

**Maya Stanfield-Mazzi, *Clothing the New World Church*
Liturgical Textiles of Spanish America, 1520-1820, University of Notre Dame Press,
Indiana, 2021, 408 pages, hardback, ISBN 9780268108052, \$50.00.**

Maya Stanfield-Mazzi's *Clothing the New World Church: Liturgical Textiles of Spanish America, 1520-1820* highlights some of the essential threads in the social and material history of textile production and usage within the context of the Church in Spanish America. This includes their consideration against the backdrop of Spanish colonial rule and expanding international trade networks. The investigation commences with the seventeenth-century painting *Mass for the Dead and Souls in Purgatory* from the Church of San Pablo de Cacha, Cusco, Peru, considering the various textiles it displays. These cloths dress members of the clergy or religious statuary, a common practice throughout the colonial era in Spanish America, as well as walls, furniture and altars. Stanfield-Mazzi contends that cloth 'was the single most important material and visual feature of Catholic church interiors in Spanish America' and supports her assertion with wide-ranging examples that explore a spectrum of materials falling under the category of church textiles.¹ The book is arranged by chapters grouped by textile type: woven silk, embroidery, featherwork, tapestry, and painted cotton and lace. Its taxonomic framework makes this publication equally accessible to art historians and non-specialists, drawing on works and materials that are not always categorised as art within dominant Western frameworks. This clarity is achieved through detailed descriptions of textile terminology, a clear glossary, an engaging writing style, and lucid illustrations that exemplify each textile type at a macro-level. This organisational structure makes the book a useful reference work.

Clothing the New World Church testifies to the important role played by textiles in the Spanish colonial context and its processes of colonisation, but also draws attention to the underlying fact that the manufacture and maintenance of these cloths was a shared project by the Spanish colonisers and diverse groups of Indigenous people across former Spanish colonial territories alike. Economic and Spanish imperial expansion resulted in multifaceted influences on textile designs, and on material production and its agents. Stanfield-Mazzi deepens this much-needed analysis first laid out in her article on 'Weaving and Tailoring the Andean Church: Textile Ornaments and Their Makers in Colonial Peru', stressing the previously underestimated role of Indigenous actors as mediators between regional ancestral textile traditions and those promoted by the Catholic Church.² The author underpins her argument with careful analyses of materials and techniques, and the use of motifs. The attention paid to historical backgrounds provides an understanding of why certain materials, such as

featherwork, were used and developed in the production of Church textiles in terms of their physicality and materiality. Through this, the development of individual motifs is explored, and how these transformed under the cultural influences of native cultures mixing with those of European origin.

Today, many church interiors lack colonial-period textiles, with most of those textiles currently housed in textile collections, anthropological museums and art museums, such as the Pedro de Osma Museum and the Museo de Arte de Lima, both Lima, Peru, the Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK. As a result, *Clothing the New World Church* draws on a wide range of textile, textual and diverse pictorial resources from collections in Mexico, Peru, Argentina, Europe and the United States, including private collections. Textiles operate on the boundaries of systems of Western categorisations in the museum sphere in resisting a clear-cut definition as craft versus art, and their makers as artisans versus artists. These prevailing categorisations – and their impact on textiles – complicate archival practices and access to the material at hand, as they are dispersed across many repositories. Stanfield-Mazzi circumvents the question of classification, arguing that the discussion postdates the period of her study. This allows for a multi-media approach avoiding hierarchical views of both the materials and their makers. It is commendable to facilitate subject engagement without reinforcing existing disciplinary boundaries, an approach that still needs to be more widely adapted by academic writers as a practical reaction to topical theoretical discussions. Written records, church inventories and account books are used alongside extant textile fragments and pictorial sources in an effort to reconstruct church collections and the use and ideological relevance of individual pieces. These include now lost textiles and surviving vestments such as intricate chasubles (a sleeveless outer vestment restricted to the sacrament of Mass and worn by its officiating priest), mantles, and processional tunics.

The incorporation of a chapter on featherwork, despite the dearth of surviving liturgical textiles made with feathers, which were extremely delicate, shows the wide range of case studies presented. As a specialist in Andean colonial art, Stanfield-Mazzi focuses a large portion of her study on the territory of present-day Peru. That said, her exploration of featherwork that focuses on Mexico fits neatly within the wider framework of the publication. Featherwork is established in terms of its pre-Columbian Indigenous origins – especially in central Mexico, but also in the Andes and as practiced by the Tupinambá in Brazil – before assessing the technique used in several miters (a cylindrical liturgical headdress reserved for bishops, cardinals and popes) in the colonial period. The miters are of refined quality, undoubtedly some of the most intricate textile examples included in the book.

Stanfield-Mazzi's publication contributes profoundly to 'the preservation of Spanish America's textile legacy' as 'a massive humanist project that requires much dedication and continued support, but is fruitful in the lives of many'.³ Rather than shying away from a project with such a large scope, Stanfield-Mazzi has compiled an intriguing range of cases, presenting to the reader with a breadth of oft-ignored and unseen examples that deserve further attention in the future. Given the issues of preservation and display facing surviving textiles, *Clothing the New World Church* provides a much-needed window into the depth and riches of textiles of Spanish America.

¹ Maya Stanfield-Mazzi, *Clothing the New World Church* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press), 3.

² Maya Stanfield-Mazzi, 'Weaving and Tailoring the Andean Church,' *The Americas: A Quarterly Review of Latin American History*, Vol. 72, No. 1, 2015, 77–102.

³ Maya Stanfield-Mazzi, *Clothing the New World Church*, xxi.