

ARENAS IN GLOBAL HISTORY: IBERIAN EMPIRES IN GLOBAL HISTORY
POSITION PAPER

Early modern Iberian empires, global history and the history of early globalization

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Abstract

This essay discusses the main lines of current research on the social and economic history of the early modern Iberian worlds. It then goes on, in light of recent debates, to make the case for the value of a purposeful dialogue between global history and imperial history. The issues of primary concern here are the extent to which lateral, inter-regional relations in the Iberian worlds dominated vertical relations connecting particular areas to Madrid or Lisbon; how power and agency on local scales may be integrated into accounts of flows and interactions on larger scales; the ways in which the history of the Iberian empires through a global prism breaks with pre-existing nationalistic narratives; and whether or not the decentralised component of these empires was unique to them. Finally, examples are detailed of how Iberian imperial history can provide a fruitful basis for a polycentric history of globalization. The examples given take heart from critical engagement with the Great Divergence paradigm, the new analytical potentialities of global ecological history, the constructive and destructive impact of globalization upon empires, and the importance of studying the history of empires comparatively.

Keywords: Iberian world; imperial history; global history; early globalization; Latin American history; Spanish and Portuguese empires; Iberian globalization

This essay presents some of the most important advances in recent historiography on the early modern Iberian empires with a bearing on empires, and their political economies, as a general phenomenon. The aim is to establish the basis for a potentially fruitful dialogue between Iberian history and the history of early globalization mediated through global history.¹ To pre-empt misunderstanding and to help orient the reader, the essay begins by giving minimal, working definitions of its key terms: (new) imperial history, global history and the history of globalization.

¹ I thank Gagan Sood for his help with this essay. He not only improved my writing but contributed to clarifying some ideas and discussed key aspects of it. As always, any errors are entirely my responsibility. I also thank the hospitality of the European University Institute during a stay as a visiting fellow which allowed me the use of its library. This work has been carried out within the framework of the FEDER research group UPO-1264973 “In search for the Atlantic aristocracies. Latin America and the peninsular Spanish elites, 1492–1824” PI, Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla, and also of the PAIDI research group HUM 1000 “The History of globalization: violence, negotiation and interculturality”, whose principal investigator is Professor Igor Pérez Tostado. Both projects are financed by the Regional Government of Andalusia. Funding for open access publishing: Universidad Pablo de Olavide. This essay’s bibliographical references are indicative and seek to bring to the attention of non-specialists works that may be useful to them, particularly for the period 1500–1700. The third and fourth sections are based on the second section’s references. This article is dedicated to Sir John Elliott, and Professors Patrick O’Brien and Herman Van der Wee.

On imperial history, global history and the history of globalization

One of the founding claims of new imperial history is that empires cannot be understood as monolithic structures violently imposed on societies which have lost the capacity to act.² The concept of ‘difference’ and the recognition of the agency of local societies currently dominate the scholarly mainstream, even for the empires of the latter nineteenth century, when the possibilities for controlling the periphery from the centre were generally greater than for the pre-industrial era.³ By taking this viewpoint, the new imperial history does not merely pay more heed to actions on the ground by considering empires as ‘composite structures’, but also stresses the vital importance of the radial relations between metropolises and the different territories. In so doing, empires are reinforced as units of both action and analysis.⁴

Global history, in contrast, has tended thus far to adopt a more regional and bottom-up approach. This is reflected in large-scale connexions between, and comparisons of, areas and populations.⁵ For many scholars, global history is an analytical perspective or method, not an object of study per se.⁶ That is how I understand the field for the purposes of this essay. In the words of this Journal’s editors, I agree that global history is concerned with ‘elaborating novel *approaches* to grasp developments of *world historical significance*’ or, in other words, with ‘crafting new *concepts and methods* to crystallize aspects of the past which would otherwise remain obscure or elusive’ (my italics).⁷ In this sense, among the most promising contributions made by the field to date have been the reciprocal comparisons method and the notion of entangled histories.

Thus, potentially, many topics fall within the parameters of global history. Perhaps the most obvious – certainly the most popular – is globalization. This concept has given rise to a number of controversies.⁸ The operational definition by Lynn Hunt is the one deployed here: ‘globalization is the *process* by which the world becomes more *interconnected* and more *interdependent*’ (my italics).⁹ Logically, the mechanisms by which the world has become more interconnected and interdependent embrace contact and integration during conflicts, as well as opposition between societies which result in distinct paths of development. The crucial point for us is that globalization is a process, albeit not necessarily a linear one, nor one affecting all parts of the world in the same manner. It should be noted that globalization as a concept has often been confused with global history as a field. This essay makes a clear distinction between global history and the history of globalization. It is quite possible to examine relations between different polities – even those spatially and culturally far apart – without needing to invoke globalization. By the same token, globalization is one of many topics which may be studied through a global history prism.

²Antoinette Burton, ed., *After the Imperial Turn. Thinking with and through the Nation* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003); Kathleen Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660–1840* (Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

³Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); John Darwin, ‘Reviewed Work(s): Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference by Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper’, *The English Historical Review* 127 (2012): 515–18; Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

⁴Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*; Krishan Kumar *Empires: a Historical and Political Sociology* (Cambridge, UK and Medford, PA: Polity Press, 2020).

⁵Patrick K. O’Brien, ‘Historiographical Traditions and Modern Imperatives for the Restoration of Global History’, *Journal of Global History* 1, no. 1 (2005): 3–40; Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

⁶Conrad, *What is Global History*, Chapter 5.

⁷Ewout Frankwma, Gagan D. S. Sood and Heidi Tworek, ‘Editors’ Note - Global History after the Great Divergence’, *Journal of Global History* 16, no. 1 (2021): 2.

⁸Frederick Cooper, ‘What Is the Concept of Globalization Good For? An African Historian’s Perspective’, *African Affairs* 100 (2001): 189–213.

⁹Lynn Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era* (London and New York, NY: Norton and Company, 2014): 52.

That leaves open the prospect of studying this process with equal promise through other prisms, such as new imperial history.¹⁰

So, if we allow that global history is not about the world in the past on literally global scales, but rather a set of approaches for robustly identifying and specifying historically significant constants and contingencies hitherto obscured or neglected, the Portuguese and Spanish empires by their very nature are well suited to the field. It hardly needs saying that much of the scholarly literature on the Iberian empires does not fall within the ambit of global history as defined above. At the same time, a plausible argument can be made that elements of this literature constituted a kind of global history *avant la lettre* in view of prior efforts to understand social, cultural and economic trends in particular areas of Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia within the framework of larger, trans-regional developments.¹¹ Evidence for this may be found in the methodological resonances between some of the most influential works in global history, such as by Pomeranz, and those on the history of the Atlantic empires, such as by Elliott.¹²

Nevertheless, there are reasons to be cautious in presenting the history of the Iberian empires as global history. First, many studies of the Iberian empires only consider local or endogenous dimensions of their past. Second, much of the scholarship is entwined with, or subsumed into, Atlantic history, which some scholars have articulated in opposition to – or even as an alternative to – global history.¹³ Notwithstanding the merits of these reasons, however, my essay argues against such approaches. It takes the position that global history allows for novel, generative contributions. This is because developments of broader significance to which the Spanish and Portuguese empires were party may be more readily discerned through juxtaposing or examining relations between particular areas of the larger Iberian world. The history of the Iberian empires through the prism of global history also gives rise to the possibility of a fruitful reinterpretation of early modern globalization.

The section below surveys the recent historiography on the Iberian empires and the polities that they embraced. It is followed by a discussion of how to reframe this scholarship in terms of global history. The essay concludes with some ideas on the way in which studying the history of empires through a global history prism can contribute to a better understanding of globalization and thereby overcome the most searching critiques of this concept.

Recent trends in the history of the Iberian empires

In contrast to previous models that looked at the Iberian empires from the perspective of domination and subordination of the periphery by the centre, a vision has gained ground which seeks to

¹⁰Toyin Falola and Emily Brownell, eds., *Africa, Empire and Globalization: Essays in Honour of A. G. Hopkins* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2011).

¹¹Rafael Marquese and Joao Paulo Pimenta, 'Latin America and the Caribbean: Traditions of Global History', in *Global History, Globally: Research and Practice Around the World*, eds. Sven Beckert and Dominic Sachsenmaier (London and New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2018): 67–82.

¹²Keneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); John H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World. Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

¹³Horst Pietschmann, ed., *Atlantic History. History of the Atlantic System, 1580–1830*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2002); Donna Gabaccia, 'A Long Atlantic in a Wider World', *Atlantic Studies* 1 (2004): 1–27; Alison Games, 'Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges and Opportunities', *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (2008): 741–757; Cécile Vidal, 'Le(s) monde(s) atlantique(s), l'Atlantique français, l'empire atlantique, français', *Outre-Mers. Revue d'Histoire* 97 (2009): 7–37; Francisco Bethencourt 'The Iberian Atlantic: Trade, Networks and Boundaries', in *Theorising the Ibero American Atlantic*, eds. Harald Braun and Lisa Vollendorf, (Leiden, 2013), 15–37; Jean-Paul Zúñiga, 'L'Histoire impériale à l'heure de l'"histoire globale". Une perspective atlantique', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 54, no. 4bis (2007): 54–68; Patrick Griffin, 'A Plea for a New Atlantic History', *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (2011): 236–39; Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Benjamin Breen 'Hybrid Atlantics: Future Directions for the History of the Atlantic world', *History Compass* 11, no. 8 (2013): 597–609.

'relativize the exceptional importance conferred to the metropolis' both politically and in terms of economic and social relations. This has been termed by Russell Woods as 'a compensatory history'.¹⁴ It is not, however, an entirely new vision; it has been present in kernel for a long time in several important debates.¹⁵ But what makes it new is that, since the beginning of this century and promoted especially by Brazilian and Portuguese historians, there has emerged an acutely felt need to break with the bipolar metropolis-colonies perspective to allow for 'an examination of intercolonial relations in the absence of a metropolitan component'.¹⁶ Such a break implies emphasizing relations, independently of their connexions to Lisbon and above all in the commercial sphere, between areas such as Brazil, Western Africa, parts of the Indian Ocean rim (particularly around Mozambique and Goa) and Macao.

According to these views, it is not only a matter of correcting for the lack of attention to overseas territories in power relations or in the economic and social dynamics. It also means recognizing from a legal standpoint their 'multiple colonial status'. That is to say, taking the example of the Portuguese, their empire was *not* framed by a common constitution rooted in Portugal which dominated those of other areas. Rather, the empire's constitution was the sum of the plurality of Portuguese norms and customs enmeshed with those specific to each of the overseas territories. So, in place of the 'image of an Empire centred, directed and drained unilaterally by the metropolis', the empire is envisaged as a plural and centrifugal administrative structure.¹⁷ This reimagining coincided with the studies of Lauren Benton and her stress on the existence of legal regimes and legal pluralism, which in no small measure stems from her analysis of the Portuguese and Spanish empires.¹⁸ Such ideas are easy to apply to these empires because of the coexistence of Muslim, Hebrew, Iberian (Christian) and American normative traditions within their territories. This coexistence was not only a matter of juridical practices; the so-called 'Laws of the Indies' (*Leyes de Indias*), which gave rise to the term 'Indian law' (*Derecho Indiano*) in Spanish America, recognized, and in some cases adapted, some aspects of normative codes of local societies found prior to the conquest.

It is worth noting that some of the foregoing ideas were prefigured by the wholesale revision of the concept of the state carried out in the 1980s by Spanish, Portuguese and Italian legal historians, who linked it to the notion of a composite monarchy.¹⁹ Based mainly on the political theories current at the time, and supported by detailed account of local practices of government and

¹⁴Anthony J. R. Russell-Wood, 'Prefácio', in *O Antigo Regime nos trópicos: A dinâmica imperial portuguesa (séculos XVI-XVIII) Civilização Brasileira*, eds. Joao Fragoso, Maria Fernanda Bicalho e Maria de Fátima Gouvea (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001), 15.

¹⁵John TePaske and Herbert Klein, 'The Seventeenth Century Crisis in New Spain: Myth or Reality?', *Past and Present* 90 (1981): 118–35; Henry Kamen and Jonathan Israel, 'The Seventeenth Century Crisis in New Spain: Myth or Reality?', *Past and Present* 97 (1982): 144–56; Carlos Sempat Assadourian, *El sistema de la economía colonial. Mercado interno, regiones y espacio* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1982); Juan C. Garavaglia, *Mercado interno y economía colonial: tres siglos de historia de la yerba mate* (México: Grijalbo, 1983); Jose Roberto do Amaral Lapa, *A Bahia e a Carreira da Índia*, (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1968); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India 1500–1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹⁶Russell-Wood, 'Prefácio', 15.

¹⁷Antonio M. Hespanha 'A constituição do Império português. Revisão de alguns enquadramentos correntes', in *O Antigo Regime*, Fragoso, Bicalho e Gouvea, 187–8 (my translation from Portuguese).

¹⁸Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Lauren Benton and Richard Ross, eds., *Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500–1850* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2013).

¹⁹Jaume Vicens Vives, 'Estructura administrativa estatal en los siglos XVI y XVII', in *XIe Congrès des Sciences Historiques (Stockholm, 21–28 août 1960)*, *Rapports, IV*, Stockholm -Upsala, 1960), 1–24 ; Helmut G. Koenigsberger, *Politicians and Virtuosi: Essays in Early Modern History* (London: Clarendon Press, 1986); Antonio Manuel Hespanha, *As vésperas do Leviathan: instituições e poder político. Portugal, séc. XVII* (Coimbra: Livraria Almedina, 1986); Bartolomé Clavero, *Tantas personas como estados: por una antropología política de la historia europea* (Madrid: Tecnos, 1986); Pablo Fernández-Albaladejo *Fragments de Monarquía* (Madrid: Alianza, 1992); John H. Elliott, 'A Europe of Composite Monarchies', *Past and Present* 137 (1992): 48–71.

jurisdiction, the thesis of a putatively modern state was replaced by that of a monarchy conceived as a corporate system. In contrast to the ideal type of a Weberian state, of which the early modern state was interpreted as a precedent, sovereign governance was instead conceived of as a *pluralità giurisdizionale* ('a jurisdictional plurality') expressed 'in the generalized decentralization of the forms of the exercise of authority in corporate society'.²⁰

This conception of monarchy, now decoupled from any connotation of a modern nation-state, was applied not only to the territories of the Iberian Peninsula but to all the dynastic dominions of the Avis and Hispanic Habsburgs, including their possessions beyond Europe. These territories were (and are) understood as belonging to a pluralistic monarchy. They were also understood as an extension of the royal jurisdiction, which, acquired by conquest or aggregation in the mediaeval tradition, conferred on their inhabitants the condition of vassals of the monarch with a legal status similar – although in several respects not identical – to that of those of the Peninsula. This decentralized and more egalitarian vision of intra-imperial relations was, moreover, reflected in the writings of a number of the Enlightenment Iberian thinkers and politicians of the eighteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic. Some of them preferred to speak of the 'agregation' of different 'provinces' and even different 'kingdoms'; others, like the Count of Aranda, went beyond that to imagine the division of the monarchy into a set of kingdoms of equal rank, with three of them in America. The existence of such views in the eighteenth century obliges to consider in a more critical way the transition from the earlier Spanish Habsburg empires to the later Bourbon and Braganza reforms and their attempts at imperial centralization.²¹

This decentralized, 'compensatory' vision is further reinforced when one considers the ways in which the conquered territories were incorporated into the monarchy. In contradistinction to Hobbes' Leviathan, the distant territories were organized by means of formulas which implied the recognition to local settlers and conquerors of political capital, economic privileges and rights to exercise coercion. In exchange, locals recognized royal jurisdiction over their territories. From the point of view of the political economy, this *quid pro quo* between monarchy and settler-conquerors, widespread during the period of mediaeval Iberian (and European) expansion, was a means of externalizing the costs of empire building and maintenance.²² The institutions forged during the mediaeval Christian expansion to the south of the Peninsula – *repartimientos*, *encomiendas*, *municipios* (or *câmaras municipais*), *audiencias*, *capitanias donatarias*, among others – were used for this purpose.²³

One may thus speak of a convergence of historiographical perspectives. Both from the side of colonial historians and from that of specialists in European history, it is now a commonplace view that the dynamics of these empires were not dictated from the centre (i.e., the court in Lisbon or

²⁰Jean-Frederic Schaub, 'La penisola iberica nei secoli XVI e XVII. La questione dello stato', *Studi Storici* 36, no. 1 (1995): 9–49 (quotation on p. 17, my translation from Italian).

²¹Gabriel Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the Age of Atlantic Revolutions: the Luso-Brazilian World, c. 1770–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) and *Enlightenment, Governance, and Reform in Spain and its Empire, 1759–1808* (Basingstoke and New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Allan J. Kuethe and Kenneth J. Andrien, *Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century: War and the Bourbon Reforms, 1713–1796* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Christopher Storrs, 'Magistrates to Administrators, Composite Monarchy to Fiscal-Military Empire: Empire and Bureaucracy in the Spanish Monarchy c.1492–1825', in *Empires and Bureaucracy in World History. From Late Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*, eds., Peter Crooks and Timothy H. Parson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 291–317; Maria F. Bicalho and Nuno G. Monteiro, 'As instituições civis da monarquia portuguesa na Idade Moderna centro e periferia do império', in *Monarquias Ibéricas em perspectiva comparada (Sécs. XVI–XVIII). Dinâmicas imperiais e Circulação de modelos administrativos*, eds., Federico Palomo, Roberta Stumpf (Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, Universidade de Lisboa, 2018), 209–36.

²²Bartolome Yun-Casalilla, *Iberian World Empires and the Globalization of Europe 1415–1669* (Singapore-London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2019).

²³Barreto Xavier, Palomo and Stumpf, *Monarquias Ibéricas*.

Madrid) and were not the consequence of a sort of ‘parasitic absolutism’,²⁴ but were the result of multilateral relations between autonomous polities and of the interplay of multipolar interests. These relations and interests formed a ‘power nebula’, the study of which, especially in a comparative vein, opens up remarkable interpretive possibilities.²⁵

In tandem with this historiographical convergence, we have seen the development of entangled history, *histoire croisée* and global microhistory, all of which highlight the social networks cutting across the component polities of the empires. As above, the focus is on lateral dealings which did not necessarily pass through the courts of Lisbon or Madrid.²⁶ This standpoint has been taken in examining the European territories of the Spanish Habsburg Monarchy.²⁷ The main proponents have not been Europeanists but historians who, like Sanjay Subrahmanyam, look at the empires from their peripheries.²⁸ Such historians have directed attention to different types of connexions, many of them with a trans-oceanic dimension, populated variously by traders, aristocrats, officials, members of the religious orders, and others. Likewise, they place stress on relationships of patronage, clientelism or friendship on a variety of scales.²⁹

Mercantile networks have proved especially fertile ground for this perspective.³⁰ Influenced by the work of Avner Greif in particular, there is now considerable interest among specialists in the capacity for self-organization and the autonomous creation of trust and enforcement mechanisms

²⁴Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson and James Robinson ‘The Rise of Europe: Atlantic Trade, Institutional Change, and Economic Growth’, *The American Economic Review* 95 (2005): 546–79.

²⁵Francisco Bethencourt, ‘Political Configurations and Local Powers’ in *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion 1400–1800*, eds., Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 197–254.

²⁶Serge Gruzinski, *Les quatre parties du monde: histoire d’une mondialisation* (Paris: Éditions de la Martinière, 2004); Zakarias Moutoukias, ‘La notion de réseau en histoire sociale: un instrument d’analyse de l’action collective’, in *Réseaux, familles et pouvoir dans le monde ibérique à la fin de l’Ancien Régime*, Juan L. Castellano and Jean Pierre Dedieu, eds. (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1998); Eric Van Young, *Hacienda and Market in Eighteenth-Century Mexico: The Rural Economy of the Guadalupe Region, 1675–1810* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006); Nikolaus Böttcher, Bernd Hausberger and Antonio Ibarra, coords., *Redes y negocios globales en el mundo ibérico, siglos XVI–XVIII* (Mexico: Iberoamericana-Vervuert- ColMex, 2011); Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation Upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal’s Atlantic Diaspora and the Crisis of the Spanish Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Ana Crespo, *Comunidades transnacionales: Colonias de mercaderes extranjeros en el mundo Atlántico (1500–1830)* (Aranjuez: Doce Calles, 2010).

²⁷Castellano and Dedieu, eds., *Réseaux, familles et pouvoir*; Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla, dir., *Las redes del Imperio. Elites sociales en la articulación de la Monarquía Hispánica, 1492–1714* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2009).

²⁸Sanjay Subrahmanyam *Explorations in Connected History: Mughals and Franks* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2005) and ‘Holding the World in Balance: The Connected Histories of the Iberian Overseas Empires, 1500–1640’, *American Historical Review* 112 (2007): 1359–85. Also Jorge Flores, *Unwanted Neighbours: The Mughals, The Portuguese, and Their Frontier Zones* (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2018).

²⁹Mafalda S. da Cunha and Nuno G. Monteiro, ‘Governadores e capitães-mores do império Atlântico português nos séculos XVII e XVIII’, in *Optima Pars. Elites Ibero-Americanas do Antigo Regime*, eds., Nuno G. Monteiro, Mafalda S. da Cunha and Pedro Cardim, (Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2005), 191–252; Ángeles Redondo and Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla, ‘Aristocracias, identidades y espacios políticos en la monarquía compuesta de los Austrias. La Casa de Borja (ss. XVI y XVII)’, in *Homejane a Antonio Domínguez Ortíz*, eds., Juan L. Castellanos and Miguel L. López Guadalupe (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2008), 759–71; Federico Palomo, ed., ‘Written Empires: Franciscans, Texts and the Making of the Early Modern Iberian Empires’, *Culture & History Digital Journal* special issue 5/2 (2016); Francisco Bethencourt, *The Inquisition: A Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Michel Bertrand, *Grandeur et misère de l’office. Les officiers de finance de Nouvelle Espagne aux XVIIème et XVIIIème siècles* (Paris: Les publications de la Sorbonne, 1999); Jane Mangan, *Transatlantic Obligations: Creating the Bonds of Family in Conquest-Era Peru and Spain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); José M. Imizcoz, dir., *Redes familiares y patronazgo. Aproximación al entramado social del País Vasco y Navarra en el Antiguo Régimen (siglos XV–XIX)* (Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco, 2001).

³⁰David Brading, *Mineros y comerciantes en el México borbónico* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1975); John Kicza, *Empresarios coloniales: Familias y negocios en la ciudad de México durante los Borbones* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1981); James C. Boyajian *Portuguese Trade in Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580–1640* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993); Nikolaus Böttcher, Bernd Hausberger and Antonio Ibarra, coords., *Redes y negocios globales en el mundo ibérico, siglos XVI–XVIII* (Mexico: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, ColMex, 2011); Margarita Suárez, *Desafíos Transatlánticos. Mercaderes, Banqueros y el Estado en el Perú Virreinal, 1600–1700* (Lima: Institut français d’études andines, 2001).

outside the formal institutions of the Iberian empires.³¹ This has underpinned studies on how corruption and smuggling affected the systems of officially recognized institutions.³² Informed by ‘history from below’, which has been important to both Atlantic history and the history of the connexions spanning the Iberian empires, the significance of cultural transfers attending migrations has been foregrounded. This has directed interest towards the forced movement of enslaved peoples, not only across the Atlantic but also in other areas of the Iberian world.³³ All of the above has encouraged a growing concern for trans-oceanic and global biographies.³⁴ These are not confined to biographies of people, but extend to those of objects, most notably commodities like silver – undoubtedly the object to have received the greatest scholarly attention to date – whose circulations and exchanges are examined for their impact on polities far removed in space from one another.³⁵

These subjects, which form the core of so-called Iberian globalization, link up with the more globally oriented studies of scholars like McNeill and Crosby, which have brought the ecological dimension into the mainstream of historical scholarship.³⁶ There are also clear resonances between the history of Iberian globalization and trans-imperial history, especially in

³¹Catia Antúnes and Amelia Polónia, eds., *Beyond Empires. Global, Self-Organizing, Cross-Imperial Networks, 1500–1800* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016); Yun-Casalilla, *Iberian World Empires*, chapter 7; Xavier Lamikiz, *Trade and Trust in the Eighteenth-century Atlantic World: Spanish Merchants and Their Overseas Networks* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer Press for The Royal Historical Society, 2010); Antonio Ibarra and Guillermina Del Valle Pavón, i.e., *Redes sociales e instituciones: Una nueva iejas sobre iejas incógnitas*, special issue. *Historia Mexicana* 56, no. 3 (2007).

³²Erik Lars Myrup, *Power and Corruption in the Early Modern Portuguese World*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015); Christoph Rosenmüller, ‘Corrupted by Ambition’: Justice and Patronage in Imperial New Spain and Spain, 1650–1755’, *Hispanic American Historical Review* 96 (2016) 1–37; Christoph Rosenmüller and Stephan Ruderer, eds., *Dádivas, dones y dineros. Aportes a una nueva historia de la corrupción en América Latina desde el imperio español a la modernidad* (Madrid: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2016); Francisco Andújar and Pilar Ponce Leiva, eds., *Mérito, venalidad y corrupción en España y América. Siglos XVII y XVIII* (Valencia: Albatros, 2016); Margarita Suárez, ed., *Parientes, criados y allegados: los vínculos personales en el mundo virreinal peruano* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2015).

³³Ida Altman, *Transatlantic Ties in the Spanish Empire: Brihuega, Spain, and Puebla, Mexico, 1560–1620* (Stanford: California Stanford University Press, 2000); Tatiana Seijas, *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico: from Chinos to Indians* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Lúcio De Sousa, *The Portuguese Slave Trade in Early Modern Japan: Merchants, Jesuits and Japanese, Chinese, and Korean Slaves* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

³⁴Charles Boxer, *Salvador de Sá and the Struggle for Brazil and Angola, 1602–1686* (London: the Athlone Press, 1952); Lúcio De Sousa, *The Early European Presence in China, Japan, the Philippines and Southeast Asia (1555–1590): The Life of Bartolomeu Landeiro* (Macao: Macao Foundation, 2010); Erica L. Ball, Tatiana Seijas and Terri L. Snyder, eds., *As if She Were Free: a Collective Biography of Women and Emancipation in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Valentina Favaró, *Pratiche negoziali e reti di potere: Carmine Nicola Caracciolo tra Europa e America (1694–1725)* (Rubbettino: Soveria Mannelli, 2019); Nuno Vila-Santa *Entre o Reino e o Império: a carreira político-militar de D. Luís de Ataíde (1516–1581)* (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2015).

³⁵Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War in Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); John TePaske, ‘New World Silver, Castile and the Philippines, 1590–1800’, in *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds*, ed. John F. Richards (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1983), 425–45; Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, ‘China and the Manila Galleons’, in Dennis O. Flynn, *World Silver and Monetary History in the 16th and 17th centuries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), 71–86; Alejandra Irigoin, ‘The end of a silver era: the consequences of the breakdown of the Spanish Peso standard in China and the United States, 1780s–1850s’, *Journal of World History* 6,1 (2009); Marcy Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures: a History of Tobacco and Chocolate in the Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Irene Fattaciu, *Empire, Political Economy, and the Diffusion of Chocolate in the Atlantic World* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020); Steven Topik, Carlos Marichal and Zephyr Frank, eds., *From Silver to Cocaine: Latin American Commodity Chains and the Building of the World Economy, 1500–2000* (Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Rebecca Earle, *Feeding the People: the Politics of the Potato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Marta A. Vicente, *Clothing the Spanish Empire: Families and the Calico Trade in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

³⁶Russell-Wood, *The Portuguese Empire 1415–1808: A World on the Move* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972) and *Ecological Imperialism: the Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1986); William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1976).

considerations of borders as zones of conflict and interaction both within and between sovereign regimes.³⁷ Such resonances have encouraged interest in the entangled nature of the Portuguese and Spanish imperial ventures in Asia, as well as in the zones of contact between the Iberian empires in Asia and other sovereign regimes, not least Ming and Qing China, Mughal India and Tokugawa Japan.

So, more recent studies look in detail at the Indian Ocean world's connexions with Africa and, via South Africa and Angola, with the Iberian Peninsular and Latin America (the Caribbean, Brazil and the Rio de la Plata).³⁸ Similarly, though pointing in the opposite direction, research continues to be undertaken on the connexions between Manila and Mexico, and on the Manila Galleon. These latter connexions are traditional concerns for Iberianists.³⁹ The more recent studies differ in that they address new areas such as the China Sea and analyse how the empires abutting the Indian Ocean affected the Portuguese-Spanish dominions of, say, New Spain and the Viceroyalty of Peru, by way of the Pacific, and Western Africa.⁴⁰ The Pacific has as a result become much more central to interpretations of the history of the Americas, particularly of New Spain and the Viceroyalty of Peru, and even of the Atlantic seaboard of Rio de la Plata and the Caribbean Sea.⁴¹ Some authors working on this subject have gone on to argue – consciously or not, following Gunder Frank and his idea of a polycentric globalization – for the emergence of an ‘American globalization’ whose poles were located in the New World.⁴² Doing so offers a way of decentring the history of inter-regional relations within empires and at the same time contribute to the history of globalization.

These two lines of development – in favour of decentralization and of connexions – have been complemented by growing support for the thesis of local societies being party to global entanglements. The thesis may be interpreted as the natural extension of the growing focus on decentralization and connexions. At the same time, this view cleaves to a long tradition, rooted in an

³⁷Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: the Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Tamar Herzog, *Frontiers of possession: Spain and Portugal in Europe and the Americas* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2015); Valentina Favaro, Manfredo Merluzzi and Gaetano Sabatini, eds., *Fronteras. Procesos y prácticas de integración y conflictos entre Europa y América (siglos XVI-XX)* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2017); José M. Escibano Páez, *Juan Rena and the Frontiers of Spanish Empire, 1500–1540* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020); Ines G. Zupanov, *Missionary Tropics: The Catholic Frontier in India (16th–17th Centuries)* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

³⁸Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade in Asia*; Filipa Silva Ribeiro, *Dutch and Portuguese in Western Africa: Empires, Merchants and the Atlantic System, 1580–1674* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011); Leonor Feire Costa, *O transporte no Atlântico e a Companhia Geral do Comércio do Brasil (1580–1663)* (Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimientos Portugueses, 2002); Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300–1589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean, 1570–1640* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

³⁹Carlos Martínez Shaw, *El sistema comercial español del Pacífico (1765–1820)* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 2007); Carmen Yuste López, *Emporios transpacíficos. Comerciantes mexicanos en Manila, 1710–1815* (México DF: UNAM, 2007); José L. Gash-Tomas, *The Atlantic World and the Manila Galleons. Circulation, Market, and Consumption of Asian Goods in the Spanish Empire, 1565–1650* (Leiden: Brill, 2019); Cuauhtémoc Villamar, *Portuguese Merchants in the Manila Galleon System 1565–1600* (London: Routledge, 2020).

⁴⁰Sanjay Subramanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India, 1500–1650* (Cambridge, New York, NY., Cambridge University Press, 1990); *Explorations in Connected History: Mughals and Franks* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005) and *Impérios em comcorrência. Historias conectadas nos séculos XVI e XVII* (Lisboa: Instituto de Ciências Sociais de Lisboa, 2012); Denis O. Flynn, ‘Silver in a Global Context, 1400–1800’, in *The Cambridge World History*, Vol VI, ed. Jerry H. Bentley, Sanjay Subramanyam and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 213–39; Birgit Tremml-Werner, *Spain, China, and Japan in Manila, 1571–1644. Local Comparisons and Global Connections* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015).

⁴¹Mariano Bonialian, *El Pacífico hispanoamericano: política y comercio asiático en el Imperio Español (1680–1784)* (México: El Colegio de México, 2012); Tatiana Seijas, *Asian Slaves*.

⁴²Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in The Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Gruzinski, *Les quatre parties du monde*; Bernd Hausberguer, *Historia mínima de la globalización temprana* (México: El Colegio de México, 2018); Mariano Bonialian, *La América española: entre el Pacífico y el Atlántico. Globalización mercantil y economía política, 1580–1840* (México: El Colegio de México, 2019).

indigenist vein of research, which constitutes a kind of proto-Subaltern Studies.⁴³ This includes work by Americanists and Africanists, in history and anthropology, who have privileged vernacular analysis and case studies, and who since the end of Second World War have been labouring on subjects like miscegenation, the varieties of colonial domination and exploitation, and inter-racial relations both in the Americas and in the Portuguese-speaking territories of Africa and Asia. Their scholarship is marked with what Wachtel has called ‘the vision of the vanquished’.⁴⁴

The novelty of recent decades lies in linking these earlier concerns to global history. Increasingly, phenomena such as creolization and slavery are studied as part-and-parcel of the circulation of people, commodities, technologies, ideas and information in an Iberian imperial space which in early modern times was the major arena for often forced, long-distance migration.⁴⁵ The development of connected or entangled history as an approach has facilitated this trend, furnishing an analytical framework for the elaboration of generative hypotheses. Alongside this, ethnography has furnished concepts like ethnogenesis which have helped historians interpret cultural relations between human groups as components of an evolutionary process. By allowing for the agency of ‘subalterns’ in shaping the history of empires, there has been a break with older ideas of ‘acculturation’ from above.⁴⁶

Take the example of slavery. Local studies highlight slavery’s idiosyncratic nature, rooted in specific places, at the same time as acknowledging its entanglement in global processes.⁴⁷ Slavery is no longer considered the exclusive preserve of the plantation economies of the Caribbean or Brazil, an idea which predominated until a few decades ago. On the contrary, its significance to other dimensions of the polity – wage labour, socio-political resistance, domestic life, inter-cultural conflicts, the formation of imagined communities, and so on – is now well attested in many areas. The scope of slavery has also broadened to include the enslavement of

⁴³Nathan Wachtel, *La vision des vaincus. Les Indiens du Pérou devant la conquête espagnole (1530–1570)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971); Zvetan Todorov, *La conquête de l’Amérique. La question de l’autre* (Paris: Seuil, 1982).

⁴⁴Nathan Wachtel, *Le retour des ancêtres. Les indiens Uris de Bolivie, XXe–XVIIe siècle, essais d’histoire régressive* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990) and ‘L’aculturation’, in *Faire de l’Histoire. Nouveaux Problèmes*, dirs., Jaques Le Goff and Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 174–202; Nancy Farriss, *Maya Society under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Rolena Adorno, *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2000); Serge Gruzinski and Nathan Wachtel, coords., *Le Nouveau Monde Mondes Nouveaux. L’expérience américaine* (Paris: Éditions de L’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1996); Omar Svriz-Wucherer, *Resistencia y negociación. Milicias guaraníes, jesuitas y cambios socioeconómicos en la frontera del imperio global hispánico (ss. XVII–XVIII)* (Buenos Aires: Prohistoria, 2021); Christophe Giudicelli et Gilles Havard, dirs., *Les révoltes indiennes: Amériques, XVIe–XXIe siècle* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, Americana, 2021); Maria Regina Celestino de Almeida, *Metamorfoes Indígenas. Identidade e Cultura nas Aldeias Coloniais do Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 2003); Stuart B. Schwartz, *Blood and Boundaries: The Limits of Religious and Racial Exclusion in Early Modern Latin America* (Waltham, Mass: Brandeis University Press, 2020); and *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

⁴⁵David Eltis, Philip Morgan and David D. Richardson, ‘Agency and Diasporas in Atlantic History: Reassessing the African Contribution in the Americas’, *American Historical Review* 112, 5 (2007): 1329–58; Philip Morgan, ed., *Maritime Slavery* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012); Bethany Aram and Manuel E. García, ‘Rice Revisited from Colonial Panama: Its Cultivation and Exportation’, in *American Globalization, 1492–1850. Trans-Cultural Consumption in Latin America*, eds., Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla, Ilaria Berti and Omar Svriz-Wucherer (London: Routledge, 2022).

⁴⁶Guillaume Boccara, *Guerre et ethnogenèse mapuche dans le Chili colonial: l’invention du soi* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1998); Guillaume Boccara, ‘Etnogénesis Mapuche: Resistencia y Reestructuración Entre Los Indígenas del Centro-Sur de Chile (Siglos XVI–XVIII)’, *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 79, 3 (1999): 425–461; Christophe Giudicelli, *Pour une géopolitique de la guerre des Tepehuán, 1616–1619: alliances indiennes, quadrillage colonial et taxinomie ethnographique au Nord-Ouest du Mexique* (Paris: Centre de Recherche sur l’Amérique espagnole coloniale – Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris III, 2003); Guillaume Boccara, ed., *Colonización, Resistencia y mestizaje en las Américas (siglos XVI–XX)* (Quito: Instituto francés de estudios andinos, 2002); Ralph Bauera and Marcy Norton, eds., ‘Entangled trajectories: Indigenous and European histories’, *Colonial Latin American Review* 26, 1 special issue (2017) (a state of the art is given in the introduction by the two editors on pp. 1–17).

⁴⁷Marco Rosario Capodiferro, Bethany Aram, et al., ‘Archaeogenomic distinctiveness of the Isthmo-Colombian area’, *Cell* 184, 7 (2021): 1706–23.

Native Americans. While these phenomena were known to earlier generations of scholars, the innovation of today lies in how they are being marshalled to help us understand slavery as a complex of formal institutions, with an important distinction drawn between slave societies and societies with slaves.⁴⁸ This research is revealing varied, and sometimes opposing, forms of inter-culturality over the long term. Seen from below, the earlier more uniform and simplistic image of slavery has been torn up and replaced by a picture of enormous plurality. This is typical of multicultural societies which had autonomous dynamics while being simultaneously enmeshed in global flows and interactions. The result is an efflorescence of research on race relations, on relations between different subaltern groups, and on relations between subalterns and the elites.⁴⁹

Imperial Iberian history and global history

As a result of the developments discussed in the previous section, the image of the Iberian empires today is very different from the one which prevailed at the beginning of this century, barely a generation ago. The new image is largely beholden to global history. In turn, this image promises to help us ‘grasp developments of *world historical significance*’.⁵⁰ This may be seen in the fresh questions posed by it and the avenues of research these open up.

The older conception of the Iberian empires as hierarchical systems of power imposed from above has been heavily qualified, if not up-ended. The cultural, legal and institutional plurality of the polities over which they exerted hegemony, as well as their circulations, exchanges, blockages and oppositions associated with global trends, have become more evident. The image of the empires performing a balancing act among autonomous polities throws doubt on the thesis of the empires being subject to a process characterized by inescapable European domination. It invites us to reconsider their purportedly secular evolution.

The juxtaposition of the history of empires and global history places the spotlight on the mutual horizontal relations between the component polities of the empires, particularly on their ‘peripheries’, and the challenges of integrating them into a general imperial history. The study of these relations can be approached on many analytical levels. In order to show the avenues of research opened up by this fresh questioning, consider the fiscal and commercial dimensions of Iberian imperial history.

The high degree of fiscal autonomy of the empires’ territories has been leveraged to argue for the system of imperial governance being marked by a high level of provincial autonomy,⁵¹ to the extent that some talk about polycentrism in this particular aspect. The key fact here is that Spanish empire, and *mutatis mutandis* the Portuguese empire, was grounded on fiscal provincial circumscriptions – *cajas* (‘treasuries’) – in which bargaining between the local elites and the king’s servants was crucial, and by means of which funds were transferred between those territories to cover administrative and defensive needs and emergencies. But it should not be forgotten that at the base of this fiscal machinery lay arbitration, coordination and even coercion directed from

⁴⁸Jaime Valenzuela Márquez, *América en diásporas. Esclavitudes y migraciones forzadas en Chile y otras regiones americanas (siglos xvi-xix)*, (Santiago de Chile: Ril, 2027); Andrés Reséndez, *The Other Slavery. The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America*, (Boston/New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016); Nancy Van Deusen, *Global Indios: The Indigenous Struggle for Justice in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); Stuart Schwartz.

⁴⁹Jorge Diaz Ceballos, *Poder compartido. Repúblicas urbanas, Monarquía y conversación en Castilla del Oro, 1508–1573* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2020); Zoltán Biedermann, *(Dis)connected Empires. Imperial Portugal, Sri Lankan Diplomacy, and the Making of a Habsburg Conquest in Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁵⁰Frankwma, Sood and Tworek, ‘Editors’ note’: 2.

⁵¹John J. TePaske and Herbert S. Klein, *The Royal Treasuries of The Spanish Empire in America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1982); Carlos Marichal and Johanna von Grafenstein, eds., *El secreto del imperio español: los situados coloniales en el siglo XVII* (Mexico: ColMex, 2012); Regina Grafe and Alejandra Irigoin, ‘A Stakeholder Empire: The Political Economy of Spanish Imperial Rule in America’, *The Economic History Review* 65 (2012): 609–51; Susana Miranda, ‘The Centre and the Periphery in the Administration of the Royal Exchequer of the “Estado da Índia”, 1517–1640’, *e-Journal of Portuguese History* 7, 2 (2009).

Madrid or Lisbon in trying to ensure local elites transferred cash from territories with surpluses to those in deficit. In this sense, provincial autonomy and the horizontal relations between the different territories were forcefully regulated, if not severely constrained, by the centre. As the fiscal machinery supported the whole defensive apparatus of the empires, their survival thus necessarily depended on Madrid or Lisbon. It follows that the long life of these empires cannot be explained by looking at them solely as constellations of autonomous polities in a power nebula.⁵²

With regard to commercial interactions, there were strong complementarities and linkages between different areas of these empires which did not necessarily pivot on the metropolitan centre. The economies of Angola and Madagascar were closely tied to that of the *Estado da Índia* (with its headquarters in Goa), and even to those of Brazil and Buenos Aires, via flows which were not always controlled from Lisbon. In Spanish America, the endogenous circuits formed around the great mining settlements are well known. Some have emphasized the capacity of these circuits to weaken the relations of Spanish America with Europe. The same can be said of the flows between New Spain and the Viceroyalty of Peru, and between the former and the Philippines.⁵³

But the European centres remained crucial because the kind of complementarities and linkages between different areas of the imperial periphery noted above also often created tensions and clashes. For the merchants of Mexico, collaboration with those of Lima could turn into a conflict of interests due to the latter's fraudulent trade with the Philippines (in which many Mexicans were involved, of course). The flows between, on the one hand, Lima and Potosí and, on the other, Buenos Aires were especially frowned upon by the Sevillian merchants, who felt this compromised their monopoly of trade between the Caribbean and Seville. Tensions like these, and the importance of keeping the territories united and cooperative, show up the roles of Madrid or Lisbon through their ability to maintain and organize their empires. This helps explain why, when following the Portuguese War of Independence (1640–68) all the Lusitanian domains, with the sole exception of Ceuta, which fell under the suzerainty of the Spanish Hapsburgs, became independent of Madrid and continued to depend on Lisbon. That the Portuguese empire did not disintegrate in this moment of great upheaval is undoubtedly because of the magnetism which Lisbon continued to exert over its various territories. The outcome of the Hispanic American independence movements after 1808 and the subsequent failure of any Bolivarian Pan-American utopia suggests the same: the complementarities and positive linkages collapsed when the authority of Madrid, which had previously underpinned them, disappeared. This suggests that, while the Iberian empires had many centres, they did not have the equivalent role, influence or capacity in the realm of sovereign governance. Furthermore, their precise role, influence and capacity depended on the details of the prevailing situation. The asymmetries between the various centres, as well as the contingencies of each case under analysis, are of critical significance.

So, examining the fiscal and commercial dimensions of imperial history reveals the importance of horizontal relations between the different territories. It also reveals the ability of the metropolises to exercise control over, and regulate, local particularisms, as well as its bargaining power. To try to encapsulate such a reality in a single term such as polycentrism or uncontested absolutism is simply impossible and misleading. Only a perspective that embraces this dualism will allow us to answer the kind of questions raised by the forgoing findings.

Imperial history has tended to stress vertical and radial relations of domination and political bargaining. Through the prism of global history, however, the importance of the horizontal relations between the polities of the empire has increasingly come into view. This combination of perspectives obliges us to directed attention to the local as a site of study, since it is there where

⁵²Cf. Pedro Cardim, Tamar Herzog, José Javier Ruiz Ibáñez, and Gaetano Sabatini, 'Polycentric Monarchies: How did Early Modern Spain and Portugal Achieve and Maintain a Global Hegemony?', in *Polycentric Monarchies*, eds. Cardim, Herzog, Ruiz Ibáñez and Sabatini, 3–8.

⁵³Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade*; TePaske and Klein, 'The Seventeenth-Century Crisis'.

the various scales of flows and interaction materialize, and which the historian must consequently elucidate. One way of doing this is by carrying out a microanalysis of local cases (which some refer to as ‘microhistory’). As long as such microanalysis is understood as a means of discovering the universal in the small, such an approach can be useful. Furthermore, some microhistorians have argued that this approach can be extended to embrace a reciprocal comparison of local situations. Microhistory, they go on, may even be combined with connective history by analysing the ways external forces affected the space under examination.⁵⁴ Others, however, argue that the examination of the universal on a small canvas explicitly or implicitly seems to gainsay the possibilities of comparisons.⁵⁵ But whatever one’s position, it is obvious that studies on global scales need microanalysis.

The state of research at present makes it difficult, if not impossible, to speak of the Iberian empires having a single political economy or a single institutional and political framework. To understand these empires – indeed, all empires – the institutions of the imperial superstructures must be juxtaposed with those of local societies with their specific cultural beliefs and normative codes, often based on conflicting customs. Both affected the forms of coercion, enforcement, trust-building and resource allocation, and intersected with global processes which extended beyond the empires’ frontiers. Both also affected fiscal policy, the capacity of ruling elites to extract resources, the establishment of cross-border markets, and the accuracy and movement of information received by political and economic agents.

Such thinking spurs us to reassess the relationship of the Iberian empires’ territories with the metropole. Earlier theses like that of the colonial pact between Madrid and Lisbon and their overseas territories need to be revisited. There is now a pressing need to determine how local ‘subaltern’ groups, whose influence on the large scales has been demonstrated by more recent scholarship, were involved in, or were sometimes even an obstacle to, the elaboration of working agreements between territories and the metropole.⁵⁶ When we consider the rebellions of the late eighteenth century (which culminated in the Latin American independence movements), alongside the struggle of American elites for independence from Madrid or Lisbon, we see demands by subalterns for changes to – even resistance to – the perceived colonial pact and, by extension, the global forces which were proving detrimental to their interests. Of course, such demands were not new; they were rooted in ideologies, myths and ways of doing politics which went back a long way and which had been preserved and remained resilient in local societies. They formed part of prevailing moral economies which had evolved over time. Alongside the processes of hybridization, however, some inherited traditions serving to justify the agency of the subalterns persisted almost unchanged.⁵⁷

This emphasis on the local, and in the microanalytical approach sometimes associated with it, should not obscure the significance of more global and trans-regional reasoning. Microanalytical

⁵⁴Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ‘The Stuff of Which History is Made: a Brief Conversation with Carlo Ginzburg’, *Hindu* (November 2007). (https://www.academia.edu/46044905/The_Staff_of_Which_History_is_Made_A_Brief_Conversation_with_Carlo_Ginzburg) (accessed May 12, 2021); Natalie Z. Davis, ‘Decentering History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossing in a Global World’, *History and Theory* 50, 2 (2011): 188–202. On the local and the global, see also, Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* (Minnesota, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Francesca Trivellato, ‘Is there a future for Italian microhistory in the age of global history’, *California Italian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2011); Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla ‘Localism’, *Global History and Transnational History: A Reflection from the Historian of Early Modern Europe*, *Historisk Tidskrift* 127, no. 4 (2007): 659–78.

⁵⁵See the essays collected in John-Paul A. Ghobrial, ed., ‘Global History and Microhistory’, *Past & Present*, 242, special issue, Supplement 14 (2019).

⁵⁶Ana Diaz Serrano, ‘Las *poco* y las *más repúblicas*. Los gobiernos indios en la América española’ and Catarina Madeira Santos, ‘O império português fase às instituições indígenas (Estado da Índia, Brasil e Angola, séculos XVI-XVIII)’, in Barreto, Palomo and Stumpf, eds., *Monarquias Ibéricas*, 237–302.

⁵⁷Charles Walker, *The Tupac Amaru Rebellion* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2014); Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and the Mexican Struggle for Independence, 1810–1821* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 2001).

approaches can also be – and are being – applied to the study of larger-scale trends through, for example, contextual biographies. Related notions such as *'jeux d'échelles'* are also fruitful. Paradigms such as dependency theory, which some articulated as a form of global connectivity, have it is true collapsed under their own weight. That said, larger scales all the way up to the global remain crucial for comprehending the workings of the Iberian imperial systems. Most scholars today acknowledge that the proportion of global trade channelled to Europe was smaller than previously thought, at least until about 1580.⁵⁸ We know that the introduction of new consumption patterns was slower than had been thought earlier and there were many vacuums in the adoption of European and Asian patterns of consumption and products.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Latin America since the seventeenth century was an important pole in the processes of commercial globalization. The construction and reconstruction of polities there necessitated a considerable import of non-American products, not least enslaved peoples. These imports flowed in because of the abundance of American silver, which was used to pay for them. Whatever value we want to place on the role of trade in the globalization of the early modern era, the figures for outflows of American silver show that consumption on this continent and its foreign trade played an important role in the overall intercontinental trade in the eighteenth century.⁶⁰

Furthermore, there existed other dimensions along which non-European territories had an impact on metropolitan economies.⁶¹ This was felt keenly in relation to political, administrative and social structures. Mercantile activities, especially those vested in the imperial territories, threatened to alter the social order of the European heartlands, hitherto based on the predominance of the nobility and the Church. The price revolution, largely due to the arrival of precious metals from the New World, eroded the incomes of the poorest and of the high aristocracy. At the same time, the new connexions between the Americas and Europe facilitated the resilience and continuity of some pre-existing metropolitan structures, in particular by creating opportunities for the social promotion for the elites and by making credit cheaper for indebted aristocracies. The silver flows received by the kings of Madrid also had a powerful impact on the political equilibrium of the European states; it affected the possibilities for the economic development of specific areas which took advantage either of the expenses of the Spanish Monarchy or of the colonial trade. Views such as those of Williamson and O'Rourke, which stress the limits of market globalization, have a basis in fact, but assessments of their historical significance need to take account of these other dimensions along which economic relations were negotiated.⁶²

Another recent contribution stemming from global history for our understanding of the Iberian empires has been to throw into sharp relief the weaknesses of nationalist narratives and methodologies, which were very influential in scholarship produced during the dictatorships of Franco and Salazar. The critique of, and shift away from, these narratives and methodologies was already implicit in the 1980s, with the revision of the modern state paradigm as an analytical category for the early modern period and its substitution by the idea of a composite monarchy. This idea underlines the existence of different polities with distinct institutional systems and political and legal traditions, in place of the earlier image of a proto-national state. The subsequent study of the Iberian empires from a global history perspective has furthered such revisionism.

⁵⁸Patrick O'Brien, 'European Economic Development; the Contribution of the Periphery', *Economic History Review* 35 (1980): 1–18; Yun-Casalilla, *Iberian World*; Sanjay Subrahmanyan, *The Political Economy*.

⁵⁹Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla, 'From Goods to commodities in Spanish America: Structural Change and Ecological Globalization from the Perspective of the European History of Consumption', in *American Globalization* eds., Yun-Casalilla, Berti and Svriz-Wucherer, 285–301.

⁶⁰For a discussion on the degree of globalization and the figures, see Jan De Vries, 'Connecting Europe and Asia: A Quantitative Analysis of the Cape-route Trade, 1497–1795', in *Global Connections and Monetary History, 1470–1800*, eds., Dennis O. Flynn, Arturo Giráldez and Richard Von Glahn (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 81, fig. 2.3b.

⁶¹The following are some of the main theses of Yun-Casalilla, *Iberian World*, chapters 4 and 6.

⁶²Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, 'When did Globalisation begin?', *European Review of Economic History* 6 (2005): 23–50.

There is currently a consensus that the resources coming from the empire served to maintain the political status quo, which reinforced at least until the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War the composite character of the monarchy.

The break with nationalist approaches has also been facilitated by interpreting empires as arenas of transnational networks. This has been argued most sharply by Henry Kamen.⁶³ According to him, the Spanish imperial system functioned, not because of the Castilians or their technology and knowledge, but because of the German miners, engineers of Italian origin, and the capital of the Genoese, among others. The survival and efficiency of the empire depended on these connexions. Studnicki, Boyajian and others have shown that the machinery of the Portuguese empire is incomprehensible without foregrounding the Hebrew minorities through whom capital, information and know-how circulated and was exchanged. Building on an earlier tradition of studies about the role of German bankers in the Americas,⁶⁴ there have been valuable studies on Italian mercantile networks in the Americas and Asia, and on noble Italian (and Jewish) families and traders who played important roles in the functioning of the Iberian empires without having their epicentre in the Iberian Peninsula.⁶⁵ The connexions revealed by this work have also made it possible to observe the impact of the Iberian empires beyond their own peninsular borders in Europe.⁶⁶ Without these 'foreigners' – frequently rejected by nationalist narratives – the imperial systems could never have functioned as they did and would probably not have persisted for as long as they did.

It is worth noting that the communities and corporations embedded within these networks, although in tune with the imperial systems, did not always conform to the agenda of their rulers or the geography of the empires. Consider the Society of Jesus. Linked to and favoured by the Crown – they received, for example, the real estate of the pagodas of Goa, on which their revenues came to be based – the Jesuits established their own channels of communication between different regions.⁶⁷ These enabled them to create in effect a kind of informal empire, a state within the state. That eventually led to a confrontation which ended with the expulsion of the Society from the Iberian empires in 1759 and 1766–7. The Jesuit example is echoed in the associations of Peruvian traders, the mostly Creole 'peruleros', whose commerce linked Lima and Seville via the Caribbean and also Lima to Manila.

The trans-imperial character of these connexions has prompted the study of empires from without, particularly in their contact zones with other political formations. Here the cross-fertilization of global history and imperial history offers great promise. This is especially true for the Asian territories of the Iberian empires. Recent work on the early modern history of China, India and Japan has shown the ways in which political and economic changes in those areas affected the whole Iberian world. Attention has been called to the payment of China's taxes in silver being dependent upon the Latin American mining sector, which expanded in large part due to the increasing value of silver caused by growing Chinese demand. Changes in the tribute

⁶³Henry Kamen, *Empire: How Spain Became a World Power, 1492–1763* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2003).

⁶⁴Hermann H. Kellenbenz, *Los Fugger en España y Portugal hasta 1560* (Salamanca: Junta de Castilla y León, 2000); John Everaert, *Le commerce international et colonial des firms flamandes à Cadix, 1670–1700* (Bruges: Temple, 1973).

⁶⁵Catia Brilli, *Genoese Trade and Migration in the Spanish Atlantic, 1700–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in The Early Modern Period* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009); Valentina Favaro, *Pratiche negoziali e reti di potere: Carmine Nicola Caracciolo tra Europa e America (1694–1725)* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2019); Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation*; Ronnie Po'Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540–1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Paolo Broggio, *Evangelizzare il Mondo. Le missioni della Compagnia di Gesù tra Europa e America (secoli XVI–XVII)* (Roma: Carozzi, 2004).

⁶⁶See, for example, how they affected to European patterns of consumption in Veronyka Hyden-Hanscho, Renate Pieper and Werner Stangl, eds., *Cultural Exchange and Consumption Patterns in the Age of Enlightenment. Europe and the Atlantic World* (Bochum: Verlag Dieter Winkler, 2013).

⁶⁷Andreu Martínez d'Alós-Moner, *Envoys of a Human God: The Jesuit Mission to Christian Ethiopia, 1557–1632* (Boston: Brill, 2015).

system for trade in China are now seen as crucial for the increasing trade of Portuguese and Spanish in Macao and Manila. The importance has been underlined of the slave trade in Asia for the rest of the world, as well as of how local conditions shaped the involvement of the Portuguese merchants in this very lucrative sector and the incipient tensions which would allow the Dutch to displace the Portuguese during the seventeenth century. There is growing appreciation of the relationship between the arrival of silver in China and the political crisis leading to emergence of the Qing dynasty. While in Japan, the negative impact on Iberian trade of Tokugawan economic policy has been related to the need of the new regime to limit the power of *daimios*, who had been invigorated by their trade with Manila and Macao.⁶⁸ Similarly, recent work on the African territories of the Iberian empires has illuminated the ways in which developments there affected the larger Iberian world, both in Europe and in the Americas.⁶⁹ To realize fully the promise of this kind of research, collaboration between specialists on the Iberian empires and those on areas in which were their contact zones with other political formations is indispensable.

As already noted, there is great heuristic value in undertaking comparative research on imperial history through the prism of global history. This is of relevance not just to the Iberian empires, but others too. Perhaps the most significant outcome of this approach is the recognition of a multiplicity of centres of decision-making. The problem, however, is that until recently such multiplicity has been presented as a feature particular to the Iberian empires alone among early modern European empires. That could well be due to the association of their imperial systems with the notion of a composite monarchy, by definition multi-centred in nature. Indeed, the very conception of the *Monarchia Universalis*, found in Iberian political thought of the era, is based on notions of political and juridical pluralism.⁷⁰ But on closer examination, it has been found that most empires, including that of the English (and later the British), were characterized by a multiplicity of centres between which agreements were in effect negotiated by their respective elites.⁷¹ In light of that, what we need are analyses and comparisons of the praxis of politics on the ground.

⁶⁸Denis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, 'Cycles of Silver: Global Economic Unity through the Mid-Eighteenth Century', *Journal of World History* 13 (2002): 391–427; Denis O. Flynn, 'Silver in a Global Context'; Gakusho Nakajima, 'The Structure and Transformation of the Ming Tribute Trade System', in *Global History and New Polycentric Approaches*, eds., Manuel Perez-García and Lucio de Sousa, (Singapore: Palgrave, 2018), 137–62; François Gipouloux, *La Méditerranée asiatique. Villes portuaires et réseaux marchands en Chine, au Japon et en Asie du Sud-Est XVIe-XXIe siècles* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2009); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*; Irfan Habib, 'Merchants Communities in Precolonial India' and Morris Rossabi, 'The 'Decline' of the Central Asia Caravan Trade', in *The Rise of Merchant Empires. Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350–1750*, ed., James Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 371–421 and 351–70; Lucio de Sousa *The Portuguese Slave Trade; Tremml-Werner, Spain, China, and Japan in Manila*.

⁶⁹David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean, 1570–1640* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and A Fistful of Shells: West Africa from the Rise of the Slave Trade to the Age of Revolution* (London: Allen Lane, 2019).

⁷⁰Anthony Pagden, *Lords of all the World: Ideologies of Empire on Spain, Britain and France, c. 1500–c. 1800* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995); Diogo R. Curto, *Imperial Culture and Colonial Projects: The Portuguese-Speaking World From the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2020); Pedro Cardim and Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro, 'Introduction', in *Political Thought in Portugal and its Empire, c. 1500–1800*, eds., Pedro Cardim and Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 1–44.

⁷¹On the British Empire, John Darwin has written that "it creates the illusion of a standardized apparatus of power whose command and control were centered in London. But it could never have been so. The first stumbling block was the astonishing scale and diversity of British possessions. By 1913, more than one hundred separate political units (even excluding the 600 or so princely states of 'Native State' India) owed allegiance to the British Crown. They had been acquired over centuries. They displayed almost every variety of human community, and their internal diversity was sometimes extreme". *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (London: Allen Lande, 2012): 189. See also Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy, *Negotiated Empires: Centres and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500–1820* (Nueva York; London, Routledge, 2012); Gagan D. S. Sood, 'Knowledge of the Art of Governance: The Mughal and Ottoman Empires in the Early Seventeenth Century', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Series 3*, 30, no. 2 (2020): 253–82; David Veevers, 'Inhabitants of the universe': global families, kinship networks, and the formation of the early modern colonial state in Asia', *Journal of Global History* 10, no. 1 (2015): 99–121.

These will allow us to grasp the extent to which the various centres were autonomous, the manner in which negotiations were conducted with the empire's rulers, and how the forms of legal pluralism differed between distinct imperial formations and localities.

However, carrying out such comparative research is a complicated matter, above all because of the multiple levels on which salient flows and interactions took place, sometimes in contrary directions. For the Maya and other native American peoples, historians have documented hybridization in their religious practices. But we know that religious dogma was less negotiable. Castilian colonists commonly held to the view that some laws and customs of the indigenous society had to be respected. Nevertheless, we have plenty of evidence to the contrary in their actions. It has been shown that the authorities of the New Kingdom of Granada were eager to attribute barbaric traits to the Native Americans of the area if that served to legitimize a 'just war' in order to acquire land and slaves violently and unilaterally.⁷² So, alongside negotiations as a mechanism, the possibility of violence was ever-present. It was intrinsic to the prevailing forms of hegemony and domination; whether or not it broke out depended on the particular circumstances. Taken together, there was a multitude of ways in which power could be – and was – articulated in relations between the various centres of decision-making within empires. The challenge for us as historians is to define suitable units of comparison and appropriate variables or aspects to research so as to enable plausible general conclusion.

To that end, inter-temporal and inter-territorial comparisons are worth serious consideration. Though we must exercise caution in making any generalizations within and across empires due to the immense variations in local conditions, the Iberian empires seem to correspond to the model of European imperialism described by Ringrose for the period before 1750: in comparison with the empires of the latter nineteenth century, those in early modern times were limited in their territorial and social penetration, and therefore had little need to draw upon military force to control their territories and societies.⁷³ This model might suggest that there was less use of imperial violence in this period. But that is a hypothesis awaiting demonstration. Furthermore, the many indications of violence locally give reason not to take too literally the political theories of the time which advocated harmonious coexistence between metropolitan structures of governance and the original constitutions and legal regimes of the conquered peoples.

Iberian imperial history and the history of globalization

The forgoing excitement and promise of studying the Iberian empires in terms of global history clashes, however, with the sense of marginality felt by some Iberianists. There are certain subjects, like the circulation of silver in the first globalization, for which scholars whose expertise lies elsewhere are obliged to take the Iberian world into account. Here, the decisive role of the Iberian empires in globalization is unavoidable. But for other aspects of globalization, the Iberian empires tend to be missing or merely present as bit players. This, at least apparent, marginality has spurred a sense of disconnect among specialists, who have issued repeated calls for a deeper integration of their findings into broader historiographical debates and into the general history of empires.⁷⁴

⁷²Luis M. Córdoba Ochoa, *Guerra, imperio y violencia en la Audiencia de Santa Fe, Nuevo Reino de Granada, 1580–1620* (PhD diss., Pablo de Olavide University, Seville, 2013).

⁷³David Ringrose, *Europeans Abroad, 1450–1750* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019); Jason C. Sharman, *Empires of the Weak: The Real Story of European Expansion and the Creation of the New World Order* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019).

⁷⁴Matthew Brown, 'The Global History of Latin America', *Journal of Global History* 10 (2015): 365–86; Jorge Luengo and Pol Dalmau, 'Writing Spanish History in the Global Age: Connections and Entanglements in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Global History* 13 (2018): 425–45; Christopher Schmidt-Novara, 'After 'Spain': A dialogue with Josep M. Fradera on Spanish Colonial, Historiography', in Antoinette Burton, ed., *After the Imperial Turn*, 158–69; Rafael Dobado-González and Alfredo García-Hiernaux, 'Introduction', in *The Fruits of the Early Globalization: An Iberian Perspective*, Rafael Dobado-González and Alfredo García-Hiernaux, eds. (London and Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 3–25.

Some Iberianists express the hope that new approaches being developed for the history of empires may serve to bridge this gap. Other scholars, however, are less sanguine, criticizing global history as ‘another Anglospheric invention to integrate the other into a cosmopolitan narrative on our terms, in our tongues’.⁷⁵ This assertion, coming from a scholar who has devoted a good deal of his research to Latin American history, may be transposed to the Iberian empires and worlds. There are concerns that this field, especially in relation to the history of globalization, may be obscuring alternative, though meaningful, perspectives, not least those grounded in Latin America.⁷⁶

Whether or not such thoughts and feelings are justified, there is no denying the contrast between current debates and older, now moribund ones. The latter include most prominently debates over the proposals of Hamilton and others at the beginning of the twentieth century (who placed Iberia, particularly Spain, at the vanguard of the analysis of the rise – or frustration – of capitalism); the world economies of Wallerstein and Gunder Frank (who were keenly interested in the role of the Iberian ‘peripheries’, specifically in Latin America, in the development of Europe); and the transition to capitalism according to Pierre Vilar and others (who, following Karl Marx, highlighted the role of the Iberian empires in the primitive accumulation of capital and asked why these pre- or proto-capitalist empires saw their ‘transition’ delayed).⁷⁷ Though these debates appear to have been superseded, they remain instructive in a negative sense: look at from today’s standpoint, perhaps their most striking feature is that Asia – especially China – was either absent in them or at best present as a silent guest. The contrast with historians since the 1990s is marked. They have sought to insert Asia into the equation. In so doing, there has been a positive ‘Copernican turn’ in conceptions of globalization. The question is to what extent are we now making the same mistake in marginalizing the Iberian worlds from these debates.

The remainder of this essay seeks to address such concerns in a more sanguine manner by discussing how recent developments in the scholarship on Iberian empires noted above can rectify and enrich our understanding of past globalizations. This is done by considering in turn three distinct aspects of early modern history of larger scholarly interest: the Great Divergence, an ‘American globalization’ framed in terms of ecosystems, and the destabilization of empires by globalization. There are, of course, more possible examples which cannot be developed here.

Given his thesis, it was logical for Pomeranz to ignore the agency of Latin America in explaining the Great Divergence between the West and the East. Much of the research in this vein has been about the chronology of that divergence – or, more generally, the trajectory of globalization – with the primary focus being on England, the Netherlands and certain areas of China. But as research has progressed, it has become clear that the characteristics of, and the processes vested in, this narrative cannot be comprehended without bringing in the role of the Iberian world. For instance, the pre-1800 growth capacity of China was in significant part a function of the arrival of American crops and, above all, of the region’s fiscal stability enabled by the import of American silver and the export of manufactured products (which, especially from 1574–5, was buttressed by Iberian trade networks, to which were joined later those of the Dutch and British).

Other reasons for giving heed to the Iberian world pivot on current explanations of the industrial revolution broadly construed. Jan de Vries’ thesis of the ‘industrious revolution’ does not hold

⁷⁵Jeremy Adelman, ‘What is global history now?’, *Aeon* 2 (2017) <https://aeon.co/essays/is-global-history-still-possible-or-has-it-had-its-moment> (accessed May 20, 2021).

⁷⁶Dominic Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives on Global History: Theories and Approaches in a Connected World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 242.

⁷⁷Earl J. Hamilton, ‘American Treasure and the Rise of Capitalism (1500–1700)’, *Economica* 9, no. 27 (1929): 338–57 and ‘Prices, Wages and the Industrial Revolution’, *Economics and Industrial Relations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1941), 99–112; Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, vol. I, *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Andre Gunder Frank, *World Accumulation, 1492–1789* (London: Macmillan, 1978); Pierre Vilar, *Crecimiento y desarrollo* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1974).

up without taking account of the circulation of exotic products transported by Iberians and their contribution to fostering more capacious, flexible consumption habits in European and American societies since the sixteenth century. If, on the other hand, we admit the importance of the Small Divergence, as argued by Van Zanden, it is essential to discuss the links between the Iberian worlds and countries such as the Netherlands and England. This is because the growth of these countries was facilitated by their infiltration from 1600 into markets in which Spain and Portugal paid the costs of imperial protection and control; by the increase in the available money supply due to the Iberian empires; and by the effects of Spanish domination in Europe on their institutional evolution. Explanations, like those of Joel Mokyr, compel us to look afresh at the profound changes which occurred in European regimes of knowledge following contact with the New World, notably the relationship between empiricism and science and technology. The revived interest in the history of capitalism, which at times is put in dialogue with the Great Divergence, orients us towards recovering the origins of the later established techniques of enslavement and the commercialization of the enslaved, early laboratories for which were the zones of contact between Iberians and the peoples of Africa and Asia.⁷⁸

These considerations invite us to take a critical look at the achievements of the scholarship on the Great Divergence and its limitations. They also touch on the very nature of the historian's craft. Taking the widest economic perspective, one of the greatest leaps in human history occurred very likely between 1415 and 1498, when the arrival of Europeans in many parts of the world by way of maritime routes put globalization onto a new path. The later industrial revolution, around which the Great Divergence debate revolves, was undoubtedly transformative for our species (and others). But did not the earlier trade in enslaved Africans unleashed by the Iberian empires transform the lives of millions of people even more? And what about the countless Native Americans who died from a combination of disease and exploitation associated with the European presence in the Americas? How do we historians explain to the denizens of Buenos Aires, Mexico, Lima, New Orleans or New York the genealogies of the enormous spectrum of ethnicities and skin colours which surrounds them today? Were the historical trajectories of the peoples of the Old World not permanently altered as a result of novel types of exchanges between cultures and economies?

It is not surprising that in a country like Mexico a political controversy has been triggered over the Spanish conquest, resulting in demands for apologies from Spain's government of today. We may agree or disagree with the merits of these demands. But we cannot deny that the lives of a great many people in Latin America today – and in the world at large – owes a lot to what happened from the turn of the sixteenth century. If global history truly aspires to make sense of where we come from, who we are and how we relate to those around us, the Iberian world should have more prominence in debates over the decisive turns in the early modern past, be they labelled the Great Divergence or something else. This can only be done by broadening the agenda of, in particular, the economic history of globalization to encompass matters which at present are not seen as being of prime importance for understanding the past of northwestern Europe and the emergence of the modern West. It hardly needs saying that this reasoning is all the more pertinent for Africa and other areas even more marginalized than the Iberian world.⁷⁹ Of course, the nature and consequences of this marginalization have been discussed extensively by scholars over the last two generations. The main point made here is that, without bringing into the mainstream the

⁷⁸Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Jan L. van Zanden, *The Long Road to the Industrial Revolution: The European Economy in Global Perspective 1000–1800* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009); Joel Mokyr, *A Culture of Growth: The Origins of the Modern Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017). For a general state of the art on the new history of capitalism, see Phillip Magness, 'A Comment on the New History of Capitalism', *The Economic Historian* (September 15, 2020) (<https://economic-historian.com/2020/09/a-comment-on-the-new-history-of-capitalism>) (accessed September 2021).

⁷⁹Frederick Cooper, *Africa in the World: Capitalism, Empire, Nation-State* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2014).

Iberian world through globalization, it will not be possible for us to comprehend subjects like the Great Divergence. The way we have considered the history of globalization to date is still grounded in the paradigm of the 'Rise of the West and the Fall of the Rest'. Globalization is more than that. Remedying this situation ought to be a priority for historians.

Remedying the current situation will probably require a different account of how the extra-European Iberian world exerted influence beyond itself. The history of American ecosystems is an example among many others which gives rise to the prospect of just such an account. Essentially, the Great Divergence is about the shift – in Wrigley's terminology – from an organic to an inorganic economy.⁸⁰ But there was a no less significant ecological change and great divergence earlier in history: the one produced by what Crosby called 'ecological imperialism' which affected with particular intensity the Americas. However, the significance of this for divergence and convergence among societies and economies has yet to be elaborated. Crosby, McNeil and others have approached it from the standpoint of the destruction of resources on a global scale. This standpoint must be made broadened if ecological imperialism is to help in understanding globalization.⁸¹

It is sometimes forgotten that the arrival of the Iberians in the Americas was a step forward in the globalization of elements of the so-called 'mediaeval Islamic green revolution' which had taken place in the Mediterranean, the most interconnected area of Afro-Eurasia at the time.⁸² But even more overlooked is that, after the disruptive effects of the ecological imperialism, a reconfiguration of the American ecosystems took place in the following decades. Eurasian and African products, animal, microorganisms, crops and technologies mixed with the remains of the prior American ecosystems to generate novel forms of ecological regimes and of human relationships with the environment. From the technological point of view, this meant the adoption in the Americas of largely European, especially Mediterranean, technology. But a number of studies have revealed that there was also movement in the reverse direction, by means of which originally American technologies were adopted and adapted by Europeans, with women in domestic settings playing important roles.⁸³ This is a line of research which demands further development.

More importantly and rarely articulated in the mainstream, the formation of these novel ecosystems meant that entire peoples in the Americas shifted from hunting and gathering to settled agriculture in a century or less. This happened by ways inconceivable if the Neolithic Revolution is considered only from the perspective of Eurasia. Functionally, the shift in the Americas was equivalent to a Neolithic Revolution, though induced or promoted by agents such as the Jesuits and other European conquerors.⁸⁴ Radical as this shift was, much more was to come. Further dimensions were added to the transformation of the American ecosystems with the establishment of the plantation economy, based on the enslavement of thousands of people and their transportation from Africa, and entwined with the development of commercial capitalism and the construction of global markets. In consequence, crops and goods like sugar cane, cocoa, tobacco and cotton, which were either new to the Americas or, if not new, then produced in quantities hitherto unknown, altered profoundly the ecologies of many areas, from the Caribbean to Brazil to

⁸⁰Edward A. Wrigley, *Continuity, Chance and Change: The Character of the Industrial Revolution in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); *Energy and The English Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); *The Path to Sustained Growth: England's Transition from an Organic Economy to an Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

⁸¹Yun-Casalilla, 'From Goods to Commodities'.

⁸²Andrew M. Watson, 'A Medieval Green Revolution: New Crops and Farming Techniques in the Early Islamic World', in *The Islamic Middle East, 700–1900: Studies in Economic and Social History*, ed., Abraham L. Udovitch (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1981); Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

⁸³Marcy Norton, 'Subaltern technologies and early modernity in the Atlantic World', in 'Entangled trajectories', eds. Bauera and Norton, 18–38.

⁸⁴Omar Svriz-Wucherer, *Resistencia*.

the Ecuadorian coasts, and encouraged collateral changes in areas specialized in the breeding and rearing of mules and cattle for the plantation economy. In terms of energy use, too, these developments were transformative. It has been argued that the animal labour endowment in Latin America in the eighteenth century was higher than, or very close to that of, Europe as a whole.⁸⁵ That was only possible because the European empires – particularly the Spanish and Portuguese – created conditions, underpinned by coercion and violence, which enabled trade and production to thrive.

So, yet another core element of early globalization, ecological in nature, is deeply implicated with the history of empires.⁸⁶ As part of this, the Americas not only experienced the destructive effects of ecological imperialism, they were radically changed by their ecological reconstruction of them. In turn, they contributed to the transformation of ecosystems on a planetary scale. This draws attention to the processes by means of which the Americas launched into the world a long list of crops, goods and some diseases – most famously, corn, cassava, potatoes and syphilis – which altered the ecologies of other regions and by extension their historical trajectories.

A global narrative or paradigm has yet to be developed which takes full account of these multi-directional flows and interactions.⁸⁷ We know that the potato contributed to reshaping Chinese agriculture.⁸⁸ Its consumption, as well as that of corn, contributed to population growth in many areas of Eurasia. Maize and cassava were vital in sustaining the demographic growth of Africa despite the bloodletting caused by the traffic of enslaved peoples to the Americas.⁸⁹ As in the Americas, the introduction of these items into Eurasia and Africa was not free of conflict; coercion was often involved as native species in many areas were displaced.⁹⁰ It is also important to note that these crops were not ‘natural’ products. Rather, they were cultural products in that they resulted from the application of the technologies and other types of know-how of the American peoples. This is alongside more secular processes of biological selection, fusion of species, cultivation techniques and evolution in plants and animals stemming from longstanding systems of production. The significance of practical American knowledge, without which early globalization cannot be explained, is evident in the case of cassava or yucca, a poisonous crop, which could only be adopted in Africa after cooking techniques developed in Mesoamerica had been introduced.⁹¹

The forgoing remarks are, of course, incomplete and tentative. But hopefully they make clear that the role of the Americas, and by extension of the Iberian imperial systems, in the ecological and economic dimensions of early globalization was crucial. We know details of this role, especially through case studies based either on national approaches or focused on specific products

⁸⁵Ruggiero R. Romano, *Mecanismo y elementos del sistema económico colonial americano. Siglos XVI–XVIII* (México: ColMex/Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004), 53–54.

⁸⁶Sven Beckert, Ulbe Bosma, Mindi Schneider and Eric Vanhaute, ‘Commodity frontiers and the transformation of the global countryside: a research agenda’, *Journal of Global History* 16, no. 3 (2021): 435–50.

⁸⁷A general view on these processes can be seen in the synthesis of Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Food: A History* (London, Macmillan, 2001), chapter 7.

⁸⁸Patricia J. O’Brien, ‘The Sweet Potato: its Origins and Dispersal’, *American Anthropologist* 74, no. 3 (1972): 342–65; Rebecca Earle, *Feeding the People*. For a survey which includes the literature in Chinese see Manuel Pérez-García, ‘Challenging National Narratives: On the Origins of Sweet Potato in China as Global Commodity During the Early Modern Period’, in *Global History and New Polycentric Approaches. Europe, Asia and the Americas in a World Network System*, eds., Manuel Pérez García and Lucio de Sousa (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 53–80.

⁸⁹Jevan Cherniwchan and Juan Moreno-Cruz, ‘Maize and precolonial Africa’, *Journal of Development Economics* 136 (2019): 137–50.

⁹⁰James C. McCann, *Maize and Grace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Jonathan Bishop Highfield, *Food and Foodways in African Narratives Community, Culture, and Heritage* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017)

⁹¹Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange*; William O. Jones, *Manioc in Africa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959).

circulating on global scales.⁹² We need, however, to go deeper into such cases in order to understand them from ‘a world-system perspective’,⁹³ as well as to go beyond the analysis of the diffusion of particular products, species and commodities to understand general environmental processes.⁹⁴ That can only be done by giving due heed to the actors and areas of Latin America in the history of globalization.

Considerations of ecosystems remind us that the relationship between empires and globalization is much more intricate than occasionally thought. Until recently, empires had been interpreted as the main drivers of early globalization. This encouraged unidirectional interpretations. The Iberian empires, however, gainsay such interpretations. They suggest the opposite: globalization as challenging the governing machinery of empires and destabilizing their foundations. When doing this, it may be termed ‘corrosive globalization’.⁹⁵ The notion is connected to Fernando Fernandez-Armesto’s call to study ‘empires in their global context’,⁹⁶ though it is more expansive in scope.

On one side of globalization, from an internal viewpoint, the growing reach of the Iberian empires created problems of control, monitoring and arbitration. The self-regulating networks on which they were based undoubtedly created long-distance ties of great commercial efficiency, as the recent scholarship has stressed.⁹⁷ But the individuals, corporations and communities embedded in those networks also had considerable autonomy while operating within those empires and were able to impose their own logic and advance their own interests within the imperial ruling system.⁹⁸ This is because as social associations they were not merely confined to mercantile actors; they were tied to local elites, officials and rulers who appreciated that dealing with them – legally or illegally – was integral to the bargain which had been struck with the metropolitan heartlands.⁹⁹ The presence of these agents in such networks was prominent and influential in empires, like those of the Spanish and Portuguese, governed by schemes based on family solidarities (which sometimes clashed with loyalty to the monarch) and having political cultures and moral economies marked by clientelist and patronage relations. Many of their sovereign institutions were thus inevitably rooted in informal mechanisms of enforcement, which, though helping to stabilize these imperial formations, contributed to their state capacity growing at a much slower pace than the increasing tensions due to globalization demanded. Within the Iberian empires, this was reflected in widespread nepotism, corruption, fraud and smuggling, in which the monarch’s agents were themselves frequently involved and which were part of the negotiated character of the empires.¹⁰⁰ The outcome was a ‘contractor state’, in which the agents who benefited from

⁹²Johnson Donald Hughes, *An Environmental History of the World: Humankind’s Changing Role in the Community of Life* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2001); John F. Richards, *The Unending Frontier: An Environmental History of the Early Modern World* (Berkeley, Los Angeles CA and London: The University of California Press, 2003).

⁹³Alf Hornborg, ‘Global Environmental History’, in *World System History: Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems*, eds., George Modelski and Robert A. Denemark (Oxford: EOLSS, 2009).

⁹⁴Lise Sedrez, ‘Latin American Environmental History: A Shifting Old/New Field’, in Edmund Burke III and Kenneth Pomeranz, eds., *The Environment and World History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2009), 255–75.

⁹⁵Yun-Casalilla, *Iberian World*, 342–48.

⁹⁶Fernando Fernández-Armesto, ‘Empires in their Global Context, ca 1500 to ca 1800’, in *The Atlantic in Global History, 1500–2000*, eds., Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Erick R. Seeman (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007).

⁹⁷Cátia Antunes, ‘Free agents and formal institutions in the Portuguese Empire: towards a framework of analysis’, *Portuguese Studies* 28, no. 2 (2012): 173–85; Amélia Polónia, ‘Indivíduos e redes auto-organizadas na construção do império ultramarino português’, in *Economia, Instituições e Império. Estudos em Homenagem a Joaquim Romero de Magalhães*, eds., Alvaro Garrido, Luis Miguel Duarte and Leonor F. Costa (Coimbra: Almedina, 2012), 349–72.

⁹⁸This is one of the main thesis of Yun-Casalilla, *Iberian World Empires*, passim; Francisco Andújar and Pilar Ponce Leiva, eds., *Mérito, venalidad y corrupción*; Christoph Rosenmüller and Stephan Ruderer, eds., *Dádivas, dones y dineros*; Margarita Suárez, ed., *Parientes, criados y allegados*.

⁹⁹Yun-Casalilla, *Iberian World Empires*, 329–42.

¹⁰⁰Some examples in Suárez, ed., *Parientes, criados y allegados* and Grafe and Irigoín, ‘A Stakeholder Empire’.

contracts for mobilizing financial and military resources, or from the privileges and monopolies they implied, were very often the same as those who promoted clientelist-patronage practices which ultimately weakened the metropolises' machinery of government.¹⁰¹

On the other side of globalization, there is an aspect which is often neglected. The Iberian empires were developing at the same time as other contemporary empires. It is worth juxtaposing these empires to sharpen our sense of the significance of early globalization. Great prominence has been given to the expanding empires of the English and the Dutch, which are usually seen as the chief instigators of the mercantilist tensions of the period. But the period also witnessed the expansion of the empires of the Russians, the Ottomans, the Safavids, the Mughals and the Ming, and a more assertive policy pursued by the Japanese in the China Sea and Korea. The effects of these expansions were profound. Some specialists have argued that they led to the revival of the caravan route and overland trade between the Far East and the Mediterranean, which were able to compete with the alleged sixteenth-century Portuguese monopoly of trade between these regions.¹⁰² Though this thesis has been critiqued, there is little doubt that the worldwide imperial expansions of the period coupled to the multipolar nature of globalization resulted in the emergence of new trade routes and the strengthening of some old ones, frequently organized by agents – commercial diasporas, ecclesiastic orders, and others – located beyond the purview of ruling elites. The reconfiguration posed an additional immediate challenge to the central governing machinery of the Iberian empires, in which the power of the ruler depended on the control and, importantly, ongoing significance of particular channels of commerce and communication, above all those linking Lisbon with Goa and Seville-Cádiz with the Caribbean area.

These two sides of globalization reduced the ability of the Iberian empires' European heartlands to engross an increasing fraction of global wealth. The reforms of the Bourbons and the Braganzas in the eighteenth century, which had already been initiated at the end of the previous century in response to the prevailing tensions, bear testimony to the pressing need felt by contemporaries to rectify this model of imperial governance. The reforms sought to do this by strengthening the central state or instituting new formulas of negotiation between the imperial metropole and provinces, alongside improving the empire's naval power to deal with new problems emanating from mercantile globalization.¹⁰³

It is important to note that research over the past generation has demonstrated that the kind of tensions between self-regulating networks and formal institutions in the Iberian empires were also present in their purportedly more 'modern' counterparts. This has been shown for the British empire.¹⁰⁴ Although perhaps to a lesser degree than for others,¹⁰⁵ informal enforcement mechanisms, family networks and business corporations contributed to the development of the British empire, while simultaneously acting to limit its 'infrastructural state power'. As in the Iberian empires, London's difficulties in controlling the relationships between East India Company officials and local powers, and the corruption arising from those relationships, led to significant attempts at reform, which show how the globalization of the empire affected its own

¹⁰¹Alejandro García Montón, *Genoese Entrepreneurship and the Asiento Slave Trade, 1650–1700* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2021).

¹⁰²Irfan Habib, 'Merchants communities in precolonial India' and Morris Rossabi, 'The 'decline' of the Central Asia caravan trade', in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350–1750*, ed., James D. Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 371–421 and 351–70.

¹⁰³Kuethé and Adrien, *Spanish Atlantic World*; Ivan Valdez-Bubnov, *Poder naval y modernización del estado: política de construcción naval española (siglos XVI–XVIII)* (México: Iberoamericana, 2011).

¹⁰⁴Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); David Veevers, 'Inhabitants of the universe'.

¹⁰⁵Peer Vries, *State, Economy and the Great Divergence: Great Britain and China, 1680s–1850s* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015): 429.

foundations.¹⁰⁶ The most recent explanations of the development of the British cotton industry relate it to mechanisms of increasing globalization within the empire itself and the difficulties this created for British industry. Either the importance of protectionist and even coercive policies against Indian production is stressed, or the emphasis is placed on the process of import substitution which later encouraged the industrial development of the island.¹⁰⁷ The Navigation Acts of the late seventeenth century were in part a reaction to the ability of the American colonies to trade within the empire while bypassing London in the context of increasing commercial multilateralism.¹⁰⁸ During the eighteenth century, an accelerating globalization pitted the British in conflict with the Spanish and French in the Americas and threatened to destabilize the British presence in India and China.

These developments signal how premodern globalizations could destabilize all the major empires of the early modern world. Having said that, the potential benefits of globalization to imperial machineries of governance should not be downplayed. The Iberian empires provide plenty of evidence of these benefits. Globalization thus potentially offered benefits as well as posed difficulties for empires, which, in turn, could facilitate or drive globalization and be transformed by it at the same time. Grasping all this obliges scholars to examine processes on a global scale without neglecting the local conditions in which power was rendered tangible.

Some afterthoughts

The proposals presented in this essay highlight challenges for historians of the Iberian worlds as well as for historians of other empires and areas of the planet. This is where cooperation is more necessary than ever. Some researchers have shown a genuine concern not only for global history, but for the globalization of the field as practised today.¹⁰⁹ That in particular requires incorporating the knowledge contained in the kind of historiographies discussed in this essay into more open and general debates. A good deal of the historiography on Iberian empires and Iberian globalizations, especially in relation to Asia, Africa and the Americas where very important intellectual strides have been made over the last decades, is still waiting for their findings to be taken account of in broader arguments. Obviously, doing so is not always easy. But, as discussed in this essay, this endeavour is facilitated by the buoyancy of our discipline at present, reflected in a growing number and variety of perspectives.¹¹⁰ Perhaps now is just the right moment for us to travel the path argued for here. For global history, and the history of empires and of globalization, are far from a scholarly whim. Rather, they are a social imperative for the many men and women of our planet who feel that they belong to a shared community, with a shared past.

¹⁰⁶Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire. India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008).

¹⁰⁷Prasannam Parthasarathi, *Why Europe Grew Rich and Asia did not. Global Economic Divergence, 1600–1859* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁰⁸David S. Lovejoy, *The Glorious Revolutions in America* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1985).

¹⁰⁹Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives*, passim.

¹¹⁰Emma Rothschild, 'Economic History and Nationalism', *Capitalism: A Journal of History and Economics* 2, 1 (2021): 227–33.