

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE JESUIT COLONIAL MISSIONS OF CHIQUITOS

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San Xavier: 1691



San Rafael de Velasco: 1696

## Initial Attempts

The first Jesuit missionaries arrived in what is now Bolivia (then known as Upper Peru) in 1572, having moved eastward from the Viceroyalty of Peru, where they had been established as a province since 1568. They were preceded in Bolivia 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 it was granted in 1566 by Phillip II, while the Portuguese king John III had given them leave to enter Brazil in 1549. For the first hundred years or so, the Jesuits invariably accompanied the Spanish military and were residents of its scattered garrisons; they were not authorised 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.

On 15 May 1587, the first three Jesuits - Fr. Diego Martínez (the provincial superior), Fr. Diego de Samaniego, and Br. Juan Sánchez - reached the remote eastern outpost of Santa Cruz de la Sierra (at that time located near present-day San José de Chiquitos), where they were welcomed by the governor, Lorenzo Suárez de Figueroa, and the entire town. The following year, Fr. Martínez began sporadic evangelisation of the nearby Itatine tribe. Over the years, other tribes, most of them ethnically part of the Chiquitano group, gradually were converted; only the Chiriguano remained hostile to evangelisation.

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 of their evangelising efforts actually were carried out from La Plata. Santa Cruz at the time was no more than a backwater frontier settlement of some two hundred souls, and suffered repeated setbacks from disease, drought, and

lack of resources. The Jesuits also staffed two other small towns in the region – both long since abandoned but at the time strategically important - San Lorenzo de la Barranca and San Francisco de Alfaro. The former was for a time the official seat of Jesuit activity in the Chiquitania, before it was translated back to Santa Cruz.

### **Successes Outside the Chiquitania**

Meanwhile, the Jesuits also had penetrated into Bolivia's northern reaches, especially the Moxos (now part of Beni Department) and Guarayos (now part of Santa Cruz Department) regions. The first incursions there took place in 1596, although it was not until 1682 – a few years prior to their settling the Chiquitania – that the Jesuits were definitively established in the Moxos with the founding of the *reducción* of Nuestra Señora de Loreto. Their subsequent growth there was rapid, however, and within a few decades, the Jesuits had established 24 missions (*reducciones*) in the area.

The success of these *reducciones* (and later those in the Chiquitania) had everything to do with the Jesuits' insistence that these communities be run not only as centres of spiritual welfare, but social welfare as well. Additionally, great emphasis was placed upon three key elements: communal self-reliance and self-sufficiency; cooperation with – rather than coercion of – native inhabitants; and as complete autonomy as possible from the colonial authorities.

### **The Jesuits in the *Doctrina* of Juli**

The Jesuits first employed this unique method neither in the Moxos nor in the Chiquitania, but in the town of Juli, located on the shores of Lake Titicaca in the extreme west of Bolivia, over which they were given spiritual control (and for the most part, temporal as well) in 1577. Juli was not a newly founded *reducción*: it was an established Aymara village long before the Spanish arrived. In fact, it was not a *reducción* at all, but rather a *doctrina* (a settlement that differed in various respects from a *reducción* but was in others similar; they were more often found in Mexico and Central America.) Juli had been evangelized by the Dominicans. The Jesuits did not attempt in any way 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 nothing short of spectacular: Within a few years, Juli boasted some 15,000 inhabitants and four churches.

While it would be a mistake to claim that this was the Jesuits' preferred approach everywhere (their proselytising was very different in India, Japan, and elsewhere), it certainly was successful throughout most of South America. Their experience in Juli proved invaluable, and served as a vague blueprint for their successive activity elsewhere on the continent. Argentina, Brazil, and especially Paraguay soon had several Jesuit *reducciones* established along the same lines, and similar Jesuit incursions in Chile and Ecuador also benefited from this cooperative arrangement, albeit in modified form. However, the approach did not sit well with civil authorities and aroused jealousy amongst other religious orders as well. But apart from a few exceptions like Juli, the Jesuit *reducciones* were so physically distant from active colonial control that it hardly mattered initially.

### **The Jesuit Mission Culture**

The Jesuit approach also held something else that would have enormous repercussions on the culture of Latin America as a whole: the development of an artistic synthesis between the missionaries and the native inhabitants. The Jesuits both brought new means of cultural expression to the missions *and* adapted to the existing cultures of the native peoples. Although not entirely free of the superior attitude of most Europeans of their time, for the most part the Jesuits made great efforts to adapt to native cultures and rarely denigrated them.

The result again was a strikingly positive one. Along with their native counterparts, the Jesuits created fascinating microcosms: mission societies that were at once European and non-European, knit together with a unifying spiritual theme, especially evident in its artistic and musical expression. Consequently, the

world views and means of cultural expression of the peoples the Jesuits encountered were of course profoundly altered, but they did not disappear (the usual fate of most native Amerindian cultures after initial contact with European colonizers). Instead, they conformed and adapted, and in fact reached their cultural apogee in the Jesuit mission era. Nowhere was this more evident than in the famous Chiquitos missions in the heart of the Chiquitania.

The Jesuits trained their naturally proficient “charges” to become phenomenal craftsmen in several fields. Those of the Chiquitos missions are best known for their musical skills. Even classically European musical instruments - the cello, the harp, the violin - were created anew in the depths of the Bolivian forests and plains by the inhabitants of the *reducciones*, without any innate knowledge of what they were making. There is strong evidence they composed numerous complex musical pieces, and of course also performed them. The tribes of the Chiquitos were talented in several other fields as well, especially in weaving, working precious metals, and carving wood. The Jesuits willingly availed themselves of these indigenous peoples’ amazing ability to adapt to and incorporate foreign motifs into their artistic output, resulting in what were perhaps the most singular churches ever constructed.

In the case of the Chiquitos missions (as well as some amongst the Moxos and Guarayos), this led to each autonomous settlement having not just a striking church, but also an orchestra, several artisans’ shops, and often schools of music and painting. Imagine this in a town of about a thousand inhabitants, hundreds of miles from the nearest settlement of any size, and one begins to get a vague idea of what the Jesuits and indigenous peoples managed to create together.

### **The Jesuits in the Chiquitania...at Last**

By the late seventeenth century, the Jesuits had been in Santa Cruz for a century, although local missionary efforts were few and far between. When missionaries did arrive, they usually came from the Archdiocese of La Plata, as none were to be had within the sparsely populated Diocese of Santa Cruz de la Sierra itself (erected in 1605).

But after 1690, things changed rapidly. In that year, a Jesuit college was established in Tarija, the northernmost outpost of the Jesuits’ sphere of influence in Paraguay. Although Tarija originally had been part of the Jesuit province of Peru, it was largely independent from distant Lima and in 1607 control was transferred to the newly created Archdiocese of La Plata.

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

Also in 1690, the Tarija-based Fr. José de Arce was put in charge of Jesuit evangelisation of the hostile Chiriguano tribes, who occupied much of the vast and desolate Gran Chaco, an enormous area encompassing broad swaths of modern-day Bolivia, Paraguay, and Argentina. A less spiritual mandate attached as well: to find a route and establish *reducciones* between long-suffering Santa Cruz and the Paraguay missions. Jesuit religious authorities in Lima initially claimed the responsibility as theirs, but busy with their efforts in the Moxos and elsewhere, made no effort to stop Arce. In 1706 the Jesuit provincial general ruled in favour of the Tarija mission, definitively ending the debate.

### **A Fortuitous Mistake**

Arce - although based in Tarija and nominally answerable to authorities in La Plata - certainly was very interested in establishing missions that would link Santa Cruz and points west to Paraguay. After all, it was his primary mandate.

Ironically, he never intended to enter the Chiquitania *per se*, but rather the territory to the southeast, which was geographically closer to Paraguay. However, en route, he and his companions, Frs. Miguel de Valdeolivios and Diego Centeno, were befriended by a group of Chané near Santa Cruz. Nearly dead of thirst, the three priests remained with their benefactors for three days and vowed to repay their kindness.

At that time, the tribe's leader, the *cacique* Tambacura, was imprisoned in Santa Cruz and condemned to death. After his sister interceded for him with the Jesuits, the group traveled to Santa Cruz, argued successfully to have Tambacura's sentence overturned, and secured his freedom. The timing was ironic: Governor Agustín Arce (no relation to the Jesuit Arce) previously had asked the authorities in Peru for Jesuit missionaries (there being none in the area) for the nearby Chiquitano, who had journeyed several times to Santa Cruz to petition him directly.

While in Santa Cruz, Fr. Arce and his companions witnessed the forced march of some 300 Chiquitano who had been captured by Portuguese slave traders and sold into slavery. They were destined for the faraway mines of Potosí – and almost certain death. This terrible sight convinced Arce that his lot lay with the Chiquitano, not the Chiriguano.

Returning immediately to Tarija, Arce had no trouble convincing the new Jesuit Provincial Lauro Núñez of his change of heart. Núñez approved the venture and authorized a grand total of six Jesuits to convert both the Chiriguano and the Chiquitano tribes, covering an area roughly the size of Alaska. The original mandate to find a route between Santa Cruz and Asunción remained in place as well. In 1691 Arce and Centeno set out again for Santa Cruz, accompanied this time by Br. Antonio de Rivas.

In retrospect, by the time the Jesuits officially were granted permission to expand into the Chiquitania by both spiritual and civil leaders, their long experience in the region had made them a religious and temporal force to be reckoned with. They previously had established no less than 29 settlements in Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay alone, with a total population of more than 100,000 native inhabitants. The entire territory was essentially under Jesuit control for several years (and the subject of a popular 1986 film entitled “The Mission”). In Bolivia, they had been successful as well, with 30 villages established in the west and far northern reaches of the territory by 1705. Another 16 towns had been established between 1682 and 1715 to the northwest of Santa Cruz, amongst the Moxos and Guarayos.

### **The First Jesuit Mission Settlements of the Chiquitania**

Unfortunately, Governor Arce died soon after the decision was made to evangelise the Chiquitania, and there was little support for continuing the policy. In fact, 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 - Arce and de Rivas at last founded the first *reducción* of San Francisco Xavier de los Piñocas (now San Javier or San Xavier) for the Piñocas, a subgroup of the Chiquitano family. It was – and still is - located approximately 215 kms (133 miles) northeast of Santa Cruz. Ten more settlements followed, with Santo Corazón de Jesús de Chiquitos (now simply Santo Corazón) the last, erected in 1760, just seven years before their expulsion. (The short-lived *reducción* of Nuestra Señora del Buen Consejo, founded just three months before the expulsion in 1767 near present-day Puerto Suárez, is not included in any list of these *reducciones*, as its existence was ephemeral.) The missions were prone to everything from pestilence to attacks by hostile tribes to fires and floods, and several had to be re-located or even re-founded. That they even survived is something of a miracle itself.

Politically, these settlements owed nominal allegiance to the Spanish Crown, 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 was in control, itself ultimately subject to oversight from the Archdiocese of La Plata (which, although secular, was dominated by and had a strong affinity towards the Jesuit Province of Paraguay).

In reality, however, thanks to their remoteness, the Chiquitos missions truly were completely autonomous and entirely self-sufficient. In fact, 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). A list of these settlements in the Chiquitania and their founding follows.



San José de Chiquitos: 1698



Concepción: 1699

**JESUIT MISSION SETTLEMENTS (*REDUCCIONES*) OF THE CHIQUITANIA**

<b>Settlement (Original name)</b>	<b>Founders</b>	<b>Founded/Relocated</b>
San Xavier (San Francisco Xavier de los Piñocas)	Fr. José de Arce; Br. Antonio de Rivas	1691/1696; 1698; 1708
San Rafael de Velasco	Fr. Juan Bautista Zea; Fr. Francisco Hervás	1696/1701; 1750
San José de Chiquitos (San José de los Borós)	Fr. Felipe Suárez; Fr. Dionisio Avila	1698
San Juan Bautista (San Juan Bautista de los Borós)	Fr. Juan Bautista Zea; Fr. Juan Patricio Fernández; Fr. Pedro Cerena	1699/1716; 1772; 1788-99
Concepción (La Inmaculada Concepción)	Fr. Francisco Caballero; Fr. Francisco Hervás	1699/1707; 1708; 1722
San Miguel de Velasco (San Miguel Arcángel)	Fr. Felipe Suárez; Fr. Francisco Hervás	1721
San Ignacio de Zamucos [abandoned in 1745, inhabitants transferred to San Ignacio de Velasco]	Fr. Juan Bautista Zea; Fr. Agustín Castañares	1723
San Ignacio de Velasco (San Ignacio)	Fr. Miguel Areijer; Fr. Diego	1748

de Loyola de Velasco)	Contreras	
Santiago de Chiquitos (Santiago Apóstol)	Fr. Gaspar Troncoso; Fr. Gaspar Campos	1754/1764
Santa Ana de Velasco	Fr. Julián Nogler	1755
Santo Corazón (Santo Corazón de Jesús de Chiquitos)	Fr. Antonio Gaspar; Fr. José Chueca	1760/1788



San Miguel de Velasco: 1721



San Ignacio de Velasco: 1748

### **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*) 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.

Only the natives and the Jesuit missionaries were legally inhabitants. Spanish 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 to this law was the architect Antonio Rojas, who possibly constructed two Chiquitos churches.) The *reducciones* naturally were absolutely off-limits to the Portuguese *mamelucos* (slave hunters) as well, to the point where each town maintained its own Jesuit-captained private militia to ward them off. In 1696, the hated Portuguese were decisively defeated at the Battle of San Xavier – in nearby present-day San Julián – by a combined force of missionary-led Piñocas and Spaniards.

There was no end to the abilities of the inhabitants to assimilate the cultural impulses of the Europeans. Soon these small villages were the cultural equals of large, urban centres like La Paz and Potosí, and had progressed to performing entire Baroque operas backed by full orchestras, complete with hand-made instruments and sophisticated musical scores...literally in the middle of nowhere. In particular, the Chiquitano and Guarayo had an astonishing ability with even the most complex music.

Each settlement had its own craftsmen skilled in the various arts; this was encouraged by the missionaries as an expression of labour and love for God. The artistic abilities of the indigenous peoples were truly phenomenal. All manner of carvings, furniture, musical instruments, metal ware, and other goods poured out of these remote towns and into Spanish colonial cities elsewhere to supplement their agricultural and cattle-raising pursuits.

The natives were members of one of the region's three largest tribal groups: the Chiquitano, Guarayo, or Ayoreo. (A very few Chiriguano and Guaraní were present in some *reducciones* in the Chiquitania as well.) At the time of the Jesuits' expulsion in 1767, there were at least 23,000 inhabitants, and perhaps as many as 37,000 throughout the ten settlements in the Chiquitania then under Jesuit guidance.

### **Their Churches**

The *reducciones*' focal point was, of course, the church (*templo*), which acted not only as a place of worship, but also as the primary cultural, economic, and educational centre of each settlement.

The *reducciones*' churches - seven of which have been more or less restored to their original state - were built by the combined efforts of the missionaries and the native population (with the exception of Santa Ana, which was built entirely by the Chiquitano after the Jesuits' expulsion). This cross-pollination had a profound effect on both sides, but more so on the natives, who gradually synthesised or adopted many of the Jesuits' cultural influences, in particular the propensity for praising God through the arts, often in a visually and aurally ornate manner.

Between 1746-1756, the Swiss Jesuit, musician, and architect Martin Schmid (1694-1772) worked in the Chiquitos missions and built there three (at least) extraordinary churches – San Rafael, San Xavier, and Concepción - from wood and adobe (sun-dried bricks) and equipped them with carved altars, pictorial works, music instruments and compositions.

Seven of these *templos* survived for more than two centuries, despite barely durable building materials, in an unfavorable climate, with massive neglect and contrary to most other timber-skeleton churches. This was largely due to Schmid's solid building method. However, the churches were maintained until roughly the beginning of the 20th century with very little expenditure. The extreme seclusion of the Chiquitania stymied for a long time any attempt at modernization. Only during the rubber boom, starting in 1880, were three of the churches modified in a neoclassical style (i.e., fitted with wooden columns faced with bricks).

A list of these churches and their founding follows.

### **JESUIT MISSION CHURCHES (*TEMPLOS*) OF THE CHIQUITANIA**

<b>Settlement (Original Name)</b>	<b>Built By</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Current State</b>
San Xavier* (San Francisco Xavier de los Piñocas)	Fr. Martin Schmid	1749-52	restored by Roth, <i>et al.</i> , 1987-93
San Rafael de Velasco*	Schmid	1747-9	restored by Roth, <i>et al.</i> , 1972-96
San José de Chiquitos*		c. 1745-54	restored by Roth, <i>et al.</i> , 1988-2003
San Juan Bautista (San Juan Bautista de los Boros)	possibly Schmid	1755-9? (burned 1781, 1811)	ruins of tower only
Concepción* (La Inmaculada Concepción)	Schmid	1752-6	restored by Roth, <i>et al.</i> , 1975-96
San Miguel de Velasco* (San Miguel Arcángel)	co-worker or pupil of Schmid	c. 1750-7	restored by Roth, <i>et al.</i> , 1979-83

San Ignacio de Velasco (San Ignacio de Loyola de Velasco)	co-worker or pupil of Schmid	by 1761 (destroyed 1948)	reconstructed 1964-8; 1992-2001 by Roth, <i>et al.</i>
Santiago de Chiquitos (Santiago Apóstol)		c. 1767 (destroyed mid-1800s)	reconstructed 1916-20
Santa Ana de Velasco*		c. 1770-80	partially restored by Roth, <i>et al.</i> , 1989-2001
Santo Corazón (Santo Corazón de Jesús de Chiquitos)		by 1769?	reconstructed

\* Named by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 1991

Ten of these churches were built, of which seven still exist (one - San Ignacio de Velasco - is a not a restoration but a reconstruction). These seven comprise the commonly known “Jesuit Mission Circuit” churches of Chiquitos (although three others, those of Santiago de Chiquitos, San Juan Bautista, and Santo Corazón, also exist, albeit in a state of replacement, ruin, and decay, respectively). Remarkably, those that stand today were all built within 30 years of each other (1745-75). At least three are attributable to the indefatigable Swiss Jesuit Fr. Martin Schmid, and another two to one or more of his co-workers.

The enormity of the task of building these churches is scarcely imaginable today. They did not spring up overnight: it took years of painstaking work, with every piece made by hand. For example, consider the *templo* at Concepción, begun in 1752. According to Schmid’s own correspondence, more than 2,000 hardwood trees were felled: each of the church’s massive beams required an entire tree trunk. These were about 12 metres (36 feet) in height, and on average weighed in excess of nine tonnes. To roof the edifice, more than 100,000 bricks and tiles were needed, and an additional 150,000 bricks for other sections of the building. The vertical columns - also of hardwood - weighed 20 tonnes. All this was done by hand, using only the crudest of tools. The result was a church that holds more than 3,000 people.

So important were - and are - these Chiquitos churches that they were placed upon the register of World Heritage Sites by UNESCO in 1990. They still play a central role in the lives of the people of the Chiquitania, and to the missionaries (now mostly German, Italian, and Polish Franciscans) who continue to minister to their spiritual needs. They are at the same time parish churches - enormously large and historic ones at that - and spiritual centres for the people who live in the region and still observe many of the same rites and traditions from the Jesuit missionary era, three hundred years on.

### **Political Considerations and the Expulsion of the Jesuits**

These ten 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* - had their own nefarious purposes for expanding westward. It did not help that their thriving economies and well-ordered way of life had earned the *reducciones* a great deal of jealousy. As they were virtually semi-independent states (complete with their own private militias), both powers were suspicious of the missions’ undefined political status and sought to exploit it.

It all came to a sudden end on 27 February 1767, when the Spanish King Carlos III ordered the expulsion of the Jesuits from his realms (those in Brazil had been expelled by the Portuguese in 1759), including the scarcely two dozen missionaries who watched over the enormous Chiquitania territory. Most of these died as a result of the hardships endured after the expulsion. With it came the end of a truly unique era in history, but one whose legacies still live on for the artist, historian, or traveller to appreciate.

### **After the Expulsion**

The astonishing growth of the Chiquitos *reducciones* ended abruptly with the expulsion decree, and the towns slowly spiralled into a state of near-terminal decline. In 1776, the government of the entire region was militarised and the Chiquitania administered from the newly created, far-away Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata (to which the Audiencia of Charcas now belonged). In ecclesiastical terms, the last *reducción* was secularised a few years after Bolivia declared independence in 1825 and the Diocese of Santa Cruz de la Sierra took over spiritual control (although in 1840 Franciscan missionaries were appointed to the Guarayos and Moxois missions). 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 swift demise of these settlements raises troubling questions for the student of 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 the Jesuits were reconstituted by Pope Pius VII in 1814, did the Jesuits not return 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 had 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.”

### **Current Research Concerns**

Although the expulsion of the Jesuits is a matter well-documented, and much has been recorded of the period preceding their banishment, considerable research remains to be done on the history immediately preceding and following the Jesuit missions of the Chiquitos. (This is especially so in the case of the chaotic period immediately following Bolivia's independence.)

As regards the Jesuit Era itself, almost no research has been dedicated to the anomalous churches of San Juan Bautista and San José de Chiquitos. Astonishingly, although primary resources exist in archives in Cochabamba, Sucre, and elsewhere, nothing has been written on the interaction between the Jesuits in the Chiquitos missions and their counterparts in the Moxos and Guarayos. And while there is much extant correspondence between the (mostly Central European) Jesuit missionaries and their fellow-Jesuits in Europe, little beyond a few of Schmid's letters have been examined.

As noted above, few works in any language extensively treat either the pre- or post-Jesuit era (and none in English). Thus, what little work is available focuses almost exclusively on developments of the Jesuit era only, and often relies upon secondary sources (many of them inaccurate). Some of the more vexing problems are that no exhaustive bibliography of the Jesuit presence in the Chiquitania exists (the largest being Querejazu's, found in *Las Misiones Jesuíticas de Chiquitos*); a Spanish or English biography of Schmid has yet to appear; the vast archives of Hans Roth lie mostly unexamined in Concepción (in the care of his elderly widow); and much important Jesuit-era art still lies in abysmal storage conditions in San José de Chiquitos and elsewhere throughout the region.

Other issues loom, of a social nature: the Chiquitos missions are not in any sense “pure” Jesuit *reducción* replicas. Long years of secular and Franciscan oversight have resulted in a hybrid culture, and one that is in great danger of being further diluted by the present government's efforts to make the area a primary Bolivian tourist attraction. Ironically, this is not only precisely what UNESCO's World Heritage

designation was designed to mitigate, but it also means that further scholarly work will be made more difficult.

### **On A Positive Note**

Of the original eleven Chiquitania settlements, nine survive (San Juan Bautista is now in ruins, and San Ignacio de Zamucos was abandoned early on). Of these, seven possess a unique (albeit hybrid), virtually intact cultural and social infrastructure that has changed little since the days of the Spanish colonists. All remain active settlements (several still function as missions), with vibrant religious customs and beliefs. In fact, the Chiquitania is now undergoing something of a cultural and historical renaissance, much of which has come to light only recently. With renewed scholarly interest in the area and a careful, rigorous approach to the conservation and study of the Chiquitos missions, much more can be done to both preserve and draw from the unique cultural and historical patrimony of these places.



Santiago de Chiquitos: 1754



Santa Ana de Velasco: 1755

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