During his recent visit to the United States in September of 2015, Pope Francis canonized Junípero Serra to sainthood for “saving the souls of native people by bringing Christianity to the new world.” But it is clear that the saintly image imparted to generations of California schoolchildren is incomplete, according to UCR Professor of History Steven Hackel. Some say that Serra did not bring Christianity to native people in California, he imposed it.

Serra founded and was the head of the missions in California, helping to establish nine communities where natives lived under the supervision of priests in a life of prayer and work. One of Spain’s major goals was to assimilate the native peoples and make them part of the Spanish empire. This was done in two ways: by making the native people Catholic, and by teaching them European-style agriculture. This, however, led to the decimation of the state’s Indian population in the 18th and 19th centuries.

UCR Professor Steven Hackel’s book, “Junípero Serra: California’s Founding Father” is the first to fully examine Serra’s early life in Mallorca, an island off Spain’s coast, and how his experiences there influenced policies and actions in New Spain (California) that make him, to many, a polarizing figure in our history.

Hackel’s research specializes on the Spanish Borderlands, colonial California, and California Indians. He is especially interested in Indian responses to colonialism, the effects of disease on colonial encounters, and new ways of visualizing these processes through digital history. He is the general editor of the Early California Population Project and the Project Director for the Early California Cultural Atlas. He co-curated the Huntington Library’s exhibition, “Junípero Serra and the Legacy of the California Missions.”

Born and raised in California, Hackel earned his B.A. at Stanford and his Ph.D. in American History from Cornell. From 1994 to 1996, he was a post-doctoral fellow at the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture in Williamsburg, Virginia. Prior to coming to UCR, he taught at Oregon State from 1996 to 2007.

Monday, February 1, 2016 - 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.  
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The cost includes complimentary parking in Lot 24, directly across the street from the Alumni & Visitors Center.

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Using the enclosed self-addressed envelope, return your luncheon reservation payable to: REGENTS UC  
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