

Iberian Empires and the Roots of Globalization. Ed. by Ivonne del Valle, Anna More, and Rachel Sarah O'Toole. Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville (TN) 2020. x, 356 pp. Ill. \$69.95. (Paper: \$34.95).

This volume edited by Ivonne del Valle, Anna More, and Rachel S. O'Toole explores a two-fold argument: how, while the Iberian empires pioneered early modern globalization, these empires were also globalized by interacting with and incorporating a myriad realities, agents, and cultures across the world. *Iberian Empires and the Roots of Globalization* delves into that question, departing from a conceptual framework built on three main assumptions: (i) the polycentric nature of the Iberian empires, (ii) the possibility of establishing a non-European, but Iberian genealogy of the globalization process, and (iii) the importance of recovering social and cultural perspectives to explain Iberian globalization, frequently dominated by economic-oriented approaches. In the view of the editors, globalization did not lead to a more homogenous world. Instead, it “created heterogeneity within a connected and complex system” (p. 9). Having all these elements on the table, the book seeks to create a “space for inquiries into the non-European peoples” who forged Iberian globalization, and by extension the world’s globalization. What compass have the editors chosen to guide a volume embracing such an ambitious research agenda?

First, the editors have opted to privilege a multidisciplinary approach; this is one of the book’s defining features. Art history, literary studies, and history cohabit under the book’s umbrella to offer a “new movement of exchange” between fields (p. 15). Largely grounded in the concerns of postcolonial theory, the volume’s interest in the interpretative possibilities and limitations of early modern documents, including archival records, normative texts, material culture, and visual artefacts, comes as no surprise. As happens with books aiming to push disciplinary boundaries, many readers will find this choice appealing; others will find it more a statement of intention than a fruitful exercise.

Secondly, variety defines the locations under consideration in the chapters. The variegated places in which the Iberian empires were present is well covered in the book, including present-day Mexico, China, Colombia, Peru, Paraguay, India, and the Philippines. Besides focusing on those local observatories, this book also underscores the importance of some of the Iberian highways to globalization, such as the entanglements weaved across the Pacific Ocean, the infamous transatlantic slave trade, the Peruvian silver world commerce, and the global activities of Iberian and Catholic missionaries. Territories falling under the jurisdictions of the Spanish Empire, especially in Spanish America, are better represented than those spaces claimed by the Portuguese. Perhaps closer attention to the Portuguese experience in the Indian Ocean would have strengthened the contributions of María Elena Martínez and Bruno Feitler, who touch upon Goa in their studies. Likewise, some chapters concentrate on people of African origin in the Americas (Rachel O'Toole and Anna More), but a more detailed focus on the Iberian presence in West Africa – partially explored in Feitler’s and More’s essays – would have dramatically rounded up an already rich variety of vantage points and case studies.

Finally, in addition to combining methodologies and diversifying the cases and the locations under examination, variety also defines the collective profile of the authors. The volume includes scholars with and from different academic backgrounds, based in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Italy, Mexico, and the USA. To avoid making global history a new version of traditional northern-European narratives about the Rise of the West, historians need not only to widen the actors, objects, and geographies under study, but also the analytical and

conceptual toolboxes to be applied. To offer more balanced and plural perspectives about the past, it is necessary also to incorporate voices and expertise beyond the dominant anglo-phone intellectual traditions, as this volume exemplifies.

The book is organized into eleven chapters, mostly covering the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In Chapter One, Bernd Hausberger offers a stimulating view of the role of the Spanish-American silver trade in the making of globalization, a widely discussed topic. However, by underscoring the importance of local elites in financing and organizing the extraction and commercialization of silver, and how they benefited from this business, the author rightly resituates the importance of a question frequently neglected: the Spanish-American leg of a story of global scope. Most subsequent contributions move away from economic perspectives to favour other more cultural and social topics and interpretations.

In Chapter Two, Ivonne del Valle offers an insightful piece on how a long-lived institution such as the European hospital was readapted for the purpose of grounding the colonization of indigenous Mexican peoples. As this chapter explains, the ecclesiastical elites promoted early sixteenth-century *hospitales de indios* with a twofold purpose: to transform barbaric indigenous people into newly civilized subjects; and to integrate them into the colonial economic system as a pool of impoverished labour to be exploited. From a different angle, More's chapter is also interested in the new labour conditions to which large populations were subjected in the Spanish colonies. From a critical perspective, it investigates how early seventeenth-century Jesuit writers framed and represented the experience of enslaved Africans across the Iberian Atlantic, an early case of the "extreme precarization of global labor" (p. 133). This is a fine example of how to navigate the limitations posed by documents whose authors were "in complicity with the system of enslavement and therefore had little interest in documenting its systemic violence" (p. 133). In doing so, More offers a historical precedent to current ways of representing and normalizing the precariousness unleashed by the new worldwide, neoliberal order.

In Chapter Three, the late María Elena Martínez addresses how notions such as caste, race, and *limpieza de sangre* worked and were used across both empires by considering the distinctive construction of "early modern racial knowledge" in New Spain and Goa. Likewise, in Chapter Four, Bruno Feitler offers a "common history of inquisitorial action" in the Portuguese Empire by scrutinizing how the Holy Office officials manoeuvred in Atlantic Africa, India, and Brazil. Far from displaying "a single project for all these overseas spaces", and in the face of a wider human, cultural, and religious landscape than ever known, "the institution used instruments and means adapted for eminently specific ends, on a case-by-case basis" (p. 124). Adaptation is also at the core of Guillermo Wilde's contribution. In a nicely crafted chapter, this author shows how indigenous cooperation was vital for Jesuit missionaries in adapting to local milieus and undertaking their universalizing aims in South America. Far from being passive agents, an "explicit indigenous participation" took place "in the creation of missionary texts" and their translation from Spanish to Guaraní or Chiquitano languages. Local knowledge also moulded other evangelizing devices, such as images or oral pieces. However, as Elisabetta Corsi correctly shows in Chapter Ten, that story was far more complicated. By making a combined use of hermeneutics, semiotics, and cultural history, Corsi examines Jesuit limitations in fully controlling how their visual repertoires were adopted and reinterpreted by local populations in late Ming China.

Meanwhile, two other chapters offer complementary views on manumission and the abolition of slavery. Rachel O'Toole unravels in Chapter Six the legal agency of enslaved men

and women of African descent when negotiating their freedom. Focusing on seventeenth-century northern Peru, this chapter privileges the institution of the household and the domestic space as the main arenas in which slaves of African origin negotiated their freedom. To do so, they used, created, and manipulated a plethora of proofs to challenge “the authority of slaveholders, and also, then, a foundational discourse of empire” (p. 177). Can we find other equally foundational and complementary discourses of empire? In Chapter Seven, María Eugenia Chaves offers an answer to our question by breaking with the dominant chronologies covered in the rest of the book. By looking at late seventeenth-century Caracas and early nineteenth-century Antioquia, she shows how abolition and manumission discourses based on natural law offered a secular opposition to one of the main pillars of the Spanish Empire and its colonial order: the *ius gentium* framework that legitimized African slavery.

Iberian globalization was a polyhedral process that was also manifested in material culture or literature. However, as Chapters Nine and Ten remind us, its analysis is not always an easy task. Charlene Villaseñor Black reflects on the methodological limitations that new, hitherto existing global artefacts pose to traditional research strategies in art history. The myriad local traditions converging and blended in the Mexican *enconchados* – mother-of-pearl inlay on panel – reflect how “such visually complex networks, whose intersecting, interfolding array of possible influences confounds art historical discourse” (p. 238). A similar case about the many global influences reforging cultural artefacts on the move is present in Jody Blanco’s chapter. It focuses on the romance of Barlaam and Josaphat, originally an account of Buddha’s life. This romance was adopted and adapted in medieval Europe to become extremely popular under the Counter-Reformation spirit and baroque Spain. Here, Blanco sheds light on how this romance travelled once again to Asia and mutated once more in the hands of Catholic missionaries operating in the Philippines. Finally, the book closes with an Afterword by Raúl Marrero-Fente and Nicholas Spadacini in which they reflect on the main contributions of each chapter and the volume as a whole.

The publication of this book is timely, appearing as it does when an increasing number of studies are concerned with the global dimension of the Spanish and Portuguese empires and their inner workings. Specifically, this volume will be of great interest to historians of the Iberian empires focusing on culture and social history. More generally, it will appeal to those with an interest in subaltern agency in colonial contexts. In sum, Ivonne del Valle, Anna More, and Rachel S. O’Toole have edited a volume mirroring the spirit of the series in which it has been published, “Hispanic Issues”. Founded in 1986 and now hosted by Vanderbilt University Press, “Hispanic Issues” is an intellectual endeavour seeking to promote a reflection on “theoretical and methodological issues toward a reconfiguration of Hispanic and Lusophone cultural history and criticism”.¹ It is my belief that it is in that precise intellectual context that *Iberian Empires and the Roots of Globalization* will contribute to the field.

Alejandro García-Montón

Department of Geography, History and Philosophy, Universidad Pablo de Olavide,
Ctra. de Utrera, 1, 41013 Seville, Spain

E-mail: agarmoni@upo.es

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1. Available at: <https://cla.umn.edu/hispanic-issues/print>; last accessed 14 January 2021.