

Knowledge and Governance in the Early Modern Spanish Empire

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The relationship between knowledge production and governance has been at the center of research on the Spanish Empire for some years. One consensus reached by many recent works seems to be that information has been produced and collected by various actors and institutions, but not necessarily used by government bodies in Spain. To answer further open questions, such as the relationship between knowledge and non-knowledge or knowledge production at a local colonial level, historians from Europe and the Americas gathered for this conference, that focused on three aspects in particular: first, the legal and institutional foundations of the Empire, second, the threats to the Empire and how they were dealt with, and finally, the practices and places of information gathering.

Section 1 on the legal and institutional foundations of the Empire was opened by ALEXANDRA ANOKHINA (Oxford). She discussed different legal concepts in the works of Francisco Suarez (1548-1617), one of the most important early modern Spanish jurists. Through an in-depth analysis of Suarez's statements and modes of argumentation, she was able to show how intensively Roman law was received and that it had a great influence on the conception of governance in early modern Spain.

ADRIAN MASTERS (Austin, TX) studied the creation of the Spanish Imperial Archives by the Council of Indies between 1492 and 1598. The extensive petition system that had emerged since the Middle Ages demonstrates that knowledge cannot be regarded as uniform. In addition to the knowledge of the

state, particular knowledge permeated by interests, also played an important role in everyday administrative life. The growing complexity and the increasing amount of information finally forced the council to develop new ways of structuring archival material.

Moving from Europe to the Americas, JUAN CARLOS DE ORELLANA SÁNCHEZ (Austin, TX) examined transfers of officials through the Spanish Empire between 1567 and 1687. Starting from the observation that the *audiencias* in Spain and America were based on the same institutional foundations, he showed that they were fundamentally different when it came to dealing with promotions. After their formation in Spain, most of the judges sent to the Indies stayed there indefinitely. This way, experts who were familiar with the government of the Indies were created, on the one hand by circulation and on the other hand by promotion (also within the same *audiencia*). In this way, a consistency of jurisprudence was achieved.

The section on legal and institutional foundations was completed by SANTIAGO MUÑOZ ARBELÁEZ (Yale, CT / Bogotá). In his in-depth analysis on personal visits in the New Kingdom of Granada during the 16th century he pointed out that visitations highly contributed to the making of the New Kingdom. He interpreted the documents of the governmental classification system of native populations as empire-making artefacts that reshaped the space they tried to describe.

The first section has shown that although the different parts of the Spanish Empire were based on similar legal foundations, their practical implementations could take very different forms. Of great importance were proven methods and traditions which were adapted to local conditions.

Section 2 dealt with the threats to the Empire. JESSICA FOWLER (Segovia / Madrid) focused on an ecclesiastical organization often neglected in administrative-historical contexts: the Spanish Inquisition. Her paper focused on *Alumbrados*, a religious movement in early modern Spain that was strongly persecuted by the Spanish Inquisition. In a study of the transfers of knowledge between Spain and Mexico, she was able to prove how the Inquisition sanctioned a certain definition

of *Alumbradismo* and used it to persecute „heretics“. Thus it was not the heretics themselves who travelled, but only the knowledge.

The Philippines formed a particularly remote part of the Spanish Empire. EBERHARD CRAILSHEIM (Madrid) showed that Spain regarded this colony as a western outpost against the Muslims. These Muslims, known as „*Moros*“, were regarded as allies of the Ottomans. As the cycle of knowledge transfer from there to Spain was particularly long, the local administration enjoyed great autonomy in dealing with these opponents. The governor’s decision-making process was largely detached from information flows from Spain, and thus it was particularly shaped by local interests, such as those of the Jesuit friars.

Migration always played a major role in colonial history. MARTIN BIERSACK (Munich) took a closer look at this central object of colonial history from the perspective of knowledge production about foreigners living in Spanish America. Using South American examples, he was able to point out that the government did not have a systematic form of registration, but that each local administration had its own system – ranging from simple lists with names to small biographies of foreigners. The whole system was highly inefficient and the accounts had nearly no effect on governmental decision-making.

JUDITH MANSILLA (Miami) gave an insight in her research on the politics of defense of the city of Lima in the 17th century. As a commercial center and capital of the new kingdom of Peru, Lima was a key city for the whole continent. Whereas protection and defense against pirate invasions was a primary focus of the local government – as illustrated by the repeated efforts to improve the fortifications of Lima’s port at Callao – the preparation for natural disasters seems to have been neglected.

The second section illustrated how the Spanish Empire reacted to threats and what significance knowledge had in this context. In the papers it became clear that knowledge is not to be equated with benefit and that decision-making processes were not necessarily linked to knowledge: it could also be useless or even disruptive.

Section 3 dealt with practices and places of information gathering. Co-authored with DAVID PRETEL (Mexico City), SAUL GUERRERO (Caracas) examined in his paper the production of knowledge about silver refining in Spanish America from a decentralized perspective. Contrary to widespread assumptions, this knowledge was not imported by Europeans, but developed by local craftsmen. Due to the special geology of South America, they independently developed a process in which they produced silver using mercury.

With the Spanish Netherlands, LISA KATTENBERG (Amsterdam) looked at another region that is often neglected in research on the globally active Spanish Empire. Without falling back into a Eurocentric perspective, she discussed entanglements of knowledge during the Eighty Years’ War (1568-1648). She emphasized the importance of historical knowledge as an argumentative tool in the negotiations concerning the end of the war. The writings of Manuel Sueyro (1587-1629), who also worked as a merchant, informant, and translator for the Spanish Crown, showed that in the argumentations contemporary and ancient history was connected with social memory.

MARIE SCHREIER (Tübingen) examined precarious knowledge in the Spanish campaign against the Scottish Darien Colony in late 17th century Panama. In her analysis of transfers of information between local actors in Panama and other parts of the Caribbean she could show that information transfer was a difficult task. Information was transmitted through a large number of formal and informal actors, all having influence on the campaign. In addition to the formal actors of the Spanish colonial power, the local indigenous population also played a major role in the circulation of knowledge: knowing or not knowing often depended on the cooperation of local populations.

Since the 18th century, governments have also attached increasing importance to education for the performance of the state. PHILIP BALTUSKONIS (Oxford, MS) showed in his paper on cooperation in education in the viceroyalty of New Granada that since the 1770s educating the youth was seen as benefiting the *patria*. There was a real compe-

tion over resources for education purposes in which educators claimed a central role in knowledge production. This system also made it possible for many Creoles to become government officials.

In his work on epistemic culture in the Spanish colonial Empire, MATTHEW CRAWFORD (Kent) demonstrated that large differences in the form and function of knowledge(production) can be observed. On the one hand, extensive epistemic projects can be noticed which aimed to gain panoptic knowledge, such as the *relaciones geographicas* or scientific expeditions. On the other hand, the government also worked with intensive epistemic projects that were supposed to provide knowledge focused on a very limited subject, such as obtaining information on Chichona bark in the 1770s. However, as many of these projects failed to achieve their original objectives and useful knowledge at local level was useless or incomprehensible over long distances, knowledge cannot easily be equated with benefit. The functionalism of knowledge must therefore be reconsidered.

The third section has illustrated how different knowledge acquisition processes can be. It became particularly clear that a variety of actors were involved, like indigenous people, educators and craftsmen. They had a decisive influence on the process of acquiring and transferring knowledge.

The conference was concluded by a commentary by RENATE DÜRR (Tübingen). She stressed that governance is a very broad subject. In addition to questions of legal and institutional foundations, the various objectives of governmental action also have to be considered. The objective of the government was to promote global Catholicism, to protect the Empire from enemies and to generate income at the same time. In her commentary she also discussed what is meant by knowledge in administrative contexts. It should be noted here that knowledge is plural and that education, empiricism and experience must also be understood as categories of knowledge. Finally, she highlighted the manifold ruptures between knowledge and government. If one speaks of knowledge in the context of early modern government, functionalism must be met with skepticism. Collected knowledge

was often useless or merely used as a rhetorical tool.

The conference showed how early modern historians can benefit from linking the history of knowledge to governance, as it enables them to gain deeper insights into previously neglected actors, spaces, and practices of knowledge production.

Conference Overview:

Renate Dürr / Marie Schreier (both Tübingen): Introduction

Section 1: Legal and Institutional Foundations of Empire

Alexandra Anokhina (Oxford): Francisco Suarez and Roman Legal Studies in Early Modern Spain

Adrian Masters (Austin): From Ignorance to Archives: The Council of the Indies' Creation of the Spanish Imperial Archive, 1492-1598

Juan Carlos de Orellana Sánchez (Austin): The quest for experience. The Transfer of Ministers in Royal Courts of Justice and the Development of the Indies as Juridical Space (1567-1687)

Santiago Muñoz Arbeláez (Yale / Bogotá): Personal Visits: The Production of Knowledge and Ignorance in the Making of the New Kingdom of Granada

Section 2: Threats to the Empire

Jessica Fowler (Segovia / Madrid): From Knowing Heresy to Identifying Heretics

Eberhard Crailsheim (Madrid): Knowing the Enemy. The Representation of the 'Moros' in the Early Modern Spanish Philippines

Martin Biersack (Munich): Migration Politics in Colonial Spanish America: Knowledge Production and Administration Practices

Judith Mansilla (Miami): Unfitting Preparations. The Politics of Defense of Lima and the 'Unknowing' Threat of Natural Disasters in the Seventeenth Century

Section 3: Practices and Places of Information Gathering

Saul Guerrero (Caracas): Governing of Useful Knowledge in Silver Refining in Colonial

Spanish America

Lisa Kattenberg (Amsterdam): Knowledge, Experience and Ending War in the Netherlands

Marie Schreier (Tübingen): Precarious Knowledge in the Spanish Campaign against the Darien Colony (Late 17th Century Panama)

Philip Baltuskonis (Oxford, MS): For the Public Good: Cooperation in Education in the Viceroyalty of New Granada, 1770-1808

Matthew Crawford (Kent): The Epistemic Culture of Empire: Focused and Panoptic Knowledge Production in the Eighteenth-Century Spanish Empire

Final Discussion

Renate Dürr (Tübingen): Commentary

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