

A Brief History of the Jesuit Missions of Chiquitos

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Introduction

This article and its companion, “The Long Silence: The Jesuit Missions of Chiquitos after the *Extrañamiento*”, are two halves of a whole, written to remedy the fact that no accurate historical overview of the twelve Jesuit missions of Chiquitos or their subsequent status as important settlements in the Chiquitania¹ exists in English.²

These two accounts do not offer a comprehensive history of the individual missions themselves (a topic that will form the subject of a third and final article in this series), so much as attempt to dispel common misunderstandings, by providing this accurate historical overview. It is drawn wherever possible from primary sources, *i.e.*, the writings of the Jesuits and their contemporaries during the colonial and Independence periods.

This article covers the years from 1572 - the year of the Jesuits’ arrival in Bolivia³ - to 1767 - the year of their expulsion⁴. “The Long Silence: The Jesuit Missions of Chiquitos after the *Extrañamiento*” - the second article - treats the history of the region from years following that event to the present day.

Whilst no history in English has appeared, there are numerous accounts in Spanish, most of which rely primarily upon two secondary sources written much later in the nineteenth century, long after the Jesuits had left and the settlements had been fundamentally altered: D’Orbigny’s recollections of his travels in the region between 1831 and 1833⁵, and René-Moreno’s writings, collected in 1888 as *Catálogo del Archivo de Mojos y Chiquitos*.⁶

¹ The Chiquitania technically includes the six eastern provinces of Santa Cruz Department: Guayaros; Ñuflo de Chávez; [José Miguel de] Velasco; Ángel Sandoval; Germán Busch; and Chiquitos, although Guayaros is often excluded. These provinces originally were part of a much larger area known as Chiquitos until 1880. The nine extant Jesuit missions of Chiquitos are found in all but Guayaros (which was considered a separate mission field – often referred to as Mojos or Moxos) and Germán Busch Provinces. For these articles, the terms Chiquitania and Chiquitos are interchangeable when employed in a geographical context.

² An English-language translation of Alcides Parejas’ *Chiquitos: un paseo por su historia* (Santa Cruz: APAC Fondo Editorial, 2004) exists, although this work is no more than a brief overview of the region.

³ Bolivia was known as Upper Peru until its independence on 6 September 1825.

⁴ The royal decree expelling the Jesuits from the Chiquitania and all Spanish possessions in the New World, proclaimed by King Carlos III on 27 February 1767.

⁵ First published as *Voyage dans l’Amerique Meridionale (le Brasil, la Republique Orientale de l’Uruguay, la Republique Argentine, la Patagonie, la Republique du Chili, la Republique de Bolivia, la Republique du Perou)*, *execute pendant les annees 1826, 1827, 1828, 1829, 1830, 1831, 1832 et 1833*. Paris: Chez Pitois-Levrault et Cie., 1835–1847, 9 vols. The 4-volume 1945 edition published by Editorial Futuro in Buenos Aires is the latest unabridged version.

⁶ Conceived originally as a catalogue of René-Moreno’s historical essays and papers, *Catálogo del Archivo de Mojos y Chiquitos* (Santiago: Imprenta Gutenberg, 1888) was published at the expense of the Bolivian government. Intended as a tribute to its author, it - along with D’Orbigny’s earlier work - became a *de rigueur* source for future historians. Recent scholarship and the discovery of new primary-source accounts

Mid- to late twentieth-century assessments by Molina, Parejas, and others followed, and were gathered together and edited by Pedro Querejazu to form the massive *Las Misiones Jesuíticas de Chiquitos*⁷, universally considered the most exhaustive treatment. These works deserve credit for shedding a more accurate light on this often misunderstood – and much mythologised – era. However, increased accessibility of primary resources and especially the insistence of later historians such as García, Menacho, Tomichá, and Tonelli (the first two Jesuits) upon using primary sources whenever possible,⁸ has greatly expanded our knowledge and understanding of these twelve settlements and Chiquitos as a whole during the Jesuit era and beyond.⁹

There is now heightened interest in the Chiquitos missions (more often referred to by their Spanish name, *reducciones*¹⁰) for several reasons. Chief amongst these are the

have shown neither work to be free from error. Of the two, D'Orbigny's writings are generally considered more historically reliable and less prone to speculation.

⁷ Pedro Querejazu, ed., *Las Misiones Jesuíticas de Chiquitos* (La Paz: Fundación BHN, 1995).

⁸ Of the primary sources that have been extensively researched, the most useful is the monumental *Historia general de la Compañía de Jesús en la Provincia del Perú: Crónica anónima de 1600 que trata del establecimiento y misiones de la Compañía de Jesús en los países de habla española en la América meridional*, vol. II, edited by Francisco Mateos (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1944). Also of importance is the unedited archive of correspondence from the Jesuits of Paraguay from the years 1690-1718. Collectively known as “Cartas a los Provinciales de la Provincia del Paraguay 1690-1718,” these manuscripts are housed in the Jesuit Archives of Argentina in Buenos Aires, which also contain the invaluable annals of the Paraguay Province of the Company of Jesus, covering the years 1689-1762. The German edition of Fr. Julián Knogler's “Inhalt einer Beschreibung der Missionen deren Chiquiten,” *Archivum Historicum Societatis Jesu*, 39/78 (Rome: Company of Jesus, 1970) is indispensable, as is his account “Relato sobre el país y la nación de los Chiquitos en las Indias Occidentales o América del Sud y en la misiones en su territorio,” for which, see Werner Hoffman, *Las misiones jesuíticas entre los chiquitanos* (Buenos Aires: Fundación para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura, 1979). Fr. Juan de Montenegro's *Breve noticia de las misiones, peregrinaciones apostólicas, trabajos, sudor, y sangre vertida, en obsequio de la fe, de el venerable padre Agustín Castañares, de la Compañía de Jesús, insigne misionero de la provincia del Paraguay, en las misiones de Chiquitos, Zamucos, y ultimamente en la misión de los infieles Mataguayos*. (Madrid: Manuel Fernández, Impresor del Supremo Consejo de la Inquisición, de la Reverenda Cámara Apostólica, y del Convento de las Señoras de la Encarnación, en la Caba Baxa, 1746) and Fr. Juan Patricio Fernández's *Relación historial de las misiones de los indios, que llaman chiquitos, que están a cargo de los padres de la Compañía de Jesús de la provincia del Paraguay* (Madrid: Manuel Fernández, Impresor de Libros, 1726) are also valuable. There are other primary sources as yet unexamined, the majority of which are archived in Cochabamba, Sucre, and Tarija (in Bolivia); Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and Tucumán (in Argentina); Asunción (Paraguay); Madrid; and Rome.

⁹ See, for example, José María García, “Los jesuitas en Santa Cruz de la Sierra hasta los inicios de las reducciones de Moxos y Chiquitos: Posibilidades y limitaciones de la tarea misional”, in *Quinto Centenario* 14 (Madrid: 1988, pp. 73-92); Fr. Antonio Menacho, *Fundación de las Reducciones Chiquitos* (Santa Cruz: Verbo Divina, 1987) and *Por Tierras de Chiquitos* (San Xavier: Vicario Apostólico de Ñuflo de Chávez, 1991); Fr. Roberto Tomichá, *La Primera Evangelización en las Reducciones de Chiquitos: Protagonistas y Metodología Misional* (Cochabamba: Editorial Verbo Divino, 2002) and *La Iglesia en Santa Cruz* (Cochabamba: Editorial Verbo Divino, 2005); Oscar Tonelli, *Reseña histórica social y económica de la Chiquitania* (Santa Cruz: Editorial El País, 2004). Mariano Gumucio's *Las Misiones Jesuíticas de Moxos y Chiquitos: Una Utopía Cristiana en el Oriente Boliviano*, 3rd ed., (La Paz: Lewylibros, 2003), which covers the Moxos missions as well as those of the Chiquitos, also merits mention, as do the works of Guillermo Furlong, S.J.

¹⁰ The Jesuits were not the first to employ the *reducción* method, but their genius led to its perfection. The first in the New World was established by the Franciscan friar Bartolomé de las Casas in Cumaná,

unique musical and architectural legacies of these communities, forged by more than seven decades of cultural collaboration between the Jesuits and the indigenous peoples who lived in the *reducciones*. These two artistic heritages are well recognized today. The first is most prominently displayed in the popular biennial international music festival “Misiones de Chiquitos”¹¹; the second was first recognized when six former missions were named World Heritage Sites by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1990.¹²

The Jesuit missions of Chiquitos also hold promising research in nascent fields of scholarly activity, including acculturation and adaptation studies, Jesuit history and the Jesuit *modus operandi*, and missiology. Finally, the combined efforts of the departmental government of Santa Cruz (where all of these towns are located) and several cultural organizations – spearheaded by the Santa Cruz-based Asociación Pro Arte y Cultura (APAC) and culminating in 2006’s “Lanzamiento Mundial del Destino Turístico ‘Chiquitos’, Misiones Jesuíticas de Bolivia”¹³ showcasing of the Chiquitos missions as examples of cultural tourism - have raised interest in and awareness of the region and its unique patrimony.

Challenges to Historical Research

However, lifting the carefully constructed veil of tourist-centric reinterpretation to assess the Jesuit past of Chiquitos has proven difficult. Two challenges confront historians and others attempting to access information on this period, much less utilize it as a foundation for research. In spite of the genuine singularity and undoubted richness of the cultural patrimony of these settlements (and of the Chiquitania as a whole), not only is there a paucity of reliable information in English, what does exist in *any* language often is not anchored in primary sources and is frequently riddled with errors. These mistakes are largely the result of later historians citing earlier works without verifying their accuracy, and injudiciously extrapolating conclusions from them. Scholars seeking to glean accurate information or buttress theories must tread carefully when citing previous research on the Jesuit missions of Chiquitos.

Examples of compounded mistakes abound; two will suffice here. Thanks to the carrying-forward of erroneous assumptions made by earlier writers who either could not or did not care to verify their sources, the general perception regarding these ex *reducciones* is that there were anywhere from six to ten founded, and that they remain as intact continuations – rather than restored representations - of their Jesuit past. Neither assumption is correct.

Venezuela between 1515-22. His idea was adopted and perfected by the Jesuits when they were given possession of the *doctrina* (an earlier name for *reducción*) of Juli in 1576 by order of the viceroy of Peru, Francisco de Toledo.

¹¹ For information on these festivals, sponsored by Asociación Pro Arte y Cultura (APAC), see <http://www.festivalesapac.com>.

¹² See “United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage: Report of the World Heritage Committee, Fourteenth Session, Banff, Alberta, Canada, 7-12 December 1990” (the entire document is available as a downloadable .pdf file at <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/repcom90.htm#529>).

¹³ See <http://www.santacruz.gov.bo/chiquitos/LanzamientoChiquitos.asp>.

There were no less than twelve *reducciones* formally established throughout the Chiquitania between 1691 and 1767. Of these, six (San Xavier, San Rafael de Velasco, San José de Chiquitos, Concepción, San Miguel de Velasco, and Santa Ana de Velasco)¹⁴ have been designated World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. This accounts for why some reports cite only six *reducciones*. A seventh – San Ignacio de Velasco – whilst not a World Heritage Site (its mission complex is a reconstruction, not a restoration, and therefore did not satisfy UNESCO’s inclusion criteria) is nonetheless the largest settlement in the Chiquitania and reasonably well known; including it makes the tally seven. The two most remote *reducciones*, Santiago de Chiquitos and Santo Corazón, are occasionally included, although often overlooked. A few historians also include the abandoned San Juan Bautista, bringing the total to ten if all of the above settlements are included.

Yet there are two others (San Ignacio de Boococas and San Ignacio de Zamucos) that are almost never mentioned. (The ephemeral Nuestra Señora del Buen Consejo, claimed by Tonelli as a mission, was merely provisionally settled for a few months.¹⁵) All twelve were *reducciones* in their own right, and played important roles in the shaping of the history of the Chiquitania.

But perhaps the most egregious error is the misunderstanding – actively promoted by the Bolivian government and many tourism agencies¹⁶ – that these former missions, now secularized towns, are lineal descendants in every way to their missionary antecedents. For one thing, the vast majority of people living in them today are not descendants of the indigenous peoples who lived in the *reducciones*. They are descendants of *cruceños* who migrated to these towns after the *extrañamiento* (expulsion) of the Jesuits in 1767. The local peoples either returned to the forest after the Jesuits’ expulsion or were driven from their homes by arriving settlers from Santa Cruz. By 1851, the final vestiges of the *reducción* system had vanished throughout the Chiquitania,¹⁷ and with them, the remnants of these towns’ former inhabitants. Most indigenous groups – apart from a few who married into settler families – reside today, greatly marginalized, in semi-autonomous hamlets throughout the Chiquitania known as *comunidades*.¹⁸

One can take this second misunderstanding much further, especially when considering the cultural legacy of the Chiquitos missions. This same misassumption of unbroken continuity is nowhere more evident than in efforts made to portray their churches (*templos*) as the original buildings erected centuries ago. Yet all of the original churches

¹⁴ Throughout this article, whenever two or more *reducciones* are listed in a group, they are given in chronological order by date of founding.

¹⁵ See http://www.chiquitania.com/Chiquitania/mission_pantanal_nsdhc.html.

¹⁶ See, for example, the Cámara de Industria, Comercio, Servicios y Turismo de Santa Cruz’s 2005 study “Diagnóstico Misiones Jesuíticas de Chiquitos: ‘Patrimonio de la Humanidad’” (<http://www.cainco.org.bo/WebCDCSCZ/Documentos/Diagnostico%20borrador%20Misiones%20Jesuiticas.pdf>).

¹⁷ Querejazu, *op. cit.*, p. 387, 390.

¹⁸ Reinaldo Brumberger, OFM, “El Alma Chiquitania: Historia del Pueblo Chiquitano” (Concepción: Vicariato Apostólico de Ñuflo de Chávez, 1991).

(of which only parts of six remain) have been heavily restored. Magnificent as they are, only one – that of Santa Ana de Velasco – can be termed original.

Issues of architectural integrity aside, the art and furnishings of the *templos* are also of a much later period.¹⁹ These buildings were handed over to the secular clergy of the Diocese of Santa Cruz in 1767, and again in 1931 to Franciscan missionaries. Both groups made additions and subtractions, leaving little of the original Jesuit buildings and appurtenances. Under the restoration efforts of the late Hans Roth, *et al.* between 1972-1999 – both Herculean and meticulous - further changes were made. On the one hand, Roth's work strove valiantly to establish aesthetic and architectural fidelity to the Jesuit originals, but the result in many cases is interpretative. In some (*e.g.*, San Rafael de Velasco), the façades and exterior in general are very likely nearly identical to what one would have seen in the Jesuit era; in others (*e.g.*, Concepción) this is decidedly not so. We are left with not a true Jesuit 17th or 18th Century mission church, but an educated guess.²⁰

Many glaring lacunas also can be cited. Even as regards the well-documented correspondence between the Jesuit missionaries, almost no research has been dedicated to the interaction between the Jesuits in Chiquitos and their brethren in Moxos and Guarayos. Likewise, communication between Jesuits in Chiquitos and those in Paraguay, commonly assumed to be voluminous, was anything but that. In fact, looking for a presumed link between the missions in Chiquitos and those in Paraguay, although a logical supposition, is a dead end.²¹

The point again is that scholars must be extremely careful when arriving at conclusions based upon material that has been handed down from previous researchers, and even more so when making inferences of their own. As more primary source evidence comes to light, inaccuracies will be corrected and unsubstantiated claims will fall by the wayside. Until then, however, historical research on Chiquitos is a fragmented endeavor, and very much a question of checking multiple sources, generally geographically distant from each other.²²

The First Jesuits in Bolivia

The first Jesuit missionaries arrived in what is now Bolivia in 1572, having moved eastward from the Viceroyalty of Peru, which had been established as a province in 1568.

¹⁹ See Eckart Kühne, *Evolución y percepción de las iglesias misionales del Oriente Boliviano* (Zürich: Federal Technical University ETH, 2004); also "Borrador para una Guía de las Iglesias de Chiquitos" (unpub.).

²⁰ Querejazu, *op. cit.*, pp. 473-8. A number of historians specializing in mission art (*e.g.*, Gauvin A. Bailey, Sabine MacCormack) have noted that the art of these missions is now more polyglot than "Mestizo Baroque" (a term often used to identify Jesuit mission art of the Colonial Era in Latin America) even after the restorations by Roth, et al.

²¹ See Richard Gott's *Land without Evil: Utopian Journeys Across the South American Watershed* (Avon, UK: The Bath Press, 1993), one of the premises of which is that every attempted linkage between the two regions failed. This is not true in a technical sense, but his point is that the missions of Chiquitos and those of Paraguay never established direct contact between themselves.

²² See note 8 above.

They were preceded by other orders, including the Augustinians, Dominicans, Franciscans, and Mercedarians. The Jesuits had petitioned the Spanish Crown for permission to enter its holdings in the New World for three decades before Phillip II granted approval in 1566. (The Portuguese king, John III, had given them leave to enter Brazil in 1549.) For the first century or so of their presence in Bolivia, the Jesuits invariably accompanied the Spanish military and were residents of its scattered garrisons; they were not authorized to establish frontier settlements without approval of the civil authorities.

These early missionaries were almost exclusively from Spain. For the most part, they attended to the spiritual needs of the colonists and local indigenous peoples in the arid *altiplano*, around Lake Titicaca and in the cities of La Paz, Potosí, and La Plata (present-day Sucre). They also established chapter houses, churches, and schools, the earliest being that of La Paz, built in 1572.

The *Doctrina* of Juli

Their most important early foundation was the *doctrina*²³ of Juli, which had been established by the Dominicans in 1547²⁴ on the shores of Lake Titicaca. Its administrative and organizational structure under the Jesuits became the model for the Guaraní *reducciones* in Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil²⁵, and later, those of the Moxos and Chiquitos in Bolivia.

The Jesuits, through the Order's provincial general for the newly established Province of Peru, Fr. José de Acosta, were given spiritual control (and for the most part, temporal as well) over Juli in 1577. This was much against the wishes of the Dominicans (who had been forced to relinquish control five years earlier) but under express order of Viceroy Francisco de Toledo.²⁶ The Jesuits were very wary of accepting parishes, seeing themselves at the time as an exclusively missionary order.

Juli as a town was not a newly founded settlement: it was an established Aymara village long before the Spanish arrived. As a *doctrina*, however, it had been only recently evangelized. In assuming control, the Jesuits did not attempt to modify the theological content of their predecessors, only the way it was manifested in a social context on a daily basis. The results were impressive. Within a few years, Juli boasted some 15,000 inhabitants and at least four churches.

²³ There is considerable debate as to the differences between a *doctrina* and a *reducción* (as well as other similar terms such as *encomienda*, *ranchería*, and even *pueblo*). For the purposes of this article, *reducción* is used except where referring to Juli, as this was the word most often employed by the Jesuits themselves in describing the Chiquitos missions. See Irene Vasquez, "Sources for the History of the Indigenous Peoples of North Mexico" (<http://whp.uoregon.edu/Lockhart/Vasquez.pdf>).

²⁴ Simon Ditchfield, "What Did Natural History Have to Do with Salvation?" in *Studies in Church History*, Vol. 46 (Suffolk, UK: Ecclesiastical History Society, 2010), p. 154.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ There were three separate *doctrinas* in the vicinity of the town of Juli, often considered as one unit. See Menacho, *Por Tierras de Chiquitos*, p. 54-5. Also Ditchfield, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

The success of the *reducciones* of the Chiquitania some 150 years later had everything to do with the Jesuits' insistence – rigorously maintained since the initial establishment at Juli – that these communities be run not only as centres of spiritual welfare, but also of social welfare. Additionally, the *doctrina* of Juli provided the testing-ground for what later would become the three key elements of their success in the missions: communal self-reliance and self-sufficiency; cooperation with – rather than coercion of – native inhabitants; and as complete autonomy as possible from colonial authorities.

Arrival in Santa Cruz de la Sierra

On 15 May 1585, the first three Jesuits – Fr. Diego de Samaniego (the provincial superior), Fr. Diego de Martínez, and Br. Juan Sánchez – reached the eastern outpost of Santa Cruz de la Sierra (at that time located near present-day San José de Chiquitos),²⁷ where they were welcomed by the governor, Lorenzo Suárez de Figueroa. The next year, Fr. Martínez began sporadic evangelization of the nearby Itatine, marking the first true Jesuit incursion into Chiquitos. Over the next several decades, other peoples, most of them linguistically part of the Tupi Guaraní or Chiquitano groups, were converted; only the Chiriguano and Zamuco remained consistently hostile to evangelization.

The first chapter house in Santa Cruz was set up in 1592. Although the Jesuits always retained at least two or three (and on occasion as many as ten) of their order in Santa Cruz, most evangelizing efforts were carried out from their base in La Plata (present-day Sucre) to the southwest. Santa Cruz at the time was no more than a poor frontier settlement of some two hundred souls, and suffered repeated setbacks from disease, drought, and lack of resources. The Jesuits staffed two other small towns in the region – long since abandoned but at the time strategically important – San Lorenzo de la Barranca and San Francisco de Alfaro. The former became the official seat of Jesuit activity in the Chiquitania in 1699 for a short time, before it was translated back to Santa Cruz.²⁸

Successes Outside the Chiquitania

At the same time as they were making incursions into the Chiquitania, the Jesuits also penetrated into Bolivia's northern reaches, especially in Mojos (more commonly, Moxos), an area now considered as part of Beni Department, with the exception of Guarayos Province, which remains a part of Santa Cruz Department.²⁹ The first incursions there took place in 1596, although it was not until 1682 that the Jesuits were definitively established in Moxos with the founding of the *reducción* of Nuestra Señora de Loreto. Their subsequent growth was rapid, and within a few decades, the Jesuits had established 17 *reducciones* in the area.³⁰

While it would be a mistake to claim that the Jesuits met with success everywhere (their efforts were far less fruitful in India and Japan), they made many converts throughout

²⁷ See Nino Gandarilla, ed., *La Creación del Parque Nacional Histórico "Santa Cruz la Vieja"* (Santa Cruz: Fundación Natura Viva, 2004).

²⁸ Menacho, *Por Tierras de Chiquitos*, pp. 16-8, 24, 26.

²⁹ For a recent overview of the Jesuit presence in Moxos, see Gumucio, *op. cit.*, *sic passim* and Querejazu, *op. cit.*, pp. 303-93.

³⁰ Some historians (e.g., Gumucio) give the number of *reducciones* established in Moxos as 26. These tallies invariably – and erroneously – include the Chiquitos *reducciones*.

much of South America (including at least 100,000 in Paraguay alone)³¹. Argentina, Brazil, and especially Paraguay soon had several *reducciones* established along the lines of Juli, and incursions in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru also flourished. However, the carefully honed Jesuit approach, with its desire for an autonomous theocratic existence, did not sit well with colonial authorities and aroused jealousy amongst other religious orders. But geography helped ensure the success of many of the Jesuit missions in South America. Apart from a few exceptions, Jesuit *reducciones* were so physically distant from colonial control that the mandate of a civil authority initially mattered little.

The Jesuits in the Chiquitania

By the late seventeenth century, the Jesuits had been in Santa Cruz for a century, although local evangelization efforts were few and far between. When missionaries arrived, they usually came not from Lima but rather from the much closer Archdiocese of La Plata. None were to be had from the sparsely populated and abysmally poor Diocese of Santa Cruz de la Sierra itself (erected in 1605); the first seminary there was not erected until much later.

After 1690, things changed rapidly. In that year, a Jesuit college was established in Tarija (now in southern Bolivia, but then the northernmost outpost of the Jesuits' sphere of influence in Paraguay) by Fr. José de Arce, newly arrived from the missions of Paraguay. He was chosen by his superiors in Europe to act as a catalyst for Jesuit expansion throughout the Archdiocese of La Plata and beyond, a mission he was to achieve with great success, albeit eventually at the cost of his life. Tarija – like Santa Cruz - originally had been part of the Jesuit province of Peru, but was largely independent from distant Lima, and in 1607 control was transferred to the newly created Archdiocese of La Plata.

Tarija's proximity to trade routes to Paraguay meant it was influenced more by happenings in Asunción than in La Plata. During much of this time, the Jesuits were busy in Paraguay establishing a virtual theocracy over large parts of the region. The first Jesuit *reducción* there - San Ignacio Guazú – was founded in 1610. In the same year, the nearby Argentine *reducciones* of San Ignacio Mini and Nuestra Señora de Loreto were founded. Twenty more followed quickly, with another nine in Brazil as well.

In 1690, Arce was put in charge of the evangelization of the hostile Chiriguano, who occupied much of the vast and desolate Gran Chaco, an enormous area encompassing broad swathes of modern-day Bolivia, Paraguay, and Argentina. A less spiritual mandate attached as well: to find a route and establish *reducciones* between isolated Santa Cruz and the Guaraní missions of Paraguay, possibly via the Chiriguano-held territories. Jesuit religious authorities in Lima initially claimed the responsibility as theirs, but busy with efforts in Moxos and elsewhere, could only protest ineffectually against Arce's commission. The matter dragged on for 16 years until 1706 when the Jesuit provincial general ruled in favour of the Tarija mission, definitively ending the debate.

³¹ See, for example, Robert H. Jackson, *Missions and Frontiers of Spanish America: A Comparative Study of the Impact of Environmental, Economic, Political, and Socio-Cultural Variations on the Missions in the Rio de la Plata Region and on the Northern Frontier of New Spain* (Scottsdale, AZ: Arizona State University Press, 2005).

A Fortuitous Mistake

Arce - although based in Tarija and therefore nominally answerable to authorities in La Plata – was the right man for the job. Interested in establishing both a route and missions along the way that would link Santa Cruz to Paraguay, he ironically never intended to enter the Chiquitania, but rather the harsh Chaco to the southeast, which seemed to afford more direct access to Paraguay. However, he and his companion, Fr. Diego Centeno,³² after setting out from Tarija, became lost near what is now the town of Charagua, and were befriended by a group of Chané. Nearly dead of thirst before their rescue, the priests remained with their benefactors for three days and vowed to repay their kindness.

At the time, the Chané's leader, the *cacique* Tambacura, was imprisoned in Santa Cruz and had been condemned to death. His sister, a member of the group who met Arce and Centeno, pleaded his cause with the two Jesuits, who agreed to travel first to Santa Cruz before resuming their trek to Paraguay. Once arrived, they argued successfully to have Tambacura's sentence overturned and secured his freedom.³³ The timing was fortuitous again: Governor Agustín Arce (no relation to Fr. Arce) had just asked the authorities in Peru for Jesuit missionaries to evangelize the nearby Chiquitano, a friendly people who already had sent several delegations to Santa Cruz to petition him directly.

While in Santa Cruz, Arce witnessed the forced march of some 300 Chiquitano, destined for the mines of Potosí in the *altiplano*, who had been captured and sold into slavery by Portuguese slave traders – the notoriously cruel and much-feared *bandeirantes* (also known as *mamelucos*). The sight convinced him that his lot lay with the Chiquitano, not the Chiriguano. This seemingly isolated decision was to become the single-most important event in the history of the Chiquitania.

Leaving Santa Cruz in late 1690, Arce and Centeno set out again for Tarija³⁴, where Arce had no trouble convincing the new Jesuit Provincial General Fr. Lauro Núñez of his change of heart. Núñez approved the venture and authorized six Jesuits to convert both the Chiquitano *and* the Chiriguano, in an area roughly the size of Alaska. The original mandate to find a route between Santa Cruz and Asunción remained in place. In 1691

³² Arce originally set out from Tarija on 20 June 1689 with another Jesuit, Fr. Miguel de Valdeolivos. Valdeolivos stopped in the *reducción* of Salinas and apparently founded on his own the *reducción* of San Ignacio de Taraquea, located along the banks of the lower Pilcomayo River northeast of Tarija. Arce then returned to Tarija, met Centeno, and started out again, reaching San Ignacio de Taraquea again on 7 September of that year. The two proceeded towards Chiriguano territory alone, with Valdeolivos remaining in Salinas. See Fr. Javier Bautista, S.J., “Los Jesuitas: los llamaron, los expulsaron,” *Cuarto Intermedio*, No. 20 (August 1991).

³³ Fr. Hieronymo Herran, S.J., *Historica relation, de apostolicis missionibus partum Societatis Jesu apud Chiquitos, paraquariae populos, primo Hispano idiomate conscripta à P. Joan: Patricio Fernandez*, Chapter I, folio 7. (Madrid: Society of Jesus, 1733), p. 11ff.

³⁴ Arce and Centeno founded a *reducción*, La Presentación del Guapay, no later than 2 February 1690 (when Arce and Centeno concelebrated Mass there), near what is now the town of Cabezas, approximately 110 kilometres south of Santa Cruz. While technically not located in Chiquitos, this was the first semi-permanent Jesuit *reducción* in the Bolivian Oriente. See Bautista, *op. cit.*

Arce and Centeno set out again for Santa Cruz, accompanied this time by Br. Antonio de Rivas.³⁵

San Xavier: The First Jesuit *Reducción* in Chiquitos

Governor Arce died soon after the decision was made to evangelize the Chiquitania, and there was little support for continuing the policy. The townspeople of Santa Cruz were convinced that the Chiquitano were too bellicose, and in the end gave the Jesuits only two young guides to accompany them.

Nonetheless, on the feast of St. Sylvester - 31 December 1691 – Fr. Arce and Br. Rivas at last founded the first Chiquitos *reducción*, that of San Francisco Xavier de los Piñocas (now San Javier or San Xavier) for the Piñocas, a sub-group of the Chiquitano. (This was the only *reducción* co-founded by a religious brother.) Although it was rebuilt on three occasions before settling into its present form in 1708, its first site was – and its current location is - located approximately 215 kilometres northeast of Santa Cruz. Many accounts omit that the two Jesuits were nearly dead of starvation and almost certainly lost when befriended by the Piñocas. They could not have travelled much further in any case and so the settlement arose where it did.

The Passing of Arce

Arce remained in San Xavier for more than a decade, evangelizing the Chiquitano and Chiriguano as *padre superior de las misiones* (provincial for the Chiquitos missions) until 1703,³⁶ when he returned to the Guaraní *reducciones*. In 1715, he again was charged with the long-postponed task of opening a route between Chiquitos and Paraguay.³⁷

In that year, Arce and another Jesuit, Fr. Bartholomew Blende, struck out from Asunción, hoping to follow the course of the Paraguay River and eventually reach the Jesuit *reducción* of San Rafael, which had been founded in 1696. After a journey fraught with mistake and misery, they eventually succeeded, but opted to forge a new trail on the return to Asunción. Along the way their luck ran out. In September, Blende was killed by the hostile Payaguá, somewhere in the desolate Gran Chaco in northwestern Paraguay. In December of the same year, still en route to Asunción and almost exactly 24 years to the day he co-founded the first Chiquitos *reducción* of San Xavier, Arce met his end, also at the hands of the Payaguá. Their bodies were never recovered. It was not until 1718 that four surviving Guaraní guides arrived in San Rafael to recount what had happened.³⁸

³⁵ Arce and Ribas stopped at the *reducciones* of San Ignacio de Tariquea and La Presentación on their return journey to Santa Cruz. At La Presentación, Centeno rejoined Arce and Ribas, leaving another Jesuit, Fr. Juan Bautista Zea (who would later found or co-found three *reducciones* in the Chiquitania), in charge of the *reducción*. San Ignacio de Tariquea and La Presentación were short-lived settlements, abandoned in 1727 when their inhabitants rebelled against the Jesuits. See Menacho, *op. cit.*, p. 67; also Gumucio, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

³⁶ Guillermo Furlong, S.J., “De la Asunción a los Chiquitos por el Río Paraguay: Tentativa frustrada en 1703. ‘Breve relación’ inédita del P. José Francisco de Arce,” *Archivum Historicum Societatis Jesu*, VIII (Rome: Company of Jesus, 1938), pp. 54-79.

³⁷ Querejazu, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

³⁸ Gott, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

Additional Chiquitos Settlements

Over the next seven decades, eleven more settlements followed, with Santo Corazón de Jesús de Chiquitos (now Santo Corazón) as the last, erected in 1760, seven years before the Jesuit *extrañamiento*. (The short-lived Nuestra Señora del Buen Consejo, founded near present-day Puerto Suárez just three months before the Jesuits' expulsion, is not included in lists of the Chiquitos *reducciones*, as its existence was ephemeral.³⁹) A list of these Jesuit *reducciones* and their founding follows.

JESUIT REDUCCIONES OF THE CHIQUITANIA

Settlement (<i>Original Name</i>)	Founders	Founded (Relocated)
San Xavier* (<i>San Francisco Xavier de los Piñocas</i>)	Fr. José de Arce; Br. Antonio de Rivas	1691 (1696, 1698, 1708)
San Rafael de Velasco*	Frs. Juan Bautista Zea and Francisco Hervás	1696 (1701, 1750)
San José de Chiquitos* (<i>San José de los Borós</i>)	Frs. Felipe Suárez and Dionisio Avila	1698
San Juan Bautista (<i>San Juan Bautista de los Borós</i>)	Frs. Juan Bautista Zea, Juan Patricio Fernández and Pedro Cerena	1699 (1716, 1772, between 1788-99)
Concepción* (<i>La Inmaculada Concepción</i>)	Frs. Francisco Caballero and Francisco Hervás	1699 (1707, 1722)
San Ignacio de Boococas ⁴⁰	Fr. José Ignacio de la Mata	1707
San Miguel de Velasco* (<i>San Miguel Arcángel</i>)	Frs. Felipe Suárez and Francisco Hervás	1721
San Ignacio de Zamucos ⁴¹	Frs. Juan Bautista Zea and Agustín Castañares	1723
San Ignacio de Velasco (<i>San Ignacio de Loyola de Velasco</i>)	Frs. Miguel Streicher and Diego Contreras	1748
Santiago de Chiquitos (<i>Santiago Apóstol</i>)	Frs. Gaspar Troncoso and Gaspar Campos	1754 (1764)
Santa Ana de Velasco*	Fr. Julian Nogler	1755
Santo Corazón (<i>Santo Corazón de Jesús de Chiquitos</i>)	Frs. Antonio Gaspar and José Chueca	1760 (1788)

³⁹ A rare exception is found in Tonelli's *Reseña histórica social y económica de la Chiquitania*, the only modern work outside of Querejazu's *Las Misiones Jesuíticas de Chiquitos* to make mention of this ephemeral settlement. For an in-depth study of this would-be mission, see Tonelli, "Nuestra Señora del Buen Consejo fue la Última Reducción fundada en las Misiones de Chiquitos", *Revista Extra*, Año. 12, No. 387 y 388 (Santa Cruz: 31 August 1997 and 07 September 1997). See also http://www.chiquitania.com/mission_pantanal_nsdbc.html for a full treatment of this settlement and Tonelli's argument.

⁴⁰ San Ignacio de Boococas was incorporated into the *reducción* of Concepción in 1707.

⁴¹ San Ignacio de Zamucos was abandoned in 1745 and its inhabitants relocated to San Ignacio de Velasco in 1748.

* Declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1990.

The history of the individual missions is beyond the scope of this article, and will be treated in the third and final installment. Information (albeit in Spanish and German for the most part) on each *reducción* exists and may be found elsewhere. For an online treatment of each individual mission, the reader is referred to the author's Web site, www.chiquitania.com.

The First Period: 1691-1723

Most historians group the establishment of the Jesuit *reducciones* of Chiquitos into two distinct periods with an interval between, each characterized by rapid growth: the first, starting in 1691 and ending in 1723, corresponds to the settlement of the first eight missions; and the second, beginning in 1748 and ending with the expulsion in 1767, encompasses the last four.

Regarding the first eight *reducciones*, San Xavier has been treated above. As noted above, those of San Rafael de Velasco,⁴² San José de Chiquitos, and San Miguel de Velasco are straightforward enough to require no additional treatment beyond what is readily available elsewhere.⁴³

The remaining three – San Juan Bautista, Concepción (along with San Ignacio de Boococas), and San Ignacio de Zamucos - deserve brief additional mentions to clarify their status and emend inconsistencies amongst other historians.

San Juan Bautista

The first of these three, San Juan Bautista, no longer exists, having been abandoned definitively sometime after a fire destroyed much of the town in 1811. Along with San Ignacio de Zamucos, it had the most turbulent history of any Chiquitos *reducción*. It was founded first in 1699 on the banks of the upper reaches of the Río Tucavaca, as San Juan Bautista de los Borós, by Frs. Juan Bautista de Zea (who also co-founded San Rafael de Velasco and the ill-fated San Ignacio de Zamucos) and Juan Patricio Fernández. The mission was re-located in 1705 a short distance to the south, probably reestablished by Fr. Pedro Cerena (which, if true, would make it the only Jesuit mission with more than two co-founders). It was abandoned between 1712-17. By the time the French explorer Alcide D'Orbigny visited in 1831, this, the original mission, was in ruins.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, a new settlement, San Juan de Taperas (properly known as Taperas de San Juan but commonly Taperas), had been founded by Fr. Juan Bautista Xandra close to the site of the original settlement in 1717. This latter incarnation of San Juan Bautista was relocated as well, in or about 1772. In 1780 it was translated yet again.

⁴² See Jaime Cabello, ed., *Provincia Velasco* (Santa Cruz: Centro para la Participación y el Desarrollo Humano Sostenible, 2005) for a brief historical treatment of the four Velasco missions of San Rafael, San Ignacio, San Miguel, and Santa Ana.

⁴³ Whilst not entirely free from error, Querejazu has much useful information on all of these *reducciones*.

⁴⁴ Querejazu, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

Census records show the former *reducción* (secularized since 1767) of San Juan Bautista with a population of 1,433 in 1807 (the last count before the fire of 1811). Its newer incarnation, San Juan de Taperas, had a population of 879 in 1830, by which time the original San Juan Bautista was no more.⁴⁵ There must have been, then, two concurrent settlements for some years, probably with many of the inhabitants of the latter originally settled in the first mission.

In any case, Taperas suffered as badly as the original settlement. In 1781, a disastrous fire broke out (on the heels of a plague that had just swept through the region), destroying most records and forcing the government to permanently abandon the location and relocate its remaining inhabitants to a new spot, one that reverted to the name San Juan de Bautista. Thirty years later the village was hit by a fire that essentially burned it to the ground, although a few families remained.

Robert H. Jackson makes an interesting conjecture that San Juan Bautista may have been established not as a conventional *reducción* but as a *visita* - a settlement visited only occasionally by a priest until there were a sufficient number of other Jesuits available for permanent staffing.⁴⁶ This view is supported by René Moreno and Ramón Gutiérrez, who worked closely with Roth and others on the piecing-together of the confusing history of this settlement.

Concepción

Concepción presents a case of scholarly confusion. Originally founded in 1699⁴⁷ (not in 1708, 1709, or even 1722, as the majority of sources claim) as La Inmaculada Concepción, its initial settlement lasted only a few years. A rare example of local hostility to the Jesuits' presence in the Chiquitania, the first incarnation of Concepción was subjected to frequent attacks from marauding tribes and hastily dismantled. A second attempt in 1707 was successful, and in the following year Concepción incorporated the inhabitants of San Ignacio de Boococas, a small *reducción* founded in 1707 by Fr. José Ignacio de la Mata.⁴⁸ Concepción was formally re-established in 1709, and translated in 1722 to its current location.

San Ignacio de Zamucos

Little is known with certainty regarding the short-lived mission of San Ignacio de Zamucos, which was explicitly intended to serve as a way stop between the Chiquitos missions and those of Paraguay. It was established primarily for three reasons: the catechization of the Zamuco, a profoundly antagonistic tribe who had and would continue to harass and derail Jesuit efforts for many years; to establish Jesuit hegemony in the far southeastern reaches of Chiquitos; and to establish a link between Chiquitos and Paraguay via the impenetrable Gran Chaco or the Pilcomayo River.

⁴⁵ See Robert H. Jackson, "Demographic Patterns on the Chiquitos Missions of Eastern Bolivia, 1691-1767" in *Bolivian Studies Journal*, Vol. 12 (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois, 2005).

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 234.

⁴⁷ Gumucio, *op. cit.*, p. 119 (but also see p. 36); Querejazu, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

⁴⁸ Although several primary sources attest to the existence of San Ignacio de Boococas, only Querejazu and Tonelli makes mention of it. See Querejazu, *op. cit.*, p. 274, and Tonelli, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

It was first founded in 1719 - albeit only for a few months - by Fr. Juan Bautista Zea, who earlier had co-founded the *reducciones* of San Rafael de Velasco in 1696 and the ill-starred San Juan Bautista in 1699. (Zea was the only missionary apart from Fr. Francisco Hervás to co-found three settlements in the Chiquitania.) It was established some 83 kilometres south of the Santiago salt works, which would have placed it in a very desolate and dangerous area just north of what is now the border between Paraguay and Bolivia.

Zea set out from San Juan Bautista in 1716 in an attempt to evangelize the Zamuco. The attempt did not fare well, nor did that of 1717, nor did subsequent efforts of Frs. Miguel de Yegros and Br. Alberto Romero over the next two years. Romero paid for his daring with his life, in the process becoming the fourth Jesuit martyr in the Chiquitania, although Yegros survived. The Jesuits kept coming back, however, looking for the elusive path to Paraguay, returning in 1720 with Fr. Agustín Castañares, who later would return to re-found the settlement. In 1721, 1722, 1723, and 1724 other incursions into the area were made, all without success.

Defying all logic, in 1723 San Ignacio de Zamucos was re-founded by Castañares. His companion was Hervás, who caught the plague and died whilst returning to San Juan Bautista. Two other Jesuits, Frs. Juan de Montenegro and Domingo Bendieta, were sent to help. In 1726, much of its population was transferred to San José de Chiquitos in a bid to separate two warring factions within the mission, and San Ignacio de Zamucos was temporarily abandoned until the following year. A decade later in 1737, an epidemic reduced its population to just 30 families, although this number increased soon afterwards.

Perpetual danger surrounded the *reducción*. Fr. Ignacio Chomé, a brilliant young linguist, wrote in 1738 that he expected to die any minute. (Fortunately for him, he was transferred to Concepción where he wrote the first Chiquitano dictionary.) In 1744, the indomitable Castañares was not so fortunate. He was killed by the Mataguayo in Paraguay whilst on an evangelization trip.

By 1745 hostilities with the warlike Ugareño (or Ugarone) had made the mission virtually uninhabitable, and what was left of San Ignacio de Zamucos was destroyed. The majority of its inhabitants eventually moved some 320 kilometres northwest to the new *reducción* of San Ignacio de Velasco (then known as San Ignacio de Loyola) in 1748.⁴⁹

There the head of the mission, Fr. Miguel Streicher – one of only two non-Spanish Jesuits who founded missions in Chiquitos - induced the remnants of the Zamuco to live peacefully with the already-settled Ugareño. Those Zamuco who did not trek to San Ignacio went to the much-closer site of San Juan Bautista. That Streicher was able to persuade the Zamucos to live peaceably with the Ugareño is remarkable, given that it was

⁴⁹ Tomichá, *La Primera Evangelización en las Reducciones de Chiquitos: Protagonistas y Metodología Misional*, p. 549.

the incessant attacks of the Ugareño upon San Ignacio de Zamucos that led to that mission's destruction.

Its ruins are just barely visible, not far from the eastern entrance to Parque Nacional del Gran Chaco Kaa-Iya. It lies in an uninhabited area in western Germán Busch Province, now forgotten, just a few miles from the border with Paraguay and the Cerro San Miguel, the second-highest point in the Chiquitania.

The Second Period: 1748-1767

Between the founding of San Ignacio de Zamucos in 1723 and that of its successor, San Ignacio de Velasco, in 1748, no new missions were established in the Chiquitania. With the settling of San Ignacio de Velasco, however, the second phase of Jesuit expansion began. The four *reducciones* established in the final nineteen years of the Jesuit presence in the region were more strategically placed, having as an important objective their placement along the hoped-for route to the missions of Paraguay.

Of these four, only Santa Ana de Velasco requires additional remarks beyond what are supplied by other sources.⁵⁰

Santa Ana de Velasco

Santa Ana de Velasco is notable less from a historical and more from a cultural aspect, in that it has the only *templo* that retains most of its original Jesuit-era accouterments. In this case these include most of the church and several furnishings, including an extremely rare 18th Century organ that was brought in by mule and reassembled. In fact, Santa Ana is from a preservationist standpoint the most authentic Jesuit *reducción*, although sporadic restoration work continues. Notwithstanding, its church was built by the village's inhabitants a few years after the departure of the Jesuits but in complete fidelity with Jesuit models in existence elsewhere throughout the Chiquitania.

The Last Mission Attempt: Nuestra Señora del Buen Consejo

The final attempted *reducción* was the transitory Nuestra Señora del Buen Consejo, founded in May of 1767, although it survived only three months, owing to the expulsion that followed later that year. Of all the Jesuit settlements of Chiquitos, we possess the least information on Nuestra Señora del Buen Consejo. That we have any information at all is something of a marvel, given that the Jesuits had no time to do anything but record its ephemeral existence before they were expelled.

Fr. Sánchez Labrador, the settlement's founder, had as his intent to found a mission roughly half-way between Santo Corazón and Belén (Paraguay), somewhere to the southeast of modern-day Puerto Suárez, and quite possibly very close to the mineral-rich mountain of Mutún. Had it happened, the Jesuits would have at last realized their dream of a string of *reducciones* stretching from San Xavier in the west all the way to the Paraguay River, from which a riverine trip to Asunción could have been made.

⁵⁰ Querejazu, *op. cit.*, especially pp. 272-4; 333-5; and 347-52. See also the author's Web site, www.chiquitania.com.

The Question of Allegiance

Politically, the Chiquitos *reducciones* owed nominal allegiance to the Spanish Crown⁵¹, through the Audiencia of Charcas, with its seat at La Plata, itself part of the much larger Viceroyalty of Peru. From a religious standpoint, the Diocese of Santa Cruz de la Sierra supposedly was in at least nominal control of the Chiquitos missions. Yet the diocese was itself ultimately subject to oversight from the Archdiocese of La Plata (which, although maintained by secular clergy, was dominated by and had a strong affinity towards the Jesuit Province of Paraguay) and made no attempt to interfere with the Jesuit apparatus.

In reality, thanks to their remoteness, the Chiquitos missions were completely autonomous and entirely self-sufficient. They exported their surplus goods throughout all of Upper Peru and beyond, earning the envy of Spanish and Portuguese colonists elsewhere in South America, especially the slave traders and large landholders who coveted the fertile Chiquitania territories for their own *encomiendas* (settlements worked by enslaved native Amerindians) and *estancias* (cattle ranches).

Life in the *Reducciones*

The Chiquitos missions were founded as *reducciones* - autonomous, self-sufficient communities ranging in size from 1,000 to 4,000 inhabitants, with two priests at their head, assisted by a council of eight native leaders (known as a *cabildo*, with a *cacique*, or chief, at its head) who met on a daily basis to monitor the progress of the town and its inhabitants. Usually two priests were assigned to a *reducción*. One was in charge of the “care of souls”, and catechetical instruction and the liturgy. The other was in charge of corporal matters: communal goods, land, workshops, and the like.

These settlements were not intended as military or trading posts (although they occasionally acted as both). As Jesuit manuscripts of the era make abundantly clear, their primary purpose always was spiritual. Only the natives and the Jesuit missionaries were legal inhabitants. Colonists were not allowed to live in the settlements, and in fact could not even remain in them for more than a few days’ time. (The sole exception was the architect Antonio Rojas, who possibly constructed two Chiquitos churches.⁵²)

The indigenous inhabitants were members of one of the region’s three largest ethno-linguistic groups: the Chiquitano, Guarayo, or Ayoreo. (A few Chiriguano and Guaraní were present in some *reducciones* as well.) At the time of the Jesuits’ expulsion in 1767, there were at least 24,188 inhabitants⁵³ throughout the ten settlements then existing in the Chiquitania,⁵⁴ and more than 30,000⁵⁵ if the Moxos *reducciones* then under Jesuit

⁵¹ The Crown willingly granted the Jesuits a high degree of autonomy as the missions provided additional income. The often-cited 1727 royal prohibition against colonists living in the *reducciones* (originally promulgated in 1713 but quickly withdrawn) is but one example of this policy. See Tonelli, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁵² Kühne, *Evolución y percepción de las iglesias misionales del Oriente Boliviano*, Appendix 1.

⁵³ Querezaju, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 290-95. Tonelli claims a figure of 23,988 (according to the “Catálogo de Población de las Misiones de Chiquitos del Año 1767,” a primary source manuscript in the Bolivian National Archive in Sucre). The discrepancy of exactly 200 may be due to a typographical error.

⁵⁴ See Robert H. Jackson, “Demographic Patterns on the Chiquitos Missions of Eastern Bolivia, 1691-1767” in *Bolivian Studies Journal*, Vol. 12 (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois, 2005).

⁵⁵ Gumucio, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

guidance are included.⁵⁶ As non-baptized residents were not always listed in these tallies, it is possible the actual number may have been as high as 37,000.⁵⁷

Political Considerations and the Expulsion of the Jesuits

The Chiquitos settlements eventually and inevitably became caught in a political battle between Spain and Portugal, the latter of whose slave traders in nearby Brazil – the hated *mamelucos* - wished to expand westward, while the Santa Cruz-based *encomiendas* and *estancias* coveted the fertile lands of the mission settlements to the east. Nor did it help that their thriving economies and well-ordered way of life had earned the *reducciones* a great deal of jealousy on the part of the civil authorities. And as the settlements were virtually semi-independent states (some with private militias), both powers were suspicious of the missions' undefined political status and sought to exploit it.

It came to a sudden and completely unforeseen (from the isolated standpoint of those in Chiquitos) end on 27 February 1767, when the Spanish King Carlos III ordered the expulsion – invariably referred to in Spanish sources as the *Extrañamiento* - of all Jesuits from his realms (those in Brazil had been expelled by the Portuguese in 1759), including the scarcely two dozen missionaries⁵⁸ who watched over the enormous Chiquitos territory.⁵⁹ By September, all but one Jesuit had been forcibly removed and some inhabitants of the *reducciones* already had begun to abandon them. Several Jesuits – many of whom were aged - died as a result of the hardships endured in the long journey to Lima and then back to Europe as a consequence of the expulsion. The last Jesuit to leave the area was the elderly Fr. Narciso Patzi, on 10 May 1768, his departure from the remote mission of Santo Corazón delayed due to a grave illness.⁶⁰

After the Expulsion

After the expulsion, the *reducciones* steadily spiralled into a state of near-terminal decline. In 1776, the government of Chiquitos was militarized and the Chiquitania administered from the newly created, far-away Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata (to which the Audencia of Charcas now belonged). In ecclesiastical terms, the *reducciones* were secularized immediately after the Jesuits' departure by Bishop Herboso y Figueroa,⁶¹ and

⁵⁶ Other sources claim – without citing a source – that there were as many as 18,535 indigenous inhabitants for the Moxos missions at the time of the expulsion. See Querejazu, *op. cit.*, p. 336. If this figure is correct, the combined population of the missions under Jesuit guidance in Chiquitos and Moxos in 1767 would have been at least 42,500, and possibly as high as 57,500 if unbaptized inhabitants (see following footnote) were included.

⁵⁷ This figure was given as the estimated population of the Chiquitos missions at the moment of the *extrañamiento*, based upon a comment by Fr. Julian Knogler (founder of the *reducción* of Santa Ana de Velasco), in a manuscript entitled “Relato sobre el país y la nación de los Chiquitos en las Indias Occidentales o América del Sud y en la misiones en su territorio”, that there were at that time some 22,000 baptised inhabitants and another 15,000 “near the point of conversion”. See Werner Hoffman, *Las misiones jesuíticas entre los chiquitanos* (Buenos Aires: Fundación para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura, 1979), p. 172.

⁵⁸ Records vary, but the best estimate is that there were 23 Jesuits stationed throughout Chiquitos in 1767.

⁵⁹ See Gumucio, *op. cit.*, p. 162-3, for a copy of the proclamation.

⁶⁰ Tomichá, *La Primera Evangelización en las Reducciones de Chiquitos: Protagonistas y Metodología Misional*, p.89.

⁶¹ Tonelli, *op. cit.*, p. 92, *sic passim*.

the Diocese of Santa Cruz de la Sierra took over spiritual control. In 1840 Franciscan missionaries were appointed to the Guarayos and Moxos missions, and those of Chiquitos eventually passed to them as well in 1931. For more than thirteen decades, they lay in a state of economic and social torpor until the arrival of the Swiss architect and former Jesuit, the late Hans Roth, whose nearly three decades of spearheading restoration efforts finally raised them from obscurity.

The post-expulsion period in the Chiquitania is beyond the scope of this article and is treated at length in “The Long Silence: The Jesuit Missions of Chiquitos after the *Extrañamiento*”. Although the departure of the Jesuits is a matter well documented, and much has been recorded regarding their banishment, considerable research remains to be done on the history of the Jesuit missions of Chiquitos following the *Extrañamiento*. This is especially so in the case of the chaotic period immediately following Bolivia's independence in 1825.

The swift demise of these settlements raises troubling questions for those exploring both colonial and post-colonial history. How could such unparalleled – and acknowledged – success so quickly turn to decay and obscurity? As key export areas, why was no support offered by the Spanish crown to maintain their economic prosperity after the Jesuits were banished? Why, after being reconstituted by Pope Pius VII in 1814, did the Jesuits not return immediately to the Chiquitania?

To a large extent, the blame for these matters lay with the avaricious interests and political policies of Spain, to a lesser extent with Portuguese interests, and even the papacy itself, all of whom conspired to obliterate the Jesuits, and in so doing, their handiwork and legacy in the Chiquitania and elsewhere. As the late Hans Roth, the principle restorer of the Chiquitos missions, wrote, “It was not the natives who destroyed the work...but rather the economic and political envy, the ignorance and barbarism of those already civilized and educated.”⁶²

On A Positive Note

Of the original twelve Jesuit Chiquitos settlements, nine still survive. Of these, seven possess a unique, albeit hybrid, cultural and social infrastructure that has changed little since the days of the Jesuits, in spite of the original inhabitants – the Chiquitano and other groups – long having left the villages. All remain active settlements, with vibrant religious customs and beliefs, and some still function as missions. Although the Bolivian national government unfortunately has not embraced the preservation of the ex *reducciones*, the departmental government of Santa Cruz and the various municipal governments of these towns have and continue to do promote them as responsibly and sustainably as they can. With a renewed scholarly interest in the area tempered by a careful, rigorous approach to the conservation and study of the Chiquitos missions and reliance upon their primary sources, much of value of the unique cultural and historical patrimony of these singular places still can be preserved and drawn upon for the benefit of future generations.

⁶² See http://www.chiquitania.com/missions_history.html.

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A recognised expert and frequently cited author on the history and social development of the Jesuit missions of Chiquitos, his writings, photography, and award-winning Web site on the region have won considerable international acclaim and his works have been translated into 12 languages.