Juan F. Cobo Betancourt. *The Coming of the Kingdom: The Muisca, Catholic Reform, and Spanish Colonialism in the New Kingdom of Granada*. Cambridge University Press, 2024. Ebook, open access.

This insightful book explores a crucial aspect of Spain's early colonialism: the Christianization of Indigenous communities in its overseas territories. Using the Muisca—inhabitants of the central highlands of New Granada (roughly present-day Colombia)—as a case study, the author sheds light on a colonial region often overlooked in historical narratives, especially compared to the better-documented areas of Mexico and Peru. These regions are frequently seen as models for the Spanish colonial project, an assumption that this book challenges.

Focusing on the century following the first encounters between Spaniards and the Muisca, the study spans from the 1530s to the 1650s. During this period, particularly in the early seventeenth century, colonial officials, religious leaders, and Jesuit missionaries launched an ambitious reform effort aimed at Christianizing the Indigenous population, a process thoroughly examined in *The Coming of the Kingdom*.

Drawing from a wide array of sources—including correspondence, ecclesiastical reports, petitions, legislation, legal documents, and related materials—found in archives and libraries both in Colombia and abroad (Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States), the book traces the complex dynamics of Christianization. Cobo Betancourt reveals this process to be coercive yet deeply negotiated, contested, contingent, and uneven. Despite its shortcomings and obstacles, the Christianization effort was persistent, closely tied to Spain's identity as a newly unified kingdom and reinforced by its use of Christian evangelization to justify the conquest, occupation, and control of colonial territories, with legal backing from the papacy. The preservation of Catholic orthodoxy in colonial enclaves was an additional driving force.

The book is organized chronologically into two parts. The first part, comprising three chapters, focuses on the sixteenth century. The opening chapter examines Muisca society, government, culture, and religiosity around the time of the Spanish invasion, debunking long-standing myths such as the idea of linguistic homogeneity. The second chapter explores the early history of Spanish colonial rule and governance in the region, while the third chapter discusses growing tensions and rising violence between colonial authorities and Indigenous communities in the late sixteenth century.

The second part consists of three chapters focused on the seventeenth century, framed within significant changes in colonial leadership, both civil and religious, as well as shifts in the ideological and practical approach to Christianization. Chapter 4 delves into dramatic changes in evangelization strategies, resulting from a coalition of power brokers, including a new audiencia president, a new archbishop, influential encomienda holders, and Jesuit reformers. This group embraced more inclusive Indigenous practices of Christianity, incorporating several external manifestations of piety, including public ceremonies, celebrations of popular devotion, religious art, and participation in confraternities. Chapter 5 addresses colonial policies regarding Indigenous languages and their role in teaching Christianity. The final chapter evaluates the transformation of the church at the local level, examining deep institutional and ideological changes.

The Coming of the Kingdom is a significant contribution to the historiography of "Catholic colonialism," a body of work that has redefined our understanding of the role of the church and religion in colonial Spanish America. Scholars such as Jaime H. Borja, Inga Clendinnen, Sabine G. MacCormack, David E. Tavárez, and Adriaan C. van Oss have helped shed new light on this subject, and Cobo Betancourt's study adds to this important scholarship. Furthermore, the book enhances our understanding of the Muisca and early colonial governance in New Granada, joining the work of historians and anthropologists like Ana M. Boada, François Correa, Jorge A. Gamboa, Hope Henderson, Carl H. Langebaek, Eduardo Londoño, Fernando Mayorga, Santiago Muñoz, Nicholas Ostler, Luis F. Restrepo, and José V. Rodríguez.

Cobo Betancourt's study is refreshing, innovative, and deeply revisionist. It corrects long-standing imprecisions regarding the pre-Hispanic past and the early colonization and governance of New Granada. The book offers a nuanced and dynamic account of Christianization in the region, portraying it as a shifting undertaking that Indigenous groups adapted to creatively in pursuit of their own interests. The narrative demonstrates their unique ability to navigate a changing world and withstand colonial pressures. The book is clearly organized, with cogent prose and extensive documentation. It would be a valuable resource for both undergraduate surveys and graduate seminars.

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Galen Brokaw and Pablo García Loaeza, eds. *The Nahua: Language and Culture from the Sixteenth Century to the Present*. University Press of Colorado, 2024. Pp. 312. Paper $32.95.

The study of Nahuatl, best known as the language of the Aztecs but regionally spoken across northern

Mesoamerica, has transformed historical approaches to Indigenous and Spanish colonial Mexico over the past half century. In the United States, linguist R. Joe Campbell has played a key role in this process. *The Nahua: Language and Culture from the Sixteenth Century to the Present* pays fitting homage to Campbell's life's work. For historians who may be most familiar with James Lockhart's "New Philology" developed at the University of California, Los Angeles, in the 1970s–90s, the volume is an exemplary guide to other schools of thought and disciplinary approaches, from several generations of leading scholars in the United States, Mexico, and Europe.

The first two chapters lay the necessary groundwork and demystify the term "Classical Nahuatl," which refers to the variant of the language dominant in central Mexico at the time of Spanish invasion and should not be confused with the archaeological "Classic" period of Teotihuacán and the Maya lowlands from 300–800 CE. As Galen Brokaw and Pablo García Loaeza explain, this variant formed the bedrock of a new standardization created by Nahua and Spanish intellectuals in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The stakes could not have been higher; in a context of religious repression, imperialism, and demographic disaster, ancient and unique writing systems that constituted rare examples in world history of the independent development of script were replaced by a single Latin-based standard that only partially succeeded in capturing the richness of Nahuatl and other Mesoamerican languages. Brokaw and García Loaeza survey this transition in the early Spanish colonial period from semasiographic Mesoamerican to alphabetic European writing. They also survey the major schools of Nahuatl studies in Mexico and the United States (Europe and other parts of the world are not addressed, although some of their practitioners are cited).

The second chapter, by linguist Karen Dakin, explains the geographical origin of Nahuan languages in northern Mexico and their dispersal throughout Mesoamerica over time, as far south as El Salvador and Nicaragua. Rather than give a selectively definitive account, Dakin shows how linguists have arrived at sometimes competing reconstructions of this history. Characteristic of the author, this chapter is very readable despite its inevitable complexity. Dakin rejects the term "Classical Nahuatl" altogether and renames the sixteenth-century, central Mexican variant on which the new written standard was based Colonial Central Nahuatl, a far clearer label that avoids the impression that this version of the language was the "the direct representative of a historical mother language from which the rest of Nahua dialects derived" (39). Nor, as Brokaw and García Loaeza also point out, should the written standardization be confused with the language as spoken, which varied even within central Mexico itself, as historians like Caterina Pizzigoni and Camilla Townsend have likewise shown.

The remaining chapters indicate considerable interdisciplinary overlap in methodologies and questions across disciplines in the field of Nahuatl studies today. All focus on native Nahuatl speakers and writers rather than their Spanish interlocutors. Philologist Mercedes Montes de Oca Vega (chap. 3) explores Nahua diphrases for place-names (e.g., "the place of the black ink, the place of the red ink" to refer to a place of wise ancestors). These were not, she argues, simply honorific or flowery language, but likely referenced events, mythical stories, or culturally specific perceptions that remain hidden to us. Historian John F. Schwaller (chap. 6) and linguist Mary L. Clayton (chap. 7) both use Campbell's pioneering coded morphological database to similarly explore the Nahua conceptual world, Schwaller by unpacking Nahua ideas about running (an essential form of transportation in Mesoamerica also associated with ritual, commerce, and play) and Clayton by considering a sixteenth-century Nahuatl translation of the Spanish–Latin dictionary of Antonio de Nebrija. The translator grappled with unfamiliar concepts and things, as did his or her contemporary Fabián de Aquino, whose Nahuatl-language *Contemptus mundi* (discussed by anthropologist Ben Leeming in chap. 8) painfully evoked the disasters of his era. A century later, Nahuas continued to adjust Spanish words to match their views of a now thoroughly changed world: for instance, the prominent role played by the dangerous yet necessary Nahua notary, or *escribanoh*, in Nahuatl plays of the late Spanish colonial period, analyzed by anthropologist Louise M. Burkhart in chapter 9.

Anthropologists Rosa H. Yáñez Rosales (chap. 4) and Magnus Pharao Hansen (chap. 5) both document cases of language endangerment. In the Spanish colonial period, Nahuatl survived while other Western languages like Tepecano and Guachichil did not; by the mid-twentieth century, however, local varieties of Nahuatl were spoken only in ritual and formal contexts. In Morelos, according to Hansen, this history is potentially genocidal. He suggests that historians have failed to recognize a precipitous drop in the number of native Nahuatl speakers in the heartland of the Zapatista rebellion between 1900 and 1930, based on a misreading of the Mexican census that recorded bilingual speakers as Spanish. The Spanish flu is one potential culprit, but so, too, are recorded scorched-earth tactics employed by leaders in Mexico City against whom the Zapatistas remained in rebellion. More hopefully, anthropologists Alan R. Sandstrom and Pamela Effrein Sandstrom (chap. 10) argue that the ritual paper figures of Nahua religious practice in the Huasteca region of Veracruz and elsewhere continue the semasiographic messaging on which ancient Mesoamerican writing was based.

Immersion in the living language, exemplified by Campbell, created a sea change in Nahuatl studies. As sensitively chronicled by literary scholar Kelly S. McDonough in the final chapter, Nahuas have worked hard to pass down their ancestral knowledge and language through the ages. Particularly noteworthy is the nineteenth-century scholar Chimalpopoca, a conservative in the truest sense of the word. Efforts like his have made non-Indigenous study of the language possible and continue to the present day. Genuine partnerships have created durable, overlapping networks and approaches to Nahuatl studies, with and within the academy. The results—and future pathways—are abundantly evident in this fine volume.

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Kyle E. Harvey. *In Place of Mobility: Railroads, Rebels, and Migrants in an Argentine-Chilean Borderland*. University of North Carolina Press, 2024. Pp. 264. Paper $29.95.

Kyle E. Harvey's book, *In Place of Mobility: Railroads, Rebels, and Migrants in an Argentine-Chilean Borderland*, tackles the history of in-between places and peoples in the second half of the nineteenth century. By "in-between," I mean that it straddles two emerging nation-states, one whose status has been constitutionally defined since 1833 and the other in flux. Harvey's central thesis revolves around his definition of mobility. In the Argentine-Chilean borderland of the mid-nineteenth century, mobility is defined as lived experiences of those whose lives are affected economically, politically, and socially by their movement through and in a specific geographic space. For rebels, migrants, and the businesspeople and engineers of railroads, this space was the Trans-Andean, "understood here as part of western Argentina—namely, part of the provinces of Cuyo (particularly Mendoza and, to a lesser extent, San Juan), in close relationship with neighboring Chile" (3). Mobility acts as an engine of economic growth in the Trans-Andean, particularly as a geographic space that creates linkages across space and time but can at the same time inhibit that growth because of competing state actors with their own agendas and goals. The research that undergirds Harvey's analysis is extensive, covering both sides of the Andes and encompassing a variety of both primary and secondary sources.

Organized with an introduction, five chapters with short "interludes" in between, and a conclusion, *In Place of Mobility* breaks with the usual monograph format. For example, in chapter 4, "Manufacturing a Rebellion," Harvey discusses how capital infusions from two engineers-turned-entrepreneurs from the Chilean mine industry literally bought rebellion on the Argentine side. Those who rebelled were laborers (soldiers and others) who utilized violence to control their own labor and mobility. The interlude chapter that follows (interlude 4, "Engineers Between Frontiers") provides a case study of one of these engineers-turned-entrepreneurs, Nicolás Naranjo, and people like him. Engineers in Argentina during this period worked "surveying land for colonization, surveying mineral capacities of mining veins, surveying routes for canals and railroads" (110). What ties these chapters together is the idea that the Trans-Andean, as a borderland and frontier space, served as the canvas for people like Naranjo to transform that space for economic expansion but also, by financing a rebellion, place limits on the governability of that space.

The book's strength is Harvey's argument with respect to mobility, rural life, and the uses of property, and state responses to these experiences. For example, in the discussion of notions of property in chapter 3, pastures and houses become important. Houses in this rural space served multiple purposes, including as sites of economic exchange and of local governmental authority over a rural population. Thieves and migrant laborers relied on houses to store and trade stolen animals that merchants then bought or had the laborers steal for them, in effect creating a business out of animal theft that went beyond cattle rustling and complicated the responses from local authorities and the judicial system. "It is clear that during the intensification of Trans-Andean commercial activities, the labor of theft became increasingly necessary for aspiring merchants seeking to trade across the mountains" (80). What is novel here is the idea that merchants *had* to rely on labor of theft to pursue economic activities that benefited their business interests. In other words, criminal activity that relies on mobility becomes intimately tied to the social, political, and economic environment of the Trans-Andean. Furthermore, property, whether it be pastures, houses, or animals, serves as the foundation for all activities in the Trans-Andean (151). Harvey elaborates further on this central argument in chapters 4 and 5.

The sections on engineers and railroads have some intriguing aspects, especially when Harvey discusses railroads as technology that both built the physical environment of the Trans-Andean, and worked to "disperse the social relationships undergirding that spatial production across the world, creating, in effect, global space" (144). Nonetheless, these discussions tended to distract rather than enhance the main arguments. The organization of the book with the interludes may have contributed to this disjointedness. The Revolución de los Colorados in chapter 4 lacked details that would have aided the reader's