The Mexican Mission

In the sixty years following the Spanish conquest, indigenous communities in central Mexico suffered the equivalent of three Black Deaths, a demographic catastrophe that prompted them to rebuild under the aegis of Spanish missions. Where previous histories have framed this process as an epochal spiritual conversion, *The Mexican Mission* widens the lens to examine its political and economic history, revealing a worldly enterprise that both remade and colonized Mesoamerica. The mission exerted immense temporal power in struggles over indigenous jurisdictions, resources, and people. Competing communities adapted the mission to their own designs; most notably, they drafted labor to raise ostentatious monastery complexes in the midst of mass death. While the mission fostered indigenous recovery, it also grounded Spanish imperial authority in the legitimacy of local native rule. The Mexican mission became one of the most extensive in early modern history, with influences reverberating on Spanish frontiers from New Mexico to Mindanao.

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The Mexican Mission

Indigenous Reconstruction and Mendicant Enterprise in New Spain, 1521–1600

RYAN DOMINIC CREWE
University of Colorado, Denver
For my mother and father
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