

that Governor Antonio de Acuña (1650–1656) and his *maestre de campo* undid decades of expansion and negotiations by overburdening the indios amigos (on whom the Spanish army relied) and through ill-conceived military operations. Chapter 5 focuses on two particularly corrupt governors and their own involvement in the trafficking and enslavement of Mapuche people. He concludes that despite repeated royal legislation to close the loophole on enslaving the Mapuche, only the 1687 earthquake in Lima and subsequent wheat blight lead to a fundamental change that moved the economy away from slavery.

This book makes a valuable contribution to the long-overlooked reality of the enslavement of Indigenous peoples within the Spanish empire. It also powerfully explores the agency of the Mapuche in different capacities as they were forced to engage with the Spanish, from the enslaved and exploited individuals within the empire to the indios amigos negotiating special privileges on its fringes to the military and diplomatic victories of the people outside it. Indigenous slavery has been the subject of important recent studies in other parts of the empire, and Berger's analysis could have benefitted from engaging with this historiography, particularly the works of Tatiana Seijas and Nancy van Deusen. Similarly, a firmer grasp on the legal and administrative institutions of the empire would have nuanced his discussion of forced labor: *Encomendados* are characterized as servants instead of tribute-payers (145) and his claim that tribute was almost entirely demanded in labor requires further nuance, not least in light of evidence to the contrary in case studies Berger himself discusses (68). Engagement with scholarship on Iberian imperialism as an administrative system, such as the work of Arndt Brendecke, would also have helped articulate some of the points Berger makes in the final chapter about the ineffectiveness of legislation and of the power of colonial officials. Nevertheless, this book's meticulous documenting of the enslavement of the Mapuche and its methodological effort to center them despite the difficulty of surviving sources make it a valuable contribution to the study of colonial Latin America.

*University of Oxford*  
*Oxford, United Kingdom*  
[natalie.cobo@history.ox.ac.uk](mailto:natalie.cobo@history.ox.ac.uk)

NATALIE COBO

## ROYAL DECREES AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SPANISH EMPIRE

*We The King: Creating Royal Legislation in the Sixteenth-Century Spanish New World.* By Adrian Masters. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp 319. \$110.00 cloth; \$110.00 e-book.  
 doi:10.1017/tam.2023.99

Adrian Masters's book is a work that cannot be overlooked for several reasons. First, because it offers new approaches to central debates about the construction of the Spanish Empire. Second, because it is an attempt at methodological innovation. Third,

because it has an extensive empirical foundation, based on notoriously arduous archival work. In short, it is a text that deserves to be read in detail.

The central theme of the book, the creation of royal decrees in the Spanish Empire during the sixteenth century, may sound simple, but the book reveals the many layers of complexity involved in this process. Networks of actors, logistics, shipping routes, material conditions such as paper and ink, and even unexpected situations appear in the text as relevant factors in the creation of royal decrees. To develop this perspective, the author draws on the work of Bruno Latour, particularly the “Actor-Network Theory.” This theory provides the necessary tools to analyze the complexities he has observed in the sources and intuitively provides him with critiques of traditional perspectives on law.

Given the scope of the project, the author has examined a wide range of sources in archives located in Europe, Latin America, and the United States. It is noteworthy that the diversity of the collections studied has resulted in a text that is nourished with first-hand information on the functioning of logistic networks and has been able to delve deeply into the activities of the royal councils. What is lacking, however, is a more extensive review of doctrinal texts and pragmatic literature (*manuales prácticos*) that could also introduce—or contextualize—first-hand information on the legal culture in which, for example, *poderes* (powers of attorney) were granted to *abogados* (lawyers) and *procuradores de causa* or how the “paper ceremonies” were performed.

The book understands the creation of the decrees as the expression of a petition-and-response system that maintained the fiction of communication between the vassal and the king. The book successfully uses as a narrative thread the journey of a mestizo named Pedro Rengifo from the Andes to the royal court in Madrid to present a petition on behalf of the “family of mestizos.” A mestizo himself, the son of an Indigenous woman and a Spanish man, the purpose of his journey was that the mestizos could be accepted on equal terms with Spanish men and women in priesthood ordination. Along this path, the first chapter reviews the creation of petitions as manifestations of will (*voluntad*) ritually fixed on paper and the role of intermediaries in their formation. The second chapter looks at the networks of “actants” (to use Latour’s term) involved in transporting the wills (*las voluntades*) across the imperial domains along the maritime routes, dealing with dangers such as disease or pirates. This chapter highlights the importance of material conditions in the production of law. The third chapter is the most innovative. It examines women as actors in the development of decision-making processes within the government and royal councils. The fourth and fifth chapters examine the development of governmental decision-making processes before and after the establishment of Madrid as the center of the empire in 1561. They are well-informed chapters on the actors involved in the rule-making processes and their working technologies. Finally, the sixth chapter unpacks the actual production of royal decrees. With extensive empirical evidence, it shows that the wording of petitions was eventually copied into the final decrees and shaped royal legislation.

The book is aware of its own limitations, which is wise, given the difficulty of the proposed task. It concentrates on the work of the royal councils and on a specific type of royal decree. For this reason, it does not deal with the legislative dynamics within each local government within the empire, nor does it examine the consequences after the decree was issued. That would undoubtedly require a methodological approach that would also look in detail at the use of the decrees, the actors, and their technologies.

It is surprising that the book, when referring to legal history literature produced in Latin America and Spain, concentrates on the historiographical line of “derecho indiano,” citing the approaches of authors such as Alfonso García Gallo, Ismael Sánchez Bella, or Víctor Tau Anzoátegui. The positivist and institutionalist perspective of this literature has been discussed and questioned by authors who have studied the political, legal, and economic culture of the late medieval and early modern periods.

In this sense, it is curious that a thorough literature review, as the author has notoriously done throughout the book, does not include authors—such as Clavero, Grossi, Costa, Vallejo, and Agüero, among others—who have contributed significant innovations to the legal history of the period under study in recent decades. This newer literature does not understand the law under the modern conditioning factors of legalism and statehood—what the author, following Latour, calls the “mythologization of law.” Instead, it understands law as part of the jurisdictional culture (*cultura jurisdiccional*) in a corporate society. A dialogue with these historiographies would have provided interesting discussions on general issues, such as law-making and the construction of political power, or on more specific issues, such as grace (*la gracia*) and the role of decrees.

Finally, an editing error that cannot be overlooked is that Victor Tau Anzoátegui is named and cited as “Tao” in the text (17, 21, and 158) and the bibliography (307–8).

*Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú*  
Lima, Peru  
[damian.gonzales13@gmail.com](mailto:damian.gonzales13@gmail.com)

DAMIAN A. GONZALES ESCUDERO

## CHRISTIAN APOCALYPTIC DISCOURSE IN NEW SPAIN

*Aztec and Maya Apocalypses: Old World Tales of Doom in a New World Setting.* By Mark Z. Christensen. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2022. Pp. xii, 252. \$55.00 cloth.

doi:10.1017/tam.2023.100

*Some say the world will end in fire, some say in ice.* The existential uncertainty about the end of times, a vast preoccupation that stretches from medieval theology to the secular anxieties of the poem by Robert Frost cited above, is at the center of *this book*. This innovative volume surveys Christian apocalyptic discourse in a selection of catechistic works