Conviviality as a Tool for Creating Networks

The Case of an Early Modern Global Peasant Traveller

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Abstract

In this paper, we analyse an unusual travel account from the seventeenth century. Besides the rarity of travel accounts from this period, its singularity resides primarily in the fact that the traveller, Gregorio de Robles, self-identified as a peasant. This exceptional Spaniard travelled dominions of the Spanish, Portuguese, British, French, and Dutch empires in America and Europe, and even briefly touched Southern Africa. His travel account is rich in information, but here we focus on one specific aspect: conviviality with the people he encountered along his way, with a special emphasis on his fellow compatriots. We will argue that this conviviality allowed Robles to create new networks and accumulate social capital and that the relationship with his paisanos resignified his belonging. By moving and traveling, he could attain a more privileged position than he had apparently been enjoying in his Castilian hometown.

Biographical notes:
Raquel Gil Montero studied History in Córdoba, Argentina. Since 2002, she has worked as a full-time researcher in the National Council of Sciences and Technology (CONICET), and in various other universities and institutes in Argentina. Since 2009 she has been the Director of the scientific journal Población & Sociedad, and since 2019, the President of the National Association of Historical Researchers. She has won different fellowships, including from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Gerda Henkel Foundation (Germany), and John Simon Guggenheim Foundation (USA) among others. She has participated in the Committee of Historical Demography of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, and in the Global Collaboratory on the History of Labour Relations 1500-2000 (Amsterdam), among others. Her research interests include the social history of native peoples in the colonial Andes, the history of mining, labour relations, and the history of the population.

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Contents

1.   Introduction: Introducing Gregorio de Robles

Hidden in an unrelated volume in the *Archivo General de Indias* in Seville lies a most unusual travel account from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. In almost 100 folios, it relates the voyage of Gregorio de Robles, as he states it, a peasant (*labrador*) from the town Moral Campo de Calatrava in the diocese of Toledo in Spain. In 1688, he began a journey that would last until 1703 and take him from the Appalachian Mountains in North America, to Caribbean islands, South American ports, and remote towns in the Andes, to the Strait of Magellan as well as to Cape Town, crossing the Spanish, Portuguese, French, British and Dutch Empires. He would engage with French, English, and Dutch merchants and smugglers, black slaves as well as indigenous bonded labourers in silver mines, live in the houses of wealthy Spaniards, and travel with priests. He would work as a soldier, a merchant, and at curing sick people. According to his statement, he initiated his passage via Andalusia to America[1] only because he "did not want to restrict himself to these limited terms".[2]

The document is archived among other different sources from the Audiencia de Charcas that are completely unrelated to it. This fact hampers the necessary source critique, inquiry about the identity of Gregorio de Robles, and verification of his main arguments. We start this working paper, then, by analysing the context of his hometown, the circumstances of his travel, of his choices, and of the real possibilities of the journey as our first step. This contextualization provides us with a starting point for the research questions on conviviality and networking. A more thorough analysis will require work in different archives and involve a vast literature, which we will be able to undertake over time.[3] However, despite lacking additional information about Robles at the moment, we believe that his account is generally credible, despite the fact that he probably overemphasized or left out some aspects of his voyage.

The document is written in the third person, since it was the result of a declaration by Robles before Don Manuel García de Bustamante, member of the war council of the Indies. It is stated that Robles gave this "declaration and notice," later on also called "memorial,"[4] to Bustamante at the request of Abbot Etree, who had known of his trip through one of the letters Robles had carried to a noble lady in Madrid. The account

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1   We intentionally use "America" rather than "the Americas" as the name of the continent because that is the name of the continent in Spanish.

2   "[D]eseando no limitarse a aquellos cortos términos" Robles 1980: 27. We looked up the original travel account in the Archivo General de Indias, where it is located in Charcas, 233. However, since the original does not have any folio numbers and the edited account by Tau Anzoátegui is much easier to access for the interested reader, we decided to always cite this edited version.

3   Anzoátegui looked for his baptismal record in the Toledo parochial archive, but he reported the destruction of the corresponding church records Tau Anzoátegui 1980: 19.

4   Robles 1980: 27; 100.

was probably written by a scribe, but none is mentioned, and the document is signed only by García de Bustamante on February 4th, 1704. The document bears no subtitles or headings and is structured only by paragraphs.

His travel account is very rich and tells us details about a broad number of issues relevant to the Atlantic world at the turn of the century, such as labour relations, commerce, smuggling, and piracy. Besides this, it can serve to inform debates about theoretical and methodological issues such as the relationship between the local and the global, and serve as kind of a microhistory of the global.[5] The travel account was transcribed and edited by Tau Anzoátegui in 1980 but has not received any analysis beyond the brief introduction to the edition of the source.[6]

In this article, which forms part of a larger book project, we have chosen to focus on a specific aspect related to conviviality. We want to show how by means of conviviality, Robles created networks and accumulated social capital along his way.[7] By sharing daily life with people on ships, during walking tours, and in their homes, at work and beyond, he managed to acquire other occupations, to relate with and be funded by elite members of the colonial societies he lived in, and to be recommended to other people further along the way. We will also discuss how his conviviality with many accommodated members of the colonial societies seemingly led to a recreation of local structures of inequality. Being an allegedly illiterate peasant from south-central Spain who did not sign his travel account "for not knowing how to sign,"[8] he does not relate any close relationship to any member of the lower social strata in America; referring only to the names of Spaniards, French, Italians, and Englishmen. By living together with these people, probably serving, entertaining, and informing them with stories and data from his journey, he passed from being a *pechero*[9] to a traveller to whom

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5   These relationships have been the subject of intensive discussions in the last decade. We consider the following works as especially helpful for Robles' case: Epple 2013; Putnam 2006; Sabean 2005; Tilly 2000; Vito (forthcoming).

6   Tau Anzoátegui 1980. There exists only one other article about it, which, however, did not recognize the importance of the document (Torre Revello 1930). Several authors who work on smuggling in America have cited the edition by Tau Anzoátegui, but only refer to some brief and isolated data from specific regions. Cf. e.g.: Martinic B. 2016; Imbernón 1986; Pietschmann 2018. There is also a brief entry on Robles in Sociedad Geográfica Española 2009, and other quotations of the original document in Gil Montero 2014.

7   For the link between networks and social capital, see Bertrand 1999.

8   Robles 1980: 100. However, at one point in his account (p. 95) he states that he could not refer to all names because he could not always take notes. Despite the fact that he could have used other forms of mnemonic technique, it seems highly improbable to us that he could have remembered all the names of places, in their vast majority in the correct order, without any written notes.

9   The *pecho* was the direct tax common people had to pay in early modern Spain. As several authors have noted, when Spaniards came to the Indies, they did not have to pay this tax any more, nor the *tributo,* the tribute the indigenous people and some free Afrodescendants had to pay. Cf. Gibson 2000: 171; Pollack 2016: 89-92. He did not state explicitly that he was a *pechero*, but the absence of his identification with the hidalgos is for us a suggestive indicator.

people entrusted letters to fellow elite members and Spanish authorities thousands of kilometres away. His relatively humble origin and lack of education sets him apart from his contemporary – and equally, yet on another level, exceptional traveller – Maria Sibylla Merian.

The structure of the working paper is as follows. In the first sections, we focus on different aspects of the context, starting with the analysis of the exceptional account of Gregorio de Robles among other different travellers' accounts. Afterwards, we reconstruct the social and economic circumstances of his voyage, and the social inequalities in both Castile and Latin America. The rest of the paper focuses on the relationship Robles had with different people: we reconstruct his networks with special attention to his fellow compatriots, and briefly describe other kinds of contacts he entertained. We finish with short conclusions.

2.   Exceptionality of Robles's Travel Account

Robles's travel account is exceptional, as according to Hillgarth (2000: 11) until at least the sixteenth century people in Spain (and elsewhere) travelled only for "a concrete reason" and almost never only "for pleasure". Many travellers of the fifteenth and sixteenth century were rather conquerors, with the principal aim of becoming rich. Travel for the sake of knowledge by Europeans to America and elsewhere became much more common in the late eighteenth and even more in the nineteenth century. These expeditions were generally carried out by members of the European elite. The best-known example is certainly Alexander von Humboldt but there were many others, such as Alejandro Malaspina or Alonso Carrió de la Vandera, alias Concolorcorvo.

Compared to the early and late colonial period, accounts from the long seventeenth century (or the "colonial middle" as Restall and Lane (2000: 11) call it) are far less common. This can be seen amongst others in the *Atlas de los exploradores españoles* (Atlas of Spanish Explorers). While not being an exhaustive list, the figures are telling: It records 78 explorers from the "Golden Age," i.e. the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and 66 travellers from the Enlightenment, with dates of trips ranging from 1735 to 1802 approximately. The seventeenth century is denominated as a "time of transition," and contains references to only 14 travellers – one of them, Antonio de Andrade, in fact being Portuguese, and another one, Samuel Fritz, Czech. The last traveller in this chapter, Juan Bautista de Anza, carried out his expeditions only in the late eighteenth century (Sociedad Geográfica Española 2009).[10]

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10 Also for the other centuries, not all travelers mentioned were from Spain, the most prominent example again being Alexander von Humboldt.

The list of travellers in the mentioned century only contains one woman, Catalina de Erauso, the famous "Monja Alférez" whose journey covered large parts of South America. We could add Isabel Barreto from the late "golden age" who travelled the Pacific Ocean in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

Not contained in the list of the Atlas is late seventeenth-century traveller Maria Sibylla Merian, another exceptional woman who travelled during the same years as Robles. She can be seen as a precursor of the enlightened scientists of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. Contrary to Humboldt and his fellow travellers, she was not rich or noble, but belonged to the middle class. She travelled only with her daughter to the Dutch colonies, more precisely Surinam, and her work as a biologist and artist went completely against the gender roles of the times.

In contrast to male travellers, she was not supported at all by other European colonists. As Valiant puts it, "what help she did receive was from native Indians and Africans – both peoples enslaved by the Dutch" (Valiant 1993. Cf. also: Blumenthal 2006; Stearn 1982). Besides her gender and nationality, this distance or "unconvivial" relationship was what set her apart also from her contemporary traveller Robles, along with the purpose of her voyage, which was clearly scholarly in nature and had a specific scientific purpose – to study insect metamorphosis.

As has already been pointed out, Robles's explicit reason for travel was what we might call nowadays leisure, a concept that according to Lis (2009: 22) (following Burke) was invented in the early modern period, more precisely in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. However, leisure traveling was something for the elite, since mobile labour was often linked to the concept of vagabondism, as Ehmer (2009: 307) has pointed out for central Europe in preceding periods. Of course, there were also many other common people who travelled the world at the same time as Robles, usually looking for better economic conditions, or after being enslaved or caught in other types of unfree labour relations.[11] Due to their situations, they did not leave us travel accounts. We will discuss, however, the motives Robles declared for his travel later on.

With regard to the geographical extent of his journey, Robles's experience is not exactly unique, but the distances covered are huge, and it is remarkable that he not only stayed in the Spanish Empire but also touched upon areas of the Portuguese, Dutch, French and British Empires in the Caribbean, and even had a short stay in South Africa. Not all his passages to other empires were voluntary; some of them were due to storms (Cape Town) or captivity (Curaçao), but others were deliberate choices (Caribbean islands and Brazil). We have visualized the places he visited in Figure 1. We have split his

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11 One example is an "*indio chino*" from the Philippines called Gregorio Moreno who traveled as a servant to Peru, New Spain, and Spain (Petición de Gregorio Moreno de Licencia y de Ayuda de Costa 3/15/1607). Norah A. Gharala is currently working on a somewhat similar case.

expedition into two parts since clearly, the second part is the way back, during which he revisited many places, and we wanted to distinguish them.

Places
■ First trip
■ Second trip

Note: Cape Town is omitted from these maps.
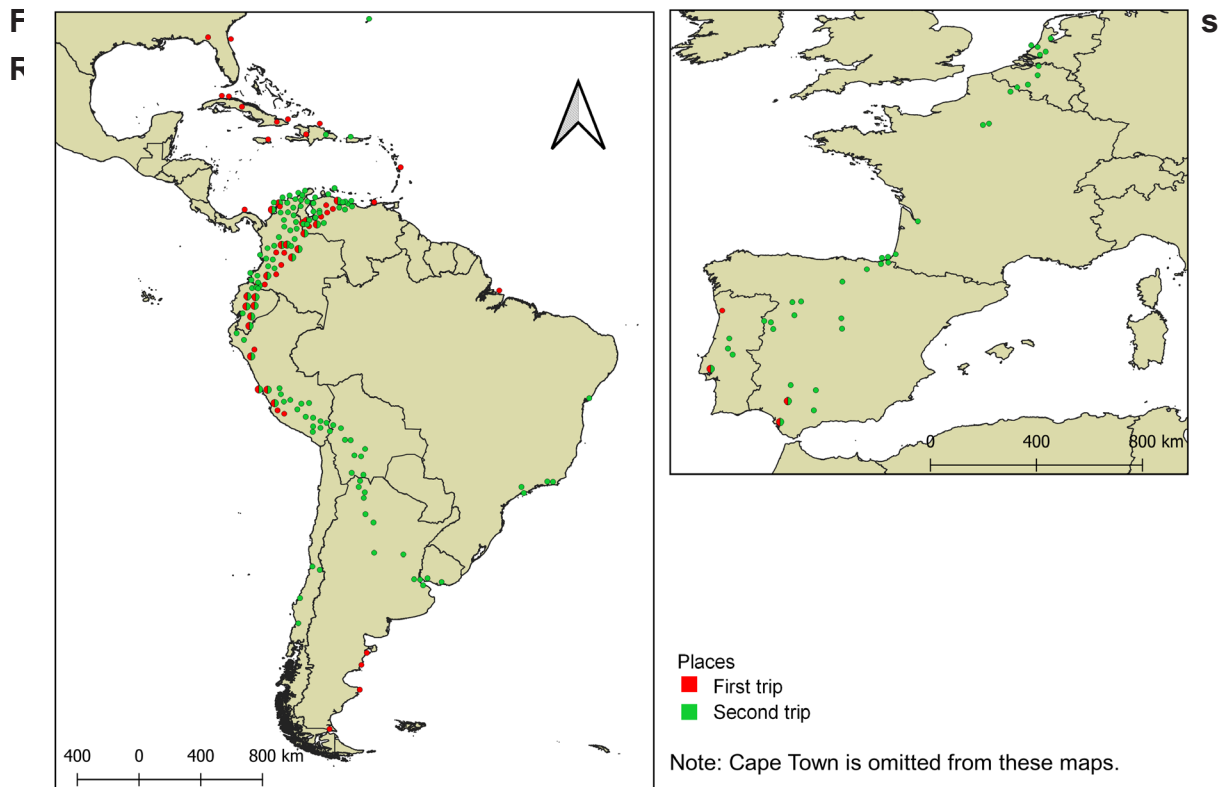
Source: All figures elaborated by the authors using geographical shapes from the University of Minnesota (2017) and places from a database created by the authors based on Gregorio de Robles's account (Robles 1980).

3.   Social and Economic Context of Robles's Voyage

Gregorio de Robles was born circa 1655 in Villa del Moral Campo de Calatrava, Toledo diocese, Castile. At the time, the jurisdiction of Toledo was broader than it is today, and included part of the Province Ciudad Real, where Robles was born and which was important for his notion of *paisano* (González Agudo 2017: 3). He stated he was a peasant (*labrador*) in a region that at this time was suffering an agrarian crisis and witnessing a growing nobility and aristocracy (Sanz 1985). These regional circumstances, however, were far from unique, as we will show in this section.

To understand the social and economic context of the region in the years Robles lived there, we should start our account somewhat earlier, because of the two very different and even opposite periods we can identify. During the sixteenth century, the region

had reached its zenith, reflected in strong immigration, transformation of its cities, and development of the manufacturing sector, especially textiles. This situation changed, however, towards the end of the century, principally due the decline of agricultural production, a demographic crisis, technological backwardness, decapitalization, a lack of raw materials, and an increase in royal fiscal pressure (González Agudo 2017: 24). The nadir was between 1630 and 1680, depending on the precise region, exactly in the period in which Robles grew up.

The seventeenth century was a turbulent and complicated period, not only in Toledo, but also more generally. The long historiographical debates on its crisis show now that there were different situations throughout the Western hemisphere, although with some specific similar patterns. One of them was the demographic stagnation or even decrease of the population in many regions of the Spanish Empire and the Iberian Peninsula itself, as Robes experienced in Toledo. The economic crisis of Toledo, in addition, was part of the general deceleration of the rate of growth after the sixteenth-century economic expansion in a context of a significant increase of fiscal pressure (Bilbao 1989). In short, the components of his historical context were an unfortunate combination of demographic stagnation or decline, economic crises, and increasing of fiscal pressure.

It was in this context that Robles wanted to "see the world", a wish that, as a peasant, he could only achieve by working as a servant or soldier. Since – until now – we have had no other related documents that help us to criticize this historical source, his decision to travel as a soldier can tell us – or at least suggest – something of his original status. The majority of the soldiers who freely embarked to American forts were peasants who wanted to escape the famine that was present in the towns and countryside of many of the poorest Spanish provinces (Marchena Fernández 1985: 94–95). Of course, this situation could have been an untold factor in his decision. He went, then, to Seville in 1688, where he was told he could be recruited as a soldier by Captain Don Juan de Ayala, who was levying people to San Agustín in Florida. Regarding this recruitment, the end of the seventeenth century appears to have been a transitional period, in which the old model of sending individual soldiers or smaller groups was beginning to be replaced by the shipment of complete units, a classic policy of the eighteenth century (Marchena Fernández 1981: 98). Exactly at the time Robles arrived in Seville, then, there were still opportunities for people like him.[12]

The final destination of this first trip was San Agustín, a presidio located in a territory that was strategic for Spain regarding the return traffic from different vessels, and also as a defensive place against those who wanted to break the commercial channels.

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12 The ship in which Robles was traveling arrived in Florida in August 1688. According to Marchena, between 1688 and 1701 no new soldiers arrived (Marchena Fernández 1981).

Due to its strategic role, the Spanish crown defended Florida in each of the peace treaties signed with the British because there were, indeed, many different empires wanting to interfere in the Caribbean commerce. Smuggling and piracy dominated the Spanish colonial economy and the relationship with other empires.

Robles's account confirms and exemplifies the current state of research on the topic: he himself was an example of imperial struggles in those waters. As Böttcher has put it recently the "ideal conception of isolated public institutions" (Böttcher 2013: 51–52, own translation) was in fact determined by a day-to-day informal practice of exchange of labour and merchandise which had little to do with the official monopolist trade of the *Carrera de Indias*. Ports constituted intersections between empires. Robles shows at several points of his account how port towns were spaces of daily interaction between vassals of different empires. The Spanish perception of the Dutch as a threat to their position is also reflected in Robles's account of the military fortifications of Curação. However, he describes the fortifications as less strong that the Spaniards seem to have supposed (Robles 1980: 94; see Böttcher 2013: 59). His relationship with wealthy Jews in Curação is also telling since Jews and *conversos* played an important role in the Dutch and Portuguese trade and smuggling (Böttcher 2013: 60–61).

Robles arrived on a continent that had suffered profound changes in the composition of its population since the conquest that had occurred almost two centuries before. These changes were principally based on three facts: the collapse of the native population; the immigration (free or forced) of European, African, and Asian people; and the miscegenation between these groups. The European conquerors came from a continent that by around 1500 had approximately 50 million inhabitants, unequally distributed. In particular, the Iberian Peninsula had a sparse population; it was estimated to be around 7 million people (Escudero 2017: 118). The estimations of the American population in 1492 are still being discussed, but the intermediate numbers are almost the same as those of the European population: according to these estimations, the continent probably had about 40 to 50 million inhabitants.[13] The conquest triggered an unprecedented demographic collapse, which was different across the continent depending on the period of the conquest (the earlier, the worse), the environment, diseases, the previous indigenous population, and the importance of the war during the conquest, among others. The decline varied from 60% to 90%, although in some places the entire native population disappeared completely. The impact of the conquest in the Caribbean was dramatic: on some islands, almost all indigenous people died or were sold as slaves, although the chronology was different in each place. The narrative of

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13 The debate on the American population before the arrival of the Europeans is still ongoing, however recent research on hunter-gatherer populations suggest that the population could have been greater.

Robles provides an account of the native peoples that still survived on some Caribbean islands.

Indigenous people were employed as the labour force everywhere, and at the beginning (and in some places during the entire colonial period, as Robles also witnessed) they were also sold as enslaved labourers to different destinations. However, as a consequence of their demographic collapse, the introduction of other enslaved people, principally from Africa, grew rapidly. Enslaved African people were dispersed all over the continent, and became the majority of the population in some regions (some Caribbean islands and parts of Brazil), although principally during the eighteenth century. Robles witnessed the beginning of the massive trafficking of enslaved Africans to the continent, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: **Number of Enslaved People Commercialized in America during Colonial Times, by Empire/Country.**
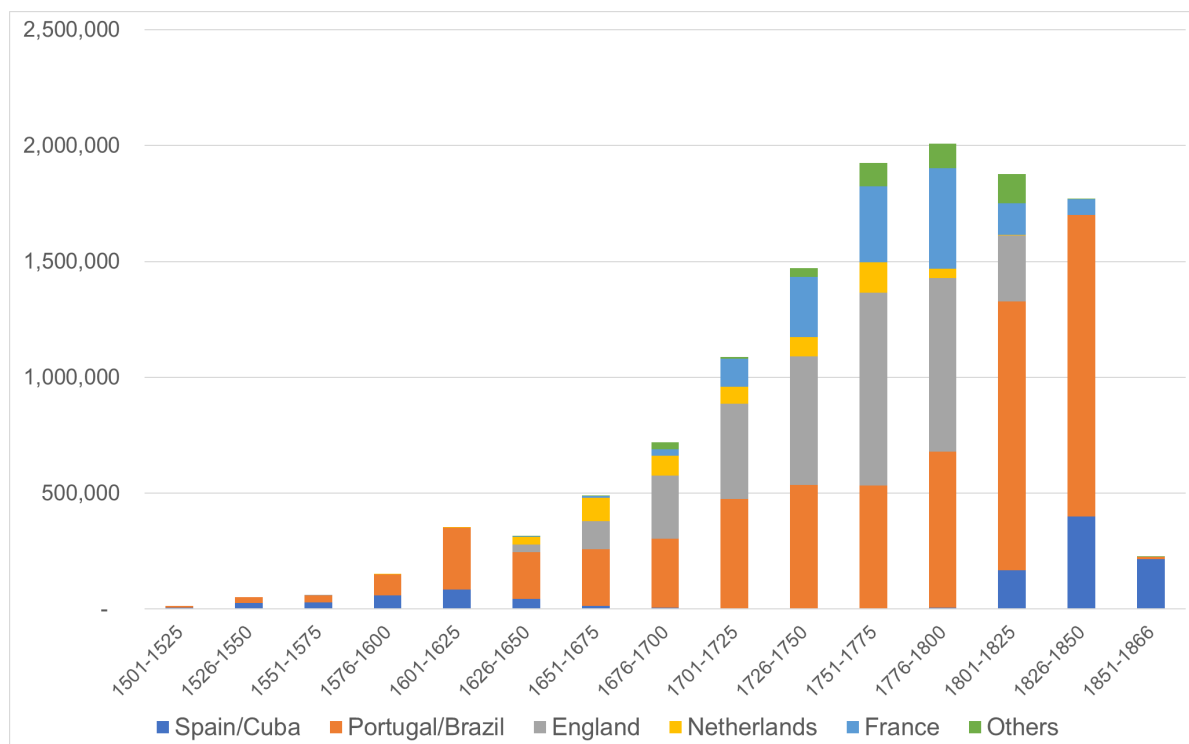
Source: Own elaboration based on data from Zeuske 2018: 128.

Since the independence of Portugal, and at the time Robles arrived, an officially allowed cross-empire trading practice was the slave trade, organized through trading licenses called *asientos de negros* (Robles 1980: 34). During certain periods, these were even bestowed on traders from other imperial powers, such as England and Portugal. Still, these empires, along with the Dutch, were very active in smuggling immense numbers of enslaved people. Curaçao and Jamaica, two islands visited by Robles, became the most important reservoirs of enslaved people introduced into Spanish America during the seventeenth century (Reyes Fernández Durán 2011: 26).

It is difficult to estimate the numbers for the European and Asian immigration during the first centuries of colonial times, since the first data for the entire population are available only from the last quarter of the eighteenth century.[14] We can say, however, that the majority of the non-native population living during the seventeenth century in America were the African enslaved people who were forced to migrate, while the number of European and Asian free or forced migrants was lower. These people were, in addition, unevenly distributed over the continent.

Miscegenation, or the so-called *mestizaje*,[15] the third element of the demographic changes that occurred in America, was and still is the subject of an impressive literature. Intercourse between people of different origins was frequent throughout the continent and during all periods. However, their children were not always recognized under the same categorization, and their presence in the sources is sometimes vague. As Rappaport said, "we cannot assert that 'mestizo' represented an essential and enduring quality" (Rappaport 2014: 4). In spite of the difficult definition and recognition, this process affected the lives of many people. *Mestizaje* implied, as Wade proposed, contradictory perspectives: on the one hand, "mixture" tells us about the crossing of social boundaries; but on the other hand, the concept also reinforces "boundaries and hierarchies or race, class and gender and is in fact a key mechanism for their reproduction" (Wade 2018: 1). Having said this, and in spite of these and other problems highlighted by the historiography, there were mestizos in almost every one of the places Robles visited, and he identified them in many parts of his narrative.

In short, Gregorio de Robles, a peasant born in a region profoundly affected by demographic and economic crisis, decided to travel as a soldier to the Spanish colonies, particularly to a specific presidio in Florida. The region he chose was an arena for the struggle of different imperial powers that wanted to impose their primacy on commerce and the trade in enslaved people. The continent where he arrived had suffered significant changes regarding its population, changes that were present in his narrative, including the different regional demographic composition that we now know of thanks to the vast historiography.

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14 There are some local censuses that recorded, for example, "indigenous people" from the Philippines or from China living in Lima at the beginning of the seventeenth century. See, for example, Cook and Escobar Gamboa (1968). Vinson (2018: 6-7) estimates that over 200,000 Africans entered the Americas between 1521 and 1639. Furthermore he gives 40,000 - 60,000 as an estimate for free and enslaved *chinos* coming to New Spain between 1580 and 1640.

15 For a debate on the chronology of the term and concept of *mestizaje* and the discussion of whether the term should be applied to the colonial period, see: Chance 1979; Stolcke 2008; Wade 2003; Zermeño Padilla 2008; Albiez-Wieck forthcoming, and Tolstoy 1978.

4. Conviviality in Unequal Colonial Contexts

Recruitment was a common starting point for many peasants that went to America to improve their lives. In Robles's case, what followed was, perhaps, rarer, and the beginning of his exceptional travels. During the journey to Florida and also during his six months at the fort, he helped the crew and other travellers suffering from an epidemic that began on the ocean. He was rewarded with his "freedom" and was allowed to embark to Havana, which he did in April 1689. It was there, in Havana, where he started to build networks, and also to travel alone and with an apparently greater degree of freedom than before.

Robles, despite his humble origins, managed to establish personal relationships with many wealthy European colonists in America. Since his account was addressed to Don Manuel García de Bustamante, member of the war council of the Indies and therefore an important Spanish authority, he underlines mainly his relationship with notable Spaniards or Europeans from other parts of the Spanish Empire. But it becomes clear that he also interacted with Portuguese, French, Italian, English and Dutch people. Throughout most of his travels, he seemed to locate himself and be addressed by others as belonging to the same estate – in a broad sense – as the dominant members of the colonial society. He was served by, guided by, and even carried on the shoulders of indigenous people.[16] He automatically recreated the stratified society he had been living in in Castile, but putting himself in another relative stratum. While he concretely identifies by name and describes many Europeans, his account does not refer to the name of any single indigenous, Afrodescendant or even mestizo person. He makes several references to the slave trade with Africans from a clearly economic viewpoint. For Puerto Deseado in Patagonia, for example, he highlights that there a bottle of spirits could be exchanged for three "slave pieces" (*piezas de esclavo*) (Robles 1980: 44). Furthermore he referred to the economic disadvantages for the Spanish crown in having transferred the right to slave trade to the English and Dutch in the so-called *asientos de negros* (Robles 1980: 34).

Like some other Spaniards, however, he was not completely ignorant of or untouched by the sufferings and abuses of indigenous people. In some places of his account, this awareness seems to be a personal conclusion, while in other parts, he was – apparently – repeating the opinions of his hosts, particularly of the priests. In Arequipa, Peru, for example, he referred to the extortions that the Spanish and especially creole authorities committed against the indigenous people, in this case regarding the forced sale of goods (*reparto de mercancías*). For the Audiencia de Quito, he underlined the abuses towards indigenous people in the textile mills in Ambato and the extortions of

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16 The same applied to Humboldt (Humboldt 1799: f. 63r).

the workers in the haciendas in Abancay. Nevertheless, he pointed out several times the economic benefits of the mines and textile mills in which indigenous people had to work under horrible conditions (Robles 1980: 39, 53, 62, 72).

All in all, his social position was determined by the well-known societal structures of the *ancien régime* and early modern empires: his classification as a Spaniard marked his legal and political position in Spain as well as in America.[17] By traveling away from Spain, he did not change his classification as a Spaniard, but the new context put him in another place. Herzog has pointed out that for the early modern Spanish world, "people were classified according to their place of birth and not according to their activities or wishes" (Herzog 2003: 10). As we will show in the next section, Robles's place of birth continued to play an important role in his journey, but so did his activities and wishes. We propose that along his way he made many choices that defined his further travels. These choices were always relational, and while on the move, he created networks that allowed him to carry on for years and finally to find his way back home to Spain.[18]

From the point of view of Robles, in the light of the structures of inequality he reproduced, it seems that conviviality was largely beneficial for him. Even in situations in which he was imprisoned, once by the French on the Venezuelan coast and later by the Dutch, who took him to Curaçao, he was released and seemingly had gotten along well with his captors. On the first occasion, he relates that on the French ship he took care of the sick people and that later on the captain set him free for "having served so well" (Robles 1980: 46), even presenting him with clothing and two *reales de a ocho* (eight-reales coins). While he does not relate the reasons for his first liberation in Curaçao, his second liberation was due to the intervention of powerful citizens – Dutch Jews and Irish Catholics he seemingly had met in the interim (Robles 1980: 94). So apparently, by sharing time with his captors and related people, probably trying to be helpful and friendly, he managed to turn a conflictive and detrimental situation into one with positive outcome and benefits for him.

In this vein, we think that Robles's travel account is a good example of the interactions so central to conviviality which, according to Nowicka and Heil, "are easily observable on a micro-scale of human relations but almost invisible on a macro-scale" (Nowicka and Heil 2015: 8). Robles's account can be read as "conviviality on the move," and

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17 For the practice of classification and also of changing classifications in the *ancien régime*, see Hespanha 2003: 827.

18 This capacity to act has often been called agency, but following Vito, we prefer to talk about relational choices. Vito highlights that "what are usually referred to as agency and structures are in fact embedded in concrete historical practices. This assumption is based on a view of human agency which, rather than taking it as a pure manifestation of free will, sees it as torn between individual choices, household and group strategies, and institutional constraints, and therefore mediated by social relations, power regimes and material limitations" Vito (forthcoming).The literature about agency is vast, but the pioneering work was made by Giddens (1979).

therefore integrates two of the three main strings of the debate identified by Nowicka and Vertovec: place/space on the one hand, and conviviality/conflict on the other; but it is not as important for the debate about normativities (Nowicka and Vertovec 2014: 342). It seems tempting to describe Robles as a cosmopolitan, but only insofar as acknowledging the critique that "cosmopolitanism arrives from a situation of unequal positions" (Nowicka and Vertovec 2014: 345).

5.   Networks and Belonging

During his voyage, Robles related to other people in several ways. We already briefly referred to his relationship with non-Europeans. With regard to Europeans, he met vassals of different European empires, but places most emphasis on the Spaniards – probably due to the circumstances of the presentation of his account. He travelled and lived together with a considerable number of Catholic priests, but also refers to communication with or knowledge of Jews and Huguenots (who fled to the Netherlands on a French ship) (Robles 1980: 91). Except for three women – a black woman who fed him, and two Spanish women who accommodated him (in New Granada and Spain) – he only reports conviviality with men. Several means of interrelation and conviviality are recurrent throughout his account, the most important being housing, traveling together (usually in a subordinated position, perhaps serving other people), carrying and handing in letters, being served by indigenous people or by slaves, and receiving gifts. An additional element which could also be grouped under conviviality, and which occurs twice, is taking care of ill people. We put these data from his account into a database, including information such as dates, places and geographical data, products, merchandise, and people. For more than 230 places he mentioned in his narrative he refers to 46 persons by name as personal contacts, and also records the names of many authorities (viceroy, governors, bishop, captains of the ships, among others), while others are just mentioned as part of a socio-ethnic or religious group, such as Mestizos, Jews, Dutch or Spaniards.

Regarding his relationships with Spaniards, one element stands out: time and again he reports conviviality with fellow countrymen (and one countrywoman). The Spanish word employed is *paisano*. We want to explore this group of people because this shows especially well how belonging was resignified far from home, and furthermore used to Robles's advantage. In total, he narrates his relationship with nine of his countrymen and one countrywoman, adding up to 23% of the contacts he mentions. The information provided on them is summarized in Table 1.

For nearly three decades, social anthropologists as well as sociologists have pointed to the fact that the place individuals occupy in society is not only determined by their

social position, but also by multiple belongings (see e.g. Yuval-Davis et al. 2006; Anthias 2009). We consider it clarifying to link phenomena of translocality, especially of people, with questions of belonging, as "bounded identities of place or region and related senses of belonging are often fuelled by increased mobility of people and transfers of goods, values and discourses" (Freitag and Oppen 2010: 9, see also: Albiez-Wieck 2018). Numerous historical and anthropological studies have shown that migration and belonging are inextricably linked (e.g.: Ogburn 2008; Anthias 2006; Engelbrecht 2014).

Table 1: Fellow Countrymen and Countrywoman Mentioned by Robles

Place	Paisano or paisana	Information about Paisanos	Observations
Mompos	Doña Catalina de Balverde	From Malagon	She hosted Robles twice. Doña Catalina gave him 50 pesos and lent him a canoe and two enslaved people for his trip to Honda.
Lima	Don Martín Gomez Robledo	From Puertollano	Robles stayed twice with Gomez in Lima, the first time for a year and a half, and the second time for two months.
Potosí	Alonso de Amores		Robles stayed for 30 days in his house
Ambato	Fray Juan de la Cruz	Carmelite friar	They walked together from Cuenca to Quito
Huancavelica	Don Antonio de Zamora	Official of the Royal Treasury	Robles was hosted by Zamora
Pisco and Tumaco	Don Diego de Briones	Captain of the ship in his trip to Trujillo	Briones helped Robles, hosted him (also in Arica), and lent him a small boat for regional travels
Arequipa	Don Diego de Prado	From Ciudad Real	Prado hosted Robles and introduced him to a religious man who also helped him
Santa Fe	Don Francisco Izquierdo		He stayed in his house
Quito	Don Mateo Mata Ponce de León	President of the Audiencia	Robles was going to stay in a guesthouse but Ponce de León invited him to stay in his house
Near Sepulturas	Juan Lopez	From Tembleque	They met and talked

Source: Compiled by authors from Robles (1980).

The same has been shown for colonial Spanish America in a study by Poensgen on a merchant family in late eighteenth-century Río de la Plata. Despite the distance in time, the importance given to *paisanos* in the personal and commercial networks of the

Anchorena family is striking. Poensgen has pointed to the fact that Spanish immigrants to the Río de la Plata preferentially established personal contacts with compatriots, with the term *paisano* referring to their region of origin, and the term *patria* to the precise town (Poensgen 1998: Chapter 2.3). Robles seems to use the term *paisano* in exactly the same way.

With Robles we can observe that far away from home, one's belonging to a certain geographic origin acquired a heightened relevance. He referred to the towns of origin of some of his countrymen (cf. Table 1 and Figure 3) which were all located in places near his own origin: in the same and the neighbouring province. It seems improbable that he had already known all of them from back home. Contrary to other persons he met, he does not refer that his initial contact to any *paisano* was via a letter someone else had entrusted him. Still, eight out of ten of his compatriots (nine men and one woman) lodged him in their homes, often for several weeks or even months. Two men, Don Martín Gomez de Robledo in Lima, Peru and Don Diego de Briones, and the woman, Doña Catalina de Valverde in Mompos, New Granada, even lodged him a second time when he passed through their respective cities again. One of the persons who did not lodge him in his home was the Carmelite friar Juan de la Cruz. Robles first met him when he was leaving Cuenca in the Audiencia de Quito and travelled with him to Quito, passing through Latacunga, Ambato, and Riobamba. Not only did they travel together, but Robles states that de la Cruz fed him and gave him presents, as it "was customary in this land" (Robles 1980: 70), and even paid for his trip. He accommodated Robles with him in in the Carmelite monastery in Latacunga. When he relates their farewell, he even speaks of him as his "benefactor" (Robles 1980: 71).

Another person with whom Robles travelled together and met several times was Don Diego de Briones, captain of a ship. Robles relates that he met him in the Peruvian coastal town of Pisco and boarded his ship for the voyage to Trujillo. Later on, in the port of Tumaco in New Granada, he encountered Briones on two occasions. Robles relates that Briones lodged and fed him as he had done previously in the Chilean port of Arica (Robles 1980: 64, 66, 74). Looking at the trajectory of his voyage, this must have been even before he met Briones in Pisco, but Robles does not detail anything else about a stay in Arica. When Robles left Briones in Tumaco for the second time, Briones gave him a bigger canoe in exchange for one Robles had previously obtained from an *encomendero,* because Robles had gone for tar in Tembeque.

Not only did several fellow countrymen who lodged him provide him with additional gifts and help; so too did his fellow countrywoman Doña Catalina de Valverde from Mompós: on their first farewell, she gave him 50 pesos and sent him along on her canoe with her slaves.

Figure 3: **Origins of Gregorio de Robles and his Compatriots Mentioned in the Account**
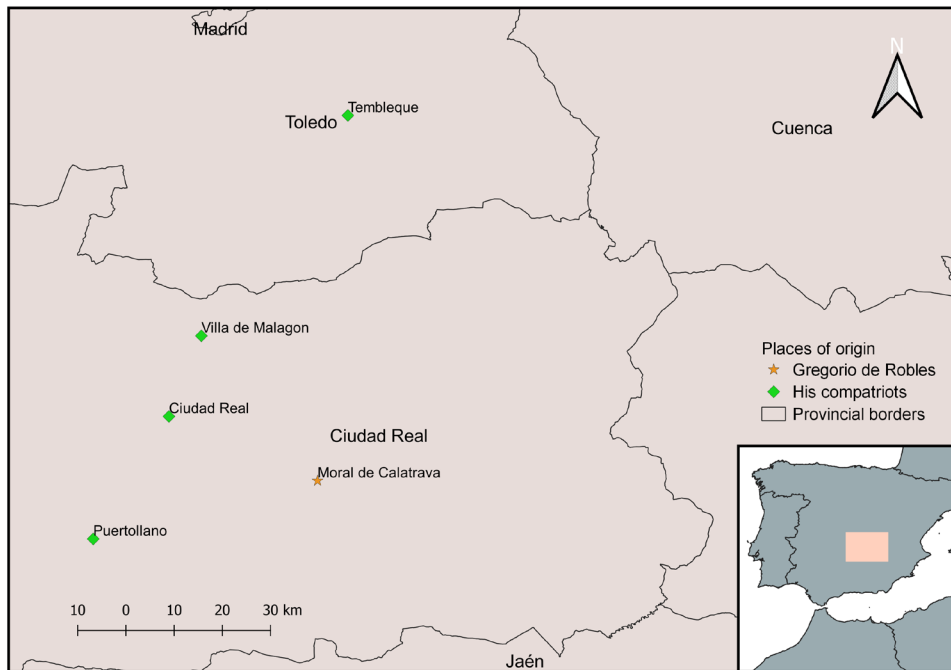
Sources: Places: personal database compiled from locations named in the account of Gregorio de Robles (Robles 1980); Shapes: World: University of Minnesota 2017, Spain: Instituto Geográfico Nacional.

As we can already see in the nature of the gifts given, many of his compatriots were well situated, which is also visible in the fact that Robles addresses seven of them with the reverential Don or Doña, and also the friar de la Cruz had apparently enough means to gift him and fund his trip while they were traveling together. One of his hosts, Don Mateo Mata Ponce de León, was even the president of the Audiencia de Quito. Robles met him shortly after the former had said goodbye to de la Cruz. According to his account, Robles had first gone to a guesthouse, but when the president learned about this he invited him to his home where he was treated very well (Robles 1980: 71).

It seems to us that his relationship with these accommodated *paisanos* was probably marked by inequality. These relationships probably varied between friendships and commercial relations between unequals in which the superior party usually tried to consolidate the relationship by gift-giving, and patron-client relations in which the gifts mentioned by Robles might have been rather a form of payment. Letters of recommendation could very well form part of both types of bond. According to Poensgen, these kind of letters often served to demonstrate the moral integrity of the person in question, the *hombría del bien*.[19]

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19 Both types of relationship as well as letters of recommendation are mentioned by Poensgen (1998: Ch. 2.3).

There is only one occasion on which a compatriot is mentioned from whom apparently Robles did not receive gifts, food or lodging. This person was called Juan López (note that this is one of the few not referred to as "Don"). He encountered him on his way to Sepulturas de Oruro, near the point where the paths from Chile and Tucumán towards Peru merged. López, originally from Tembleque, had with him three herds of mules, totalling 10,000 animals, which he had bought in Chile and wanted to sell in Peru (Robles 1980: 57). Apparently, he and Robles simply went in different directions, which would explain why they did not travel together and why Robles received no significant gifts worth mentioning.

A detail which sets the narrative about Robles's compatriot apart from his contact with other people is that he sometimes refers to the towns of origin of his compatriots, but almost never for others. What he mentions about others is their broader regional origins or "nations", such as in the case of a Galician, a Corsican, an Italian, and numerous French, Dutch, and Englishmen (Robles 1980: 34, 57-58, 78).

6.   Brief Note on Other Kinds of Contacts

Even if Robles's compatriots constituted an important percentage of his contacts and they are the main focus of this paper, we also want to point out that Robles enjoyed similar kinds of conviviality with persons with whom no apparent previous linkage existed. He travelled with or was hosted by numerous religious people, both with and without letters of recommendation or previous contacts. In some of his destinations, he looked for a monastery or for specific religious orders. However, he also entered into contact with some Jews, for example in Curação. When he was trying to continue his trip from Punta Moron on to New Spain and the Philippines, Robles, along with the other people on the ship, was captured by a Dutch sloop who took them to Curação. After some days of imprisonment, they were all released. But shortly thereafter, Robles was again arrested due to the denunciation of a Majorcan captain who accused him of being a "malevolent man" (Robles 1980: 94). But he was defended by David and Phelipe Señor, wealthy Jews, and captain Manasés and Mr. Moyarte, powerful Catholic Irishmen. Phelipe Señor then gave him everything necessary for his trip and a letter for his brother in Amsterdam, Monsiur (*sic*) López. When he handed the letter to the brother later on in Amsterdam, he also received lots of provisions and help from him.

7.   Conclusion

Gregorio de Robles was a man of his times in several regards. He was living in an estate-based society. Therein, in his Spanish birthplace he occupied one of the lower strata, although he was not necessarily poor. When moving on to America, the fact of being a Spaniard allowed him to occupy a relatively higher societal rank, placing him

above indigenous people and Afrodescendants as well as people of "mixed" ancestry. This experience was shared by a considerable number of other Spaniards traveling to America. In his account, he seemed to relate only to fellow Europeans, principally Spaniards, as equals (in a wide sense), thereby recreating existing structures and practices of inequality. However, we do not know the extent to which the fact that his main focus was on concretely identifying principally elite members of the Spanish society was due to the circumstances of his declaration. As he was asked to report to Spanish authorities and hoped to be rewarded, it seems likely that he privileged narratives of potential interest to them. And in fact, he received a reward amounting to twenty *doblones* (Robles 1980: 100).

What is clearly exceptional about his account is that it was given by someone self-identifying as a peasant. Throughout the entire colonial period, the vast majority of the travel reports was elaborated by elite members of the Spanish or other European societies. Furthermore, his account provides us with a rare and particular viewpoint on seventeenth-century practices of traveling, working, trading, smuggling, fighting, and relating to other people, as well as specific information about an impressive number of places.

Gregorio de Robles began his account by saying that he wanted to know the world. It might be possible that he reinvented the reasons for his travels retrospectively after returning to Spain. His initial stated intention was to embark as a soldier to Florida, a common goal among peasants at that time. We propose that the shift that occurred in his travels was initially random, and after that, he chose to continue and started to build networks that allowed him to continue.

In this paper, we have focused on one specific aspect of Robles's journey: conviviality with fellow travellers and people he encountered along his way, placing special emphasis on the interactions with people of the same geographical but not necessarily social origin. This analysis has led us to three conclusions: first, that practices of conviviality allowed Robles to create networks and social capital while traveling. Second, his way of relating to his compatriots is a compelling example of how a common geographical origin is resignified far from home, creating a sense of diaspora and common belonging. Both of these conclusions point to seemingly timeless phenomena of travel and migration. They have been demonstrated by numerous anthropological and sociological studies on modern migrants. Our analysis of Robles's travel report adds a historical dimension, which until now has been rather marginalized in the debates about conviviality. This leads us to our third conclusion: traveling allowed Robles to change his position from being a *pechero* in Castile to being only a Spaniard more generally in America, enjoying the privilege of not being subject to paying tribute (or serving in the corresponding relations of bonded labour). This privilege distinguished nobles from commoners in Spain, and Spaniards from indigenous people and free Afrodescendants in America.

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