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Jesuits at the Margins: Missions and Missionaries in the Marianas (1668–1769).

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Jesuits have always taken pride in working at the margins—geographically as well as theologically. In this particular case, one richly documented in Coello's volume, "margins" meant the outer limits of the Spanish Empire during the late seventeenth century. The Marianas mission undertaken by the Society was an outlier of the Philippines, already at the extreme eastern end of the Eurasian land mass, a double continent removed from Spain and an ocean away from New Spain and Spanish possessions in South America.

In this collection of previously published articles, Coello offers his readers an overview of the tumultuous colonial history of the Marianas, claimed for Spain in 1565 by Miguel López de Legazpi, who went on to plant the flag in the Philippines. Immediately thereafter the Philippines became a Spanish colony, but in the Marianas it took a century longer. It was not until the arrival of Fr. Diego Luis de San Vitores and his companion Jesuit missionaries in 1668 that there was any continuous Spanish presence in the island group. This book spans the century of Jesuit activity in the Marianas, with special attention to the early troubled years of the founding of the mission—a period that embraced the so-called "Spanish-Chamorro wars."

However noble the intentions of these early Jesuit missionaries, their apostolic adventure unleashed a series of misfortunes that even today is judged a calamity. The Mariana Islands suffered the same enormous population drop endured by Spain's New World colonies, losing ninety percent of its people over a period of forty years. The island chain also underwent a cultural upheaval that many local people still regard as an outright effacement of traditional culture. The people of the Marianas were reduced in two senses of that word—they declined in numbers to a fraction of their pre-contact population size, and they were relocated and concentrated in central villages to make evangelization easier. Meanwhile, life changed significantly for the survivors. Social and economic institutions were altered, often in ways designed to serve the interests of those early governors, who showed remarkable skills in capturing the entire annual Spanish subsidy for the colony so that it could be invested in the lucrative galleon trade (for handsome profits).

Coello guides us through these early events: the initial hostilities, the *pax hispanica* following the resettlement of local people on Guam and Rota at the turn of the eighteenth century, and the long uneventful years until the removal of Jesuits by order of the crown in 1769. Arranged in chronological order, these

essays constitute a history of Jesuit missionary work in the Marianas, although each of the essays carries its own global theme in its title. The author's own tropes steer us along the historical trails. "The Blood of Martyrs" shed during the early years of the mission was avenged, in the cosmic battle between good and evil, by the "Soldiers of Gideon." Yet, the titles themselves suggest the ambiguities that mark this history. The likelihood of martyrdom might have had a strong appeal in the recruitment of Jesuit volunteers from all over Europe, but those who were chosen could never have successfully relayed the message of the gospel without less self-absorbed motives and survival skills. The troops brought in to protect the mission might have been termed "the soldiers of Gideon," but the Jesuit missionaries themselves regarded them as the "scum of the earth" and "Spanish soldiers in nothing but name." Things are never simply what they are represented to be, as the author shows repeatedly in the course of this volume.

Yet, the labels afford their own revelations. In a chapter entitled "Transoceanic Bigamists," Coello offers a close look at the people who constituted the greatest share of the Spanish colonial presence through an unusual lens: a few examples of men who left their families in Mexico or the Philippines to serve abroad in the Marianas. That these men may have begun second families in the Marianas is less enlightening than the chain of events that led to their departure from home—the first marriage followed by the losing struggle to support a family, the accumulated gambling debts or criminal record in an effort to get the money needed, the rush to get out of town and the readiness to accept shipboard offers of a position in the garrison of the Marianas. Now we can understand how young men might be induced to sail half a world away to begin life anew in an isolated colony.

We could raise questions about the missionaries themselves and their own dispositions, for that matter. Did Jesuits show the cultural respect they might have? Did they exhibit any real confidence that the religion they preached could be integrated into island ways? Probably not, although their fellow Jesuits in other parts of Asia, notably China and Japan, had become pacesetters in this respect. Possibly, as the author suggests (339), Jesuits working in the Marianas regarded the people there as "politically or morally inferior" to them. Then, too, their attitude toward the use of force in the mission vacillated over the early years of violent outbreaks, although even at the worst of times they retained something of the pacifism of their pioneer, Diego Luis de San Vitores.

The story of the early mission in the Marianas that Coello presents is replete with ironies. San Vitores may have brought the gospel to enrich, spiritually and otherwise, his beloved island people, but the outcome was a severe loss of life and impoverishment. The union of church and state under the *patronato*

system might have been designed in part to guard against the power of pillaging individuals, but the Marianas was burdened by the greed of several of its governors. Still, the history is heroic in its own right, if only for what missionaries hoped to achieve on behalf of a people living on the edge of an empire. Coello's achievement here is in offering his readers a view of a little known but fascinating piece of the Spanish empire already in decline.

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