[Book review of:] Helge Wendt (Editor). The Globalization of Knowledge in the Iberian Colonial World

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use of statistical tables, and efforts to track smallpox outbreaks. The second section deals with questions surrounding visible numbers and the nation, with important essays connected to imperialism, mapping, and war. Miles Kimball's essay on the British author and imperialist Michael Mulhall (who developed the technique of using different-sized pictograms to represent quantity) is particularly good, showing how the power of Mulhall's visual imagery overcame serious doubts about the accuracy and objectivity of his work. Finally, the third section looks more at contemporary developments, discussing among other things the development of 3-D statistical graphs and the Milestones Project (an attempt to visualize data design history). The book concludes with a helpful, though not exhaustive, annotated bibliography.

Visible Numbers has several strengths that would make it a useful instrument for certain upper-level or graduate course on statistics as well as for scholars (here Candice Welhausen and Rebecca Burnett's article on graphic representations of smallpox is an outstanding example). For the most part the articles are well written and researched, covering a broad expanse of time from the nineteenth century to the present. The individual essays, produced by scholars from very diverse academic backgrounds (ranging from humanities fields such as English and literature to social science fields such as statistics, psychology, and communication studies), function well independently of one another. And, as one might expect from a volume about this subject, the book is filled with dozens and dozens of helpful visuals (including thirty-seven in full color) that illustrate various authors' main points.

Unfortunately, the book has some shortcomings as well. Like most edited volumes, it struggles at times to maintain a strong argumentative focus beyond the general postmodern tendency to reject linear narratives of historical development (though some of the individual chapters do go beyond this point). It is also heavily focused on "Western" forms of graphic communication, with little insight gained for cultures beyond Britain, the United States, and, to some extent, France. Finally, it is a bit disappointing that the volume does not include any chapters from scholars whose primary academic background is in history. A lot of work in this area has been done by historians in the past couple of years, but these efforts are not reflected in an otherwise excellent volume.

Despite these criticisms, *Visible Numbers* is a thought-provoking and highly useful contribution that advances our understanding of the history of graphic communication and statistics. Some of the chapters will prove quite useful for pedagogical purposes, and the research will be valuable to scholars across a wide range of disciplines and topics.

Jason Hansen

Jason Hansen is an associate professor at Furman University, specializing in modern German and European history. His book Mapping the Germans: Statistical Science, Cartography, and the Visualization of the German Nation, 1848–1914, *was published in 2015 by Oxford University Press.*

Helge Wendt (Editor). *The Globalization of Knowledge in the Iberian Colonial World*. (Max Planck Research Library for the History and Development of Knowledge: Proceedings, 10.) viii + 314 pp., figs. Berlin: Edition Open Access, 2016. €16.99 (paper).

This volume aims in several ways to take a fresh look at the transfer of knowledge in the Iberian colonial world between the early sixteenth and the late nineteenth centuries. As Helge Wendt explains in his editor's introduction, the essays are not primarily concerned with analyzing flows of knowledge from peripheries to the metropolis in Europe, nor do they conceive the Spanish or Portuguese colonial spheres as stable, self-contained, separate entities. Instead, the editor reminds us that these colonial empires had a plurality of centers, which were linked by a variety of flexible networks. Case studies in this book deal with flows of knowledge *between* different colonial spheres as well as with movements *within* these spaces.

The volume is an outcome of a long-running research project of the Max Planck Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte in Berlin on "Globalization of Knowledge" and a series of conferences organized by that institute in collaboration with the Fundación Canaria Orotava de Historia de la Ciencia of Tenerife and the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas of Spain. The nine authors of the essays in this volume, which are a sample of the papers presented at a conference in Berlin in 2013, come from Germany, Spain, Mexico, and the United States. Brazilians and Portuguese are, surprisingly, absent.

Globalization of knowledge in the Iberian colonial world has of course also figured prominently in other collective volumes published in the past three decades, such as *Mundialización de la ciencia y cultural nacional* (Doce Calles, 1993) or *Más allá de la Leyenda Negra: España y la Revolución Científica* (CSIC, 2007). Both volumes covered much of the same ground as the essays included in the book under review. In what ways do the articles in this new volume add to our understanding of the modes and impact of the transfer of knowledge in the Iberian colonial orbit? Most of the contributions are descriptive, empirical studies on subjects such as the making of manuscript maps of mines, the spread of knowledge on tobacco plants, the transfer of technology in mining, or the dissemination of knowledge on natural history and indigenous medical practices, which are informative in their own right but do not really break new ground in a methodological or conceptual sense.

A few articles *do* address issues of a broader scope in new ways, albeit not exactly in the most concise manner. In an extremely detailed study, Lars Kirkhusmo Pharo spends thirty pages belaboring the point that Catholic missionaries in the Americas tried in vain to translate notions from Christian moral philosophy, such as "sin," into indigenous knowledge systems, before launching in the last few pages the far-reaching thesis that "the colonial period of knowledge production, organization and systematization and the related socio-political processes and institutions . . . instigated the contemporary significant global impact on eco-systems and climate" (p. 87). One wonders why the author did not economize on the space used for the former claim to leave himself more room to substantiate the latter. In another lengthy article, Sonja Brentjes develops a full-scale attack on almost all historians' interpretations of the book on Asian medicinal plants compiled by the Portuguese physician Garcia da Orta in Goa in 1563. "Orta was more traditional, parochial and condescending than has so far been recognized," she claims (p. 133). According to Brentjes, much more cooperative research between specialists with different skills is needed to peel away the layers of Orta's elaborate and deceptive effort at self-representation.

The only contributions that address the issue of the globalization of knowledge at a more general level are Wendt's introduction and epilogue to the volume. The introduction provides a useful survey of literatures on the circulation of knowledge, imperial infrastructures, and the relevance of localities but with a somewhat narrow focus. It scarcely discusses connections or comparisons between the Iberian colonial world and other parts of the world—such as, for example, the English, French, or Dutch colonial spheres. The most innovative part of *The Globalization of Knowledge in the Iberian Colonial World* is Wendt's epilogue, which floats the idea of "an Iberian way into the Anthropocene." By this, he means that a study of the Iberian colonial world can give us insight into the ways knowledge production and social processes of altering nature worked in "more or less capitalistically organized economies" (p. 301) before the onset of industrialization. The Iberian case might be illuminating for what he calls the "proto-Anthropocene." It is a surely a thought-provoking idea, but it still leaves open the question of what is so particularly "Iberian" about all this.

Karel Davids

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