



FRONTIERS OF HUMANITY AND BEYOND

TOWARDS NEW CRITICAL
UNDERSTANDINGS OF BORDERS

P08 - INFORMANTS FROM THE BORDERS: AGENCY AND TERRITORIAL MEDIATION IN EARLY MODERN IBERIAN EMPIRES (15TH-18TH CENTURIES)

ORGANISERS

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ABSTRACT

For more than three centuries, the monarchies of Spain and Portugal ruled over a plurality of territories. Consequently, a complex information system was needed in order to manage the large heterogeneity of interests of kingdoms, cities, corporations, dioceses, congregations and religious provinces. Circulation, in many directions, of information and people was the first form of connection of these institutions. Our panel wants to focus on the practice of representation of local interests through the sending of agencies and memorials to the court from border territories. These representations were part of a framework of negotiation between the rulers and the ruled, which strengthened loyalty to the monarch but in which informants often moved in a context of multiple loyalties. In turn, these practices provided useful information to the knowledge and govern of border areas, both external and internal –e.g.: the regions between kingdoms ruled by the same crown.

We analyse the acts (agencies) of representation as well the news and reports on territories scattered throughout Europe, Africa, America and Asia generated by the agencies. We also focus on the figure of the agents (the informants), the features of their mission and the results obtained.

This panel reflects on all these practices trying to establish shared patterns in the action of representing and reporting advanced by local actors. The panel also pretends to highlight both differences and singularities conditioned by the type of agency, in order to value the power of information to foster dominance and fidelity. We will attend proposals focused on the representatives of cities or kingdoms; we also welcome papers on religious that operated inside and outside the borders; as well as on the informal agents that built a global imagery of these empires, analysed from the perspective of the expansion culture, the ethnographic knowledge and the cultural translation.

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