

Distributive Struggle and the Self in the Early Modern Iberian World

Veranstalter: Nikolaus Böttcher / Nino Vallen, Lateinamerika-Institut, Freie Universität Berlin

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In this age of global connectivity and increasing inequality, questions about the distribution and redistribution of wealth and opportunities have a profound impact on how people think of themselves and others. As new boundaries are drawn within and across national borders, it is important to develop new ways to explain how self and society interact and how these changing interactions relate to globalization. The international workshop „Distributive Struggle and the Self in the Early Modern Iberian World“ explored this nexus during an early phase of globalization. This event, organized by Nikolaus Böttcher and Nino Vallen and held at the Institute for Latin American Studies at Freie Universität Berlin on October 20–21, 2017, examined the various self-identities to which subjects of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns gave shape as they grappled with the challenges and opportunities created by increasing global mobility. Fifteen speakers from ten countries shed light on a panorama of conceptualizations of self used on three different continents between the sixteenth and nineteenth century.

The first session, „Regimes of Mobility,“ explored actors whose mobility played an important role in the identities they fashioned for themselves or for the groups to which they belonged. NIKOLAUS BÖTTCHER (Berlin) opened this panel with a presentation about the impact of mobility on *conversos*’ or New Christians’ mentalities. Tracing the global lives of several of these converted Jews, he illustrated these actors’ restless searches for identities that would allow them either to escape their communities’ deeply rooted suspicions or to improve their social standing within those communities. LEO GAROFALO (New London) explored a similar dynamic;

he talked about Afro-Iberian sailors, soldiers, and traders and their movements within the Spanish empire. According to Garofalo, these individuals used their services to the crown, together with claims of „Old Christian“ status, to challenge the image of the untrustworthy *mulato* or that of a lineage tainted by the stigma of slavery and servility. DELPHINE TEMPÈRE (Lyon/Paris) further examined the social benefits of mobility for Spaniards of lower ranks in her discussion of the *relaciones de méritos y servicios* (accounts of merits and services) that Spanish imperial agents produced in the Philippines or after their return. Through an analysis of these standardized legal records, Tempère showed how these men produced autobiographical accounts in which they emphasized their capacity to move and how this capacity defined their roles in the defense and administration of a global empire.

BERND HAUSBERGER (Mexico City) provided a distinct perspective on the relationship between mobility and self-writing in his discussion of „Der Neue Welt-Bott,“ Joseph Stöcklein’s collection of Jesuit letters and travel accounts that appeared in 40 volumes between 1726 and 1761. Focusing on descriptions of the Spanish territories and their inhabitants, Hausberger concluded that in these accounts, the self played a minor role. Instead, the Jesuits’ individual experiences were subjected to a collective narrative about the worldwide activities of the Society of Jesus. Hausberger argued that thus was shaped a collective self-identity that revolved around the interests and feats of the order and the common experiences of those involved in carrying the word of God around the globe. AGATA BLOCH (Warsaw) closed this session with her talk on Portuguese widows in Portugal’s African, Brazilian, and Indian colonies. She considered the impact of these women’s mobility on their chances to manage their own affairs while exploring in what ways these widows conceptualized their womanhood in the petitions they sent to the king for remunerations and royal grace.

The second panel, „Strategies of Self-Fashioning,“ examined the various ways in which subjects of the Iberian crowns fashioned individual and collective identities. Cases from Spain, the Americas, and Por-

tuguese India provided insights into the legal, literary, and artistic strategies European, creole, and indigenous persons deployed in their struggles for recognition and rewards. VESA-MATTI KARI (Jyväskylä) discussed how Spanish conquistadores sought to acquire rewards by fashioning images of an honorable self in the *relaciones de méritos y servicios* they prepared for the monarch during the sixteenth century. From a literary perspective, INGRID SIMSON (Berlin) shed light on the role of classical epic poetry in the fashioning of a deserving self. Through a careful analysis of the works of the Spanish nobleman Alonso de Ercilla and the Franciscan friar Alonso Gregorio de Escobedo, Simson revealed how these Spanish authors sought to present their services in the Indies through a mix of tradition and innovation, fiction and reality, inspired by this classical literary model. NOELLE RICHARDSON (Florence) explored a different strategy in the context of eighteenth-century Portuguese India. In her talk, she examined Hindu merchants' use and appropriation of colonial legal institutions and mechanisms. In particular, she showed how these merchants' efforts to acquire privileges, including the right to display their wealth, made these courts pivotal in social positioning and self-fashioning. MATILDA GREIG (Florence) shifted the focus back to the Iberian Peninsula and to a moment of imperial disintegration, focusing on *manifiestos*, a significant yet often neglected corpus of autobiographical writings by Spanish officers involved in the Guerra de la Independencia (1808–1814). Greig argued that these texts, written in the context of social upheaval, resembled in form the traditional *relaciones de méritos* but contained traces of a new style of autobiography that reflected the authors' views of their rapidly changing world.

Although this group of presenters considered first and foremost the strategies that were used to shape individual legal and literary subjectivities, other speakers concentrated on the fashioning of various notions of a collective self. RICHARD HERZOG (Gießen) examined the intellectual efforts of authors such as Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl and Domingo de Chimalpahin to merge traditional Nahua and Spanish strategies to legit-

imize privileges and status through familiar and communal genealogies. Herzog demonstrated how these authors moved between the notions of the Nahua *altepetl* and the Spanish *cacicazgo* to define for their communities a new collective sense of being in the world. STEFAN RINKE (Berlin) also emphasized the importance of space in understanding the shaping of a collective sense of belonging among Latin America's creole population. Rinke discussed how members of this group used textual and artistic representations of cities and landscapes, astrological knowledge, and local saints to demonstrate their ownness and worthiness to receive royal benefits. LILYAM PADRÓN REYES (Cádiz) critically considered the long-standing idea about the disappearance of Cuba's indigenous population. She discussed the appearance of a militia of *Indios* among Cuba's military forces during the second half of the eighteenth century and argued that the efforts of these indigenous groups to avoid inclusion among the majority white and *pardo* militia members appears to have been a strategic play of identities used to articulate their group interests to the authorities and negotiate a better position through Spanish institutions. JESUS BOHORQUEZ BARRERA (Lisbon), in comparison, talked about Basque, Catalan, and Portuguese migrants who established diasporas in American territories during the eighteenth century. Bohorquez questioned the scholarly tendency to focus on identity politics as one of the foremost strategies outsiders use to integrate themselves within overseas communities. He called for more attention to the roles of poverty and self-constituted subordination in establishing cohesiveness among actors moving between the two sides of the Atlantic.

The third panel, „Dynamics of Worldmaking,“ examined how acts of self-fashioning influenced the narratives persons told about the world and their place in it. JOSE CÁCERES MARDONES (Zurich) explored the relationship between self-fashioning and worldmaking through Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala's notion of Andean historicity. Cáceres argued that Poma's drawings in the „Nueva crónica“ (1613) correspond to an Andean „pachahistoricity,“ which obliterated the ontological

difference between time and space and created a new dimension to represent the self and the world. Through his pictorial analysis of the „C ronica nueva“, C ceres provided not only insights into the local process of worldmaking but also revealed nuances in the ideological struggle between Indians and Spaniards. Finally, NINO VALLEN (Berlin) considered New Spain’s pivotal place as a crossroads of global routes and the ways in which this position influenced the stories Spanish clergymen told about themselves and the world. He argued that local clergymen did not necessarily support the efforts of friars such as Juan Gonz lez de Mendoza and Rodrigo Aganduru Moriz to present the viceroyalty as an ideal stopover on a global religious itinerary. Instead, Vallen demonstrated how local clergymen and populations questioned this notion by opposing the mobility of friars traveling between Europe and Asia and stressing their own successes in the Asian mission to underline their claims to royal and papal patronage.

The presentations and discussions in this workshop highlighted the significance of people’s efforts to stress their own worthiness of certain rewards or privileges in the shaping of self-identity. Through official legal documentation, letters to monarchs, histories, and paintings, military men, royal officials, friars, sailors, merchants, and women sought to underline their qualities, virtues, and the services they rendered to the Spanish crown. Imperial expansion and growing mobility inspired legal, literary, and quotidian notions of a deserving self that emerged at the interface of constantly negotiated distributive practices, norms, laws, and theories on the origins and alterability of human difference. Although these conceptualizations of a deserving self differed between places and through time, the papers presented at this event also illustrated the remarkable diffusion and longevity of certain strategies of self-fashioning. The workshop thus underlined the importance of considering different distributive struggles to understand how people’s images of themselves have been shaped by varying experiences with and responses to globalization.

During the final discussion, the panelists

emphasized that more cooperation is crucial among specialists of different regions and times who work with different perspectives to advance theories about this particular regime of self. Such cooperation is necessary in considering how individuals and groups in various localities related themselves to expanding early modern states and empires. Moreover, collaboration among these scholars will help us explore the debates developing in different localities about the organization of social orders, the opportunities for social ascent within them, and the desirability of geographical mobility. The papers presented during this workshop focused more on the forms of different conceptualizations of a deserving self and less on the disputes from which specific notions emerged. A more comparative approach can help to render visible similarities between localities, both in metropolises and the peripheries. It also will contribute to a deeper understanding of how the notion of self was fashioned in relation to the political, economic, religious, or natural historical and philosophical ideas through which people saw and sought to give shape to the world. Focusing on these particular social dynamics can help us to recognize alternative self-understandings as well as related visions about how the world was or ought to be organized that do not correspond to the imperial, proto-national, or cultural identities that have commonly shaped our understandings of the self during this early phase of globalization.

Conference Overview:

Session 1: Regimes of Mobility

Nikolaus B ttcher (Berlin) – Movilidad y migraci n de los cristianos nuevos (S. XVII)

Leo Garofalo (New London) – Afro-Iberians as Soldiers, Sailors, and Travelers Claiming ‘Old Christian’ Status

Delphine Temp re (Lyon / Paris) – En las fronteras del mundo ibero-asi tico. Discurso y vida de los agentes de la Corona espa ola en Filipinas (Siglo XVII)

Bernd Hausberger (Mexico City) – Cartas de los misioneros jesuitas de sus viajes a Am rica y Filipinas

Agata Bloch (Warsaw) – The Early Modern Atlantic Portuguese Empire: The Space of Op-

portunities in the World of Exploitation

Session 2: Strategies of Self-Fashioning

Ingrid Simson (Berlin) – Estrategias de auto-creación (self-fashioning) en géneros tradicionales durante la conquista y la colonización de América: Alonso de Ercilla y Alonso Gregorio de Escobedo

Stefan Rinke (Berlin) – Creole Identities and the Changing Meaning of 'America' in the 17th and 18th Centuries

Richard Herzog (Gießen) – Building on Iberian and *Nahua* Precursors: Native Authors and *alpetl* in Central New Spain

Session 3: Strategies of Self-Fashioning

Vesa-Matti Kari (Jyväskylä) – Honour as a Rhetoric Tool in Petitions for Rewards of the Spanish Conquistadors of New Spain

Lilyam Padrón Reyes (Cádiz) – 'Que esta clase de gente no puede agregarse a los blancos ni pardos.' Ideas en torno al indio miliciano, su condición social y reconocimiento en las postrimerías del Siglo XVIII en Cuba

Jesús Bohorquez Barrera (Lisbon) – Self-Fashioning: from Ancestry and Nobility to Outsiderdom and Subordinateness in the Iberian Empires (18th Century)

Noelle Nadiah Richardson (Florence) – Petitions, privileges and protection: the use of colonial legal mechanisms by Hindu merchants in Portuguese India, 1750-1830

Matilda Greig (Florence) – Early Modern Men and the Modern Struggle for Self: Spanish Officers' Autobiographical Writings During the *Guerra de la Independencia*, 1808–1814

Session 4: Dynamics of Worldmaking

Jose Cáceres Mardones (Zurich) – Local Historicity: Guaman Poma and the World

Nino Vallen (Berlin) – Distributional Struggle and the Making of the World in Early Modern Iberian Empires

Final discussion

Tagungsbericht *Distributive Struggle and the Self in the Early Modern Iberian World*. 20.10.2017–21.10.2017, Berlin, in: H-Soz-Kult 22.01.2018.