

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



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-49254-6 — The Mexican Mission
Ryan Dominic Crewe
Frontmatter
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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108492546

DOI: 10.1017/9781108602310

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First published 2019

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Crewe, Ryan Dominic, 1977- author.

TITLE: The Mexican mission : indigenous reconstruction and mendicant enterprise in New Spain, 1521-1600 / Ryan Dominic Crewe, University of Colorado, Denver.

DESCRIPTION: 1 [edition]. | New York : Cambridge University Press, 2019. |

SERIES: Cambridge Latin American studies

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2018051120 | ISBN 9781108492546 (hardback) |

ISBN 9781108462921 (pbk.)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Mexico—History—Spanish colony, 1540-1810—Missions. | Mexico—History—Spanish colony, 1540-1810—Church history.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC BV2835.3 .C74 2019 | DDC 266/.27209031—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018051120>

ISBN 978-1-108-49254-6 Hardback

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Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-49254-6 — The Mexican Mission
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For my mother and father

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Acknowledgments

Some two decades ago, two professors at the University of California at Davis lent their support and encouragement to an undergraduate student who had just returned from study abroad in Spain with a head full of questions about Spanish colonization. I was fascinated by the transition from late-medieval medieval Spain to colonial expansion in the Americas. At Davis, Charles Walker and the late Arnold J. Bauer lent their unflagging support, hours of conversation that I remember fondly, and unswerving guidance as I made my way through a lengthy senior thesis. Books begin like this: not solely with the curiosity of the student, but with the generosity and listening skills of the mentor. Even after many twists and turns, this book is very much the result of those initial questions, those initial conversations over coffee. I shall be eternally grateful: Chuck, thank you for your guidance that long ago set me on this path. And to Arnie: *pardiez, el zagal por fin cumplió*.

At Yale University, I found the ideal environment for examining the history of New Spain in a global context. I shall forever be indebted to my advisor, Stuart B. Schwartz, for his guidance and inspiration over all these years – first in coursework, then the dissertation, and recently as I revised the dissertation and produced this book. Stuart brings a sense of wonder to the study of the past, as well as an unflagging insistence to never lose sight of the humanity of our historical subjects – lessons that guide me to this day. I would also like to thank Gilbert Joseph for his advice and encouragement over all these years. Their guidance and inspiration made all of this possible. I am also grateful to Rolena Adorno, whose courses introduced me to the works of sixteenth-century chroniclers and critics, and to Mary Miller and Jaime Lara, whose course in

sixteenth-century Mexican art and architecture planted the seeds that led me to explore the history of Mexican “fortress monasteries” in the archives and in the field.

Along the way, as this project proceeded through dissertation, postdoc, and production phases, several institutions provided generous support for research. I thank the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Program, the John F. Enders Foundation, the Andrew M. Mellon Foundation, the Yale Council for International and Area Studies, the Tinker Foundation, the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Yale University. I am also grateful to Daniel Chua at the University of Hong Kong’s Society of Scholars in the Humanities, whose support for my second project on the Pacific world also provided me with time – and a broader global perspective on the early modern period – to begin revising a dissertation that was all too unwieldy. Finally, the University of Colorado at Denver has also supported my research and writing. In particular, the Office of Research Services under the leadership of Bob Damrauer, the College of Letters and Science, and the Department of History have generously supported research trips and the final production funding for this book.

During the course of research, the staffs of several institutions provided the documents, assisted me in following enticing leads, ran the photocopies, and helped me to contemplate the mysteries of *tramitología*. In Spain, these include the Archivo Histórico Nacional, the Biblioteca Nacional de España, the Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia, the Archivo General de Simancas, and above all, the Archivo General de Indias. In the United States, the staffs of the Huntington Library and the Nettie Lee Benson Library at the University of Texas at Austin also provided their assistance. In Mexico, I would like to thank the staffs of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, the Biblioteca Nacional de México-Fondo Reservado, the Universidad Iberoamericana, the Archivo Provincial de la Orden Agustina de México, and the Instituto Mora. Most importantly, however, I appreciate the labors of the staff of the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City, especially in Galería Cuatro, who delivered the documentation that forms the core of this study.

I am also grateful to my colleagues, whose comments and suggestions have been extremely helpful: William Taylor, Jonathan Truitt, Ana Pulido Rull, Robert Ferry, Jorge Cañizares Esguerra, Joaquín Rivaya Martínez,

Acknowledgments

xvii

Kevin Gosner, Ignacio Martínez, Alex Hidalgo, and José Carlos de la Puente. At the Cambridge Latin American Series, I thank Kris Lane and Matthew Restall for all their support, which made publishing a seamless process. I am also grateful to Peter Anthamatten and Cody J. Peterson, who designed the maps for this book. My eternal thanks also go to my editor, Debbie Gershenowitz, who has helped me navigate this book from manuscript to publication with great patience and excellent advice. I also counted on the great help of the production team at Cambridge University Press, as well as Rudy León, who produced the index and provided great feedback, and Carolyn Holleyman, who copy-edited this book and was a tremendous help in the final phases.

Over the years friends have helped me, most of them unknowingly, through this seemingly unending process of research, writing, and revision. María Willstedt, since the beginnings of this project, has always listened, provided insight, and assisted with revisions. I will always be grateful to Louise Walker for her support and advice through the many stages of the graduate career – with great laughs and insights along the way. I also would like to thank Martin Nesvig, who has provided invaluable advice and support. In New Haven, tremendous intellects enlivened my first years there with debates about nearly everything: Manuella Meyer, David Assouline, Haralampos Stratigopoulos, Luís Martín Cabrera, Daniel Noemi, Tatiana Seijas, and Nefeli Misuraca. In Mexico, my fellow inmates at Lecumberri also provided great company and conversation as we navigated the legajos and defined our projects: José Barragán and Heather Peterson, who never resisted a call to head over to VIPs for coffee and some *molletes*. In Hong Kong, long conversations with Rajeev Balasubramanyam, Divya Ghelani, and Victor Zatsepine brought me great inspiration. In London, Father Vincent Crewe, my uncle, and the late Father David Roderick at Sunbury parish widened my perspectives and did so with only the finest bourdeaux. And at the University of Colorado, Denver, I have been lucky to have the good friendship and support of my colleagues. I am especially grateful to Gabriel Finkelstein, who read the entire manuscript multiple times and provided invaluable advice. Finally, I want to thank Carmela Romanov for accompanying me on this long journey, seeing one sixteenth-century church after another, supporting me through the endless hours of writing – above all, I thank her for her lessons on *lo que viene siendo México*.

My eternal gratitude will forever go to my family for their support for every single step, every milestone, of this seemingly-endless project: my

brothers John and Gregory, and my late grandmother, Clara Freschi. My parents, Dominic and Carolyn Crewe, are my greatest teachers. Through lessons and example they taught the importance of empathy and wonder, and a sense of social justice. And for as far back as my memory can take me, they have always inspired me to follow my curiosity.

For their love, I dedicate this book to them.

Ryan Dominic Crewe