American Globalization, 1492–1850

Trans-Cultural Consumption in Spanish Latin America

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First published 2022

ISBN: 978-0-367-76676-4 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-032-02443-1 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-003-16805-8 (ebk)

Chapter 4

Spanish Women as Agents for a New Material Culture in Colonial Spanish America

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DOI: 10.4324/9781003168058-5

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

4 Spanish Women as Agents for a New Material Culture in Colonial Spanish America[1]

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Introduction

From the perspective of global history, various authors have explained how migratory networks and economic relations and consumption patterns connected distant areas of the world long before the twentieth century. This creation of an interconnected geographical space thanks to the circulation of people, objects and ideas was especially striking in the case of the Spanish empire during the early globalization of the sixteenth century (Subrahmanyam 1997; Gruzinski 2006; Aram and Yun-Casalilla 2014). The emigrants who travelled to America in search of better living conditions were key agents in the construction of the Spanish empire and had a fundamental impact on the economic and social structures of the New World. Family letters conserved along with the travel licenses to the Indies make it possible to analyze the instructions that Spanish women received from their husbands about the goods – most of them textiles – that they would take to America. Thus, this chapter sets out to link transatlantic family migration networks to the movement of European products and the creation of a demand for these products in the colonies. To date, the impact of colonization on the American economy generally has been analyzed in terms of the violent actions that occurred during the Spanish conquest and the role of the state and the Church in the creation of a new market. The large mercantile companies that mobilized enormous capital in the Carrera de Indias (the navigational route of the Indies) have also received considerable attention. However, the development of American markets and changes in consumer behavior were determined by the presence of the first Spanish settlers and their processes of social mobility, as they created consumer groups of reference within the process of colonial social stratification (Bauer 2001, 82). The circulation of people and goods from the sixteenth century onwards had a fundamental impact on the creation of a global consumer market (Yun-Casalilla 2014, 280). Spanish women also played an important role as exporters of certain models of consumption and behavior, which they transmitted through the goods they included in their luggage. This

DOI: 10.4324/9781003168058-5

chapter analyzes the material culture linked to the migration of Spanish women to America in particular and the important role it played in the creation of a demand for certain European products in America, and ultimately, in generating widespread trade in European textiles.

Material Culture in Emigrants' Family Letters

In the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century a total of 450,000 emigrants undertook the voyage to Spanish America with the aim of settling and prospering in the new territories (Mörner 1976). Women and extended families featured in large numbers in the migration chain (Almorza Hidalgo 2018). This family migration was made possible thanks to the circulation of people – merchants, clergy and sailors – between Spain and America, transatlantic networks and family correspondence. Some well-established, prosperous emigrants sent letters from America to their relatives in Spain inviting them to join them and gave specific instructions for the trip, which were included in the licenses to travel to the Indies.[2] The letters that have survived were written between 1540 and 1616, with the largest number dating from 1571 to 1594, which coincides with the greatest incidence of family migration. The bulk of these letters (150) were written by men in America to their wives. The letters came mostly from the American capitals (Mexico, 146 letters; Lima, 94 letters) and other cities like Cartagena, Puebla, Panama and Potosí, the urban centers with the largest populations of Spanish origin (Otte 1988, 11). The socioeconomic origin of the emigrants was very varied, although neither the most marginal groups nor those of the highest social status feature in this correspondence. Few mention their trade, but those who do are artisans, laborers, soldiers, miners, merchants, clergy and officials of the vice regal administration (Otte 1988, 14–21).

Of the 650 letters published by Enrique Otte, most of those addressed to women contain precise indications for the journey. These letters were produced in the context of a migration chain, in which a male member of the family (husband, father or brother) had travelled before, and once settled and having achieved a certain level of prosperity, then asked his wife, children or siblings to follow him. Most of the letters to women are addressed to the wives of emigrants in America, followed in second place, by their sisters, who are invited to travel so that they too can enjoy the wealth of their emigrant brothers. Accordingly, family reunification took place in the Indies (Almorza Hidalgo 2010). Because of the enormous dangers the trip posed for women, the letters often contain detailed information on how their travel should be organized. Such instructions scarcely feature in the letters addressed to men. The women to whom the letters were addressed lived mostly in Seville, as many families had settled in the city, attracted by its economic growth and the possibility of moving to America (Almorza Hidalgo 2018).

Some men who managed to prosper in America sent sums of money to finance their families' travel expenses, usually fifty to one hundred pesos (Otte 1988, 25). Where to send this money, how to invest these sums and how to organize the journey were included in the correspondence. In this way, they sent information on the processing of the travel license at the House of Trade (Casa de la Contratación) or the Council of the Indies (Consejo de Indias). In addition, family members (especially women) were advised to join a travelling group, and to be in the company of trustworthy people making the journey from Seville to America.

Passage on the Spanish fleets was usually financed by family members who had already emigrated, through signed deeds whereby they undertook to make payment on the arrival of their relations in America.[3] Moreover, some emigrants sent money to finance the trip and provisions for the crossing, which were the responsibility of each passenger. Food packs were prepared in Seville, and had to include water, oil, vinegar and wine, as well as large quantities of biscuit, dried fruit, chickens, pulses, bacon and spices (Otte 1988, 29; Mena García 2004).

The entire journey entailed a heavy investment for the passengers, as the ticket cost at least twenty ducats per adult in the 1580s, plus the additional cost of provisions and other travel expenses. To that effect, emigrants had to sell all their properties before embarking, which they added to the sums sent by relatives from America. But not all emigrants received financing for the trip. For example, Alonso Herojo wrote from Tunja (Nueva Granada) to his wife in 1587 yet did not send her money. Instead, he promised to provide for the family upon arrival: "Sell all that you have and come to these lands with your children and mine [. . .] when you come here, you will find the table set and the bed made, and if you come naked, you will not lack the mercy of God who is great, as I will clothe and honor you with my person and money, because what I have I do not want except for your children and mine".[4] Significant travel costs led many emigrants to seek hire as the servants of other passengers in order to pay for their passage (Elliott 2006, 95).

In other cases, the necessary resources were sent to undertake the journey. For example, in 1574, the Spaniard Alonso Ortiz, who had settled in Mexico, wrote up to four letters to his wife Leonor Gonzalez urging her to join him, as he was beset with a judicial process in which he was being prosecuted for living separately from her.[5] In order to facilitate his wife's trip, with the help of a contact, Juan de Castro Ribera, who was travelling to pick up his own wife, he sent 150 pesos of common gold (in *8-reales* coins) to prepare for the trip, and a power of attorney in which he committed up to 200 Castilian ducats to pay for the entire travel group (his wife and children with other possible relatives) upon arrival in Mexico.[6]

When men sent money for the trip, it was sometimes intended for the purchase of products to take to America – mainly textiles in the form of clothing. They also included requests for working tools or household

goods. These were mainly sent in the early years of colonization, when there was a greater shortage of Spanish products, or from less populated areas where European products arrived in much more limited supply. Sebastián de Pliego, for example, wrote to his wife from Mexico in 1581 requesting her to bring with her a series of household items such as a "good frying pan and broiler, a large ladle and a spoon [. . .] a wire mesh cooking basket, as well as plates and bowls, and a kettle".[7] Furniture does not feature largely, although requests for beds were common, mainly with *guadamecíes*, hides tanned in Cordoba that were highly sought after throughout America (Otte 1988, 31). The hides could also be used in the decoration of the house: a certain Gaspar Viera from Chiapas wrote to his wife in 1595 sending her quite a small sum of money with the following instructions: "The outfits you wear should be honorable, made of silk and gold, because that is the most suitable. I should also like you to bring in a drawer eight hides from Cordoba, large silver-plated figures; with this alone your house will be fully furnished".[8] There are also occasional requests in this correspondence for chairs, especially sedan chairs: "an armchair for you to come from Veracruz to here".[9] Finally, although very rarely, there are requests for food products, such as oil, wine or spices (saffron, pepper, clove and cinnamon).

The products most in demand in emigrants' letters were textiles, which were given the generic name of "Castilian clothes" (*ropa de Castilla*). The male settlers who managed to send sums of money for the purchase of products made specific requests regarding the clothes to be worn by the women who were to join them. There are detailed descriptions of such clothes purchases in up to twenty-five letters, and in others there is mention of separate instructions about the textiles to be bought in Seville, although these are not conserved in the licenses: "The money will be distributed as follows: 100 pesos to pay for leaseholds and any other debts you may have and the other 100 pesos for provisions and the other 100 for clothing, according to the recital that accompanies this. [. . .] I shall pay for the shipping costs, and they'll give you a cabin in which you shall travel at your pleasure".[10] The amounts sent for the purchase of clothes were generally around one hundred pesos (sometimes 140 or 150 pesos, and 400 pesos in only one instance), which was approximately the same amount assigned for payment of the trip, including cargo charges, provisions and other expenses. The importance given to the clothes they should take with them was such that Bartolomé de Morales indicated in his letter that the money sent for the preparation of the trip was for the purchase of clothing; what was left over could be invested in provisions, and not the other way around: "Madam, the 100 pesos should be mainly for the purchase of clothing, because here clothes are expensive, and what is left over will be for provisions".[11]

Dress appears in letters as an incentive inciting women to travel and presented as proof of the wealth and well-being awaiting them in America:

"I have very pretty dresses for when you come and a household fit for a king".[12] It could also be an excuse for not undertaking the journey, if one lacked the required wardrobe for the trip: "And if you have but a few dresses, do not feel ashamed because I shall provide these here with the help of God".[13] Sometimes the man excused himself for not sending money, arguing that he had not found trustworthy intermediaries:

> I see what you say in your letters, and I would very much like to find a person to take you a hundred pesos, with which to dress yourself, but I have not been able to find anyone honest and true, to whom I could give them. [. . .] I am not sending the money, because with two hundred more you will dress much better here, and even if naked, you and your daughter should travel on the fleet.[14]

There were a series of circumstances that explained the requests to purchase Castilian clothes to take to America. The primary reason was the high price of these goods in the New World, so it was very convenient to buy them in Seville before travelling: "Bring everything you can, because here they cost an arm and a leg".[15] The goods shipped on the Carrera de Indias acquired a high price in America due to transatlantic shipping charges, including transport and duties.[16] Not only that, strong demand for European textiles meant they became increasingly scarce and were sold at exorbitant prices: "If you come to this land, bring shirts and dresses, the rest is here in such abundance that there could not be more".[17]

On the other hand, goods were selected in the context of long-distance and definitive emigration, which meant a long trip fraught with danger and discomfort, with limitations on the luggage that could be transported. Passengers to the West Indies were issued a license to carry personal baggage without having to pay transit fees (*almojarifazgo*). Some people could afford to travel in small cabins, but most passengers travelled on deck on top of their belongings, which were stored in boxes or bundles.[18] If the luggage was very heavy, it was necessary to pay for the boxes to be loaded and unloaded. Upon arrival at an American port, passengers had to pay the cost of the journey to their destination. Those travelling to Peru had to cross the isthmus and to continue along the Pacific coast, which meant additional transport costs. Therefore, generally speaking, the only goods that could be transported were those that were costly in America, relatively easy to transport and compensated for the costs involved.

The selection of objects that emigrants chose to take with them on the journey was significant and was related to the expectations of a better life in America. The men who managed to send money for the purchase of products were craftsmen, urban workers or small-scale businessmen who were successful after years of hard effort. Being able to reunite their

family was proof of their prosperity and women had a fundamental role to play in socially representing the status they achieved. On the other hand, women travelled with the expectation of living a more comfortable life in America. The clothing included in luggage was fundamental for their integration into the New World, so that the acquisition of textiles in the process of Atlantic emigration took on considerable relevance.

In this sense, research on gender and material culture has pointed out how, in the case of women, movable property had an outstanding value in the modern era in terms of personal wealth, since it could be handed down to successive generations, and it was more stable and personal than real or monetary property that was generally in male hands. A woman's wardrobe was an item of property accumulated over a lifetime during which a woman's social position changed from single to married and widowed and represented a certain stability (Cavallo 2000). Throughout, clothing appears as a key element in the construction of the female identity, generating a narrative of its own, as an important form of property for women. In the case of emigration to America, the female wardrobe fulfilled different needs. Textiles were the most easily transportable goods in the limited space available for luggage on the transatlantic crossing.[19] Moreover, clothes were seen as assets that could be sold and turned into money in case of need, thanks to the huge demand for European textiles in American cities, and the resulting high prices. In 1592, for example, Sebastián Gómez Altamirano complained that he was finding it difficult to get rich, on account of the misfortunes suffered during his trip: "It was necessary when I arrived in the Indies to sell the garments that I brought with me, to remedy my way".[20] That is to say, the sale of his wardrobe had allowed him to face the difficulties encountered on arrival in America, but on the other hand, with its urgent sale he had lost the possibility of using it as an initial business investment.

Clothing had an additional series of benefits for the emigrant woman and her living prospects in America. Emigration was an opportunity to build a new life and defend a certain status achieved. In this process, women's dress and adornments were a fundamental element in the process of building new identities in America. The importance of female attire was even more decisive in the case of single women who travelled in search of the possibility of an advantageous marriage.[21] The wardrobe of unmarried women was a key preparative element with a view to marriage (Stanley 2016, 453). So, the widow Leonor García declared that she

> goes to that land out of a desire to travel and to stay there and she goes with her three daughters, with an exemption of up to 200 pesos on the customs tax known as the *almojarifazgo*, on the grounds of her need to transport a considerable amount of luggage because she had three daughters to marry in accordance with their *quality* (status).[22]

There were frequent requests from migrant women for exemption from the *almojarifazgo*, on the grounds that they needed to take more luggage than allotted, on account of their status.

A woman's attire was not only personal property, it also reflected her family's status and position, and therefore interested the husband as well, as evidenced by money transfers to finance women's wardrobes, with instructions on what to buy. Therefore, an emigrant woman's luggage was not only made up of the clothes she had previously owned, but it often included an important purchase of textiles before embarking on the voyage. In some cases, we find precise indications that all previously owned goods were to be sold, and new clothes bought. In this sense, Sebastián de Pliego indicated to his brother in 1581: "First of all […] sell everything you have there, as well as what is at home; sell off all the canvasses you can, and buy linen; bring all that you can and a few more balls of linen, for use in your home".[23] An emigrant who could not send money for new clothes might send instructions on the most valuable clothes to be transported – above all, linens and clothes that were in good condition. In 1596, for example, Juan de Mercado wrote from Cartagena to his wife in Seville that she should travel with her children, and he told her: "And don't bring bulky clothes, just a box or two of dresses and linens, because the rest will cost more to bring than their worth here".[24] According to explicit guidelines in the correspondence, clothes were to be purchased in Seville.[25] The city of Seville had experienced spectacular economic growth throughout the sixteenth century, as a result of the Carrera de Indias. Workshops and craft stores supplied not only local demand but also exports to the Indies. In addition, the cities of Seville and Cadiz were connected to the main European textile production circuits (France, Flanders and Italy) for the shipment of products to America. These textiles were handled by large-scale merchants, but private individuals also had access to this trade through warehouses and private retail stores (Lorenzo Sanz 1979). Purchases of this nature made just before the trip in preparation for future settlement in the New World involved investing in outfits of greater quality and splendor than the dresses they used to wear in Castile. They therefore implied a reframing of identity with a view to an improvement of their status in America, where emigrants expected to live in better conditions than in Spain.

The requests for textiles that appear in correspondence were mainly for manufactured clothing, that is, garments made by tailors in Seville. Only three letters make requests for rolls of textiles to be manufactured later in America. The author of one of these was Alonso Zamora, who wrote to his wife from Santa Fé de Bogotá. In addition to the list of dresses that she had to buy in Seville, he asked her "to also buy some *ruán*,[26] maybe two pieces, and a piece of *holanda*,[27] and some silk, for sewing here".[28] The other two requests came from la Puebla de los Ángeles (Mexico), which had a large community of textile craft workers from

Brihuega (Toledo) (Altman 2000). In 1571 Diego de San Llorente wrote to his wife in Seville and told her that he was sending 150 pesos, and with it she should

> buy the things that I tell you as follows, because these will be required in your home; that is, a bed upholstered with high-quality *guadamecí* [embossed leather], nine *varas* [approximately twenty-five feet][29] of satin in brownish or orangey hue, one *vara* [2.8 feet] of brown or purple velvet, a piece of silk *burato*, another of silk and wool, ten *varas* [twenty-eight feet] of black taffeta, and two *varas* [5.6 feet] of fine black satin, some pillows and a good quality bed cover.[30]

The clothes to be bought are often divided into two types: lower-quality dresses intended for travel, and finer dresses for life in America. From Guatemala, Francisco de Mesa sent instructions for his sister's trip:

> And in Seville you will be able to dress as an honest maiden: for the journey two dresses, one colored and the other of plain black velvet, a velvet *saya*,[31] and a Turkish (*turca*) and satin *jubón*[32] all plain, without embellishment, and a colored dress for the journey with a gold *pasamanillo*.[33]

Alonso de Zamora, mentioned earlier, advised his wife:

> [I]f you come, sell all the things you have for decorating the home, take to Seville no more than the clothes that you and your daughter are wearing, and two blouses each, that you will buy better and cheaper in Seville, and you will not have to be laden with clothes and weighed down [. . .] so, as I say, with only one dress each you have more than enough for Seville; these will be with green skirts [*faldellines*] and green braids, [. . .] cloaks [*capotillos*], and your hats, and these you can keep for the sea. A pair of well-made *jubones* made of *holanda* to go with the green dresses. In Seville you will dress in the same style as here: each with a black taffeta gown, and another in brown satin [. . .]; you will buy two rugs, one big and one small, and three blue velvet cushions.[34]

Other listings are much more modest, but nevertheless include investments in quality fabrics. The most sought-after products were *sayas* (dresses) and cloaks made of silk textiles: satins, velvets and taffeta. These fabrics were expensive products that required careful processing, and do not seem to have been worn before or during the voyage. Velvet was the most expensive product and was mainly used for mantles, which were largely produced in Segovia. Taffeta, another silk fabric cheaper than velvet, was generally brightly colored and one of the most popular

textiles.[35] Juan de Ribera wrote from Lima to his brother-in-law Rodrigo Díaz, a dyer in Seville, who travelled with the whole family:

> The money I send to you is only for dresses [. . .] and so you will make garments for yourself and for all the ladies, and if it cannot be velvet, let it be taffeta, because in this land nothing else is used. [. . .] They will come in pieces, and understand, my lady, that in these parts they look not so much at the person but how she is attired.[36]

Other frequently requested garments were shirts for men and blouses for women, usually made with *ruán* or *holanda*. In 1590 one man wrote to his sister: "Try to bring all the money you have, having spent it on silk garments for yourself which are very expensive here and that God knows you deserve [. . .] and some shirts and linen which are cheaper over there".[37] Similarly, María de Carranza in Mexico wrote to her brother in Seville with instructions for the journey telling him to bring "as much white dress cloth as you can, as it is very costly here".[38]

These requests were also determined by what was being worn by the various groups of Spaniards in America, which was influenced by the Spanish clothing introduced by emigrants, as well as by the climatic conditions of each locality. From Panama, Pedro Gallegos wrote to his wife, stating: "[Y]ou shall buy the dresses you have to bring for the voyage in Seville, and these should be light and honest, because the land here is warm".[39] From Mexico, a certain Bartolomé de Morales cautioned his wife: "Do not bring any *anascote* cloak [woolen stuff], as in these parts what is used is *burata*,[40] nor woven cloth, I mean skirts, just for the sea-crossing, and a *ropilla de balleta*".[41] As we can see, tastes adapted to the American context.

On the other hand, we find that the fabrics requested had to be bright in color (in the case of taffeta and satins) or black in the case of velvets.[42] The reason for this was that European clothes should stand out in quality and texture, as opposed to the coarser clothes and dark colors used by the poorer population. There are also suggestions that women should buy beads and trinkets, dressy hats, shoes (*chapines*),[43] and adornments and complements to dress up their outfits for festive days or special occasions. For example, although the hosier Roberto de Burt does not have the capital to order velvets or taffeta for his wife, he does ask her to wear blouses, a shiny cloak, *chapines* (shoes) and hair ornaments, which would stand out as small luxury objects in America:

> Endeavor to bring nice gifts. Whatever you can buy with the silver you have, good blouses and headdress and a sleek cloak, for nothing else is worn in this city, however poor the person is, and other trinkets, fine shoes and footwear (*servillas* and *chapines*), good quality hair adornments, for these are much used. As for dresses, these shall

> be made here [. . .] And do not forget to purchase a lady's hat with pretty feathers, which is to be given to a lady who asked me for it".[44]

There is a marked difference between female and male clothing in the requests included in these letters, the latter being much more brief. Andrea Lopez, for example, who offered her two sisters marriages in Mexico, told them to wear: "a *saya* gown and *ropa de tamete* (*estameña*)[45] with gilt edging (*pasamano*), a light bodice, a sleek cloak, a dress and skirt and bodice (*ropa, saya y jubón*) in black taffeta adorned with necklets (*soguillas*), blouses, ruff necks (*gorgueras*) and headdresses, as fitting". In contrast, she tells her brother Agustín López to wear "a *sayo* [man's garment] and cape and black cloth boots and doublet, a cap and shirts".[46]

In addition to clothing fabrics, there were frequent requests for canvas or linen, mainly to be made into household linens such as sheets, tablecloths and napkins. "And if you want to bring some money to start out with, bring it in goods. [. . .] And if there is much canvas there that is homemade, it will prove gainful, and it will be a start to begin with".[47] The use of linen textiles for home decoration was common in sixteenth-century Spain and America (Boyd Bowman 1973, 351). Taffeta and velvet were also requested to decorate the home, so that curtains, bedspreads and cushions could be made and chairs upholstered. Some requested that these household items should be manufactured in Spain. Thus, in addition to beds and *guadamecís*, there were frequent requests for embroidered velvet cushions or even rugs for the *estrados*, a sort of dais within the main room of the home set aside for women, which was where they received visitors. Writing from Chimbo (Ecuador), Juan de Fuero explained to his son that he should

> bring all the linens that you have at home, because here they are highly esteemed, and the women should come well dressed in silk, because here it is very expensive, and bring six velvet colored cushions and a good carpet, so that these 700 ducats are spent on what is necessary, leaving enough for the journey to Nombre de Dios, as there I will have money to pay your passage and transport to where I am.[48]

Some letters point out that the menfolk who had been in America for many years started to decorate and prepare their houses only just before the family arrived, or they expected the women to do so on arrival. Although they had been settled in the New World for several years, only the arrival of the women allowed them to create a domestic setting, along Castilian lines. Diego de Espina told his wife in Seville:

> Take note, madam, that you merely have to buy what is necessary for your dress and provisions, as here you will find every household

> service, beds and table newly made, that I am now beginning to welcome you here on your arrival. Yours to the death.[49]

The richest and most detailed lists related to the daughters (or sisters) who were called over to marry in the Indies, and whose appearance should be as good as possible. One of the most explicit sets of instructions is that sent by Francisco Ramirez Bravo, a rich miner from Nochtepec (Mexico), who summoned his daughter for marriage.[50] To this effect, the daughter had to make an entrance that would impress the local population, and for this reason he instructed her to bring

> three silk dresses, decorated skirts [*basquiñas*] of velvet and polished satin, as is customary; for the crossing a deep-red dress, over-skirt [*basquiña*] and *turca*, two silk cloaks, fine velvet shoes [*chapines*], a taffeta hat with gold braid and feathers, small cloak of black decorated damask, with its smart golden edging, whatever headdresses you wish, so that you look well dressed and attractive, because here you are famed for your looks, and there will be many looking on. [. . .] The armchair for my daughter must be adorned in velvet.

He also told her to wear some jewels such as earrings, rings and a chain with her *agnus dei*.[51] The clothing and fabrics worn by migrant women were therefore a family investment, aimed to demonstrate and reinforce a certain status in the Indies. This was an investment made in expectation of a new life in America.

Spanish Clothes and Social Mobility in Colonial America

The emigrants sought to reproduce in America the way of life of the European elites. One of the various means of achieving this was through the goods they consumed, which had a fundamental impact on the economic model they developed in the colonies (Elliott 2006). One of the most important of these consumer goods was textiles. In colonial society, clothing and material culture were fundamental elements in the construction of identities and in the structuring of social groups (Bauer 2001; Presta 2010), where status was demonstrated through appearance (Graubart 2007, 128). In the cities with the highest concentration of inhabitants of Spanish origin and where the social origin of the new arrivals could at times be unclear, self-reinvention was very possible with the necessary economic and social resources. In this sense, having the capital to invest or employ in businesses was important, but so too was the material culture that permitted newcomers to build a certain identity. In the make-up of the colonial world, which occurred in a context of violence and where goods of Spanish origin were valued over what was produced locally, textiles from Europe had a fundamental role. Thus, there was enormous

demand for textiles from Spain, not exclusively Spanish-made, but of the style worn in Spain, which also included foreign products. In fact, there was an important trade in European textiles to America, from the end of the sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth century (Oliva Melgar 2003).

In the first decades of colonization, this was a very dynamic society, partly on account of the constant migratory waves not only of Spaniards but also of the indigenous and African populations. These migrations gave rise to a reconfiguration of social categories, and during this process the Spanish emigrants tried to become part of the colonial elite or to improve their status with respect to their former situation in Spain. The clothing worn by emigrants played a fundamental role in the process of building a new life after the journey, which began on landing. This is what Eugenio de Salazar tells us about the trip he made with his family in 1573. Arriving in Santo Domingo, after a most uncomfortable journey, he described a flurry of activity in:

> opening boxes in great haste, taking out clean shirts and new dresses, everyone looking so elegant and stylish, especially some ladies from our village who came out from below deck [. . .] so well-coiffed, curled, coiled and arranged, that they looked like granddaughters of those who were on the high seas.
>
> (Martínez 1999, Appendix 3, 299)

Several sixteenth-century chroniclers ridiculed the fact that many emigrants claimed to be of a higher status than they were prior to their arrival in America. For example, Buenaventura De Salinas accused the Spaniards of inventing distinguished backgrounds on the voyage to the New World:

> When they land in Panama, the Chagres River and the South Sea baptize them, and give each one the title of *Don*: and on arrival at this City of Kings (Lima), they are all dressed in silk, descend from Don Pelayo, and from the Goths, and Archgoths, go to the Palace, claim to have incomes and trades, and in the Churches form two columns, like the Colossus of Rhodes, and order masses to be said for the soul of El Cid.
>
> (Salinas y Córdoba 1630, 1957, 246)

Here he was referring to how Spaniards arrived in America claiming high social rank based on their lineage relating them to old Christians, including the leaders of the *Reconquista*. External symbols were also employed to this end such as the title of *don* and luxury consumer goods. Chroniclers highlighted the luxurious garments worn in the main American cities, and especially the clothing worn by women. In the case of Lima, Francesco Carletti pointed out, "It is indeed remarkable to see the

greatness and splendor of the dress worn by the wives of the Spaniards" (Carletti 1606, 1976, 48). According to Pedro de León Portocarrero, women "dressed ostentatiously and expensively; all generally wear silk and very rich fabrics and velvets of gold and fine silver. They wear thick gold chains, pearl necklets, rings, chokers, diamond bands, emeralds, rubies and amethysts" (León Portocarrero XVII 1958, 39). This excessive luxury was also apparent in Mexico, described by Thomas Gage: "Both men and women wear excessive attire, more silk than cloth. Precious stones and pearls only increase their vain ostentation" (Gage 1648, 56).[52] These descriptions give an account of the country's wealth, and therefore of its elite. The wealth of a particular group was commonly exhibited through the women's dress in the new colonial elites, to the scandal of contemporary moralists (Almorza Hidalgo 2015).

Emigrants consciously used clothes as a strategy to simulate belonging to a higher social category, as can be clearly seen from family correspondence. From Cartagena de Indias, Diego de Saldaña wrote to his wife asking her to join him, and told her that when she arrived in Seville "take something from home and dress everyone very honestly. . . . For, as you know, where people are not known, they are honored for their dress".[53] Cristóbal de Montalvo wrote to his mother-in-law in Seville telling her that he had a daughter in Lima, whom her mother "should bring dressed in a manner that those who don't know her think she is the daughter of some important man".[54] In a context of growing *mestizaje*, people began to dress "Spanish style" and in European fabrics in order to differentiate themselves from others who could not rise to such levels.

To varying degrees the colonization process produced a change in the style of dress of all social groups. Thus, indigenous populations were sometimes forced to alter their traditional dress. On other occasions, changes in modes of production and new markets led to new styles (Bauer 2001, 110; Presta 2010). In the new colonial town centers, the growing population began to absorb large quantities of textile manufactures. In order to take advantage of these markets, the *obrajes* (textile mills) were founded, whereby indigenous labor was employed through the *encomienda*. The coarser and poorer-quality textiles they generally produced were used by the lower classes (Miño Grijalva 1991). Nevertheless, some cloth industries managed to produce quality textiles that achieved regional circulation in America: the Puebla cloths, which were sold in the Viceroyalty of Mexico and even in Peru before their prohibition, and the Quito cloths, which acquired a certain quality and were sold throughout Peru (Bauer 2001, 110). Sebastián Carrera wrote to his wife from Lima that "everyone dresses in clothes made here, and a dress doesn't last more than a year, because so much dust eats the clothes".[55] Quality fabrics from Europe, which marked a clear social differentiation, were therefore highly prized and costly: "The land here is abundant in food, but goods from the homeland are expensive".[56]

The high price of Spanish clothing, which made the Atlantic textile trade viable, was maintained thanks to the circulation of silver, mainly in the second half of the sixteenth century. The city of Lima represents a clear illustration of this phenomenon. With an estimated population of 25,000 Spaniards at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the city became a major consumer of textiles and luxury products.[57] Thus, according to the historian Juan Bromley, by 1630 there were fifty shops of the guild of hats and silk-workers, eighteen *obrajes* of hat-makers, fifty tailor shops, and thirty "shops of clothes from the land", in addition to other weavers whose number is not given (Bromley 1959, 285). In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries European textiles were the goods in highest demand, consumed primarily by the colonizers and Creoles, who demanded quality products for which they paid high prices.[58] This merchandise was distributed in the *calle de los mercaderes* (merchant's street), which around 1630 had, according to the description of the chronicler Buenaventura De Salinas,

> more than twenty stores and more than two hundred shops and public stalls, where every year from five to six million [pesos] of Castilian cloth are traded, and one million or more [pesos] invested in clothing from Mexico and China that are brought in for sale.
>
> (Salinas y Córdoba 1630, 1957, 238)

The city of Lima became a great consumer center for luxury goods, linked to the creation of the new elite and the availability of silver from the Potosí. The chronicler Poma de Ayala accurately described the flows of the Carrera de las Indias, when he referred to the port of El Callao: "From the Indies silver stops there, from Castile clothing stops there".[59]

This American economic growth favored the arrival of new emigrants, who took advantage of the trip to do business using clothes from Spain. In the second half of the sixteenth century, a large number of writs were issued granting an exemption from the *almojarifazgo* tax to people who were going to populate the Viceroyalty of Peru, which meant that they would not have to pay tax on the goods they took to America.[60] In order to boost the arrival of new emigrants to populate the territory, passengers were allowed to carry a certain amount of goods for their own consumption that would be free of taxation. The families of artisans and small merchants obtained an *almojarifazgo* exemption of 200–400 pesos, while royal officers who were going to occupy positions in the viceroyalty obtained exemptions of up to 1,500 or 2,000 pesos. In 1550, Alonso de Madrid, a *borceguinero* (leather boot manufacturer), obtained an *almojarifazgo* exemption worth 200 pesos, as he was travelling to Peru with his wife, children and household.[61] This prerogative, understood as being for settlers, helped them enormously if they could bring the products

required to reflect their status, which were mainly textiles and some furniture.

These permits were also used to transport goods to America that could be sold on arrival, without paying transatlantic transport taxes. Fraud became so widespread that in 1549 the king issued a warrant to Peruvian officials "to charge those persons who, having received a royal grant of a certain sum in *almojarifazgo* tax, proceeded to sell it".[62] Thus, products carried on the voyage were not only for personal consumption but also represented a great opportunity for doing business in the Indies. This initial investment permitted emigrants to raise significant capital, with which to start a business and a new life in Peru: "Sir, you will be successful with your few bits and pieces, because I believe they will increase well, being useful in some things that are worth little over there and worth a lot here".[63] In 1587 Celedón Favalis complained of not having invested money in clothes during his trip to Peru, which would have allowed him to start good businesses and become very rich: "I was misfortunate in not succeeding to bring with me even a mere 600 ducats employed in certain things with which without a doubt I would have made more than 3,000 pesos, and would have meant becoming rich forever".[64]

The conquistadores of Peru became involved from very early on in the Spanish clothing trade business and started the first dispatches of capital to invest in European products in Seville, which would be shipped to America for sale.[65] In the second half of the sixteenth century, trading companies emerged that were run by Peruvians who were able to invest large sums of capital (Vila Vilar 1991). Family correspondence also reflects this mercantile activity; from Cartagena Francisco del Barco wrote: "I am sending to Spain two thousand gold pesos, worth three thousand ducats; these are to be invested in Seville and [the benefit] to be brought here".[66]

Aside from the professional merchants, a large part of the Spanish population was involved to a greater or lesser extent in the business of buying and selling goods, and even in sending money to Panama or Seville for the purchase of clothes that would later be sold in Peru. Diego de Ocaña, a Jeronymite friar who arrived in America in 1599, described his surprise to find that in Lima "everyone is an investor and everyone is a merchant".[67]

In the creation of these trade circuits in which emigrant families participated, the information sent in the correspondence about the specific products in demand in the American markets was crucial. For example, the aforementioned Celedón Favalis wrote to his father, Simón Favalis, in Madrid:

> The merchandise that is good for this land are goods from Milan. [. . .] Silk stockings and colored silks are also very good

> merchandise for here, as long as they are not black or brown or white [. . .] Segovia hats also sell for a very good price. [. . .] Anything that comes from Castile is sold for a good price, as long as it is not a trifle or a bead, which used to be worth a lot here. Mr. Juan Giménez del Río has told me that he will send to you a list of the things that are saleable and very profitable, so that you may be aware of what is on offer.[68]

Also from Lima, Alonso de Villadiego made a large order of fabrics from Segovia, *holandas*, velvets, silks, Toledo trimmings (*pasamanería*), taffeta and short silk stockings. He also asked for goods from Milan and highlighted the success of silk stockings and colored silks, as well as hats and black plumes.[69] Silk seems to be one of the products in highest demand and most expensive in the capital. The letters underline that the clothes must be of superior quality; "Try to use all the money that you have to bring silk clothes, that are costly here, and stuff of shirts and linens that are cheaper over there".[70] Products that did not sell could even be returned to Spain.[71]

The products that the merchants indicated in their letters corresponded with the textiles that the emigrants were requested to bring with them. For example, Alonso de Villadiego wrote to his nephew, the merchant Tomé Sánchez de Guzmán, whose arrival he was awaiting in Lima, and asked him to bring the following textiles:

> You will be able to employ your estate in the following merchandise, which is a highly successful business here with many advantages, because here they do not have enough:
>
> > Black *paño ventidoseno* [woolen cloth] of Segovia de Gumiel, Black *raja* [woolen cloth] from Segovia or Las Navas. [. . .] Thin *holandas*, [. . .] Black velvets of 1- ½ naps [*pelo y medio*], Loose silks, Toledo trimmings [*pasamanería*] and taffeta, And short silk stockings. And with these extraordinary things, those who come here shall be said to produce earnings and it is a safe business.[72]

These textiles (velvets, linens, silks) coincide with the products detailed for the Indies fleet destined for Peru in the second half of the sixteenth century (Olivera Alegre 2005). Also, the textiles involved in family trade coincide with those analyzed by Peter Boyd Bowman in the inventories of the merchants of Puebla de los Angeles (Mexico) in the mid-sixteenth century (Boyd Bowman 1973), which indicates that the emigrants had quite precise information about the Spanish clothing in demand in America, and moreover that they themselves played a fundamental role in creating this demand.

Conclusions

During the colonial era a relatively homogenous culture developed throughout the Americas, based on social stratification and consumer patterns associated with social mobility (Bauer 2001). This process was shaped by Spanish emigrants who travelled to the New World full of expectations about a new life and equipped with goods to facilitate their settlement. Most of the women and family groups emigrated to America between 1540 to 1620 (Almorza 2018). These Spaniards, and especially the womenfolk, transported consumption patterns and social behavior that had a fundamental impact on colonial society and economy.

Requests for silks, satins, velvets and taffeta, as well as *ruán* and *holandas*, in addition to embroidered cushions or leather-upholstered beds from all corners of the Spanish colonies, initiated a global process in the sixteenth century. Aware of the strong demand and the high prices that these products fetched in America, settled Spaniards became involved in the Spanish clothing business via the Carrera de Indias. They sent information through letters or lists of the products to be purchased to relatives who subsequently travelled to join them, involving the family in the transatlantic transport of goods, and favoring the creation of a trade networks among private individuals that escaped the appraisal and control of the Crown. In the context of the first phase of globalization and in the case of Spain, we can determine how the movement of people (geographically and socially) was closely linked to the movement of goods. It also gave rise to large-scale trade in European textiles from Seville that were distributed in America where they were mainly purchased by the emerging elites, but also by the middle-class urban groups (Earle 2001; Phillips 2003).

Notes

1. This research was made possible thanks to the project HAR2014–53797-P "Globalización Ibérica: Redes entre Asia y Europa y los cambios en las pautas de Consumo en Latinoamérica" [Iberian Globalization: Networks between Asia and Europe and Changes in Consumption Patterns in Latin America] financed by Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad, Spain, of which the principal investigator is Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla.
2. The letters included with the licenses to the Indies have been published by Enrique Otte (Otte 1988). Werner Stangl has revised several editions of collections of private letters of the Spanish Empire (Stangl 2013).
3. Payment on arrival was in operation until at least the early seventeenth century. Sergio Rodríguez Lorenzo carried out a study of the contracts of passage deposited in the Archivo Histórico Provincial de Sevilla, Sección Protocolos Notariales (Rodríguez Lorenzo 2017).
4. Otte 1988, letter 372. Letter from Alonso Herejo to his wife Teresa González, in Reina (Tunja 1587).
5. As part of the population policy, several laws were passed to prevent the abandonment of women by their menfolk and to promote family reunification in

the Indies (Almorza Hidalgo and Rojas García 2015). Jane E. Mangan has analysed family relations in Atlantic Spanish America, their role during the emigration to Peru and how different types of families were created in the colony, incorporating indigenous, mestizos and Afro-Peruvians (Mangan 2016).

6. Otte 1988, letters 50–55. Letters from Alonso Ortíz (Mexico) to his wife Leonor González (Zafra, Badajoz), 1574. Leonor González finally travelled to Mexico in 1575 (Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Indiferente, 2056, N.77).
7. Otte 1988, letter 174. Letter from Sebastián de Pliego (Puebla, Mexico) to his wife Mari Díaz, in Mecina de Buen Varón (Granada).
8. Otte 1988, letter 254. Letter from Gaspar Viera (Ciudad Real de Chiapas) to his wife Cecilia Rodríguez Verdugo.
9. Otte 1988, letter 154. Letter from Luis de Córdoba (Puebla, Mexico) to his wife Isabel Carrera, in Seville, 1566.
10. Otte 1988, letter 19. Letter from Juan López de Sande (Mexico) to his wife Leonor de Haro, in Triana (Seville), 1568.
11. Otte 1988, letter 42. Letter from Bartolomé de Morales (Mexico) to his wife Catalina de Ávila, in Constantina (Seville), 1573.
12. Otte 1988, letter 36. Letter from Juana Bautista (Mexico) to his sister Mariana de Santillán (Seville), 1572.
13. Otte 1988, letter 89. Letter from Hernán Ruiz (Mexico) to his wife Mariana de Montedoca (Seville), 1584.
14. Otte 1988, letter 66.
15. Otte 1988, letter 17. Letter from Antonio de Blas (Mexico) to his wife Leonor Bernal (Sanlúcar), 1566.
16. Peter Boyd Bowman ascertained that the price of European textiles in Mexico increased by almost 200%, due to transatlantic transportation costs and Carrera de Indias fees. (Boyd Bowman 1973, 338).
17. Otte 1988, letter 70.
18. Otte 1988, letter 174. Letter from Sebastián de Pliego (Puebla, Mexico) to his brother, 1581. Otte 1988, letter 300, Letter from Diego de Virués (Nombre de Dios, Panama) to his wife Ana López de León (Seville), 1559.
19. Amy Stanley has analysed the wardrobe of women from the rural world who migrated to cities linked to domestic service in Japan in the nineteenth century, highlighting its value as an easily transportable item that could be sold and a key element in creating the identities of migrants (Stanley 2016).
20. Otte 1988, letter 365. Sebastián Gómez de Altamirano (Antioquía, Nueva Granada) to the graduate Francisco de Tena, in Campanario, 1592.
21. A large number of women who travelled to America in the sixteenth century were single (Almorza Hidalgo 2018).
22. AGI, Lima, 565, L3, 186 v.
23. Otte 1988, letter 174.
24. Otte 1988, letter 356. Letter from Juan de Mercado (Cartagena) to his wife María de Cárdenas (Seville), 1596.
25. Otte 1988, letter 319: "In Seville you dress in the way that is customary here".
26. The *ruán* was a textile named after the city of Rouen (France), and could be woollen or linen fabric. It was cheaper than other fabrics and normally used for skirts or household goods (curtains, sheets or tablecloths) (Boyd Bowman 1973, 347). Eufemio Lorenzo highlights the strong presence of French textiles (*angeos* and *ruán*) transported from Seville to the Indies in the sixteenth century (Lorenzo Sanz 1980, 157).

27. *Holanda* was "the most costly of sixteenth century linens, used to make fine kerchiefs, quilts, pillows, bedsheets, shirts and tunics for those who could afford quality fabrics" (Boyd Bowman 1973, 346).
28. Otte 1988, letter 319, Alonso Zamora from Santa Fé de Bogotá to his wife in Almaguer (Toledo).
29. The Castilian *vara* was a standard unit of length of approximately 2.8 feet (Boyd Bowman 1973, 336).
30. Otte 1988, letter 157. Letter from Diego de San Llorente (Puebla, Mexico) to his wife Luisa Sánchez, in Seville, 1571
31. *Saya* could be a skirt (non-elite women) or a dress (Bernis 2001, 221). Women would wear a shirt, *saya* and cloak when they left the house.
32. The *jubón* was a kind of doublet to be wear over the skirt (Bernis 2001, 217).
33. Otte 1988, letter 247. Letter from Francisco de Mesa (Guatemala) to his mother, Isabel Chaves, in Baena (Córdoba), 1585.
34. Otte 1988, letter 319. The women's clothes for journeys in the sixteenth century were as described in the letter, a green dress and a small cloak to wear with a hat (Bernis 2001, 46).
35. According to the dictionary of Sebastián de Covarrubias: "Taffeta: fine silk cloth, pronounced thus from the noise it makes when one is clothed in it, making the sound *tif, taf*. For its onomatopoeic form" (Covarrubias 1611). Silk fabrics, velvets, satin and taffeta, highly demanded among the Spanish elite, had different qualities and prices (Bernis 2001, 277).
36. Otte 1988, letter 443. Letter from Juan de Ribera (Lima) to his brother-in-law Rodrigo Díaz, dyer, in Seville, 1575.
37. Otte 1988, letter 497. Letter from Diego Hurtado (Lima) to his sister Juana Hurtado, in Seville, 1590.
38. Otte 1988, letter 181. Letter from María de Carranza (Puebla, Mexico) to her brother Hernando de Soto, in Seville, 1589.
39. Otte 1988, letter 298. Letter from Pedro Gallegos (Panama) to his wife María Jiménez, in Llerena (Badajoz), 1594.
40. *Burato* was a textile of silk or wool and silk, normally used for women's cloaks (Bernis 2001, 280).
41. Otte 1988, letter 42. Letter from Bartolomé de Morales (Mexico) to his wife Catalina de Ávila (Constantina, Seville), 1573.
42. Otte 1988, letter 376. Alonso Ramírez Gasco (Trinidad) to his son and son-in-law Juan García Ramírez and Pedro Sánchez de Corrales, in Villanueva de Alcardete (Toledo), 1577.
43. *Chapines* were the classic elite Spanish women's shoe in the early modern period, a high sandal made of cork and leather and covered in velvet (Bernis 2001, 271).
44. Otte 1988, letter 476. Roberto de Burt, stockinger, to his wife Ana Franca. Los Reyes, 1583
45. *Estameña* in early modern Spain was a silk cloth, commonly used in skirts (*basquiñas*) (Bernis 2001, 280). According to Sebastián de Covarrubias, *ropa* was the loose cloth to wear over the dress, which was tight to the body (Covarrubias 1611). Thus, the *ropa* could be worn over the shirt and *saya* or *jubón*.
46. Otte 1988, letter 49. Letter from Andrea López de Vargas (Mexico) to his sisters (Jerez de la Frontera, Cadiz), 1577.
47. Otte 1988, letter 59. Mexico, 1574, letter to his brother, inviting him to send the nephews.
48. Otte 1988, letter 414. Letter from Juan Fuero (San Miguel de Chimbo, Ecuador) to Juan Fernández Resio (Cuenca), 1587.

49. Otte 1988, letter 516. Letter from Diego de Espina (El Callao) to his wife María Sánchez (Seville), 1597.
50. Nochtepec was a mining enclave near Taxco (Province of Guerrero) (Enciso Contreras 1999).
51. Otte 1988, letter 216. Letter from Francisco Ramírez Bravo (Nochtepec, Mexico), to his daughter Doña Isabel Bravo (Lepe, Huelva), 1582. The *agnus dei* was a small religious figure of a sheep, representing Jesus Christ, that was also used as an amulet (Covarrubias 1611; and Aram 2001, 274).
52. Peter Boyd Bowman also mentions several sixteenth-century accounts which describe the Mexican population's excessive use of silk (Boyd Bowman 1973).
53. Otte 1988, letter 351. Letter from Diego de Saldaña (Cartagena) to his wife Águeda Martínez (Villanueva de Alcardete, Toledo), 1590.
54. Otte 1988, letter 524. Letter from Cristóbal de Montalvo (Trujillo) to his mother-in-law Margarita de Ayala (Seville), 1590.
55. Otte 1988, letter 425. Letter from Sebastián Carrera (Lima) to his wife, 1558.
56. Otte 1988, letter 511, Letter from Juan Delgado de Salido (Lima), to his father, Juan Aguado, in Alcobendas (Madrid), 1599.
57. Bernabé Cobo estimates that at the outset of the seventeenth century Lima had 61,000 inhabitants, made up of 25,000 Spaniards, 30,000 Blacks and 6,000 Indians (Bromley 1959).
58. According to Gleydi Sullón, a significant share of this clothing trade with Spain was in the hands of the Portuguese (Sullón 2016).
59. Poma de Ayala 1615–1616, fol. 1034, "*Ciudad*".
60. On the *almojarifazgo* of the Indies: Lorenzo 1980, 363.
61. AGI, Lima, 566, L.6, F.248R, 1550.
62. AGI, Lima, 566, L.6, F.175V, 1549.
63. Otte 1988, letter 423. Letter from Alonso del Castillo (Lima) to his father, 1557.
64. Otte 1988, letter 487. Letter from Celedón Favalis (Lima) to his father, Simón Favalis (Madrid), 1587.
65. Rafael Varón Gabai analyzed the businesses of the Pizarro family in Peru in the sixteenth century (Varón Gabai 1994).
66. Otte 1988, letter 330. Letter from Francisco del Barco to his siblings Antón Rodríguez and Catalina González (Las Casas de Millán, Cáceres), 1575.
67. Ocaña 1605, 64.
68. Otte 1988, letter 487, 1587.
69. Otte 1988, letter 497. Letter from Diego Hurtado (Lima) to his sister Juana Hurtado (Seville), 1590.
70. Otte 1988, letter 497.
71. Otte 1988, letter 277. Letter from Hernando de Cantillana (Panama) to his wife doña Magdalena de Cárdenas, in Seville, 1575. Hernando de Cantillana sent his wife clothes that had been on the market for sale in Lima for sixteen years.
72. Otte 1988, letter 479. Letter from Alonso de Villadiego to his nephew Tomé Sánchez de Guzmán, a merchant in Salamanca (Lima), 1584.

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