

# Introduction<sup>1</sup>

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The history of consumerism and material culture has undergone a radical turnaround in recent decades. Until the end of the past century, it focused mainly on an analysis of the transformations experienced by consumption models in specific and well-defined geographical regions.<sup>2</sup> Since the first decades of the twenty-first century, however, the influence of the so-called spatial turn has been decisive. The result is a series of studies that have taken the process of globalization as a point of reference to focus on the circulation of goods between different regions and the contact between forms of material culture of diverse geographical backgrounds. To a large extent this has been achieved through the analysis of the movement of certain products across the globe and the way in which this movement has been influenced by economic, social and cultural factors.<sup>3</sup>

In this context, America and Latin America in particular, figured prominently and soon became an area whose globalization attracted ongoing and increasing interest.<sup>4</sup> The reasons are obvious. Since 1492 America had been not only a new player on the world stage, flooding the globe with new products, some of which contributed decisively to changing societies in other areas of the planet. It was also the region that most rapidly and dramatically witnessed changes in the consumption patterns and social structures of its original peoples. Both processes constitute what we have chosen to call “American globalization”, starting out from the ideas expressed by Andre Gunder Frank (1998), whereby primitive or early globalization – within the period from 1492 to the industrial revolution – had polycentric characteristics.<sup>5</sup> In that context, the changes caused by American products beyond American borders, as well as those experienced within them due to the influence of external agents, were at the epicenter of American globalization from an analytical perspective.

The present volume is the logical follow-up to a previous work that studied how certain products circulated from Latin America to other, distant areas of the planet (Aram and Yun-Casalilla 2014). It should be noted that there is an essential difference in approach in the two investigations. When it comes to the question of how American products affected other areas of the planet, there has been a lack of meaningful and

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coherent argument relating to the effects of the phenomenon. In fact, the role of America in globalization – and Latin America in particular – has often been related to the development of capitalism perceived as the driving force of markets and – quite frequently – relationships of economic dependency of the colonial areas to the centres of world economies. In a sense, these investigations have been inscribed in the narrative of the transition to capitalism or have been approached from the perspective of explaining modern economic growth.<sup>6</sup> The fact is that we do not have a coherent and structured monograph that evaluates the impact of America in Europe, Asia and Africa (and Oceania), encompassing the overall influence of phenomena as diverse as the circulation of silver, syphilis, vicuña, yuca, corn, potato, cochineal grana, cocoa, the long list of herbs that Europeans and Asians used for medicinal purposes, and an extensive list of animals, plants, microbes, and the like, which affected diverse and distant areas, societies and ecosystems. We certainly have partial and very fragmentary studies, but not a comprehensive vision.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, it is quite possible that, were we to approach the issue in this way, we could get bound up in a question – or a series of questions – that could prove difficult to answer and for which we can count only on partial studies for the time being.<sup>8</sup>

However, precisely because this is a series of complementary studies to this perspective, the following chapters analyze the opposite process: the way in which contact with other worlds produced profound transformations in the consumption patterns of the continent and especially the lands that stretch from the Rio Grande, on the current border between Mexico and the United States, to the region of Patagonia in Argentina. This process has been the focus of special attention from historians and anthropologists, and we even have monographs that have presented solid and well-informed arguments in this regard. These works have also succeeded in creating a relatively coherent account, highlighting above all the effect of Spanish domination and its capacity to change consumption patterns, which at times involved resorting to violence, and drawing attention to the way in which ecological imperialism changed patterns of food consumption. Within this framework, other aspects have also been studied and variants of the general ideas have been presented.<sup>9</sup> The chapters that follow are intended to offer a solid contribution in this regard and provide greater complexity to the image we already have. To this end, we have selected a series of case studies on products that are either for the most part little known or which focus on their heretofore lesser known or unexplored aspects.

Emphasizing the features and introductory processes of products before the massive circulation of these goods across America, this volume is organized into three complementary analytical levels. It starts out with an analysis of the political economy and some of the institutions that governed the process of selection and introduction of new products

across the Atlantic. To that end, we examined a series of key components such as the form of trade organization – in this case, of enslaved persons (García-Montón), the circulation of information in Europe (Díaz Blanco), the role of the state as a formal institution in the introduction of a product of high strategic value such as hemp (Díaz-Ordóñez) and the involvement of informal networks and institutions in the form of family connections and, specifically, of the women who acted within them (Almorza).<sup>10</sup> In some cases, these are subjects and areas of knowledge virtually unexplored by historians of consumerism, for whom the state has seldom been viewed as a major agent or by whom the role of women has seldom been analyzed in the transatlantic perspective adopted here.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the circulation of news within Europe regarding the products and goods to be taken to America is broached here from a new angle – the translation of essential works on trade – emphasizing the ways in which changes to the political economy of the empire affected the supply of an essential labour force whose scarcity affected that of other basic products in the mid-seventeenth century.

The next section focuses on the sphere of consumerism and in particular food consumption. It goes without saying that this is a crucial sector. On the one hand it is a consumer segment strongly influenced by the conquest. But it is also a sector very clearly marked by the transformations in the original ecosystems, on which it would also have a profound impact. It examines the introduction of products that were crucial for America and yet almost unknown to historians until now, such as chickens (Saldarriaga).<sup>12</sup> It also analyzes the way in which different social sectors were influenced through a variety of methods – ranging from coercion to persuasion – including symbolic consumption in the early encounters with new European products and the unleashing of mechanisms of mistrust and rejection in some pre-Columbian social groups (Córdoba).<sup>13</sup> The case of rice (Aram and García-Falcón) is also particularly interesting in that it introduces players and distribution channels for products that are not of Iberian origin. This section can also be viewed as part of a significant broad discussion, such as the different species that existed of the same products and the possibility that there were American precedents for them. In turn, the case of breadfruit and potato (Earle) expands on a theme defined by a previous work, by highlighting other products that have not come from generally recognized areas, such as the Pacific islands, and underscoring the global character – beyond their specific origins – of these goods.<sup>14</sup> This is followed by an analysis of the social interaction that takes place in areas of encounter between different consumption patterns, such as that of cooking (Berti).<sup>15</sup> In all these chapters, the focus of analysis is on the introduction of products in America based on the study of the exact point of cultural interference. In this way, forgotten or neglected aspects of historiography are revealed. Such is the case of the decisive character of apparently innocuous products, such as chickens, in

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the formation of markets and in changes within family economies. And the same is true of the study of the problems existing in the relationship between the first conquerors and the American original elites, as well as the way in which consumerism created very complex forms of connections, trust and distrust. The works of Earle, on the one hand, and Aram and García-Falcón, on the other, contrast in showing how introductory processes were adopted at different times by very different protagonists, thus highlighting the complexity of the processes studied. Its complement, without a doubt, is the way in which the food relationship between masters and slaves was dealt with in the Caribbean in the nineteenth century in terms of cooking, and the way in which slaves could transfer food patterns to the former; an area that renders even more multifaceted the image we have of food transfers.

The third and final section includes work on the entry of other nonfood products and the global dimension of these goods over and above relations with Spain. It demonstrates how forms of negotiation and violence, as well as market mechanisms and other processes, intervened in the dissemination of non-food products. Also included here is a chapter on the introduction of Chinese porcelain that provides a transatlantic comparison between Mexico and Seville (Gasch-Tomás),<sup>16</sup> and the analysis of a hitherto virtually unknown product, such as weapons (Svriz-Wucherer).<sup>17</sup> The section closes with a work which has often been considered more specifically in terms of culture but not in terms of trade – the Sevillian art market in Portobelo and its effects in Seville (Quiles).<sup>18</sup> To conclude, we offer a general overview that attempts to address some aspects of the history of consumerism and material culture in Latin America, while broadening the perspective to include questions of a more general nature, such as the process of introducing, adapting and rejecting products in America from the perspective of the history of ecological globalization (Yun-Casalilla). The consequences of the selection of these works are obvious. This perspective permits broadening the field of analysis to place these goods in wider contexts of circulation. In doing so, it is also possible to enter into aspects such as the global character of some of these commodities regardless of their origin, or to link with debates that have so far been seldom dealt with by studies in this area, such as the globalization of the military revolution and its consequences on social structures, while at the same time underlining how artistic influences have not always been derived from cultural relations but also from mechanisms of an economic nature.

From a geographical point of view, areas ranging from Central America to Argentina are studied, including Mexico, the Caribbean, Panama, present-day Colombia, Peru, the Chaco and the border area between Paraguay and Argentina; and all this is considered from the varying perspectives of Seville, Cadiz and London, Africa, the Pacific – from Tahiti to the Philippines – and so forth.<sup>19</sup> In terms of the history of cultural transfers, what emerges is a more complex panorama than the one usually

understood by the term. It can refer to societies close to one another or in which violence and coercion were not so prevalent in these transfers.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, it deals with a great variety of primary and secondary products, some of strategic military value, others in daily use, some agricultural and others produced industrially, even, to name one example, luxury goods. At the same time very diverse social agents are identified individually within the transfer process. The result is a multifaceted landscape full of contrasts.

It is up to the reader to discover many of these dimensions. But I wish to concentrate on two in particular – the players involved in introducing products before they became massive commodities and the role of coercion – that have featured prominently throughout this collective research.

As for the first of these, what the microanalysis of the selected cases reveals is a plurality of circumstances which, nevertheless, are linked to considerations and problems of a general nature. In contrast with simplistic visions, what comes to light is the tremendous diversity of actors in the process of adaptation and introduction of new products. This is not a top-down process between colonizers and colonized, which is the most widely studied aspect to date focusing on the role of merchants, *encomenderos* and conquerors. On the contrary, these essays often argued that both social groups, colonized and colonizers, acted almost on an equal footing in the hybridization of their consumption habits.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, some of these analyses also show that the Crown and the state in its broadest sense played an essential role even in areas such as the spread of hens or hemp, which proved largely unsuccessful, and even rice. And it did so thanks to mechanisms based, not only on coercion involving the pure and simple imposition of habits associated with attempts at civilization, but also on resistance from below and negotiation both in the *repúblicas de indios* and in the Cimarron communities of Panama. The process is all the more complex because it also took place “horizontally”, not only between the world of the colonizers and that of the Amerindian population, but also as a result of the increasing cultural diversity of the New World itself. As a matter of fact, it would have been immigrants belonging to a lower class, like the African slaves, for example, who brought their culture with them and – as was the case with the cooks of the Caribbean region – who even became the primary transmitters.<sup>22</sup> The process disseminating new products demonstrates how far the subaltern classes were from the passivity with which they have often been regarded and which was attributed to them in European writings on the subject in the case of Europe. Their capacity for action is very visible in the case of the Guaraní who learned not only how to use firearms but also how to produce them, and – as has already been said – among slaves of African origin. Despite being marginalized in that society in many ways, the prevalence of initiatives undertaken by women is also striking, a fact that confirms what other studies underline in other areas,

particularly in Europe. As in the European model, it is the women of the Mexican elite who spearheaded the introduction of Asian porcelain – and of silks too – in Mexico (Gasch Tomás 2018).<sup>23</sup> The same is true of the emigrants from Seville in many other areas of consumerism and family culture, and in particular in dressing habits. However, less well known is the leading role that may have been played by the Guaraní women or those of Nueva Granada who engaged in forms of cultivation which, while still largely centred on corn, increasingly included wheat or chickens, thanks to the family division of labour derived to a large extent from the menfolk's significant involvement in warfare (Svriz-Wucherer 2019). In other respects, it is also evident how, over time, not only the methods but also the protagonists of these transfers gradually changed to such an extent that one could feel tempted to propose a model of general evolution. From the early days of the conquest when conquerors and religious seem to have played an essential role, we have moved on to a situation in which patriotic societies and other formal institutions played a fundamental part. While merchants were influential protagonists in broadcasting news about marketable goods in the Indies through their more or less private letters and communications, the example of the newspaper *Norte de la Contratación* shows how diplomats and non-commercial agents could already exercise this function in the eighteenth century. In a sense, this marked a shift from a mercantile distribution system in which private correspondence was the only form of advertising, as was the case with the sale of art at the Portobelo fairs, to another in which communication was more evident in the public sphere.

While violence and coercion, as stated in some of these works, are prevalent in the relationships between all these social actors, cultural transfers are also based on the ability of some of these actors to gain the trust of others from extremely different cultural universes. Perhaps the clearest example once again is the case of the slave cooks who worked for the Caribbean elite around 1800, as it is true that trust was essential in the food sector where not only the likes and dislikes of the diners were at stake but also their health and safety. And it was trust – and in a sense the lack of it – that determined the provision of weapons to the Guaraní by the Jesuits or that governed relations between the first conquerors and the original chiefs at the first banquets they offered to each other.

All of the above leads to a final reflection. These studies, in recognizing the plurality of the actors involved in cultural transfers, refute what was one of the initial working hypotheses of this research. If it is not, as I have stressed, a bilateral process of action between dominators and dominated, neither is it a bilateral relationship between Spain and America. Africa is very present, and so too is Asia. Furthermore, one must underline the existence of relevant resistances to the convergence and homogenization of American consumption patterns. Despite the tendency to uniformity brought by colonization, a plurality of racial

and cultural differences persisted after 1492. Unlike the European model in which scholars tend to see – maybe wrongly – a trend towards the equalization of consumer behaviors, the forces that obstructed a similar process in America must have been very important. Moreover, what we have here is even more ground-breaking – a multipolar process of expansion of American products in America, alongside products from other diverse areas of the planet, such as the Pacific islands.<sup>24</sup> It is also worth noting that, from many points of view America preceded Europe in the globalization of products (Chinese porcelain is a good example) associated in the Old World with refinement and decorum. Likewise, the ability of the Spanish American elites to introduce the Enlightenment's ideas – and not strictly the European Enlightenment – regarding the use of overseas goods is a demonstration of those elites' precocious globalization (Rebecca Earle).

Although this entire volume is based on case analysis, the truth is that these works contribute to a better understanding of the great processes of American history, as we have endeavoured to discuss in the final chapter. It is in this game of scales that the social and cultural history that dominates most of the volume is instrumental in contributing to a greater understanding of the changes that occurred in the economic and ecological sphere. The changes are necessarily enormously varied and complex across different areas, as are the chosen case studies. But the collection as a whole creates a coherence that impinges on the major debates of our time and contributes to a broader understanding of the history of consumerism. For, whereas in Europe the history of consumerism has been linked to industrialization and social modernization, it is quite possible that in the case of Latin America it has to be interpreted in two senses. On the one hand, it is a way of understanding the “modernization” of the American elites and the formation of markets that gradually became part of a global economy. But it is also a way of understanding cultural diversity, the social hybridization between classes not belonging to these elites, and the fractures between social and ethnic groups, as well as the other side of triumphant capitalism since the end of the eighteenth century: the development of ecologically unsustainable economies that began long before industrial capitalism itself and which originated from complex negotiation processes but also high levels of social and cultural violence which remain present today in Latin America.<sup>25</sup>

## Notes

1. The chapters included in this volume are the result of research carried out by the group 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. This research group is included in the PAI Group

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- HUM-1000, “Historia de la Globalización: violencia, negociación e interculturalidad” [History of Globalisation: Violence, Negotiation and Interculturality], which is financed by the Regional Government of Andalusia. The open access for this chapter has been financed by the ERC Starting Grant-679371 GECEM, “Global Encounters between China and Europe: Trade Networks, Consumption and Cultural Exchanges in Macau and Marseille, 1680–1840”, whose principal investigator is Professor Manuel Pérez García.
2. This has been the tenor of many publications too numerous to enumerate here, but represented by works like those of McKendrick et al. 1982, Shamas 1990 and Brewer 2013. Perhaps the best and most important exception is the work of Braudel (1967), which heralds the current works on the subject.
  3. Although this approach had its most important starting point in Braudel 1967, its development has been more marked in recent years. See, above all, the pioneering work of Mintz 1985, as well as that of Nützenadel and Trentmann 2008, 1–21, and Brewer and Trentmann 2006, and a long list to follow since then. Two of the most representative of this last phase are those of Riello 2013, and Beckert 2014. The subject is part of a major trend in European historiography. See Muchembled and Monter 2006–2007.
  4. In reality this has been true even in works such as that of Bauer 2001, where the intention was not to study the circulation of products but only the transformations brought about on American soil. This is logical if one considers that they dealt with transformations derived from contact and colonization and for that reason can reflect flows of goods often on a global scale.
  5. See also Perez García and De Sousa 2018.
  6. There are abundant examples of writings in this vein, but we find that it is best exemplified in the works of Wallerstein 1974. Regarding the second, it is similarly difficult to select examples, but K. Pomeranz’s work is one of the most emblematic. See Pomeranz 2000.
  7. An example from the early days of this process, but which logically could not account for the process in the longer term, is the book by Russell-Wood 1992.
  8. This is precisely what was intended with Aram and Yun-Casalilla 2014.
  9. Undoubtedly Bauer 2001, provides the best synthesis.
  10. These issues were also the subject of Almorza’s doctoral thesis, now published as a book. See Almorza Hidalgo 2019.
  11. See an important precedent in Vicente 2006.
  12. Saldarriaga devoted an extensive study to products such as corn, yuca and others in Saldarriaga 2011.
  13. Córdoba Ochoa’s doctoral thesis on the war in the New Kingdom of Granada covers aspects related to the consumption of some products for the period subsequent to the one considered here. See Córdoba Ochoa 2013.
  14. By the same author, see also Earle 2012.
  15. For a broader perspective see Berti forthcoming.
  16. A broader study by the author that includes many more aspects, Gasch Tomás 2018.
  17. Also with a broader dimension which this work forms part of Svriz-Wucherer 2019.
  18. By the same author Quiles 2009.
  19. I wish to express the three editors’ frustration with the exclusion of a chapter on Portuguese America, which, despite being planned within the original research project, had to be canceled due to personal reasons. It is very evident that one cannot speak of American globalization leaving out such an



- important part of the continent. We hope that the great variety of studies and perspectives presented here will palliate this deficiency.
20. Muchembled and Monter 2006–2007. For a more global perspective, see some of the works already included in Schwartz 1994.
  21. Nancy Farriss affirmed that in terms of material culture, it would be difficult to affirm who assimilated whom, that is, if any kind of assimilation actually took place. See Farriss 1984, chapter 3. An interesting case is the introduction and production of coconut wine by the Chinese population in Colima, perhaps a precursor of mezcal. See Machuca 2016. My thanks to Sergio Ser-rano for his reference to this work.
  22. The subject has given rise to considerable and justified interest in recent times. See, for example, Eltis, Morgan and Richardson 2007.
  23. Among other works, see also Vicente 2006, and Almorza Hidalgo 2019.
  24. An overview of the different ways of introducing a product in Latin America from the perspective of global and multidirectional history may be found in cotton. See Riello 2013.
  25. Although the attention paid to Latin America in this period is surprisingly scarce, it is worth rereading the perspective provided by Sven Beckert in a far-reaching work on cotton as a global commodity. See Beckert 2014.

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