

Burckhalter, David. *Baja California Missions: In the Footsteps of the Padres*. Foreword Bernard L. Fontana. Photographs David Burckhalter and Mina Sedgwick. Southwest Center Series, ed. Joseph C. Wilder. Tucson AZ: Arizona State University Press, 2013. Pp. xviii + 162 + 113 illustrations. \$24.95 paper.

The Northwestern border of the Spanish colonization of America was characterized during the Sixteenth Century by a wide unexplored territory and the lack of density of the American Native nomads, which diffculted the establishment of former new towns from where to organize the conquest and domination of Nueva España. Baja California was the extreme peripheral borderland far from the colonial centers of power, is nevertheless interesting for the model of settlement implemented there beginning in the Seventeenth Century by the Jesuits in their attempt to evangelize and civilize local inhabitants.. Soon the Jesuits' activities were complemented with political functions, and their missions came to act as territorial control posts for the Spanish Crown. The extreme climatic and environmental conditions of the region, together with the profound ignorance of the geographical configuration of the peninsula, in fact defined the missions as the main venues for the Spanish colonial understanding of the territory. They were not only places to promote spiritual conquest, but also defensive outposts along the royal route from the mineral mines to the administrative centers, part of a larger network developed to extend the frontiers of New Spain. A great deal of research exists on the role of the Catholic Church in the colonization of the continent, including this region. A new publication about these mission settlements is, therefore, always anticipated with interest for the new focus it can offer.

David Burckhalter's *Baja California Missions: In the Footsteps of the Padres* is a book of photographs about the eight surviving stone missions built in the Peninsula in the Eighteenth Century. It offers a very interesting point of view for the interpretation of these buildings for several reasons. First, it portrays them not as isolated structures, but as settlements within their involving landscapes, something really important in order to understand the significance of these outposts for Baja California. The specific pressures and tensions that configured the Jesuits' occupation need to be analyzed from an integral perspective to understand them correctly, something realized from the first in the treatment of each of the missions in this book. In addition, the volume not only includes photographs of the architecture of the buildings but also of their details, sculptures, and paintings. It is really important to present these buildings together with their decorative artwork—despite the fact that the latter is less opulent than that found in other, more central locations—as these works of art were complementary to the architecture of the missions in the effort to teach Christianity and to civilize the natives.

This wholistic approach to the buildings and their contents and ornaments is probably the most important aspect of the book, but *Baja California Missions* also includes much more information about this part of Mexico and its historical fate. First of all, the book gives readers the basic facts on how to reach the individual missions, basic information about the places where they are located and the day of the year when popular celebrations occur, making it a perfect companion for a journey to Baja California. But it is not only a tourist guide. A map with the location of all the missions and outposts built in the peninsula, many of them in ruins due to the fragility to erosion of their rammed-earth construction, help readers to understand the history and pattern of colonial occupation in this region. Together with the descriptions, this also suggests why some missions and

settlements are more historically relevant to the overall story being told here than others. For each of the missions presented in the book there is also a ground plan, offering more details for their understanding from a typological point of view.

While *Baja California Missions* is far from being a definitive study of the subject, its text presents details of the history of the discovery of the peninsula, the evolution of the Jesuits' colonization/evangelizing effort, and specific issues that they had to face. Similarly, the images found in this book will also help anyone studying the history of the colonization of northern New Spain. A great introduction to the ways in which Catholic religious orders had to adapt their evangelical plans in the face of the pressures of political, military, and economic reality it will also complement other more detailed investigations, which lack the integrated, graphic vision of Burckhalter's work.

Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura,

Guido Cimadomo

Universidad de Málaga, Spain