other intellectuals and politicians, has made to fix the problem. In the conclusion of the book Wassner discusses the great volume of articles he has published in newspapers in recent years. These articles are evidence of his ongoing commitment to cultural democratization. This book makes a strong case for Aguinis as a beacon of modernity who deserves more public recognition.

Ariana Huberman


How to study the early modern Spanish monarchy? Was it really a national colonial empire? Can its complex constitution best be understood by a single author or by many historians working in tandem? *Polycentric Monarchies* offers forceful answers to these questions.

In a short yet clearly argued introduction, the editors claim that the Spanish monarchy had no centers and peripheries, that it was more than just a “composite monarchy,” a term coined some three decades ago by John Elliott. According to the editors the Spanish monarchy was more than an assembly of its European kingdoms, each with its own separate constitution, presided over by Castile, whose control over a vast colonial hinterland in the Americas and parts of Asia made it dominant. Global Spain, they argue, was not a colonial empire. It was, rather, a “polycentric monarchy,” that is, a globally dispersed collection of European “kingdoms” and American city states (in America the cities and their hinterlands often had vast territories in between under the control of indigenous sovereign polities), each claiming fierce autonomy (and often exaggerated claims of religious centrality for the whole).

This global collection of kingdoms and city states were loosely kept together by explicit and implicit constitutions, pacts, and exchanges. There was a complex political economy of favors by which “kingdoms” and cities transferred subsidies to the Crown in order to participate in the collegial co-direction of empire through councils and parliaments. The brisk circulation of lay and clerical bureaucracies, whose entourages often married into distinguished local families, also kept the whole together. As members of these bureaucracies stayed behind, they created vast trans-kingdom familiar networks that engaged in transoceanic commercial or religious enterprises (merchant guilds, cofradías, religious and secular orders).
Religious and civilizing ideas also moved around, contributing to creating a degree of homogeneity within a vast geographical canvas. Catholicism in particular gave the whole a sense of purpose and unity. Post-tridentine Spanish Catholicism became associated with being “Spanish,” regardless of race. This confessional identity drew boundaries of inclusions and exclusion: “Indians” were “Spanish” in the making. Back in Europe, Catholic foreigners were easily assimilated but in the confessional borderlands of America they remained foreigners. Heretics, Jews, and Moors need not apply.

Circulation of capital was the ultimate lynchpin of this polycentric monarchy. Local brokers pooled money from either widows or entrepreneurs to finance public debt of a highly leveraged Crown. Pooled monies also went into profitable trans-national, trans-oceanic businesses that often included smuggling. The brisk circulation of capital into public debt and private smuggling even brought independent city states in the Netherlands and Italy (particularly Genoa) into the strong gravitational pull of the monarchy.

In short, the Spanish monarchy was more than the sum of its parts. It was the loose constitutional arrangement and brisk circulations of peoples and ideas that allowed early modern Spain (and Portugal, in the words of the book’s subtitle) to “achieve and maintain a global hegemony.” It was resilient to challenges, crisis, and change. In short, it was long lasting.

This strong thesis laid out in the introduction and epilogue is accompanied by an equally strong methodological proposal: only a network of historians, experts on the local complexities and idiosyncrasies of each of the monarchy’s parts, can accurately piece the whole together. *Polycentric Monarchies* is an edited volume with twelve richly researched essays that explore in detail a locale: Naples, Milan, Genoa, Bahia, Terceira (Azores), Paris, Valencia, etc.

For all the appeal, the book fails to fully persuade. One problem is methodological: the essays only make sense in light of the strong program in the introduction. It is only when read together that the each essay begins to transcend its own self-imposed limits. Each essay, on its own, reads often as very traditional political historiography.

The other problems are historiographical. *Polycentric Monarchies*, for example, assumes Spain and Portugal had similar global constitutions and circulations but it never makes this argument explicit. Portugal is at times brought in as part of Spain and at times as an independent global monarchy of its own. Is Portugal to be fully assimilated into the history of the early modern Spanish monarchy?

More serious: The argument that the polycentric monarchy was not “colonial” is a Eurocentric fairytale. Chapters that seek to present the city states of the Americas as the equals of those of Europe ultimately demonstrate the opposite: the marginal and peripheral nature of the American kingdoms within
the constitutions of both Spain and Portugal. Bahia and Goa were not Milan or Genoa. The seventeenth-century Indies were not the equivalent of Valencia, Aragon or Cataluña either. Actually a chapter of the book itself demonstrates that in the 1630s the representative political body of the Indies as a whole, the Council of Indies, was considered to be a peg below that of the council of the recently integrated kingdom of Flanders. No matter how loud creoles protested, the entire continent of America, including the Philippines, could not manage to wrestle from the Crown acknowledgement of equal or superior symbolic authority than one tiny Flanders. Finally, the Eurocentric focus of the volume excludes a plethora of peoples, indigenous, African, and Asian, who were part of this global monarchy. The kingdoms and city states of Africa, India, and the Far East are nowhere to be seen.

Paradoxically, this volume does make clear that the mechanism that allowed “Spain” to settle parts of the Americas, Africa, and Asia were fully operative in Europe itself. Spain “occupied” Paris from 1590 to 1594 and negotiated with the various French political factions in ways similar to those Cortes and his soldiers used to negotiate with Tlaxcala and the members of the Mexican Triple Alliance. By the same token, the story of the Azores under Spanish occupation resembles that of the two Republics of Indians and Spaniards in the Americas. From 1580 to 1640, Spain ruled Terceira, the island of the Azores that was the staunchest stronghold of Portuguese military resistance to Philip II’s new Habsburg dynastic rule. And yet Terceira became fully integrated into the Habsburg monarchy through parallel systems of administration, justice, and fueros, one for the Spanish soldiers at an occupying garrison and another for the local Portuguese vecinos. These two systems blended through marriage: more local Portuguese women married Spanish soldiers and officers rather than local Portuguese men. Polycentric Monarchies can become a useful and vigorous historiography if shorn of its Eurocentrism.

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El Tribunal del Santo Oficio de la Inquisición en Nueva España generó durante sus casi tres siglos de existencia documentos que hoy son para nosotros valiosos testimonios de la historia social y religiosa en la sociedad colonial. Los