Empire, Enlightenment, and the Time Before: Global Contexts for Writing the History of Mexico

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ABSTRACTS

Dieser Beitrag untersucht die unterschiedlichen Wege und Werke zweier mexikanischer Kreolen, die es durch die Vertreibung der Jesuiten 1767 auf beide Seiten des Atlantiks verschlug. Francisco Javier Clavijero (1731–1787) schrieb in den Päpstlichen Staaten, damals ein bedeutendes Zentrum alten Wissens in Europa, die monumentale *Storia antica del Messico* (1780–1781). José Antonio de Alzate y Ramírez (1737–1799) gab in Mexiko-Stadt seine *Gazeta de literatura de México* (1784–1795) heraus und schrieb Notizen zu Clavijeros Geschichte für eine nie veröffentlichte spanische Ausgabe. Dieser Artikel lenkt die Aufmerksamkeit weg von der „Auseinandersetzung der Neuen Welt" mit gegenüberstehenden europäischen und amerikanischen Stimmen und konzentriert sich stattdessen auf die sehr reiche, aber noch immer nicht untersuchte Debatte unter mexikanischen Kreolen. Er verweist darauf, dass das Exil Clavijero und Alzate in unterschiedliche imperiale Konfigurationen versetzte, was erhebliche Auswirkungen auf ihre politischen Agenden und erkenntnistheoretischen Ansätze hatte. Durch die Untersuchung der Strategien, mit denen sie ihre internationale Glaubwürdigkeit als lokale Experten für Mexikos vorkoloniale Geschichte und architektonische Relikte profilierten, wird auch die variable Rezeption von Clavijeros und Alzates Werken erkundet, in einer Zeit, die durch bedeutende imperiale Transformationen gekennzeichnet war.

This article examines the different trajectories and works of two Mexican Creoles, separated by the Jesuits' exile in 1767 in two different sides of the Atlantic. Francisco Javier Clavijero (1731–1787) wrote the monumental *Storia antica del Messico* (1780–1781) in the papal states, then a major center of antiquarian knowledge in Europe. José Antonio de Alzate y Ramírez (1737–1799) edited his *Gazeta de literatura de México* (1784–1795) in Mexico City and wrote notes on Clavijero's history for a never published Spanish edition. This article shifts attention away from the "dispute of the New World" opposing European and American voices and concentrates in-

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stead on the very rich but still unstudied debate between Mexican Creoles. It suggests that the exile placed Clavijero and Alzate within different imperial configurations, and this had significant implications on their political agendas and epistemological approaches. By investigating the strategies that they employed for shaping their international credibility as local experts of Mexico's pre-colonial history and architectural remains, this article also explores the fluctuating reception of Clavijero's and Alzate's works in a period characterized by significant imperial transformations.

The "dispute of the New World" entered a new phase in the 1780s, one characterized by the direct "*prise de parole*" of American Creoles, coming both from the Spanish and the Anglophone sides of the continent.[1] These new voices delineated an Atlantic world, linking Europe and the Americas, the British and Spanish empires, via the Pontifical States. They provided distinct and original perspectives about the nature, inhabitants, and history of America. American Creoles paid close attention to the antiquities in the New World and its natural history, while challenging the diminishing view championed by Enlightenment *philosophes* such as Buffon, Raynal, Cornelius de Pauw, or William Robertson.[2] It is not our aim to repeat this well-known story. What matters here is to stress the imperial and transimperial dimension of this intellectual "polemics" – as Gerbi called it –, focusing on the tensions among Mexican Creole savants in the age of the Enlightenment.

Deep changes took place in both the European and American chessboard in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Spanish empire underwent administrative, economic and political transformations as result of the Bourbon reforms, which aimed at countering the French and especially the British threat. The Seven Years' War (1756–1763), the first commercial conflict on a world scale, was a crucial event which marked a significant weakening of Spain in front of "the making of the British empire" in America as well as in Asia.[3] Among the principal events following the Treaty of Paris, three are particularly relevant for the scope of this article. First, the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Bourbon States in 1767 and the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773, which modified substantially the contours of scholarly life in the Catholic World. Within this context, nearly four thousand Jesuits, mostly coming from the Spanish empire, arrived in the Papal States. Second, the American Revolution (started in 1776), which constituted the first defeat of European imperialism on a world scale, and brought Enlightenment ideas to the Constitution of the United States in 1787. Third, the start of the French Revolution (1789), which soon came to be interpreted as a direct result of the spirit of the Enlighten-

1 A. Gerbi, The Dispute of the New World, Pittsburgh 2010 [1955].

2 On Creole historiography, see D. A. Brading, The Origins of Mexican Nationalism, Cambridge, UK 1985, pp. 3–23; Id., The First America. The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots and the Liberal State. 1492–1867, Cambridge, UK 1991; A. Pagden, Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination, New Haven, CT / London 1990, pp. 91–116. See also Ch. Stewart (ed.), Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory, Walnut Creek 2006; R. Bauer / J. A. Mazzotti (eds.), Creole Subjects in the Colonial Americas: Empires, Texts, Identities, Chapel Hill 2009.

3 Ch. A. Bayly, Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire, Cambridge, UK 1988; Id., Imperial Meridian. The British Empire and the World, 1780–1830, London / New York 1989.

ment. These events produced a profound reconfiguration of the intellectual poles of the Enlightenment on a global scale, while also contributing to a new way of writing history, and in particular the history of the New World.[4]

In this article we examine the trajectory and the works of two Mexican Creoles: Francisco Xavier Clavijero (or Francesco Saverio Clavigero in the Italianized form, Veracruz 1731-Bologna 1787), author of a monumental *Storia antica del Messico* (1780–1781), who, as a Jesuit, experienced the exile and was sent to the papal states in Italy; and José Antonio de Alzate y Ramírez (Ozumba 1737–Mexico City 1799), polymath and editor of the *Gazeta de literatura de México* (1784–1795) who, being a secular priest, remained in Mexico, where he became a very active intellectual figure. They were two major characters of a group of savants which has been identified by historiography as the "Mexican Enlightenment",[5] and which also included the erudite Antonio de León y Gama (Mexico City 1735– Mexico City 1802) and the Jesuits Francisco Javier Alegre (Veracruz 1729–Bologna 1788) and Pedro José Márquez (Rincón de León, Guanajuato 1741–Mexico City 1820).[6] After the Jesuits' expulsion, this group was split on two opposite sides of the Atlantic – a peculiarity which had major political as well as epistemological consequences in their writings and exchanges, as we try to show in what follows.

Clavijero and Alzate display many similarities, both on a sociological and on an intellectual level. The fathers of both had immigrated to New Spain marrying with creole women, and both had Basque origins. Alzate studied in the Jesuit College of San Pedro y San Pablo in Mexico City, where Clavijero, six years older than him, was teaching in the 1750s. Both had a keen interest in the antiquities and in the natural history of Mexico, to which they dedicated a considerable amount of their intellectual production. From this perspective, both took part in the Enlightenment "dispute of the New World". However, they developed very distinct historiographical genres, had different scopes and aims, and addressed diverse audiences. If Clavijero responded to the European *philosophes* with a monumental history of ancient Mexico, Alzate employed the most agile strategy of punctual interventions, which he published in his periodical gazettes – an editorial format which had spread all over Europe in the previous decades and that he employed for addressing Mexican issues.

4 J. Cañizares-Esguerra, How to Write the History of the New World. Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World, Stanford 2001.

5 Ch. E. Ronan, Francisco Javier Clavigero, S.J. (1731–1787), Figure of the Mexican Enlightenment: His Life and Works, Rome/Chicago 1977; R. Moreno, Alzate, educador ilustrado, in: Historia Mexicana 2 (1953) 3, pp. 371–389; Id., La filosofía de la ilustración en México y otros escritos, Mexico City 2000; A. S. García, Dos científicos de la Ilustración Hispanoamericana: J. A. Alzate y F. J. de Caldas, Mexico City 1990.

6 Other members of this group were, on the Jesuit side: Diego José Abad (Jiquilpan 1727–Bologna 1779), Francisco Javier Alegre (Veracruz 1729–Bologna, 1788), Rafael Landivar (Guatemala 1731–Bologna 1793), Andrés Cavo (Guadalajara 1739–Rome 1803), Juan Luis Maneiro (Veracruz 1744–Mexico City 1802), Andrés Guevara y Basoazábal (Guanajuato 1748–Placencia 1801); and, among those who remained in Mexico City, José Ignacio Bartolache (Guanajuato 1739–Mexico City 1790), and Benito Díaz de Gamarra y Dávalos (Zamora 1745–Mexico City 1783). See G. Goldin Marcovich, ¿Una generación del 67? Trayectorias sociales y redes intelectuales novohispanas después de la expulsión, in: I. Fernández Arrillaga et al. (eds.), Memoria de la expulsión de los jesuitas por Carlos III, Madrid / Alicante 2018, pp. 175–184.

The locality from which they wrote had significant influence on their scholarly productions, as well as in the circulation of their works. Clavijero's forced exile in the Pontifical States placed him in one of the major centres of antiquarian knowledge in Europe, whereas Alzate wrote his gazettes from Mexico City, the capital of New Spain. Clavijero's history circulated widely in Europe and was translated into English and German, also reaching the newborn United States. If Alzate was a correspondent of European academies and institutions, to which he sent various specimens and maps, he remained at the margins of European debate over the eighteenth century. By distantiating them, the exile also placed the two Mexican savants within different imperial configurations, with distinct political as well as intellectual agendas.

Historiography has focused on the Creole responses to European *philosophes* within the context of the "dispute of the New World", stressing their "local expertise" as well as the ways in which American patriotism shaped their epistemological interventions.[7] Instead, the debates among Mexican savants, as well as their different political and historiographical perspectives, have been left unexplored. In this article, we suggest a shift in attention away from the polemics between European and American voices to concentrate on the very rich 'internal' exchanges among Mexican Creoles. In so doing, we intend to question a major historiographical construction that pretends that the Mexican Creoles shared a unique and monolithic viewpoint. On the contrary, in our opinion, not only did they follow various strategies and employ different tools in addressing European *philosophes*, but they also expressed diverse and sometimes conflicting perspectives while dealing with Mexican history, both natural and civil.

Our article interrogates these different approaches by focusing on the direct, as well indirect, debate between Clavijero and Alzate, which opens up critical questions, such as: what is history? When does it start? What are the instruments and what are the reliable sources upon which its legitimacy might be founded? How could Creole savants establish their intellectual authority and recognition from different localities? What does it mean to write from Bologna or from Mexico City? What are the epistemological implications of their specific discourses in the political arena? In order to address these questions, we attempt to bring together intellectual and imperial histories and shed light on the negotiations of knowledge in different settings of the Atlantic world. This is also a way to investigate the role played by Mexican savants in the Enlightenment debate.

Writing the History of Mexico in Bologna

Clavijero was born in Veracruz in 1731. He began his studies in Puebla where he entered the seminary but then decided to become a Jesuit, so he went to the Colegio de Tepozotlán in 1748. He developed a great interest in the new European philosophy (Descartes and Leibniz, especially), and played an important role in introducing it into the univer-

7 This is the case of the already mentioned crucial works by Gerbi, Brading as well as Cañizares.

sity curriculum.[8] After some time spent in Puebla, he was sent to Mexico City to the Colegio San Pedro y San Pablo. It is in this period that Clavijero became the mentor of a group of young students who were drawn to reformist ideas. Important intellectual figures emerged from this group in the following decades, including Alzate.[9]

In the aftermath of the royal decree of 1767, which expelled the Society of Jesus from all the Spanish territories following the example of Portugal (1759) and France (1764), 678 Jesuits from New Spain were conducted *manu militari* to the port of Veracruz, while their goods and possessions were expropriated.[10] Jesuits sailed on a long journey, lasting several months, during which they were also held in prisons for some time at La Havana, Cadiz, and finally in Corsica, which was then in the midst of a civil war. Diplomatic negotiations between Spain, France, the Republic of Genoa, and the Popery took place in relation to their settlement. The majority of the expulsed priests coming from the Mexican province landed in Bologna in September 1768, where they reorganized the life of the order.[11] They relied on the pension that the Spanish crown provided them, supplementing it with private masses. Clavijero lived in Ferrara with other Jesuits for a couple of years and then settled in Bologna in the palazzo Herculani.

After a difficult first year, the living conditions of the banished priest seemed to stabilize, in spite of the uncertainties about the duration of the expulsion as well as the future of the order, especially after the death of Clement XIII in 1769. The suppression of the Society in 1773 by Pope Clement XIV's bull *Dominus ac Redemptor* marked a new exile for Clavijero, a spiritual one.[12] Two manuscripts in Clavijero's hand address the question of the suppression of the Society, who thus transgressed the prohibition imposed on (ex-) Jesuits to write on this subject: he depicted Jesuits as modern Templars, who were victims of an international conspiracy. This was, according to him, the most terrible among many errors of his own "unphilosophical century".[13]

Throughout his banishment in Italy, Clavijero found himself at the heart of the "lieu des savoirs antiquaires":[14] the papal states were then a lively intellectual hub, full of very rich libraries and collections, which attracted erudite scholars from all over Europe – among whom the names of Johann Joachim Winckelmann and Alexander von Humboldt are just the most well-known. Furthermore, from Bologna Clavijero could be in touch with

8 B. Navarro, La introducción de la filosofía moderna en México, Mexico City 1948.

9 G. Méndez Plancarte, Humanistas del siglo XVIII. Introducción y selección de Gabriel Méndez Plancarte, Mexico City 1941.

10 E. M. St. Clair Segurado, Expulsión y exilio de la provincia jesuita mexicana, 1767–1820, San Vicente del Rapeig 2005.

11 E. Giménez López, Jesuitas españoles en Bolonia (1768–1773), in: U. Baldini / G. P. Brizzi (eds.), La presenza in Italia dei gesuiti iberici espulsi. Aspetti religiosi, politici, culturali, Bologna 2010, pp. 125-157.

12 M. Batllori, La cultura hispano-italiana de los Jesuitas expulsos: españoles-hispanoamericanos-filipinos, 1767–1814, Madrid 1966; Id., Entre la supresión y la restauración de la Compañía de Jesús, 1773–1814, in: Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu XLIII (1974), pp. 364–393; St. Clair Segurado, Expulsión y exilio; I. del Valle, Escribiendo desde los márgenes: colonialismo y jesuitas en el siglo XVIII, Mexico City 2009.

13 Clavijero, Carta sobre el juicio que formará la posteridad sobre la destrucción de los jesuitas (probably written in 1776), Ms. 187, Fondo Sorbelli, Biblioteca Estense di Modena. See also MS 193, ibid.

14 A. Romano (ed.), Rome et la science moderne entre Renaissance et Lumières, Rome 2008.

other erudite ex-Jesuits in exile, who had also landed in the Pontifical States and were engaged in writing the histories of various parts of America: from Chile to Guatemala, Argentina, Ecuador, Filipinas…[15] One of his regular correspondents was the Spanish Jesuit Lorenzo Hervás y Panduro, who set out to write a universal encyclopedia of all the languages.[16]

Clavijero was neither a unique nor an isolated voice among the Jesuit Creoles, but he deserves special attention as he was one of the first to enter a stage which had been, until then, the prerogative of European scholars. His *Storia antica del Messico*, printed in two volumes in 1780–1781 in the Pontifical town of Cesena, was a major contribution to historiography, while Clavijero also penned a short treatise on the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe and a *Historia de la Antigua o Baja California* (1789), published posthumously in Venice.[17] Originally written in Spanish, but published in Italian, the *Storia antica del Messico* was a pre-Columbian history, which aimed to provide evidence of the period preceding the conquest. It consisted of ten books, chronologically ordered and covering a large time-span, from the late-sixth century to the capture of the last Mexican monarch in 1521. The leitmotiv of the history was an Enlightenment question: that of the formation, growth, and fall of empires. The protagonist of the narrative was the Aztec empire, swept away by the Spanish empire, itself in decline in Clavijero's time. The *Storia* was dedicated "by a Mexican" to a Mexican institution, the "reale e pontificia università degli Studi di Messico", considered to be the only institution appropriated for writing Mexican history. Clavijero lamented the absence of a chair of Antiquity, without which the comprehension of Mexican paintings had been lost even in Mexico. At the same time, he advocated for the construction of a museum, in which to preserve all the ancient monuments, statues, and documents: this was the necessary foundation of any historian.[18] A preface on the historical method and an "Account of the writers on the Ancient History of Mexico" strengthened this point.

Nine "Dissertations", dedicated to Count Gian Rinaldo Carli – author of the *Lettere Americane* (1780) which compared pre-Columbian history to Italian antiquities[19] – closed the *Storia antica del Messico*. These repeated, in polemical and oratorical form, the

15 The names of the Jesuits writing about America in this period include Giovanni Ignacio Molina on Chili, Juan de Velasco, José Jolís, and José Manuel Peramás on Quito, Paraguay, and Rio de la Plata, Filippo Salvatore Gilij on Orinoco.

16 A. Astorgano Abajo, Hervás y Panduro y sus amigos ante la mexicanidad, in: M. Koprivitza Acuña (ed.), Ilustración en el mundo hispánico: preámbulo de las independencias, Tlaxcala 2009, pp. 201–254

17 Francesco Saverio Clavigero, Storia antica del Messico, cavata da' migliori storici spagnuoli, e da' manoscritti, e dalle pitture antiche degl'Indiani : divisa in dieci libri, e corredata di carte geografiche, e di varie figure : e dissertazioni sulla terra, sugli animali, e sugli abitatori del Messico, Cesena, Per Gregorio Biasini, all'Insegna di Pallade, 1780–1781; Breve noticia sobre la prodigiosa y renombrada imagen de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de México, Cesena, Gregorio Biasini, 1782; Id., Storia della California: opera postuma, Venezia, M. Fenzo, 1789.

18 Antonio María de Bucareli y Ursúa, viceroy of Spain between 1771 and 1779, had disposed to collect the antiquities in a museum within the Royal University of Mexico City, where he also founded the first chair on the pre-conquest history. But both the museum and the chair lived very shortly. See M. Achim, From Idols to Antiquity. Forging the National Museum of Mexico, Lincoln / London 2017, p. 12.

19 See Gerbi, The Dispute of the New World, pp. 233 ff.

topic previously expounded as "historical truth". Each dissertation took as an argument one of the themes of the Enlightenment "thesis" about America: Clavijero challenged the supposed strangeness and malignant nature of the American continent, the assumption that American animals were small in comparison to those of the Ancient World, dealt with the question of how America was peopled and to the "true" origins of syphilis. He insisted, in particular, on the physical and moral constitution of the Americans, who were far from being weak and effeminate as Buffon and Cornelius de Pauw had imagined, while dealing with their culture and religion.[20]

Clavijero used the instruments of criticism as elaborated by European Enlightenment against Enlightenment itself. From a rhetorical point of view, he followed a twofold strategy, both ironical and provocative, by denouncing the whimsical theories of European philosophers, who never left their countries but who claimed the right (and the knowledge) to write the history of others. It was as a missionary as well as an American voice "in the field" that Clavijero undertook to ridicule and to "provincialize" histories produced by an armchair scholar in, and from, enlightened Europe. Clavijero created an imaginary and sarcastic dialogue with, on the one hand, the European philosophers and, on the other hand, his potential reader. This rhetoric, which continually resorted to pathos, to exclamation, and moral judgment, led to the condemnation of the opposing party in an imaginary court.

In order to strengthen an alternative "*régime d'historicité*"[21] to that of the European Enlightenment, Clavijero had to shape his authority differently. One of his literary strategies was to base his legitimacy on his status as a Creole. As such, not only could he speak on the behalf of all the Americans, but he was also the one who knew and brought sources from America to Europe. He claimed to be able to understand and speak the Nahuatl, and to have direct and close knowledge of the "indigenous" inhabitants of the New World, as well as their "original" documents. The *Storia antica del Messico* was the fruit of his lifetime interest for the indians.[22]

The renewed attention paid to the most ancient history of Aztecs led Clavijero to adopt a historiographical perspective which questioned the idea that written documents were the only reliable sources for history. While denouncing the distorted vision through which the written culture of Europe failed to recognize the worth of other cultures, he upheld the use of iconographic, archaeological, as well as pictographic materials. His approach marked a break from the method adopted by Enlightenment *philosophes* such as the Scottish Presbyterian William Robertson, who had built his highly respected *History of*

20 Dissertations on the Land, the Animals, and the Inhabitants of Mexico: in which the Ancient History of that Country is confirmed, many points of Natural History illustrated, and numerous Errors refuted, which have been published concerning America by some celebrated modern Authors. On Clavijero's Storia, we follow here the argument advanced by Silvia Sebastiani, What constituted historical evidence of the New World? Closeness and distance in Robertson and Clavijero, in: Modern Intellectual History 11 (2014) 3, pp. 675–693.

21 F. Hartog, Régimes d'historicité. Présentisme et expériences du temps, Paris 2002.

22 See Félix de Sebastián, Memorias de los padres y hermanos de la Compañía de Jesús de la provincia de Nueva España, Fondo Sorbelli, Biblioteca Estense di Modena, Ms A 532, vol. 2, pp. 66–67.

America (1777) relying on Spanish sources, while dismissing the validity of the Indian ones. On the basis of these sources, Robertson had enchained American societies to the first stage of human development, that of "savagery", where the European *conquistadores* would have found them. Clavijero, by contrast, considered Mexican paintings and codices as the most authentic, and so reliable, historical records witnessing the greatness of the Aztec empire, swept away by the Spanish. In so doing, he criticized the Enlightenment narrative of European expansion, based only on European written documents.[23] However, his history remained Eurocentric for three major reasons: first, it was developed within an antiquarian perspective by maintaining a constant parallel with European classical antiquity; second, its epistemological framework remained that of a conception of human history conjured as an illustration of sacred history; third, it justified the evangelizing mission, so ending up attenuating his criticism of European empires.

Clavijero's *History of Mexico* in Britain and Back to (the Other Side of) America

Clavijero's *Storia Antica del Messico* was translated into English by Charles Cullen, one of the sons of the well-known Edinburgh physician William Cullen, and published in London in 1787 by Robinson's family, which emerged from the mid-1780s as a major publisher of the Scottish Enlightenment on the London market.[24] The *History of Mexico* had a strong impact in both Britain and its former empire, the United States, founded in the same year: 1787. Cullen dedicated his translation to John Stuart, Earl of Bute, a Scotsman who was Prime Minister of Great Britain in 1762–1763 and signed the Treaty of Paris which ended the Seven Years' War, while also being one of the principal patrons in Scotland. Lord Bute's patronage, Cullen's family circle, and Robinson's editorial milieu represented for Cavijero's *History* a veritable guarantee for wide distribution in the anglophone world and beyond.

Becoming available in English, Clavijero's work immediately confronted what was then Britain's most authoritative American history: the already mentioned *History of America* by the Principal of the University of Edinburgh William Robertson (Borthwick 1721–Edinburgh 1793). The comparison was exacerbated by Cullen's introduction, which

23 Cañizares, How to Write the History of the New World; J. G. A. Pocock, Barbarism and Religion, vol. 2: Narratives of Civil Government, Cambridge, UK 1999, pp. 316–328, and vol. 4: Barbarians, Savages and Empires, Cambridge, UK 2005, pp. 157–204. On the providential role of European expansion in Robertson's work, see S. J. Brown (ed.), William Robertson and the Expansion of Empire, Cambridge, UK 1997; S. Sebastiani, The Scottish Enlightenment. Race, Gender and the Limits of Progress, New York 2013, ch. 3.

24 Francesco Saverio Clavigero, The History of Mexico: Collected from Spanish and Mexican Historians, from Manuscripts, and Ancient Paintings of the Indians […]. Translated from the Original Italian, by Charles Cullen, Esq., 2 vols., London, G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1787. The Robinson family were booksellers active in 1764–1830: George Robinson (?–1811), George Robinson (1736–1801), James Robinson (?–1803 or 1804), John Robinson (1753–1813). See R. B. Sher, The Enlightenment and the Book. Scottish Authors and their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland and America, Chicago 2006, p. 390 and Appendix.

contrasted Robertson's elegant style with Clavijero's authentic argument. Numerous reviews published in the main British journals of the period (from the *Monthly Review* through the *Scots Magazine*, the *Critical Review* or the *London Chronicle*) also proposed the confrontation between the two authors, sometimes favouring one approach while sometimes favouring the other. The article "America" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* the major British work of organized knowledge in the eighteenth century, dramatically changed in the span of ten years, between the second edition (1778) based on Robertson's narrative, and the third (1788) inspired by Clavijero's work.[25]

Robertson himself, at the time considered one of the major historians in Europe, engaged in a direct debate with Clavijero, answering the (ex)Jesuit's "great asperity" in the fifth and last revised edition of his *History of America*, published in 1788.[26] The answer was a negative one, by which Robertson confirmed the validity of his own historical method and hierarchy of reliable sources. The European "discovery" and conquest of America, which Robertson placed at the outset of his narrative, disclosed his historical project and the place covered in it by the New World, while also stressing the positive evaluation of the Spanish Empire.[27] Book VIII, which closed Robertson's *History*, moved from the destruction of Aztec and Inca empires through the improvement of the whole of American society in almost every field of knowledge, economics, and morals, that occurred especially in the last century of Bourbon rule.[28] American progress remained, according to Robertson, the consequence of Spanish imperialism – in spite of Clavijero's efforts of praising the Aztec empire.

The English translation of Clavijero's *History of Mexico* served as the basis for the German translation, published in Leipzig in 1790, and as such was quoted by the naturalist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach in the third edition of *De generis humani varietate native*[29], so becoming part of the huge anthropological debate then taking shape. It also crossed the Atlantic: it was first published by the Scottish emigré Thomas Dobson in Philadelphia in 1804 and then in Richmond (Virginia) in 1806, in several editions.

Clavijero's *History* provided a historical model to scholars of the newborn United States also in search of their own past. Benjamin Smith Barton and Thomas Jefferson took Clavijero as a crucial reference while dealing with North American Antiquities. In par-

25 S. Sebastiani, L'Amérique des Lumières et la hiérarchie des races. Disputes sur l'écriture de l'histoire dans l'*Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1768–1788), in: Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales 67 (2012) 2, pp. 327–361. This article develops in detail the historiographical polemics between Robertson and Clavijero.

26 William Robertson, The History of America (1777), V ed., 3 vols., London 1788. See Sebastiani, "L'Amérique des Lumières et la hiérarchie des races", and "What constituted historical evidence of the New World?".

27 St. J. Brown, An Eighteenth-Century Historian on the Amerindians: Culture, Colonialism and Christianity in William Robertson's History of America, in: Studies in World Christianity 2 (1996), pp. 204–222; K. O'Brien, Narratives of Enlightenment. Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon, Cambridge, UK 1997, pp. 93–166.

28 Robertson's plan of writing about British America was interrupted by the outbreak of the American Revolution.

29 The third edition of Blumenbach's *De generis humani varietate native* was published in Göttingen in 1795, while the first edition dated back to 1776. For an English version, see The Anthropological Treatises of Blumenbach and the Inaugural Dissertation of John Hunter on the Varieties of Man, transl. and ed. by Th. Bendyshe, London 1865, pp. 192, 293. Blumenbach also quoted Robertson several times, together with other Enlightenment naturalists and historians.

ticular, the "Account of several remarkable vestiges of an ancient date, which have been discovered in different parts of North America", that introduced Barton's *Observations on Some Parts of Natural History*, published in London in 1787, was intended to provide proof of a glorious past in North America, parallel to that of Mexico. Barton, who in 1787 was a student of medicine at the University of Edinburgh under William Cullen and took issue against the Principal William Robertson, became an important intellectual figure of post-colonial America: from 1789 he taught Natural History and Materia Medica at the College of Philadelphia, where he introduced Blumenbach's classifications of human race, together with a new attention toward language and antiquities.[30]
Barton proposed to compare the ruins of Kentucky or Ohio to those of Mexico: if they were less spectacular, it was nonetheless possible to lay claim to the same monumental and cultural tradition for North America, too. When the new state began to look west, Mexico mattered strongly, as Samuel Truett has put it: "the fact that Mexican history came to the US frontier by way of New Spain added a new layer of entanglement, in which prior appropriations at the borderlands of one empire found new significance at the acquisitive edges of another".[31] By discovering, at the margins of Europe, another Creole voice, coming from another empire, Barton could enrich his historical view with perspectives borrowed from the Mexican past. But whereas he rooted the new nation in a monumental natural history, Clavijero had focused more on the cultural foundations of American history, in connection to Nahua peoples.
The newborn United States was at the frontier with Mexico, but Mexican history entered the United States from Europe, via the Atlantic. It is within these transatlantic and transimperial interactions – and competitions – that Clavijero's work has to be placed.

Tensions Within the Spanish Empire: Alzate Follower and Critic of Clavijero

In 1783 the editor Antonio de Sancha (Torija 1720–Cádiz 1790) announced the forthcoming Spanish edition of Clavijero's *Storia antica del Messico*. The Court had addressed a letter to Clavijero asking him to send his Spanish original manuscript to Sancha, probably on the advice of some people in Madrid, who were very interested in his work.[32] Sancha, the main printer in Madrid, intended to publish the most elegant and complete edition of Clavijero's history, to which he planned to add maps and illustrations. He

30 See S. Sebastiani, Anthropology beyond Empires: Samuel Stanhope Smith and the Reconfiguration of the Atlantic World, in: L. Kontler et al. (ed.), Negotiating Knowledge in Early Modern Empires: A Decentered View, New York 2014, pp. 207–233.

31 S. Truett, The Borderlands and Lost Worlds of Early America, in: E. Countryman / J. Barr (eds.), Contested Spaces of Early America, Philadelphia 2014, pp. 300–324, quotation p. 319. See also P. Hämäläinen / S. Truett, On Borderlands, in: Journal of American History 98 (2011) 2, pp. 338–361.

32 Charles Ronan asserts that, with all probability, the person behind the idea of Clavijero's Spanish edition was Manuel Lardizabal y Uribe (1739–1820), a Mexican-born lawyer who had studied at the Colegio de San Ildefonso and had emigrated to Spain to continue his education. See Ch. E. Ronan, Clavigero: The Fate of a Manuscript, in: The Americas 27 (1970) 2, pp. 113-136, esp. note 7, p. 114. In the next pages we follow Ronan's article.

first sent the manuscript to the Council of Castile, which entrusted Pedro de Luján, el Duque de Almodóvar, with its revision. The latter reviewed it positively, except for what he considered Clavijero's partiality towards Las Casas and his use of some sources he deemed unreliable.[33]

Around the same time when Sancha announced the Spanish edition of Clavijero's *Storia antica del Messico*, about fifty copies of the Italian edition arrived at the University of Mexico City, to which – as we have mentioned – the work was dedicated. As soon as he heard about Sancha's project, José Antonio de Alzate y Ramírez prepared some notes to be added to Clavijero's Spanish edition.[34] Alzate was very confident that his comments soon would be published in Madrid, as he mentioned this affair in his publications.[35] But this was not the case. His notes provide, however, unique insight into the reception of Clavijero in New Spain and the relation between locality and the production of knowledge within the boundaries of the same empire.

José Antonio de Alzate y Ramírez was born in a town near Mexico City in 1737. When the family moved to Mexico City, Alzate studied in the Colegio de San Pedro y San Pablo, where Clavijero was teaching; so, their friendship might date back to 1750, as Charles Ronan has suggested.[36] Alzate became a secular priest and started working at the Arzobispado just before the expulsion of the Jesuits. In spite of the distance, he remained somehow in contact with Clavijero. Speaking about Clavijero's circle at the Colegio, his biographer Juan Luis Maneiro (Veracruz, 1744–Mexico City, 1802), at the time his student and then his closest friend during exile, named specifically Alzate, "whose literary works arrive to us from time to time even if the vast sea separates us".[37] Clavijero was one of the most cited authors in Alzate's writings, often qualified as "*el sabio*" or "*el insigne*". But a close reading makes it also emerge some divergences, which are worth to be emphasised.

In his *Descripción de las antigüedades de Xochicalco*, a short treatise on the ruins of Xochicalco published as a supplement to the *Gazeta de literatura* in November 1791, Alzate quoted Clavijero in the opening epigraph, thus implying that he was fulfilling his wish of preserving and studying Mexican antiquities. In the preliminary remarks, he noted that the similarity between their ideas did not depend on copying each other, but was

33 Ibid. p. 117. Pedro Francisco Jiménez de Góngora y Luján, first Duke of Almodóvar (1727–1794), edited the Spanish translation of Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes*, "with the comments by a Catholic Spaniard", under the pseudonym Eduardo Malo de Luque. The first volume was published by Antonio de Sancha in 1784.

34 Alzate's manuscript notes for book VI and VII (vol. II) are kept in the National Library of Mexico and are reproduced in R. Moreno de los Arcos, Las notas de Alzate a la Historia antigua de Clavijero, in: Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl 10 (1972), pp. 359–392. Roberto Moreno also found the notes for books I and II in the Biblioteca Nacional de Antropologia e Historia de México and published them in: Las notas de Alzate a la Historia Antigua de Clavijero (Addenda), in: Estudios de cultura náhuatl 12 (1976), pp. 85–120. The notes for the remaining books have not (yet) been found.

35 See for instance, Alzate, Gaceta de Literatura de México [ed. 1831], vol. 2, p. 53.

36 See Ronan, Francisco Javier Clavigero, note 100, p. 34.

37 Juan Luis Maneiro, Joannis Aloysii Maneiri… De vitis aliquot mexicanorum aliorumque qui sive virtute, sive litteris Mexici inprimis floruerunt, 3 vols., Bononiae, ex typographia Laelii a Vulpe, 1791–1792, vol 3, p. 49. "[…] Josephus Alzateaus, cujus assiduas in litteris vigilias interdum audimus, tametsi mari immenso disterminemur."

the result of "treating the same subject with sincerity and the help of the critic".[38] If the emphasis Alzate put in stressing that he read Clavijero "*only after*" having published his own treatise might seem excessive and, as such, a bit suspicious, his approach to the ruins differed from that of the *Storia antica del Messico*. Alzate presented his treatise as a personal report of his visit to the ruins, written in the first person – in contrast with the impersonal account adopted by Clavijero's history. Unlike Clavijero who also presented himself as a local expert of Mexico but never quoted his indigenous informants directly, Alzate referred often to the "natives" who accompanied him in his excursions and that he called "*prácticos*": the role they played in his narrative is indeed significant.[39] Alzate's intervention addressed first of all an internal question: he denounced both the precarious state of preservation of the ruins and the pernicious activities of those hacienda's owners who used their territories as carriers. But, at the same time, his *Descripción de la antigüedades* – published on the occasion of the arrival, in Mexico, of Malaspina's expedition, to whom he dedicated his treatise – clearly shows that Alzate aspired to reach an international and scientific audience.

Alzate's complex relationship with Clavijero, made of admiration but also of criticism, emerges in the clearest way in the notes he wrote on the *Storia antica* around 1789–1790.[40] By then, Alzate was established as one of the most important intellectual figures of New Spain and had been publishing his *Gazeta de literatura de México* for half a decade. He was also a correspondent member of the French Academy of Sciences since the 1760s.[41] In his gazettes he dealt with a variety of topics related to "useful" sciences, mainly physics, chemistry, and natural sciences, but also history and geography.[42] Alzate is neither systematic nor monolithic in his interests and interventions; but, by constantly referring to his gazettes' articles in his other publications, he weaved thematic threads and gave a sense of coherence to his work as a whole, despite the dispersion of the materials. Along with the antiquities, one thread was his long-standing interest in the Mexican Indians.

The notes that Alzate wrote on books VI and VII of *La storia antica del Messico,* dealing with ancient Mexicans' religion, rites, and political, military and economic organization, are particularly interesting. His style of commentary was the same he used for annotating the excerpts of foreign authors he translated and published in his gazettes. Roberto Moreno maintains that Alzate followed Clavijero in his vindication of the Indians before

38 Alzate, Descripción de la antigüedades de Xochicalco, in: Gaceta de Literatura de México, 1831, vol. 2, p. 265. In the Advertencia, Alzate asserted: "Ni el abate Clavijero se valió de mi débil ensayo, ni yo tuve original que copiar; nos expresamos con identidad, lo que no es de extrañar, pues tratando del mismo asunto con sinceridad y con el auxilio de la crítica, era preciso vertiésemos las mismas ideas."

39 In his reference to his indigenous informants, Alzate also stressed their "superstitions". See, ibid., pp. 28–30.

40 On the datation of Alzate's notes, see Moreno, Las notas de Alzate a la Historia antigua de Clavijero, pp. 360–364.

41 P. Bret, Alzate y Ramirez et l'Académie Royale des Sciences de Paris: la réception des travaux d'un savant du Nouveau Monde, in: P. Aceves Pastrana (ed.), Periodismo científico en el siglo XVIII: José Antonio de Alzate y Ramírez, Mexico City 2001, pp. 123–205.

42 A sample of Alzate's writing has been recently edited by M. Achim, Observaciones útiles para el futuro de México: selección de artículos 1768–1795, Mexico City 2012.

and after the conquest, against two different enemies: the European *philosophes* who had diminished their physical and intellectual capacities in their writings, and the political mistreatments of Indians by the authorities of New Spain.[43] Alzate, however, disagreed with Clavijero on some important details, such as the estimations of the number of human sacrifices, which he maintained to be less numerous than usually stated, siding with Las Casas.[44]

Beside pushing forward the "Lascasasian" agenda, Alzate challenged the central argument on which Clavijero had constructed his authority as a Creole historian: his firsthand knowledge about American nature, peoples, and original documents. The insistence on the local expertise and the epistemological value of the eyewitness in opposition to the philosophical and distant history of armchair Europeans was a leitmotiv of the *Storia antica del Messico*. However, Alzate, from his position *sur place*, challenged this very point, stressing that Clavijero had spent over twenty years in exile, and was therefore far away from the Mexican sources, specimens, and monuments he was speaking about. While applying to Clavijero the same criticism the latter had raised against European writers, Alzate pointed to an important contradiction lurking throughout the work of the banished Jesuit: Clavijero had couched his own history in a language of closeness, but he was writing from a distant space and time, being in Bologna and dealing with the Aztec past.[45]

This was particularly true for natural history, for which Alzate often relied on his own observations. For instance, he disputed Clavijero's observations about the axolotl, an endemic species living in the lakes of Mexico City. Clavijero noted, following the writings of Francisco Hernández (1514–1587), the sixteenth-century author of the *Mexican Treasury*, that this "aquatic lizard" had a uterus and menstruated. In his text, Clavijero took aim at Jacques-Christophe Valmont de Bomare (1731–1807) who doubted this characteristic, dismissing the authority of the French naturalist, on the ground that the latter had never seen such a specimen in person, and was therefore not trustworthy. Alzate, on the contrary, wrote in his notes to Clavijero's history that "Bomare was right to doubt about this phenomenon [menstruation], as by its dissection I have verified that this is false".[46] In so doing, Alzate reasserted his deeper degree of intimacy and experience, in which he rooted his own scientific credibility. On November 1790, Alzate devoted a full issue of his gazette to the axolotl. Briefly referring to "a work that I've

43 Moreno, Las notas de Alzate a la Historia antigua de Clavijero, p. 369.

44 Clavijero records that Las Casas "reduces these sacrifices to such a small number, that we are left to believe, they amounted not to fifty, or at most not to a hundred", whereas other sources – including Zumarraga, the first archbishop of Mexico – reported that the number of victims was 20,000 per year or even more. Clavijero took an intermediate position here, while stressing that he did not understand why Las Casas, who used Zumarraga's testimony, contradicted him on this issue. See Clavijero, History of Mexico, vol. I, book VI, chap. 20, pp. 280–283. Alzate, on the contrary, noted: "I do not know why our author [Clavijero] disagrees with Las Casas' opinion". See note 13, in Moreno, Las notas de Alzate a la Historia antigua de Clavijero, p. 379.

45 Sebastiani, What constituted historical evidence of the New World?.

46 "En lo demás tuvo razón Bomare para dudar del fenómeno que se refiere, pues por la disección he verificado ser falso." See Moreno, Las notas de Alzate a la Historia Antigua de Clavijero (Addenda), p. 356, note 102.

prepared on the history of New Spain, and which I hope will be published very soon by D. Antonio de Sancha"[47], he did not mention explicitly Clavijero but reasserted his agreement with Bomare and delved into a full examination of the axolotl, retorting to first-person narrative and relying heavily on Indian informants. He concluded that the axolotl syrup was a good medicine against tuberculosis and suggested that it should be commercialized.

Alzate, thus, used a variety of literary strategies to intervene both on local and on international levels, in the hope of being published in Europe. He stressed the importance of the knowledge he was revealing to Europeans, and to Spaniards in particular, either for their physical well-being (such as the cure for tuberculosis) or for the well-being of the empire through the development of commerce – benefitting the empire at broad as well as New Spain's economy. With his gazettes, Alzate could achieve several goals: he could bring the latest European scientific contributions to New Spain but also gather and make available Mexican riches and particularities to Europe. In this way, he could contribute, from his locality, to the scientific international discussions. The flexibility and regularity of this literary genre, while providing a running commentary of the local affairs (within the limits of the censorship requirements), also allowed him to organize the enlightened sociabilities in Mexico City.[48]

The emphasis on locality emerging from Alzate's notes could be read as a political commentary on the current state of Indians and ancient vestiges alike. One could roughly categorize Alzate's notes of the books VI and VII in three sets: anthropological observations, curious facts and political comments. His notes doubled down on the local expertise by providing a glimpse of how things were in the present. Many notes provided information on whether modern Indians still behaved as the ancient ones described by Clavijero: whereas the latter affirmed, for instance, that the Indians used to burn incense for the idols in all their houses, Alzate explained that "nowadays the Indians burn incense for the saints in their chapels".[49] On the one hand, this presentist gaze reinforced

47 "En una obra que trabajé sobre la historia de Nueva España, y que espero se publique muy en breve por D. Antonio de Sancha, expuse observaciones seguras acerca del ajolote o ajolotl, pez raro por su organización, y de que se han vertido muchas falsedades…" See Alzate, Gaceta de Literatura de México [1789–1795], Puebla, 1831, vol. 2, p. 53.

48 See G. Goldin Marcovich, La circulation des savoirs entre l'Europe et la Nouvelle Espagne au XVIIIe Siècle. Les Gazettes de José Antonio De Alzate y Ramírez, Mémoire de Master, Paris, EHESS, 2012. For more on Alzate's naturalist practices and his criticism vis-à-vis the European classificatory system, see R. Moreno de los Arcos, Linneo en México: Las controversias sobre el sistema binario sexual, 1788–1798, Mexico City 1989; and more recently: H. Cowie, Peripheral Vision: Science and Creole Patriotism in Eighteenth-Century Spanish America, in: Studies in the History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences 40 (2009) 3, pp. 143–155; M. Achim, From Rustics to Savants. Indigenous Materia Medica in Eighteenth-Century Mexico, in: Studies in the History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences 42 (2011) 3, pp. 275–284.

49 "En el día acostumbran los indios en sus oratorios incensar a los santos." Alzate, note 14 to Clavijero's Vol. II, Lib. VI, Chap. 21, in Moreno, Las notas de Alzate a la Historia antigua de Clavijero, p. 379. See also note 11, p. 378. A similar idea was also expressed in note 21: whereas Clavijero wrote that the ancient Mexicans sent their children to school, Alzate noted that "even today the Indians try to send their small children to colleges" ("hasta el día procuran los indios dedicar sus prequeños hijos a los colegios"), ibid., p. 380. He added that there was more demand than supply and that some had tried to open schools for Indian children but had faced many difficulties.

Clavijero's credibility in his confrontation with the European polemicists; on the other, it served as a local and punctual intervention. If Clavijero merely hinted his disagreement on the way Indians were treated by local authorities, Alzate gave it full development.
In book VII, chapter 14 dealing with the "Division of the lands, and titles of possession and property", Clavijero compared the ancient land property system of the Indians to the Spanish (and European) feudal system. "In the Mexican empire" – he wrote – "as far as we can find, real fiefs were few in number; and if we are to speak in the strict sense of the civil law, there were none at all; for they were neither perpetual in their nature, as every year it was necessary to repeat the form of investiture, nor were the vassals of feudatories exempted from the tributes which were paid to the king by the other vassals of the crown."[50] This rather fair system, he seemed to conclude, somehow had been preserved by the Crown through benevolent legislation, but had been abused by individuals and judges. "The catholic kings have assigned lands to the settlements of the Mexicans, and made proper laws to secure to them the perpetuity of such possessions; but at present many villages have been deprived of them by the great power of some individuals, assisted by the iniquity of some judges."[51]
Alzate, in his notes, went further: "ever since the Indian peoples have been deprived of the administration of their lands, these [lands] have become totally useless to them: it sounds like the property is theirs, but they cannot make any use of them [these lands] or have the slightest profit from them".[52] He provided a list of examples to illustrate his point: Tlatelolco, Iztacalco, Mexiuca. If we understand this correctly, these lands assured a rent, but the Indians, according to Alzate, were ignorant of this economic system and so derived no benefit from it: "why would the Indians care about the publication of how much of their riches have been used in the National Bank, if they ignore that there is such a Bank and if both the capitals and the profits are so useless to them?"[53] Locality played on a multiplicity of scales, in New Spain but also in Madrid, where Clavijero's *History* was supposed to be published.

Historiographical Failures and New Imperial Competitions

The Spanish publication of Clavijero's history never saw the light of day in Spain. When Sancha sought the approbation of the Council of the Indies, he encountered insurmountable difficulties. "The appearance of the *Storia antica* in Italy" – writes Ronan – "had caused a very unfavorable reaction among a number of the exiled Spanish Jesuits

50 See Clavijero, The History of Mexico, vol I, Book VI, Ch. XIV, p. 349.
51 Ibid. p. 350.
52 "Desde que se quitó a los pueblos de indios la administración de sus tierras les son absolutamente inútiles: suena por suya la propiedad, pero no pueden hacer ningún uso ni sacar de ellas el más mínimo provecho". Alzate, note 26 in Moreno de los Arcos, Las notas de Alzate a la Historia antigua de Clavijero, p. 382.
53 "¿Qué importa a los indios que se publique que sus caudales han utilizado tanto o cuanto en el Banco Nacional, si ellos ignoran que hay tal Banco y tan inútiles les son las utilidades como los principales?" Ibid.

living in that country."[54] They considered it as having defended Mexican Indians, while being "highly insulting to Spain". Therefore, as soon as the Majorcan Jesuit, Ramón Diosdado Caballero, who was sent to Rome, heard the news about the forthcoming edition of Clavijero's history in Spanish, he wrote a strong refutation with the intent of "repairing the scandal it had provoked".[55] Diosdado sent a letter to Gálvez, the former *Visitador general* of New Spain, at that time Minister of the Indies, warning him about Clavijero's work and hoping to publish his own refutation – *Observaciones americanas y suplemento crítico a la historia del ex- Jesuita Don Francisco Xavier Clavigero* – under his patronage as an antidote to the Spanish edition.[56] So, although the censors provided positive reviews of Clavijero's manuscript to the Council of the Indies, Gálvez stalled the publication, with the intention of revising it on the basis of Diosdado's observations, that he intended to publish.[57] One of the censors of Diosdado's "Observaciones" hailed his efforts "to refute an American in the middle of Italy" as an action "proper to a noble heart, truly Spanish, and worthy of great praise", while stressing that Diosdado successfully refuted "the Raynals and Robertsons".[58] This in itself did not prevent the publication of Clavijero's history in Spain, as the book was further sent to censorship with Diosdado's "Observaciones" and its reports: the censors deemed Clavijero worth publishing, whereas they considered Diosdado's observations as full of errors and lacking in good faith. However, the opposition levelled by Diosdado and backed by Gálvez stalled the publication so effectively that the entire project was eventually forgotten, awaiting a final revision which the appointed person never made.[59] Diosdado's opposition casts light on the complexity of stances concerning the place of America and American history within the Spanish empire, as well as among the (ex)Jesuits.

As for Alzate, he never reached the audience he expected to and his notes remained manuscript. Around the same time, Alzate asked the Crown to be named "royal chronicler of the Indies" and proposed a geography of America.[60] His request was endorsed by the Viceroy Revillagigedo who commended the high quality of Alzate's works and his devotion to the homeland and the king.[61] In Madrid, Juan Bautista Muñoz had no objections but the members of the Academia de la Historia expressed their opposition to such a title.[62] The task of a chronicler, they explained, was to "adjust history to the political interests of the Nation, and the rights of the Crown, defending them against the

54 Ronan, Clavigero: The Fate of a Manuscript, p. 118.

55 Diosdado to Gálvez, Rome, August 5, 1784, AGI, Patronato 296, fols. 1–3, quoted in Ronan, Clavigero: The Fate of a Manuscript, p. 118.

56 Ibid. p. 119.

57 Ibid. p. 121.

58 Miguel de San Martín Cueto to José de Gálvez, November 12, 1785, AGI, Patronato 296, fols. 4–31v, quoted in Ronan, Clavigero: The Fate of a Manuscript, p. 122.

59 Ibid., pp. 125–134.

60 "Expediente sobre que la Cámara de Indias tenga presente para Prebendas, à D.n Josef Antonio de Alzate…", 1777–1791, Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, México, 1883.

61 Ibid., June 26, 1790.

62 Juan Bautista Muñoz (Museros 1745–Valencia 1799) was appointed by Charles III Cosmographer of the Indies in 1770. In 1779 he was charged with the writing of a "History of the New World" that was to counter the philo-

declamations and rumors of the rival nations, or the conquered provinces". Thus, in the view of the Academia de la Historia, the main purpose of history was political, and had to counter both foreign enemies and internal dissenters. By consequence, the chronicles should, according to them, "at all times reside at the Court, so that he would write his history under the sight of the tribunals".[63] In this imperial logic, writing from Italy or from New Spain was equally problematic, as both places were distant from the courtly oversight.

Alzate had remained on the sidelines of the European debate, despite his efforts, all along his life, to take direct part in it. His work would enter the European debate only after his death, via Alexander von Humboldt, who first made his name documenting his travels to Spanish America. In his *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain* (1811), Humboldt stressed the achievements of the Bourbons in New Spain, while relying much on both Alzate and Clavijero. His *Political Essay* was, in turn, appropriated and reinterpreted by the Mexican nationalist historiography during the 19th century.[64] In Europe, Humboldt's "comprehensive description" made the "previously opaque Spanish possession transparent, instilling the belief that Mexico was pivotal to the control of world trade."[65] Particularly in Britain, Mexico came to be perceived as a strategic site for global commerce, not only for its geographical position nearly equidistant between Europe and Asia, but also because it appeared full of resources to be exploited and possibilities for foreign investments.[66] The knowledge developed by Mexican savants was now put at the service of British imperialism.

The new imperial logic which developed in the wake of the Atlantic revolutions and the disintegration of much of the Spanish Empire had a direct impact on Clavijero's reception. When Clavijero's *Storia* finally appeared in Spanish in 1826, it was not published in Madrid but in London. It was printed by the German publisher Rudolph Ackermann (Schneeberg 1764–London 1834), who produced more than eighty titles in Spanish, seizing the profitable opportunities opened by the commercial blockade with Spain in

sophes views on Spain and its history in the Indies. For a detailed account of the historiographical stances of the Academy and its inner workings see Cañizares-Esguerra, How to write the history of the New World, ch. 3.

63 "Informe de Don Juan Bautista Muñoz", January 26, 1791 and "Informe de la Academia de la Historia", April 29, 1791, Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, México, 1883, "Que es también del cargo del cronista, ajustar la historia a los intereses políticos de la Nación, y derechos de la Corona, sosteniéndoles contra las declamaciones y rumores de las naciones rivales, o de las provincias conquistadas. Que por esta razón es una de las máximas fundamentales de estos Reynos, y señaladamente de las Indias, que el Cronista, en todos tiempos haya residido en la Corte, para que escriba su historia a la vista de los Tribunales."

64 L. E. O. Fernandes, Patria Mestiza. A invenção do passado nacional mexicano (séculos XVIII e XIX), São Paulo 2012; Id., Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain: Humboldt and the history of Mexico, in HiN – Humboldt im Netz. Internationale Zeitschrift für Humboldt-Studien (Potsdam/Berlin) XV (2014) 28, pp. 24–33, http://www.unipotsdam.de/u/romanistik/humboldt/hin/hin28/fernandes.htm.

65 N. Rupke, A Geography of Enlightenment: The Critical Reception of Alexander von Humboldt's Mexico Work, in: D. N. Livingstone / Ch. W. J. Withers (eds.), Geography and Enlightenment, Chicago 1999, pp. 319–339, quotation p. 330.

66 Ibid., pp. 331–333.

the newly independent republics of Spanish America.[67] The *Historia antigua de Megico* which was published in England, to be sold (especially) in Latin America, was not the original text written by Clavijero but it was a translation from the Italian, made *ex novo* by José Joaquín de Mora (Cádiz 1783–Madrid 1864), a Spanish liberal writer who had exiled in London in 1823, after the French invasion.[68] Between 1823 and 1826, Mora was the most prolific collaborator of Ackermann's publishing venture for overseas, deeply contributing to build his Spanish catalogue.[69] Mora's translation of Clavijero's *Historia* was reprinted in Mexico in the 1850s, while another translation by the Bishop of Puebla, Francisco Pablo Vázquez, was published by Juan R. Navarro in 1853. The original Spanish text written by Clavijero, instead, appeared in 1945 only,[70] whereas Alzate's notes remained dispersed in Mexican archives.

During the uncertain process of Mexico's nation-building, Creole historiography became unpopular.[71] The National Museum of Mexico, founded in 1825 by presidential decree, responded to Clavijero's prospect of preserving Mexican ancient monuments and documents in one space, but had to adapt the eighteenth-century model of "collecting and studying antiquities and natural history" to the "new formation of economic and social power both in Mexico and in the transatlantic world".[72] With the independence of Mexico, another imperial configuration took shape, together with a different political, geopolitical and intellectual agenda.

67 E. Roldán Vera, The British Book Trade and Spanish American Independence: Education and Knowledge Transmission of Knowledge in Transcontinental Perspective, Aldershot 2003.

68 F. S. Clavigero, Historia antigua de Megico sacada de los mejores historiadores españoles y de los manuscritos y de las pinturas antiguas de los indios … traducida del italiano por José Joaquín de Mora, 2 vols., London, R. Ackermann, 1826.

69 During his collaboration with Ackermann, Mora wrote, edited and translated an impressive number of works in Spanish, ranging from history to catechism, geography, political economy, education of women, as well as Spanish and Latin grammars, literature, and journals. At the end of 1826, he left England and moved first to Argentina and then to Chile. For a list of Ackermann's Spanish publications, including those by Mora, see Roldán Vera, The British Book Trade and Spanish American Independence, pp. 243–259. On the Spanish liberal exile in England in the 1820s, see the classic study by V. Lloréns, Liberales y románticos: Una emigración española en Inglaterra (1823–1834), Madrid 1968, esp. pp. 229–257. See also F. Durán López, Versiones de un exilio. Los traductores españoles de la casa Ackermann (London, 1823–1830), Madrid 2015.

70 F. J. Clavijero, Historia antigua de México. Primera edición del original escrito en castellano por el autor, ed. and introd. by M. Cuevas, 4 vols, Mexico City 1945.

71 This is clearly shown by D. Brading in The Origins of Mexican Nationalism, Cambridge, UK 1985. See also chapters "Civilisation and Barbarism" and "Mexican Leviathan" in Brading's The First America.

72 Achim, From Idols to Antiquity, pp. 15–16. This study stresses the uncertainties of the first four decades of the National Museum and shows that the alliance between archeology and state power took shape in the 1870s only. It is by that time that the museum came to be identified with its antiquities.