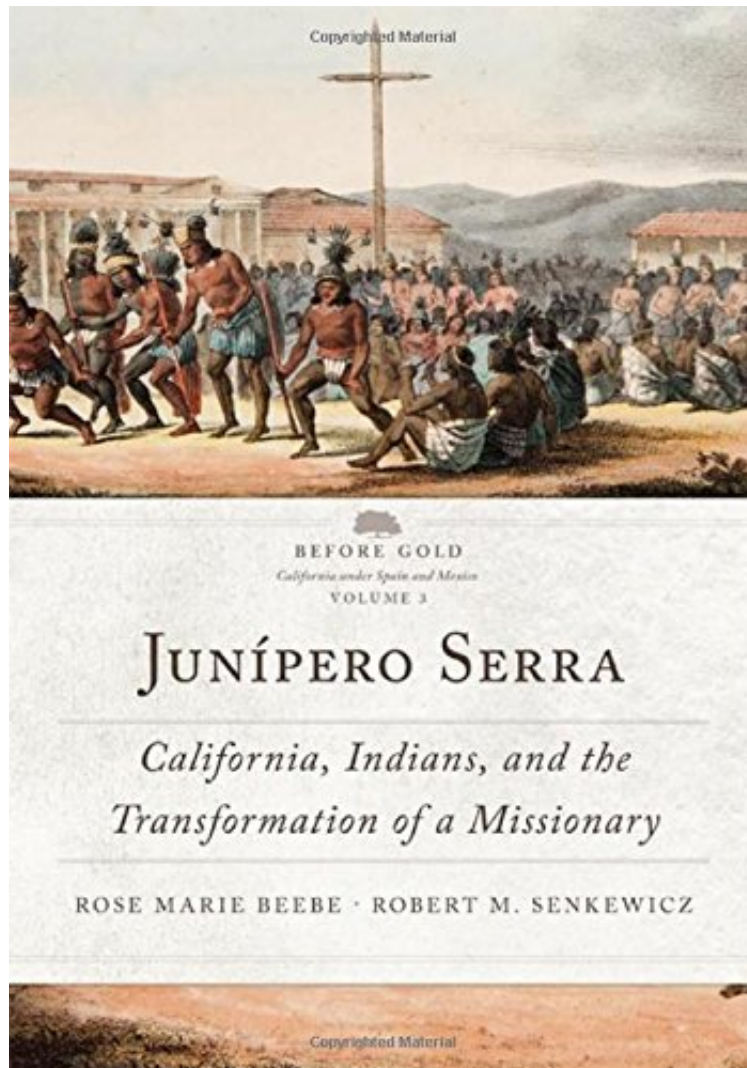


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Junpero Serra: California, Indians, and the Transformation of a Missionary (Before Gold: California under Spain and Mexico Series)

Rose Marie Beebe, Robert M. Senkewicz
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Rose Marie Beebe, Robert M. Senkewicz : Junpero Serra: California, Indians, and the Transformation of a Missionary (Before Gold: California under Spain and Mexico Series) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Junpero Serra: California, Indians, and the Transformation of a Missionary (Before Gold: California under Spain and Mexico Series):

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. An absolutely important book on Junipero Serra and Spanish Colonial Catholicism. By Bill Burrows I knew little of Fr Serra and the little I did know was of the controversies surrounding his life and ministry in the context of his impending canonization. I do know a fair bit about missiology, the study of mission. This book has drawbacks but I think it is an absolutely penetrating study of the ambiguity of mission done in the shadow of the colonial project. Christianity has already been in Mexico for more than two hundred years when Junipero Serra arrives, so he is participating in an ongoing work, and in the second half of his life in Spanish North America, he is one of the pioneers of Franciscan Catholic missions in what would become Arizona, New Mexico, and (the center of his life) California. His personal sanctity and honesty come through clearly. But his conscious participation in the Spanish Colonial project is just as clear. Spanish culture and Catholicism were interchangeable even if there were massive conflicts between the civil and religious departments. Serra is shown as a proponent of the goal of making Christian Indians into Spaniards who would be reliable sources of labor for Spanish ranchers, farmers, and other businesses. But it is also clear that he really believed he was there to save souls from hell. He had the misfortune to work alongside colonial administrators whom one can only call small-minded and cover-their-butt bureaucrats. The core of the book are the letters that Serra writes to three groups of people: his Franciscan and ecclesiastical superiors and confreres; administrators in California and in Mexico; and to family and friends in Majorca and elsewhere. The authors have an annoying habit of introducing the material in the letters by summarizing them instead of placing them succinctly in the context of unfolding events. They do so with quotations from the letters and other documents themselves, which means you are reading the same things much more than necessary. They also repeat themselves. I think a good editing could have made it a better book. But I also think you will go far and wide and never find a book so interesting and so filled with multi-layered content. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Junperero Serra in His Own Words By J. McIntosh This book presents St. Junperero Serra by using his own letters, journals and sermons. Instead of hearing what others think of Serra, this book allows one to meet the man and form one's own opinion. All texts are from the original and have the authors' own translations. The book ends, "...Serrass struggle was his own. His attempt to live out his religious ideals as a missionary among the peoples of America gave his own life its deepest meaning. He profoundly believed that encounters with missionaries would prove more advantageous to eighteenth-century indigenous peoples than the other possibilities that he thought were realistically available to them, specifically domination by soldiers or settlers. In the New Spain of the mid-eighteenth century, this belief was quite reasonable." 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. It is wonderful to finally read a proper translation of Fray Serra's ... By T Mcf It is wonderful to finally read a proper translation of Fray Serra's own words. Always even handed work from Rose Marie Beebe and Robert.

Franciscan missionary friar Junperero Serra (1713-1784), one of the most widely known and influential inhabitants of early California, embodied many of the ideas and practices that animated the Spanish presence in the Americas. In this definitive biography, translators and historians Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz bring this complex figure to life and illuminate the Spanish period of California and the American Southwest. In *Junperero Serra: California, Indians, and the Transformation of a Missionary*, Beebe and Senkewicz focus on Serrass religious identity and his relations with Native peoples. They intersperse their narrative with new and accessible translations of many of Serrass letters and sermons, which allows his voice to be heard in a more direct and engaging fashion. Serra spent thirty-four years as a missionary to Indians in Mexico and California. He believed that paternalistic religious rule offered Indians a better life than their oppressive exploitation by colonial soldiers and settlers, which he deemed the only realistic alternative available to them at that time and place. Serrass unswerving commitment to his vision embroiled him in frequent conflicts with Californias governors, soldiers, native peoples, and even his fellow missionaries. Yet because he prevailed often enough, he was able to place his unique stamp on the first years of Californias history. Beebe and Senkewicz interpret Junperero Serra neither as a saint nor as the personification of the Black Legend. They recount his life from his birth in a small farming village on Mallorca. They detail his experiences in central Mexico and Baja California, as well as the tumultuous fifteen years he spent as founder of the California missions. Serrass Franciscan ideals are analyzed in their eighteenth-century context, which allows readers to understand more fully the differences and similarities between his world and ours. Combining history, culture, and linguistics, this new study conveys the power and nuance of Serrass voice and, ultimately, his impact on history.

Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz have merged their new, living, and superb translations of Junperero Serrass extant writings with a penetrating narrative that reflects their long experience and interpretive gifts. The authors convey an understanding of Serrass life and times that is at once nuanced and broad-stroke, challenging mainstream opinion and bringing balance to the multiple controversies surrounding the Franciscan priest. Readers cannot help but reassess their preconceptions. Janet Fireman, author of *The Spanish Royal Corps of Engineers in the Western Borderlands: Instrument of Bourbon Reform, 1764 to 1815*