

INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

MEXICO

AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT



Palazzo Pesaro Papafava
Warwick's Venice Research Centre



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK

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20 March 2008

Palazzo Pesaro Papafava,
University of Warwick in Venice, Venice

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK

The aim of this colloquium is explore the intellectual, cultural and political climate of late 18th-century Mexico – principally in relation to conceptions of the European Enlightenment.

The subjection and acculturation of native peoples, the importation of African slaves, and the influx of European scholastic and humanist thought endowed New Spain with an uneasy multiculturalism, which was soon epitomised by its cosmopolitan capital, Mexico City. From as early as the 1550s the viceregal metropolis had emerged as a centre of learning that could compete with any in Europe. Prominent scientific thinkers like Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz corresponded with European authorities, including Athanasius Kircher in Rome, whose work exemplified the compendious, encyclopaedic nature of learning in the 1600s, anticipating the character of Enlightenment thought. By the mid-18th century, Jesuit curricula in New Spain had accommodated modern philosophers such as Bacon, Descartes, Gassendi, Locke and Newton: the creole historian Francisco Xavier Clavigero was the first to lecture on the 'New Science' in Valladolid and Guadalajara in the early 1760s. However the Jesuits expelled from New Spain in 1767 were to encounter less progressive thinking among members of their Society in Italy – and this catalysed further developments: Clavigero's *Storia Antica del Messico* was first printed in Italian in 1780, and Francisco Xavier Alegre espoused popular sovereignty and rejected slavery in the seven volumes of his *Institutiones Theologicae* which appeared in Venice between 1789 and 1791.

As well as surveying the thought of elites in creole New Spain and Europe, the colloquium will investigate connections between Enlightenment ideas and some broader and more fundamental areas of enquiry in Mexican political, cultural and artistic history. We hope to consider some of the following issues:

- the intellectual currents represented in periodicals, popular literature and the visual arts.
- the extent to which the perceived opposition between the Enlightenment in Italy ('Illuminismo') and the dogmatism of the Jesuits was paralleled in New Spain.

- the nature of the relationship between actual colonial governance and 'Enlightenment' thinking during the course of the Bourbon Reforms.
- the degree to which taxonomies and forms of enquiry in 18th-century Mexico, so frequently associated with *Encyclopédisme*, had significant precursors in the Baroque.
- the extent to which Jesuit importations of the *Nova Scientia* connected with more popular notions of *Ilustración* in Mexico.
- the contribution made by accommodations of indigenous traditions and *mestizaje* to the intellectual climate of New Spain, and by extension to Europe.
- Was Mexico only a receptacle for European thinking in the later 1700s, or did it also have a role in tempering or informing 'Enlightenment' thought in Europe?

The colloquium takes place in Venice at the Palazzo Pesaro Pavařava on 20 March 2008. Participants include Brian Hamnett, Antonella Romano, Iris Montero, Niccolò Guasti and Silvia Sebastiani.

This event forms part of a larger, ongoing research project on Global Cities of the Enlightenment funded by the University of Warwick's Institute for Advanced Studies with additional support from the Departments of Classics and History. Individuals interested in participating in this colloquium are welcome to contact the organisers: Andrew Laird (Andrew.Laird@warwick.ac.uk) and Rebecca Earle (R.Earle@warwick.ac.uk).

PROGRAMME

20 March 2008

PALAZZO PESARO PAPAFAVA, VENICE

10.15-10.30

Welcome

Rebecca Earle and Andrew Laird (University of Warwick)

MORNING PANEL

Chair: Andrew Laird (University of Warwick)

10.30-11.30

The Mexican Enlightenment between Church and State, 1750-1790

Brian Hamnett (University of Essex-Emeritus)

11.30-12.30

European Categories and Creole Science: Alzate Responds to the Encyclopédie Méthodique

Iris Montero (Cambridge University)

12.30-2.00

Lunch

Ristorante Antica Adelaide

AFTERNOON PANEL

Chair: Rebecca Earle (University of Warwick)

2.00-3.00

Clavigero and the Scottish Enlightenment

Silvia Sebastiani (Istituto Italiano di Scienze Umane)

3.00-4.00

Mexican Knowledge and European Learning in Creole Latin Culture

Andrew Laird (University of Warwick)

4.00-4.15

Coffee

4.15-5.15

Round Table Discussion: Mexico and the European Enlightenment

Antonella Romano (European University) and

Niccolò Guasti (Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa)

