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Hackel: Children of Coyote, Missionaries of Saint Francis: Indian-Spanish Relations in Colonial California, 1769-1850

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Author

Milliken, Randall

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REVIEWS

Children of Coyote, Missionaries of Saint Francis: Indian-Spanish Relations in Colonial California, 1769–1850

Steven Hackel

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005
476 pp., 33 ill., 7 figs., 38 tables, 4 maps, appendices,
glossary, chronology, notes, index; \$59.95 (cloth),
\$22.50 (paper).

Reviewed by Randall Milliken

305 E. 14 St., Davis, CA 95616

Steven Hackel, the pioneer developer of the on-line Early California Population Project (ECP) database of California's Franciscan mission records, has authored an important new book on Indian-Mission relationships, *Children of Coyote, Missionaries of Saint Francis*. The book is Hackel's first book-length contribution to his other pioneering effort, that of documenting the social history of Mission Indian-Mexican relations in west-central California from the late eighteenth century through the mid-nineteenth century. Much of the book's content is reminiscent of Sherburne Cook's mid-twentieth century work, which took a thematic approach to conflict and accommodation between Indians and Hispanics. But where Cook relied heavily on aggregated population data from the Franciscan registers of baptism, marriage, burial, and confirmation, Hackel extracts information about individuals and multi-generational families (Indian and Hispanic) out of those records, by the application of "family reconstitution" social history techniques.

The opening two chapters provide concise, accurate contextual material about aboriginal California Indian society and Spanish expansion into Alta California. Chapter 3 describes the terrible demographic collapse of the Indian people at and near the missions, using aggregated Mission San Carlos Borromeo vital records, much as Sherburne Cook had done a generation earlier, but with some newer techniques drawn from historical demography and with excellent footnote citations to recent studies in epidemiology. Another aspect of history that Hackel illuminates in Chapter 3, but which is absent from the works

of Cook, is a snapshot into the frustration and sadness about the high mission death rates found in the writings of one Franciscan father president, Mariano Payeras.

Chapters 4 through 8 deal with themes involving religion, marriage and sexuality, social control, labor, and resistance. In Chapter 4, Hackel explains the outreach techniques of the Franciscans and speculates about aspects of native religion that may have helped the Europeans succeed. He also provides concrete data that indicate the mixed nature of that Franciscan success, with a 50% participation in communion for long-time Christian Indians, but also evidence from the letters of the priests that Christian commitment ebbed for many long-missionized Indians. In Chapter 6, which examines marriage and sexuality, he mixes evidence for a general policy of social control with details about specific San Juan Capistrano Indians involved in an 1811 court case, details about family relationships and personal history that are clearly stated in the mission documents, but which are absent from the court records. Chapters 7 and 8 continue to deal with themes that were handled well by Cook, but in each case new material about specific Indian families is brought into the picture to personalize this difficult period in California history.

By far the book's most important new contribution to a broader understanding of social and economic interactions among key factions of society in Mexican California—Mission Indians, landless Mexicans, and landed Mexicans—comes in the concluding Chapter 9's portrayal of Indian family experiences during the era of mission secularization (a period which began with false starts in the mid-1820s era of Governor Echeandía and that was still winding up in the early 1840s). Hackel uses land case documents, family letters, and mission records to reconstruct the story of the remarkable California Indian woman Cristina Salgado and her land battles with the duplicitous *Californio* José Antonio Romero. Hackel contrasts the rather exceptional way that Salgado gained and lost land during the mid-19th century with the more typical paths by which a few other Indians obtained lands in post-mission times. But he does not forget to place those stories within the larger theme of the complete land loss suffered by most Mission Indians.