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Science in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires, 1500-1800
(review)

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Carlos Guzmán Böckler and Jean-Loup Herbert, they countered that “Guatemala is at heart a plural society, one in which Indians and Ladinos coexist in mutual distrust and misunderstanding” (p. xxxiii).

Professor Martínez Peláez’s conviction and passionate analysis makes sense today at a crucial level. Land and the control of labor became the heart of wealth in colonial and nineteenth-century Guatemala. The liberal republic of Justo Rufino Barrios and subsequent “coffee dictatorships” represented the “full and radical realization of criollo notions of the patria” (p. 278). Anyone hoping to challenge impoverished Guatemala would have to confront the historic power of colonial elites now vested within the champions of the liberal reforms. Martínez Peláez witnessed firsthand, as a young lad, overseers parading shackled gangs of indigenous peoples through the streets of Quetzaltenango as they headed to harvest coffee. The October 1944 revolution sought to challenge both the concentration of land and the control of labor. When Carlos Castillo Armas dashed these revolutionary hopes with his CIA-backed intervention in 1954, Martínez Peláez soon became a dedicated member of the Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajadores (Guatemalan Workers Party) to challenge this historic legacy and power. Professor Martínez Peláez wrote this groundbreaking tome over the next decade and a half after he sought political refuge in Mexico, where he remained for much of his adult life.

The English translation of *La Patria del criollo* offers a gallant foray into the massive production that has sold more than 50,000 copies in Guatemala and elsewhere in the Spanish-speaking world. The team of translators and editors made tough decisions about cutting the text and rich footnotes, and in more than one spot, actually improved Professor Martínez Peláez’s Spanish prose. As the Spanish text became fundamental to Guatemalan historiography, this translation will become a staple of Latin American historiography.

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HISTORY OF SCIENCE, MEDICINE & TECHNOLOGY

Science in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires, 1500-1800. Edited by Daniela Bleichmar, Paula De Vos, Kristin Huffine, and Kevin Sheehan. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008. Pp. xxii, 427. Maps. Illustrations. Tables. Notes. Index. \$65.00 cloth.

For far too long the history of science has focused on Europe, a continent that ended at the Pyrenees for many scholars in the field. In recent decades a growing number of intrepid historians have turned to the connections between the rise of modern science and the expansion of European powers across the globe after 1500. An exciting new scholarship has begun to take shape that opens up new vistas on science and the expansion of the Spanish and Portuguese empires. Much of this scholarship has emphasized the role of non-European peoples and environments in the creation of the “new science” and ways in which Iberians and “Americans” have been overlooked in the emergence of modern sci-

ence and the Scientific Revolution. Recent works by Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Neil Safier, for example, are representative of a new generation of scholars committed to rethinking the intellectual and social history of science by bringing in the contributions of the peoples of the Americas and the Iberian peninsula to the traditional Eurocentric tale of the rise of science and modernity.

This excellent volume of essays brings together a wide variety of scholars from a variety of disciplines, countries, and continents—art historians, literary scholars, and historians based in the United States, Spain, Northern Ireland, Brazil, Portugal, and England. While the Iberian empires in the early modern period are their focus, their approaches and interests range widely. Many of the essays reflect key trends of the past few decades—studies of the social construction of scientific knowledge, the importance of local peoples in the “construction of colonial systems of knowledge” (p. xxii), and an emphasis on interdisciplinarity. Fifteen substantial chapters are divided into four sections bookended by a preface, an introduction, and an afterword. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra does a very nice job setting up the context of science in the Iberian empires. As he points out, “systematic gathering of information, plants, curiosities, and indigenous knowledges was a trademark of both empires.” Science, he notes, “was the handmaiden of the Iberian empires” (p. 1). Part 1, “Reassessing the Role of Iberia in Modern Science,” is also an excellent introduction to the field with a fine interpretive essay by David Goodman on “Science, Medicine, and Technology in Colonial Spanish America.” Palmira Fontes da Costa and Henrique Leitão follow with a thorough historiographical survey of Portuguese imperial science. Three essays make up Part 2, “New Worlds, New Science:” Maria Portuondo’s chapter on “Cosmography at the *Casa*, *Consejo*, and *Corte* During the Century of Discovery;” Onésimo Almeida on “Science During the Portuguese Maritime Discoveries;” and Juan Pimentel’s “Baroque Natures: Juan E. Nieremberg, American Wonders, and Preterimperial Natural History.”

Part 3, “Knowledge Production: Local Contexts, Global Empires,” provides several fine grained examples of the interaction of the local and the global from the work of Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, to medicine in Guatemala, the periodical press in Mexico, the imaginary geography of gold in Brazil, and mapmaking in the Spanish Empire. The latter two essays, by Júnia Ferreira Furtado and Nuria Valverde on Brazil and Antonio Lafuente on the Spanish Empire, show how the construction of knowledge at both the local and metropolitan levels shaped and reshaped each other. The longest section, Part 4, “Commerce, Curiosities, and the Circulation of Knowledge,” contains five essays. Antonio Barrera-Osorio has a fine essay on, “Knowledge and Empiricism in the Sixteenth-Century Spanish Atlantic World.” Kevin Sheehan’s chapter moves the focus to the seventeenth-century Pacific voyages of Pedro Fernández de Quirós, and Timothy Walker’s fascinating essay traces the circulation of medical knowledge through the Portuguese empire, especially between Goa, Africa, and Portugal. This section concludes with a chapter by Paula De Vos on collections of curiosities and by Daniela Bleichmar on visual culture and natural history.

As Noble David Cook and Alexandra Parma Cook point out in their concise “Afterword,” the essays in this volume fall into two distinct periods. The first is the phase of expansion

and discovery, while the second is one of consolidation of empire and the transformation of knowledge during the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment. These 15 essays span four centuries and even more continents. They are the collective work of a group of international scholars who are rethinking the history of science and technology by decentering the traditional narratives about the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment. In particular, the volume convincingly demonstrates the need to pay closer attention to the long-neglected Iberian empires in traditional narratives, and the importance of local forms of knowledge and practices in the creation of modern science. Largely a group of younger scholars, I hope we will continue to profit further from their research in the coming years as they continue to produce more transformative work.

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ATLANTIC WORLD

Havana and the Atlantic in the Sixteenth Century. By Alejandro de la Fuente. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008. Pp. xiii, 287. Illustrations. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$40.00 cloth.

The title of this book evokes Pierre and Huguette Chaunu's classic, multi-volume *Seville et L'Atlantique* (1955-1959), but *Havana and the Atlantic in the Sixteenth Century* situates itself squarely in the recent historiography of the Atlantic world. It is, above all, the painstakingly empirical story of the transformation of this Cuban port from a tiny outpost, showing signs of stagnation and decline by the 1530s, into the ninth largest urban Spanish center in the Americas, with some 1,200 vecinos, not to mention an expanding slave population, by 1620. Aside from the usual transatlantic manuscript depositories (such as the Archivo General de Indias), Alejandro de la Fuente, with the acknowledged and extensive collaboration of César García del Pino and Bernardo Iglesias Delgado, mined a wealth of notarial records, town council records, parish registries, and treasury accounts in Cuban archives to construct the detailed local perspectives that drive the analysis.

The narrative begins at a dramatic and decisive moment. On July 10, 1555, the French corsair Jacques de Sorés attacked the town, which lacked the fortifications and demographic resources to protect itself. If Cuba "seemed to have lacked a purpose in the larger scheme of the emerging empire" (p. 3), this destruction of Havana set in motion several processes that transformed the port into a strategic and commercial nexus. Individual chapters treat shipping and trade, the fleets and the service economy, urban growth, production, slavery and the making of a racial order, and the people of the land. Havana emerged as a regional trading center that specialized in the reexportation of colonial commodities, connecting transoceanic, intra-Caribbean, and intercolonial shipping, particularly between Cuba and Mexico. Bullion, specie, and food products entered Havana, which soon serviced 1,000-2,000 seamen who arrived with the fleets during the peak season in the summer. On occasion, as in 1594-1595, more than 100 ships wintered in the