

Introduction

by Cinzia Cremonini - Stefano D'Amico

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, urban centers became even more prominent in the organization and articulation of political and economic systems of power within the rising centralized states and the expanding European empires. The transition from late medieval communes to early modern cities is particularly evident and interesting in the context of the vast territories of the Spanish empire that extended from Northern Europe to Southern Italy and North Africa, from Central and South America to the Philippines.

In fact, not only did the Spanish employ cities as structural poles of the political and economic organization of their empire, but, even more than other colonial powers, utilized the founding of urban centers in the New World as a tool of imperial legitimacy, creating what Richard Kagan has defined as an «empire of towns»¹.

In the last years, a number of important studies on specific cities and urban networks has been published, largely increasing our knowledge of the early modern Spanish world².

1. R. Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493-1793*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2000, 28.

2. M.J. del Río Barredo, *Madrid Urbs Regia: La capital ceremonial de la monarquía Católica*, Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2000; J. Marino, *Becoming Neapolitan. Citizen Culture in Baroque Naples*, Baltimore, MD, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011; S. D'Amico, *Spanish Milan. A City within the Empire, 1535-1706*, New York, Palgrave, 2012; A. Osorio, *Inventing Lima: Baroque Modernity in Peru's South Sea Metropolis*, New York, Palgrave, 2008; M.J. Schreffler, *Cuzco. Incas, Spaniards, and the Making of a Colonial City*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2020; M. Lucena Giraldo, *A los cuatro vientos: Las ciudades de la América Hispánica*, Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2006; R. Cancila (ed.), *Capitali senza re nella Monarchia spagnola. Identità, relazioni, immagini (secc. XVI-XVIII)*, 2 voll., Palermo, Associazione no profit "Mediterranea", 2020; J. Martínez Millán – M. Rivero

These works have highlighted the heterogeneity and complexity of the empire and showed how, far from being a monolithic institution, it was based on a system of interconnected political entities and provincial courts that acted under the supervision of Madrid but preserved a high degree of autonomy and agency and were able to establish their own independent relationships with their native population and other cities and states³.

The emphasis on the conflict between national components, between an oppressive Spanish government and an exploited native population, which had characterized the earlier historiography, has been supplanted by the analysis of the shared interests and compromises that linked them together. Recent studies have focused mainly on the interaction between the center and the periphery, the court of Madrid and the local elites, and in particular on the role of the royal representatives, viceroys and governors and their relations with the provincial political bodies⁴.

Rodríguez (eds.), *Centros de poder italianos en la Monarquía Hispánica (siglos XV-XVIII)*, Madrid, Polifemo, 2010; P. Sanz Camañes, *Las ciudades en la América Hispana. Siglos XVI al XVIII*, Madrid, Silex, 2004; B. Alonso Acero, *Orán-Mazalquivir, 1589-1639: Una sociedad española en la frontera de Berbería*. Madrid, CSIC, 2000; R. Gutiérrez Cruz, *Los presidios españoles del Norte de África en tiempo de los Reyes Católicos*, Melilla, Ciudad Autónoma de Melilla, 1997.

3. J.I. Fortea Pérez, *La ciudad y el fenómeno urbano en el mundo moderno: España en su entorno europeo*, in «Anuario IEHS», 24 (2009), 111-142; J. Díaz Ceballos, *New World civitas, contested jurisdictions, and inter-cultural conversation in the construction of the Spanish Monarchy*, in «Colonial Latin American Review», 27 (2018), 30-51. Jorge Díaz Ceballos – Susana Truchuelo García, *Ciudades y fronteras culturales en sociedades transoceánicas*, in «Nuevo Mundo, Mundos Nuevos», (2018), 1-4; T. Mantecón Movellán – O. Rey Castelao (eds.), *Identidades urbanas en la monarquía hispánica: policía y cultura cívica (siglos XVI-XVIII)*, Santiago de Compostela, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2015.

4. See J.P. Zuñiga (ed.), *Negociar la obediencia. Autoridad y consentimiento en el mundo ibérico en la edad moderna*, Granada, Comares, 2013; C. Daniels – M. Kennedy (eds.), *Negotiated Empires. Centers and peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820*, New York, Routledge, 2002; J. Martínez Millán – M. Rivero Rodríguez (eds.), *Centros de poder italianos en la Monarquía Hispánica (siglos XV-XVIII)*, Madrid, Polifemo, 2010; B. Yun (ed.), *Las redes del imperio. Élités sociales en la articulación de la Monarquía Hispánica (1492-1714)*, Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2009; M. Merluzzi, *La pacificazione del regno. Negoziazione e creazione del consenso in Perù*

Following the new trends in the discourse on the development of the 'modern state', categories like centralization and rationality have been replaced by the interaction of multiple actors and non-institutional structures and practices. Patronage, personal relations, extra-legal actions, earlier considered obstacles to the process of state building, have now been accepted as an integral part of it. The administrative action of the government is as important as the negotiations of conflicts, and mediation usually has priority over coercion.

This constant interaction between the center and the provinces, the royal court and the local elites represented an essential element of what, since the turn of the 20th century has been defined as the 'composite' nature of the Spanish monarchy where the vertical ties between the king, his representatives, and the provincial bodies guaranteed the unity of the system⁵.

Recent historiography has preferred to emphasize the polycentric identity of the Spanish monarchy, based on multiple and shared sovereignties, a horizontal relationships among the different components of the system⁶. The provinces did not passively absorb the directives from Madrid, but actively contributed to create a common culture and offered resources and competences. A constant movement of people, bureaucrats, merchants, intellectuals and artists, and the exchange of knowledge and goods contributed to create a flexible and global monarchy. Common political and legal cultures, urban structures and ceremonials did not originate at the center and transferred to the periphery but were the product of

(1533-1581), Roma, Viella, 2008; P. Cardin – J. Lluís Palos, *El mundo de los virreyes en las monarquías de España y Portugal*, Madrid, Iberoamericana, 2012; A. Musi, *L'Italia dei viceré. Integrazione e resistenza nel Sistema imperial spagnolo*, Roma, Avagliano, 2000; A. Cañeque, *The King's living Image: The Culture and Politics of Viceregal Power in Colonial Mexico*, New York, Routledge, 2004; R. Vermeir (ed.), *Agentes e identidades en movimiento: España y los Países Bajos, siglos XVI-XVIII*, Madrid, Silex, 2011.

5. See in particular J.H. Elliott, *Europe of Composite Monarchies*, in «Past and Present», 137 (1992), 48-71.

6. P. Cardim – T. Herzog – J.J. Ruiz Ibañez – G. Sabatini (eds.) *Polycentric Monarchies: How Did Early Modern Spain and Portugal Achieve and Maintain a Global Hegemony?*, Brighton – Portland – Toronto, Sussex Academic Press, 2012. See also R. Cancila, *Introduzione*, in *Capitali senza re*, VIII-X.

wide transregional networks and developed gradually through mutual influences⁷.

Cities remained the privileged arena of all interactions and negotiations, and within the cities, the courts, central and provincial, represented the heart of production of political languages and behaviors, the hub of patronage and social mobility, source of consensus and stability⁸.

In the 16th and 17th centuries cities turned also into important spaces for individual and collective self-representation. More clearly than in any earlier period, buildings and specific urban locations acquired a symbolic valence, reflecting the agenda of individual families, urban elites, and especially religious and secular powers. In a period that witnessed the consolidation of centralized monarchies, the link between politics and urban planning became more evident. Designing the city signified to give order to its society and assert power on it, and an instrumental knowledge of architecture was central for the ruler in order to substantiate his power and legitimize his authority.

A common Spanish Habsburg architecture came to exist through the constant interaction among the cities of the empire and the circulation of people, books and ideas⁹. The city became a monumental stage for the display of princely power. Throughout the Spanish empire the urban

7. A. Osorio, *Of National Boundaries and Imperial Geographies. A New Radical History of the Spanish Habsburg Empire*, «Radical History Review», 130 (2018), 100-130; K. Lynn – E. Kathleen Rowe, *Introduction: Mapping the Early Modern Hispanic World*, in Idd., *The Early Modern Hispanic World. Transnational and Interdisciplinary Approaches*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, 1-19; L. Duerloo, *Dynasty and Piety: Archduke Albert (1598-1621) and Habsburg Political Culture in an Age of Religious Wars*, Surrey, UK, Ashgate, 2012.

8. José Martínez Millán – M. Rivero Rodríguez – G. Versteegen (eds.), *La corte en Europa: política, religion (siglos XVI-XVIII)*, Madrid, Prometeo, 2012; A. Álvarez Ossorio Alvaríño, *Las esferas de la corte: príncipe, nobleza y mudanza en la Jerarquía*, in F. Chacón Jiménez – N. G. Monteiro (eds.), *Poder y movilidad social, cortesanos, religiosos y oligarquisas en la península ibérica (siglos XV-XIX)*, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas Universidad de Murcia, 2006, 129-180; F. Cantù (ed.), *Las cortes virreinales de la Monarquía española: América e Italia*, Roma, Viella, 2008. See also M. Fantoni, *La corte e lo spazio: trent'anni dopo*, in «Cheiron», 55-56 (2011), 7-27.

9 J. Escobar, *Architecture in the Age of the Spanish Habsburgs*, in «Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians», 75 (2016), 258-262.

space was designed and built, or more often reorganized through significant interventions, in relation to the prince and his power. Squares were frequently turned into stages for public ceremonies and monumental expression of authority. The new capital cities, often organized around the palace of the king or his representatives, symbolized the growing power of the central authority and integrated different essential political, religious and military functions¹⁰.

The six essays presented in this volume, while focusing on specific urban contexts, intend to offer a contribution to a comparative analysis of urban roles and experiences in the Spanish Empire, in particular on the use of space, architecture, and court ceremonials, the creation of a common imperial culture and the functions played by cities in negotiating tensions and relationships in the borderlands of the empire.

Architecture and ceremonials acquired a particular role in promoting the royal image and connecting the absent king to his subjects in the provinces¹¹. While most provincial capitals in the Americas, but also European cities like Naples permanently reflected the power and prestige of the monarch in their urban fabric through significant architectural transformations, in other urban contexts, the delicate dynamics between Madrid and the local elites did not make that possible.

In the case of Milan studied by Stefano D'Amico, the king and his representative, the governor, limited their activity to the construction of a new circle of walls and the renovation of the castle, symbols of the important military role of the city within the Spanish empire, but since the end of the 16th century, tended to minimize their visible presence within the city, leaving the initiative in the hands of the local elites and the clergy. It was a small price to pay to earn the allegiance and financial support of the Milanese patriciate and the stability of the province, essential to the geo-political strategy of the empire in decades of turmoil and warfare.

The role and power of the king was however refreshed in the eyes and minds of the Milanese subjects through grandiose periodical ceremonials

10. M. Fantoni, *Il potere dello spazio. Principi e città nell'Italia dei secoli XV-XVII*, Roma, Bulzoni, 2002; Id., *La corte e lo spazio*; J. Escobar, *The Plaza Mayor and the Shaping of Baroque Madrid*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

11. A. Osorio, *The copy as original: the presence of the absent Spanish Habsburg king and colonial hybridity*, in «Renaissance Studies», 34/4 (2019), 704-721.

that marked the most important events related to the Habsburg dynasty. The repetition of a calendar of royal ceremonies and processions, frequently with the display of the king's simulacra, common to all imperial cities, played an essential role not only in symbolizing the presence of the absent monarch but in connecting the different cities to his authority¹².

The importance of ceremonials is also at the center of Margit Thofner's essay that studies the essential role of urban pageantry in Antwerp to articulate and negotiate the city's relationship to its overlords and its position within the empire. Focusing on the joyous entry of 1599, when the Spanish Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia and her husband, Archduke Albert VII of Austria, formally started their tenure as joint sovereigns of the city as Margraves of Antwerp and Dukes of Brabant, Thofner shows how the urban elites displayed an articulated strategy to address and tame their courtly visitors. Besides a shared body of historical, geographical and dynastic knowledge, also music and science were used to build a bridge between the city and the Habsburgs.

Gabriel Guarino analyzes instead royal visits to capture the complexity of the relationship between the different social groups in Neapolitan society and the Spanish kings who visited the city, Ferdinand the Catholic (1506-7), Charles V (1535-6) and Philip V (1702). Constant tensions and a delicate and unstable balance of power between the nobility, higher commoners and plebs, often prevented the creation of a unitary front and

12. A. Osorio, *Courtly Ceremonies and a Cultural Urban Geography of Power in the Habsburg Spanish Empire*, in L. von Morzé (ed.), *Cities and Circulation of Culture in the Atlantic World*, London – New York, Palgrave, 2017, 37-72; D. Carrió-Invernizzi, *El gobierno de las imagines. Ceremonial y mecenazgo en la Italia española de la segunda mitad del siglo XVII*, Madrid, Iberoamericana, 2008; G. Galasso – J.V. Quirante – José Luis Colomer (eds.), *Fiesta y ceremonia en la corte virreinal de Nápoles (siglos XVI y XVII)*, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica, 2013; L. Curcio, *The Great Festivals of Colonial Mexico City: Performing Power and Identity*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 2004; M. Thofner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt*, Zwolle, Waanders, 2007; G. Guarino, *Representing the King's Splendour. Communication and Reception of Symbolic Forms of Power in Viceregal Naples*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2010; C. Cremonini, *Alla corte del governatore. Feste, riti e cerimonie a Milano tra XVI e XVII secolo*, Roma, Bulzoni, 2012; T. Ruiz, *A King Travels. Festive Traditions in Late Medieval and Early Modern Spain*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2012.

allowed the monarchy to assert its power as long as it did not cross the different urban social parties.

Linda Curcio examines the lively cultural landscape of Mexico City, a city where squares, gardens, theatres and festivals rivaled their European counterparts, and the creation of a native picaresque genre embodied by the tale of Martin Garatuza in the 17th century. Through the adventures of the most popular Mexican picaro and the process of fictionalization of his life, Curcio shows how the figure of the rogue can help us to analyze urban social, moral, and economic tensions. In a colonial culture constantly interacting with Madrid and the other cities of the empire, the story of Garatuza was written and rewritten to represent the aspirations of the Mexican urban population and to define the features of cunning and ingenuity of a Novohispanic everyman.

Besides the provinces geographically closer to the center of the monarchy, the vast borderlands of the empire and its relationship with its neighbors have acquired a greater visibility within the recent historiography¹³. Also in this context their essential administrative, economic and cultural functions make cities and urban networks privileged objects of analysis.

Adding to a recent historiography on a still neglected area of the empire, Gen Liang essay examines the Spanish towns in Northern Africa in the 1520s and 1530s, in an attempt to provide a new, and more urban, perspective on what Andrew Hess defined as the «forgotten frontier»¹⁴. Liang shows how these centers were not just isolated military enclaves, but stood at the heart of lively diplomatic, economic and political webs that included both Spanish and African cities. Especially Oran, while commonly referred as presidio or plaza, enjoyed the status of *ciudad* and was an important financial and administrative hub, and a redistribution center for Northern African and European goods.

Ryan Crewe's study focuses instead on the most remote province of the empire, the Philippines, arguing that its capital, Manila, represents a particularly interesting case to examine how two different urban cultures and traditions, those of the Spanish city and the Asian port, interacted and

13. V. Favaro – M. Merluzzi – G. Sabatini (eds.), *Fronteras. Procesos y prácticas de integración y conflictos entre Europa y América (siglos XVI-XX)*, Madrid-Ciudad de México, Fondo de cultura económica de España, 2017.

14. A. Hess, *The Forgotten Frontier: A History of Sixteenth-Century Ibero-African Frontier*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978.

often clashed. Isolate beacon of Christianity with a predominantly non-Christian and multi-ethnic population, and crucial commercial outpost in the Pacific, the administration of the city presented difficult problems to Madrid. The missionary effort and the constant attempts to segregate, and sometimes to expel, the different ethno-religious groups implemented by the Spanish authorities were frequently frustrated by the need to attract Chinese capital and labor. The constant tension between practical needs, religious zeal, and anti-Chinese nativism characterized the history of the city and its spatial organization until the 18th century when economic pragmatism finally had the better hand, and all plans of expulsion were abandoned.

The role of cities as courts, their definition and conceptualization are at the center of Cinzia Cremonini's final essay. Through the analysis of Alonso Nuñez de Castro's *Libro histórico y político. Solo Madrid es corte* published in four editions (1658-98), Cremonini shows how the prestige, and the reputation of the court determined the urban hierarchies in the eyes of the contemporaries and could be used to advance a specific agenda. With his work, Nuñez de Castro defended the pivotal position of Madrid at the center of the Spanish system in a delicate period, the second half of the 17th century, in which the conflict between Spain and France and also the tensions between the two branches of the Habsburg dynasty were redefining the map of Europe. Nuñez de Castro aimed to reassert the glory and the centrality of Madrid, the only real court as seat of the king, not only within the Spanish empire but in the entire Habsburg world.

Through the examination of this text, Cremonini also highlights how our methodological perspective should adjust to the subject of our study. She argues that while the polycentric framework is usually fruitful in the analysis of the Habsburg Spanish system, when we focus on courtly dynamics the lens of the composite monarchy seems to be more effective.