in Sonora during this time thus meant surviving in a land of constant warfare against Indians who fought outside established European rules of combat, using surprise tactics and raids carried out by small bands. This also meant that local authorities had to organize colonists into militias to battle Indians.

Likewise, presidio captains were charged with the political governance of the civilian population settled within their jurisdiction.

All of this meant that political power could not be in the hands of just anyone. Those in control had to understand warfare and weaponry, and had to know how to defend their interests from raiding Indians. Skill in combat was highly prized, therefore. Participation in warfare, moreover, provided colonists with opportunities for joining presidial forces, as well as honor and the opportunity to occupy colonial office. In other words, combat was a means for social ascent.

It is, in summary, critically important for us to begin seeing Sonora in new ways. Phenomena such as indigenous resistance, for example, must be understood as a process within which social groups struggled over definitions, representations, and practices. None of these, of course, were ever static or completely stable. We need, in other words, to rethink the construction of northwest New Spain's borders, a complex space that continues to defy simple explanation.

BY WAY OF EPILOGUE

We are beginning to understand indigenous strategies for resistance to colonial and national subjugation. The power of the mission regime established here by the Society of Jesus has been idealized and overestimated. This viewpoint, derived from a rather mechanical adoption of official categories and from superficial analogies, is however finally showing signs of weakening; its capacity for explanation seems to have run its course. New explanations, founded in recent hermeneutical and anthropological trends, offer greater explanatory power, incorporating the "other" and giving greater visibility to Indians as protagonists of their own histories. This is still but one step in a long journey.

The notion of the missions as the founding agents of Sonora is a myth that is periodically revived. Given that Sonora lacks a great protagonist, a *conquistador* such as Durango's Francisco de Ibarra, it is understandable that some would promote the missions as part of a foundational myth. As discussed in this essay, the missions have been given an aura of utopia that lends itself to such myth making. That Sonorans indeed accept such a myth is a different matter. In any case, we welcome debate in this area, knowing full well that situating missions as the mythical founders of Sonora is to obscure what the sources and new interpreta-

tions have shown: that missionaries settled in Indian territory thanks in large measure to *negotiations* brokered between Indian leaders and the missionaries (Levaggi 2000: 579–90); and that the ideal of the missionary period as a “golden age” of peace and prosperity (Medina Bustos 2000: 30–34) utterly fails to consider the discontinuities of Spanish domination. It does not take into account the constant complaints against missionaries from Spaniards, *criollos*, and mestizos settled in the region. And finally, the golden-age myth precludes a much fuller understanding of the Indians’ multiple and varied expressions of rejection of missionization, and of the intrinsic limitations and contradictions of the mission regime overall. ❖

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NOTES

1. Grageda Bustamante (2003) has published a collection of works on the history of expulsions from the region. Also, our argument here is based on the notion that the centrality of language is one of the primary principles of hermeneutics: knowledge is mediated by language, interpretation is of critical importance, and the present conditions the study of the past. Indeed, there is no direct or true conduit to the past. What we have instead are representations of it that come to us through diverse chains of mediation. If language mediates everything, then the sources we turn to for interpreting history are themselves just interpretations. Traces of the past are thus expressed in particular plot lines. For the purposes of this essay, however, and with this reasoning in mind, we have adopted a stance of “selective relativity,” choosing from among diverse historical interpretations those that we consider the most plausible, including those of an extra-linguistic nature.

2. Earlier versions of this portion of the essay were presented at the Tercer foro de las misiones del noroeste de México. Origen y destino, Hermosillo, November 2005 and in the Seminario de instituciones novohispanas, at the Universidad de Guadalajara, 2005–2006.

3. We are aware of the difficulties involved in tracing indigenous peoples using non-Indian sources; that is, those that fall within a European worldview. See Griffen (2000: 249–73) and Cramausel (2000: 275–303).

4. For example, between 1748 and 1750 the Seri would so successfully resist attempts to “reduce” and Christianize them that, in missionaries’ opinion, military expeditions and deportation were required to bring them under the banner of Christianity. Between 1751 and 1771, Seri and Spaniards were engaged in all-out war. Hostilities broke out once again between 1777 and 1803. See Sheridan (1999).

5. See Spicer (1994: 152–55) for a periodization of the mission system’s deterioration. Sheridan (1988: 10) suggests that after the 1740 rebellion, guerrilla war devastated the province.

6. Navarro García (1984: 206). The period of intensification of nomadic Indian attacks proposed by Navarro García coincides with that of William L. Merrill (2000: 634–37), though Merrill takes a different tack.

7. Hausberger (1999: 51–55). Bannon (1974: 204) mentioned these difficulties, which he illustrated with the testimony of a Father Ortíz, who wrote in 1745 that “the priests who have learned a language from the Indians of these missions say that it is impossible to compose a catechism in their dialect, due to the lack of terms with which to explain the doctrine of the Faith, and the best-informed interpreters say the same thing.” For a discussion of the importance of the interpreters and their distortions in transmitting the missionaries’ message to the population, see Brown (1984: 101).

8. “Although I promised to be silent regarding the Fathers of this province, dead by the cruel violence of evil acts. . . . I only refer to the number of 6 subjects whose lives ended at the hands of such violence.” P. José Toral, Huépacá, Sonora, 31 de diciembre de 1743, in Burrus and Zubillaga (1982, p. 141); other testimonies on pp. 123 and 136. See also Reff (1991: 42, 140–41, 248, 260–64) and Hausberger (1993: 43).

9. Burrus and Zubillaga (1986: 93, 117–30). The quotation is taken from the report of Jesuit Juan Antonio Baltasar, visitor of missions, after an inspection he made of the region between November 1743 and December 1744. We do not know whether these lapses in discipline pushed apart missionaries and Indians or brought them together. It is likely that they fueled the complaints of *vecinos* and royal authorities against the missions.

10. According to Ortega Noriega (1985: 149), “By the mid-eighteenth century, the crisis of the mission system was patent . . . [and was] common among the three provinces, Sonora, Ostimuri, and Sinaloa.” This essay emphasizes multiethnic coalitions as primary evidence of the declining control of the mission regime over the Indian population.

11. Missionary Diego Pablo González was born in 1687, in Utrera, Spain, entered into the Society of Jesus in 1707, and professed in 1723 (see Burrus and Zubillaga 1982: 191).

12. This episode was recorded in the testimony of Pedro Matías de la Peña, given in Mexico City, September 14, 1742 (Mirafuentes Galván 1993: 127; see also Navarro García 1966: 24). For missionaries’ perceptions of using their

consecrated hands to demonstrate the use of agricultural tools such as the *coa* (digging stick) and *azada* (hoe) to instruct the Indians in “the culture of the fields” see Burrus and Zubillaga (1982: 183).

13. Literally, “people of reason” (usually peninsular Spaniards or *criollos*).

14. Regarding the affronts attributed to the missionaries Tello, Garrucho, and Ruhen, see Mirafuentes Galván (1992a: 167–69); on the large-scale escapes, see pp. 65–166; for the case of an Indian whom Tello sent to be whipped and placed in the stockade, and who did not survive the punishment, see Hausberger (1993: 44).

15. Relating to the massive desertion by Lower Pimas in Tecoripa who followed this prophet, during the Lenten and Easter season of 1737, see Hopkins Durazo (1991: 59–65). “In one hundred leagues . . . all of the Indians cut in the same direction” (Borrero Silva 2004: 138). With regard to Cerro Prieto, see Navarro García (1966: 18).

16. P. Lorenzo José García, Tórim, 26 de septiembre 1744, in Burrus and Zubillaga (1982: 87–88).

17. *Ibid.*, 89.

18. Father Provincial Juan Antonio Baltasar estimates the tribute at 40,000 pesos per year (see Ortega Noriega 1997: 41–54). “The Indians saw that the more work that was required of them, the fewer the benefits they received” (Ortega Noriega 1993a: 168).

19. Spicer, “Crecimiento político: una interpretación de los disturbios de 1740,” in *idem* 1994: 56–66.

20. Hu-DeHart (1990: 1:136–46) examines the long- and short-term causes of the rebellion, and gives greater explanatory weight to politics and economics. Mirafuentes Galván (1993: 117–43), on the other hand, examines the cultural and political dimensions.

21. The town of Buenavista, where in 1765 the presidio of San Carlos would be established, was a settlement to the east of the eight Yaqui towns. It now lies at the bottom of the Oviáchic Reservoir, over the old channel of the Río Yaqui. With respect to the fourteen demands that Muni, Bernabé, and his five Yaqui companions made to the viceroy, see Ortega Noriega (1993b: 45). According to Hu-DeHart (1995: 56), Muni’s notoriety suggests that, for the first time in the Jesuit and colonial history of this area, “there appeared a Yaqui voice that belonged to an articulate and independent leadership.”

22. A Jesuit report from 1753 shows that Governor Bernal de Huidobro “ensured that the Indians enjoyed the most freedom he could provide for them, and they readily removed themselves from the missionaries’ control; and they prepared for the trip to Mexico [City] . . . well instructed in what they had to say and do and with recommendations that would help them. They arrived in good time, the viceroy being Señor Vizarrón . . . and the denouncement of Huidobro against the Jesuits was well received; and with the rest of the ministers seeing the inclination of their superior, they approved Huidobro’s request, and the Indians were dispatched and rewarded and unnecessarily praised. . . . Muni, boastful with the honors received from the viceroy, expressed all the way back [to Sonora] his pride and his presumption of being the absolute ruler of those lands and Indians.” (Burrus and Zubillaga 1986: 332–34). The Jesuits’ attacks

on Huidobro after 1741 are understandable in the context of his demand for restitution to his post and back pay, which he kept alive until 1744. According to interim governor Vildósola, Huidobros's partisans attempted to create obstacles for his administration. It was not until 1760 that Huidobro obtained his back pay. (Ssee Borrero Silva (2004: 146–149; 162).

23. The execution was justified as a measure to dissuade another uprising (Burrus and Zubillaga 1986: 332–34). On the rounding up of Jesuits, see Montané (1999: 79–83).

24. For Indians' reactions and a sense of the broader context, see del Río (1993: 247–86).

25. See Navarro García (1992: 150–206) for the disputes in the sixteenth century. In 1706, Juan Mateo Mange, Sonora's *alcalde mayor*, called for the distribution of mission lands to Indians, mission secularization, and the secularization of the *repartimiento* system to enable the employment of the indigenous labor force in mines and ranches. The Jesuits' response was to press for his imprisonment in Parral. In 1722, the *vecinos* of San Juan Bautista de Sonora requested the Jesuits' complete withdrawal from Sonora, and the division of mission land and cattle amongst the Indians (see Spicer 1981: 128).

26. See Francisco Xavier de Faria, *Apologético defensorio y puntual manifiesto*, of 1657; Navarro García (1992: 153–56) argues that the situation that de Faria reveals prepares the ground for the “explosion” of 1672, a public dispute with the Jesuits struggling against attempts to open up the native labor force; see also “Texto del informe de José María Genovese al virrey, Marqués de Valero (Sonora 1722),” in which the Jesuit Genovese responds to the thirteen themes brought up by the *vecinos*, including among others, the missionaries' exile (in González Rodríguez 1977: 144–87).

27. The Sonora expedition (1767–1771) was a military force led by Colonel Domingo Elizondo, sent from Mexico City to occupy Cerro Prieto, the Seri and Pima stronghold (see Mirafuentes and Máynez 1999). The Sonoran missions provided five hundred head of cattle and 2,200 *quintales* (one *quintal* is approximately one hundred pounds) of wheat flour for the Sonora expedition (Hausberger 1993: 39).

28. For a sense of the changes after 1767, see Spicer (1994: 153). There is also testimony on the decline of mission towns, such as that of Fray Antonio de los Reyes, in 1785. Yaqui pueblos, on the other hand, were relatively more prosperous. In any case, Indian mobility was probably accentuated (Spicer 1994: 156–57; Radding 1997: 142–68).

29. By this we mean the fact that—within diverse publications, and lacking any analysis—one sees the same discussion over and over: the Jesuits gathered the scattered *ranchería* Indians into towns. In doing so (and through other means as well) they foisted upon the Indians a new identity and means of subsistence, and provided them protection against exploitation at the hands of secular Spaniards. Finally, at the moment of Jesuit expulsion in 1767, the indigenous community collapsed, now defenseless against the Spanish.

30. This vision has been promoted by influential U.S. borderlands historians such as Bolton (1991 [1917]); Bannon (1955); Polzer (1984 [1968]); and Hu-DeHart (1981). It is particularly manifest in the work of Ortega Noriega (1985,

1993), who portrays the actions of Jesuit missionaries as utterly dictating the history of colonial Sonora. On the other hand, Spicer (1962) was the earliest to situate Indians at the center of analysis, although, as we argue below, some of his conceptualizations fail to help us understand the role of Indian societies in the context of missionization and of Hispanicization more generally.

31. Here, works like those of Reff (1991); Radding (1995, 1997); Hernández Silva (1996); and Jackson (2005) stand out. Spicer's (1994) work on the Yaquis is important because, compared with his 1962 *Cycles of Conquest*, he interprets them as protagonists of their own history.

32. Spicer (1981: 9–15) characterized contact-era indigenous societies of the northwest in the following way: (1) *ranchería peoples*: the Cáhita, Ópata, and Pima; (2) *village peoples*: the New Mexico Pueblos; (3) *band people*: the Apache; and (4) *nonagricultural bands*: the Seri.

33. A complaint from “the descendants of the town of Aconchi,” lodged in 1797 against their *gobernador* for poor management of communal possessions, can be found in Archivo Histórico del Gobierno del Estado de Sonora (AHGES), Hermosillo, Fondo Ejecutivo, Ramo indios ópatas, Vol. 58, Exp. 1. Among the arguments they make, they accuse the government of not taking their wishes into consideration in the governor's election.

34. The study of colonial Sonora as an economic space reinforces the perception of an economy articulated between social groups, diverse settlements, and a variety of activities in support of mining extraction, the region's principal economic engine. This goes against more simplistic portrayals of a dual economy (see, among others, Salmerón 1990 and Hernández Silva 1995).

35. The Basque presence in the viceroyalty of New Spain has been covered in numerous studies. This is not the case for Sonora, however, despite the importance of this group that, on many occasions, left its mark on the political direction of the province and achieved a significant degree of economic power. Basques also achieved important military authority, holding official positions in presidios during the entire eighteenth century.

36. Archivo General de la Nación, AHH, Vol. 278, Exp. 11.

37. Gregorio Tuñón y Quirós was posted to the presidio of Santa Rosa de Corodéguaqui by virtue of the influence of his uncle, Jacinto de Fuensaldaña, and occupied various posts, such as presidio paymaster, lieutenant, and second in command of the company. He finally rose to presidio captain. Tuñón y Quirós, however, was more dedicated to outside activities than his official duties. He was the first to establish a flour mill in the region, which in turn allowed him to become the region's principal distributor of wheat flour and corn (Archivo General de Indias, Indiferente general, Leg. 1847).

38. Real Cédula, Sevilla, 30 julio 1731. AGN, Provincias Internas, Vol. 154, Exp. 6.

39. Examination against Tuñón y Quirós, 31 octubre 1726, AGN, Cárceles y presidios, Vol. 12, Exp. 2.

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