
Historians constantly return to questions on mobility and belonging to explain the construction of early modern communities. It is not often that they succeed in completing a work whose arguments transcend their case study—be it a city, a region or an empire—, shedding new light on an already rich historiographical field. In *Comunidad, pertenencia, extranjería*, Eleonora Poggio presents a thorough research on the labor and mercantile migration from the North Sea coasts of Europe to New Spain in the period from 1550 to 1640. With it, Poggio provides a significant historiographical contribution to the European migration in New Mexico and the role of foreigners in the construction of the Spanish empire.

The book is divided into three parts with a total of seven chapters, which form a comprehensive study of different typologies of migration and the various challenges that they created for the host society. The bulk of the primary sources consists of files concerning Inquisition processes against northern European migrants, held at the *Archivo General de la Nación* (Mexico City, Mexico). Nonetheless, Poggio also resorts to a variety of other primary sources, mostly of administrative nature, including reports by local and royal officials in New Spain, and letters between these officials, the king and the members of the royal councils in Madrid.

The first part (“*Comunidad, pertenencia y extranjería en Nueva España, 1560–1640*”) follows a political and cultural perspective. It deals with the impact of northern European migration in the evolution of forms of belonging in the Spanish empire, as well as in the othering of non-Castilian dwellers in New Spain. Chapter 1 discusses the categorization of foreigners in New Spain, inspired by Tamar Herzog’s study on the construction of citizenship (*vecindad*)
and nativeness (naturaleza) as main categories of belonging in Spain and the Spanish Americas. Poggio successfully proves that the northern European presence was never seriously challenged in New Spain, despite the opposition of influential sectors of the Hispanic society on both sides of the Atlantic. The need of attracting labor and commercial and financial connections to support the Spanish imperial project explains that attempts to expel foreigners suspected of being enemies of the king, like Dutch migrants, were repeatedly overlooked in New Spain. The second chapter studies the composiciones de extranjeros, licenses paid by non-Castilians to regularize their presence in New Spain. The composiciones, according to Poggio’s interpretation, became an instrument to define the difference between foreigness and nativeness. In the third chapter, Poggio turns to the cultural sphere to address how the Inquisition’s activity shaped the creation of negative stereotypes of the group, and of foreigners in general. These stereotypes othered European migrants, allowing the creation of a common identity that was different from that of Castilians, on the one hand, and that of colonized indigenous and slaves, on the other. In this chapter, Poggio writes the prosopography of various northern European migrants, whose life stories appear vividly described on the Inquisition files. While very rich, the author systematic analysis of Inquisition documents leads to the overrepresentation of one particular type of migratory experience, that of migrants who were eventually identified as a threat to the local community. As such, the author neglects more silent, and perhaps more successful, forms of assimilation.

In the second part of the book, Poggio further elaborates on the prosopography of northern European individuals prosecuted by the Inquisition to reconstruct individual and group economic strategies. Interestingly, the author does not merely look at merchants, as most researchers do. Instead, in Chapter 4, Poggio deals with modest, more mobile individuals, such as sailors and artisans, who ended up in New Spain usually after long and multi-staged journeys. These labor migrants rarely stayed in the same place and therefore are difficult to trace in the available sources, but the author manages to follow their journeys and experiences, highlighting the labor opportunities offered by New Spain’s colonial economy. In Chapter 5, Poggio focuses on how northern European migrants contributed to the importation and transmission of new technology that enhanced the mining production in the region. Moreover, Chapter 6 traces the economic connections built by Flemish, German and Dutch merchants between Seville and New Spain. Even though this is a well-studied group, as

Poggio rightly acknowledges with an elaborated bibliographical discussion, this chapter helps to complete the picture of the community and the links they built between Europe and the Spanish colonial space. The integration of northern European migrants, as Poggio shows, was basic for the development of New Spain’s economy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The third part of the book consists of a single chapter that studies common identity aspects and strategies of the group. While very interesting, the main topics of this chapter seem redundant, either because the author writes about them in previous sections or because there is already literature on them. That does not mean that the chapter is superfluous. In fact, it stands as a fine coda for the book, as the conclusions section barely serves to summarize the seven chapters without engaging with current or past historiographical discussions. A more developed introduction and a more thought-provoking conclusion section would have helped Poggio’s arguments to better connect with the historiographical debates about the many relevant topics that the book covers. That truly is a pity because the book, as it is, is already an excellent contribution to the migration history of Spanish America and the early modern world.

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