

Federico Palomo (ed.) *La memoria del mundo: clero, erudición y cultura escrita en el mundo ibérico (siglos XVI-XVIII)*. Cuadernos de Historia Moderna. Anejos. Serie Monografías, XIII (2014). ISBN: 9788466934930

Bruno Feitler¹

It was part of the strategies adopted by every important family in the Iberian *Ancien Régime*, whenever possible, to dedicate one or more of their children to the Church. Such ordinations were the result of specific vows, strategies of prestige, or simply a way of keeping the family estate undivided. More than one foreign traveler, in his chronicles, drew attention to the high proportion of priests, friars and nuns among the population of Lisbon, for example. Because of their number, but mainly because of their specific status and the role they played, the men and women of the Church constituted an important social group in Iberian society. They deeply influenced the economy and politics of those kingdoms, not to mention the obvious religious and disciplinary roles that they played.

Furthermore, between 1500 and 1520, 40% of the books printed in the Iberian Peninsula were religious ones (not taking into account Bibles, but including printed papal bulls). According to Wilkinson, this ratio increased to 46% between 1580 and 1600. Obviously, the men and women of the Church did not write works (printed or handwritten) that were related solely to religious subjects, yet, nevertheless, both these population numbers and publishing data pinpoint the importance of religion, and consequently of the clergy, in the written culture of the Iberian early modern world.

The volume edited by Federico Palomo and entitled *The Memory of the World: Clergy, Erudition and Written Culture in the Iberian World (16th-18th centuries)* provides us with an innovative discussion of the role played by clerics in the production, circulation and eventual printed publication of texts about a broad series of subjects during the Iberian early modern period, ranging from theology to comedies, or from chronicles to scientific treatises. It also deals with the importance of texts for these clerics' strategies and, in the case of the regular clergy, for the relations of their congregations with other religious orders. As some of the contributions show, written texts were also an important element of identity for these congregations.

¹ Universidade Federal de São Paulo (Unifesp) / CNPq. E-mail: brunofeitler@gmail.com

The choice of authors (and of the texts themselves) clearly indicates a desire to understand “the central role of secular and regular clerics in the religious field of the written culture” in this period, from an imperial or even planetary logic, as announced by the volume’s erudite, clear and comprehensive introduction written by its editor. Of the total of ten articles, only three deal exclusively with the Iberian-European context. This choice reveals Federico Palomo’s main goal: to understand the role that clerics “could have played (through their texts) in the construction and configuration of the Iberian empires.” One of the other manifest objectives of this volume is to challenge the traditional historiography that: 1) linked the intensive use of the printing press only to the Reformation, as opposed to a less erudite and more sentimental Tridentine Catholicism; 2) within the world of Roman Catholicism, saw Jesuits as the only ones who used intensively handwritten or printed texts in their political and missionary strategies; 3) regarded clerics in general and religious orders in particular, as, for example, Antonella Romano points out, as elements of obscurantism, and, because of this, as incapable of making any valid contribution to the renewal of knowledge, both technical and scientific. (Romano’s contribution shows how crucial missionary texts were, for example, for the European knowledge of China). Related to this third aspect of traditional historiography, the editor makes the noteworthy choice to leave to one side those studies that dealt more specifically with the production and circulation of doctrinal, theological and also legal works. Works that were in fact the main editorial successes of the Iberian early modern world and, in that sense, undoubtedly the largest part of what constituted its erudition and written culture.

The volume is divided into two parts, each of which consists of five contributions. The first one deals with “*The clergy and their texts: circulation, edition and commerce*,” and the second one with “*Memory, erudition and knowledge*.” Nevertheless, I will address here the somewhat narrower topics that appear in articles from both parts.

The contributions by Fernando Bouza (“*Printing investors and the religious book market in the Iberian early modern period*”) and Palomo (“*Atlantic connections: Friar Apolinário da Conceição, religious erudition and print culture in Portugal and the Portuguese America in the eighteenth century*”) study, among other themes, the market in religious publications and the very original place that the clergy sometimes occupied in it. Both authors draw attention to the importance and the influence that investors and sponsors of those publications could have on the final result of the book. The objectives of those financiers might have been spiritual, but funders also clearly had a mercantile vision of publishing, while sponsors originating from the overseas elite were seeking, through print, to guarantee their social assertion and

ennoblement. Bouza and Palomo also consider the role that religious investors, and even convents and full congregations, played in the commerce of books, with the convents being used as depositories for part of their members' publications. Through exchanges, these institutions could end up owning an important number of copies of books published by other congregations, and these could be used as assets to pay debts, for example. Palomo also describes an unusual commodification, not only of books, but also of masses. The protagonist of his study, Friar Apolinário da Conceição was placed, while in Lisbon, in charge of buying books for his Province, whose headquarters were in Rio de Janeiro. He also ended up supplying other markets in mainland Portugal. His correspondence (dating from the first half of the eighteenth century) with one of these buyers reveals an exchange market that was open only to the clergy, in which books were sold in exchange for certificates of celebrated masses.

Contrasting with the focus traditionally placed on the Jesuits, the article by Palomo, as well as those by Ângela Barreto Xavier (*Friar Miguel da Purificação between Madrid and Rome: account of a journey to Europe by a Portuguese friar born in India*) and Zoltán Biedermann (*Space subjected to time in Franciscan chronicle writings: revisiting the Conquista Espiritual do Oriente of Friar Paulo da Trindade*), study the importance of the Franciscans within the written culture of the Portuguese imperial world. These authors reveal that the Franciscans had a clear awareness of the importance of texts for the Order's identity, but also for the identity of one particular province in relation to other provinces. The cases analyzed here are the Province of Southern Brazil (Conceição) and that of India (São Tomé). This Franciscan use of texts became evident in the agitated context of the redefinition of the Iberian empires' religious fields, between the creation of the *Propaganda Fide* (1622) and the end of the Union of the Crowns of Portugal and Spain (1640). Xavier shows how a triply "subordinate" individual tried to use different instances of the Spanish and the papal courts to obtain recognition for the Portuguese "sons of India." Friar Miguel da Purificação sought to carve out a better place within the Portuguese empire and, in a broader sense, within the *Respublica Christiana*. This "sanctification of the tropics" was designed to challenge the powerful image of the atavistic degeneracy of those people living in, or born into, the overseas territories. Among these three different texts, one can perceive the definition of a chronology of the interest, or the awareness, shown by Franciscans in the importance of print, despite their need to attract sponsors because of the Order's "poverty." According to Palomo, an intellectualization of the Order occurred from the end of the seventeenth century onward. This bias was, however, noticeable some time before this, if we take into

account the works of Friar Miguel da Purificação, published in 1640 and 1641 (Xavier), as well as that of Friar Paulo da Trindade, composed during the 1630s (Biedermann). This awareness of the importance of printed texts is made clear in Biedermann's analysis of the *Spiritual Conquest of the Orient*, by the aforementioned Trindade. The author first demonstrates the archaic style of the Franciscan friar who gave more importance to time (or, we might think, to matters of a spiritual nature), as opposed to a geographical and spatial reading of the conquest of the Orient. He then argues that the use of that archaic style was nothing more than a conscious rhetorical device adopted by Trindade against the forces (above all the Jesuits) that threatened the "symbolic possession," or the monopoly, enjoyed by Franciscans in the missions of Ceylon.

This rivalry through chronicles is deeply linked to the topic of erudition and written culture as markers of religious identity. The contributions of Paul Nelles (*The Chancellery in the College: the production and circulation of Jesuit texts in the sixteenth century*), Antonio Castillo Gómez (*Letters from the convent: female epistolary in Counter-Reformation Spain*) and Rodrigo Bentes Monteiro (*Oratory of the kings and their conquests: pictures and leaflets collected by Diogo Barbosa Machado*) point more or less directly to the fact that different congregations (Jesuits, Discalced Carmelites and Oratorians) had their own writing formulas and mechanisms to promote the circulation of information that was an integral part of the identity of each of them. Nelles makes a detailed study of the importance for the Society of Jesus of the circulation of a huge amount of information. The author describes the evolution of these formats and the use of the famous "annual letters" (established in 1547), as well as the role of local colleges in the production, copying and circulation of what can be seen as an instrument for consolidating the identity of the Order. In turn, Castillo begins with a description of the highly controlled way in which female writing evolved in the post-Tridentine world. He then draws attention to just two female epistolary models: one that served as a tool for religious reformation (Teresa de Ávila), and another in which the sender was raised to the status of the "divine mother," as was the case with Maria de Ágreda, who was a political and spiritual adviser to King Filipe IV. Castillo draws attention to Teresa de Ávila's policy that nuns should write each other letters "so that charity does not grow cold," which, in a certain way, was also the purpose of the Jesuits' annual letters. One of the questions that Bentes Monteiro raises about Barbosa Machado's collection of portraits and leaflets is to what extent a private collection reflects the ideas of a wider group, a quest that points more directly to political issues. However, his article also refers to the erudite production of some other Portuguese Oratorians besides Barbosa Machado,

pointing in this way to one single apprehension of the world and a singular way of writing about history that connected these people to the Oratory and to the Portuguese Royal Academy of History.

This volume is thus an important contribution to the historiography written about the (mainly regular) clergy, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to the historiography of the learned culture of the early modern times, suggesting not only subjects of study, but also methodological approaches to further research into these two broad areas of interest.

References

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