

CALL FOR PAPERS

International Conference

**Knowledges, Sciences, Techniques and State building in Iberian America, 1790-1870**

Organizers:

Annick Lempérière (University of Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne)

Clément Thibaud (University of Nantes)

Over the last few decades the renewal of the history of the sciences has been marked by an opening towards non-European spaces, especially the Iberian Americas, and by the study of the relations between knowledges and power. We now have at our disposal a growing body of work on the imperial sciences, the contribution of the colonies to the advancement of knowledge, more particularly the natural sciences, and on the Enlightenment and the links between sciences, revolutions and independence in the colonial territories. Similarly, there has been a considerable expansion of research interest in the part played by sciences and knowledges in the consolidation processes underway in the nation-states, beginning in the last third of the 19th century, a period which coincides with the affirmation of the positivist paradigm and the integration of Latin America in world economic flows. However, scholars of Latin America are only just beginning to take an interest in the intermediary period stretching from the Enlightenment to scientism. The reason for this lies in the still common idea that in the Iberian Americas we are confronted with “lost decades,” whether in the area of state building, economic performance or the social and cultural integration of a diversity of populations.

However it is the opposite hypothesis that we seek to explore, highlighting both the modalities by which the legacy of the imperial, colonial Enlightenment was passed on and transformed, and the processes which meant that late 19th century Ibero-American societies, including Brazil and the Spanish colonies in the Caribbean, were ready to take full advantage of the new scientific paradigm with a rapidity that ought to strike us as surprising.

A reconsideration of the transition from “empires to nations” from the perspective of the relations between knowledges, sciences, techniques and state building, then, is the object of this conference. If it is true that at the global level the real “scientific revolution” occurred between the closing decades of the 18th and the middle of the 19th century—thus coinciding with the industrial revolution and, at the political level, with the age of revolutions—we should ask ourselves in what way Ibero-American societies participated in this scientific revolution, and how this revolution was linked to the construction of their political organisation as national states and to the emergence of new forms of governance of territories and populations and also of new forms of state action and public policy.

In view of the fact that knowledge in any society is the product of the society in question, the prime objective will be to identify the concrete actors, be they individual or collective, in the political, social, cultural and material history of knowledges in the Iberian Americas: what were the concrete contributions of the administrators, politicians and soldiers, scientists and jurists, essayists or pamphleteers, but also of businessmen and entrepreneurs, to the production, circulation and spread of scientific and technical knowledges? What were the networks, the instances of sociability in which they discussed and shared their knowledges, and what were the criteria by which they were considered useful for economic development and government? What were the social milieus in which the interflow of scientific and technical knowledges with public action was concretized? What systems of circulation (exile, study tour, diplomacy, scientific or administrative correspondence, publications, and so on) linked these milieus to national spaces and the Euro-American space? What were the various connections and exchanges with the scientific community in Europe and the United States? What was the role of the public sphere, of opinion and the circulation of the printed word in the socialisation of *knowledges*—whether on the subject of public hygiene, the steam engine or the metric system—and what were the effects of this socialisation on expectations about the role and function of the state? Lastly, what was the impact of the emergence of these new knowledges and techniques on social, political and religious forms of authority?

Given how questionable the centrality and institutionalisation of the “state” was during this period, the notion of the “state” will be examined using a concrete, multifaceted approach, taking in the national government, its ministers, bureaucrats and administrators, the governments of the federated states, prefects and political leaders in the provinces and departments, and municipal councils. What was the situation regarding “state knowledges” during this period? How did the authorities obtain information on population, production and commercial activity or the territory? How did they reuse and bring up to date knowledges accumulated during the imperial period, and how did public statistics come into being? Which were the agents at the state’s disposal for the acquisition of these knowledges, what were the practical or theoretical knowledges at the disposition of such agents for the accomplishment of their tasks? Did agents take initiatives in order to improve or reform the working of their offices, were the important “ordinances” of the imperial administration effectively applied or, rather, ignored as time went by, or else reformed? How was the question of the efficacy of the administration dealt with, and how was the latter connected to state involvement in economic activity?

The relevant spectrum of knowledges is extremely broad, ranging from the scientific disciplines to the practical knowledges used in mining activities or the earliest railways, in plantations or the nascent banks, and including knowledges of governance such as the law in all its forms (civil, public and international, commercial), or again political economy, administrative law and administrative science. What was the importance attached to the institutionalisation of these knowledges and what were the private or state agents of this institutionalisation? How did such knowledges circulate in the Iberian Americas and the Euro-American space, and which were the actors in this process? How, too, were they translated, in concrete terms, from the intellectual sphere into government action or their economic application?

The questions can be addressed in many different ways, through case studies favouring an approach to the relations between knowledges, government and state building that is at once contextualised, localised and transnational.

The three-day conference is scheduled to take place in January 29-31 2015 at the University of Paris 1-Panthéon Sorbonne. Accepted papers will be published in a collective volume after review by an independent editorial committee.

**Submissions:** Authors are invited to submit a one-page (maximum) outline of their proposed paper presenting original and unpublished research, taking care to mention the primary sources used in the case-study. Proposals must be accompanied by a two-page (maximum) curriculum vitae containing a list of the author's publications. Submissions should be sent **before 31 May 2014** to Annick Lempérière ([annick.lempriere@orange.fr](mailto:annick.lempriere@orange.fr)) and Clément Thibaud ([clement.2thibaud@wanadoo.fr](mailto:clement.2thibaud@wanadoo.fr)), in one of the languages of the conference: English, French, Portuguese or Spanish.

Subsistence expenses in Paris (including four nights' hotel costs) will be provided by the conference's organizing committee for one author per paper. Requests for assistance with travel costs will be examined on a case-by-case basis.