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978-0-521-84548-9 - Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe: Correspondence and Cultural Exchange in Europe, 1400-1700 - Volume III

Edited by Francisco Bethencourt and Florike Egmond

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CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

This volume explores the importance of correspondence and communication to cultural exchanges in early modern Europe. Leading historians examine the correspondence of scholars, scientists, spies, merchants, politicians, artists, collectors, noblemen, artisans and even illiterate peasants. Geographically the volume ranges across the whole of Europe, occasionally going beyond its confines to investigate exchanges between Europe and Asia or the New World. Above all, it studies the different networks of exchange in Europe and the various functions and meanings that correspondence had for members of different strata in European society during the early age of printing. This entails looking at different material supports, from manuscripts and printed letters to newsletters, and at different types of exchanges, from the familial, scientific and artistic to political and professional correspondence. This is a groundbreaking reassessment of the status of information in early modern Europe and a major contribution to the field of information and communication.

FRANCISCO BETHENCOURT is Charles Boxer Professor of History at King's College London. He was Director of the National Library of Portugal (1996–8) and Director of the Gulbenkian Cultural Centre in Paris (1999–2004).

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CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

General Editor: Robert Muchembled
Université de Paris XIII

Associate Editor: William Monter
Northwestern University, Illinois

At a time when the enlarged European Community asserts the humanist values uniting its members, these volumes of essays by leading scholars from twelve countries seek to uncover the deep but hidden unities shaping a common European past. These volumes examine the domains of religion, the city, communication and information, the conception of man and the use of material goods, identifying the links which endured and were strengthened through ceaseless cultural exchanges, even during this time of endless wars and religious disputes. Volume I examines the role of religion as a vehicle for cultural exchange. Volume II surveys the reception of foreigners within the cities of early modern Europe. Volume III explores the place of information and communication in early modern Europe. Volume IV reveals how cultural exchange played a central role in the fashioning of a first European identity.

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GENERAL EDITOR
ROBERT MUCHEMBLED

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
WILLIAM MONTER

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VOLUME III

*Correspondence and Cultural Exchange in Europe,
1400–1700*

EDITED BY

FRANCISCO BETHENCOURT
AND FLORIKE EGMOND

EUROPEAN
SCIENCE
FOUNDATION



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(Salamanca, 2005); *Communication, Knowledge, and Memory in Early Modern Spain* (Philadelphia, 2004); *Corre manuscrito: una historia cultural del Siglo de Oro* (Madrid, 2001); *Portugal no tempo dos Filipes: política, cultura, representações, 1580–1668* (Lisbon, 2000).

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Lives of Images (London, 2001); *Infelicities: Representations of the Exotic* (Baltimore and London, 1998).

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General editor's preface

The four volumes of this series represent the synthesis of works from 'Cultural Exchange in Europe, 1400–1700', a research programme sponsored by the European Science Foundation and financed by eighteen councils for research from seventeen countries. The adventure began in January 1997 when its originators decided to conduct an international investigation of the cultural roots of modern Europe. Research has increased considerably since this programme began and identifying the origins of the European identity has become a fundamental issue at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Ultimately, our programme brought together over sixty regular members, plus a few dozen individuals who participated in one or more of our group meetings. It was a real linguistic Tower of Babel including specialists from various disciplines: history, art, architecture, theatre, literature, linguistics, folklore, clothing and dance. We have recruited well beyond the borders of the European Union, from St Petersburg to Chicago by way of Istanbul, although it was not always possible for every geographical location to be fully represented in each of our four groups.

This series is devoted to four major themes: religion; the city; communication and information; the conception of man and the use of material goods. The four volumes collectively include about a third of the papers presented throughout the programme.¹ Most have been discussed collectively, revised, and sometimes rewritten.

¹ Many other contributions prepared for this programme have appeared or will appear elsewhere: Eszter Andor and István György Tóth (eds.), *Frontiers of Faith: Religious Exchange and the Constitution of Religious Identities, 1400–1750* (Budapest: Central European University/ESF, 2001); José Pedro Paiva (ed.), *Religious Ceremonials and*

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General editor's preface

It was not always easy to conceptualise our theme collectively. The most difficult and time-consuming task was to get scholars to understand each other unambiguously when employing such apparently clear concepts as 'culture', which means different things in different languages and cultural traditions. Our first major task was simply to discover whether or not a European culture existed between 1400 and 1700, an intensely conflictual and profoundly tragic period which seemed to be characterised by ruptures rather than creation. From 1517, when Luther broke with Roman Catholicism, until the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, a series of terrible religious wars drowned the continent in blood, ending the medieval dream of a united Christendom. This age of intolerance was also one of fundamental inequality, particularly with respect to birth and sex, because any woman was considered fundamentally inferior to any man. Not only was the continent divided into at least five different cultural areas – the Atlantic, the Baltic, the Mediterranean, central Europe and eastern Europe – but also, and everywhere, those frontiers established in men's minds – both visible and invisible – conflicted with any residual hopes of unity, whether expressed in terms of imperial ideology, papal universalism, or Thomas More's humanistic Utopia, all of them swept away after 1520 by a wave of persecutions.²

And yet this very same Europe also bequeathed us powerful roots for the slow and difficult construction of a collective sensibility. Our research has unearthed traces of underlying unities, despite (or because of) formidable obstacles. This stubborn growth in some ways resembled an earlier process described by a prominent medievalist as the 'Europeanization of Europe'.³ They have given substance and meaning to my working hypothesis: that European culture from 1400 to 1700 contained expressions of hidden cohesion against a background

Images: Power and Social Meaning (1400–1750) (Coimbra: Palimage, 2002). A volume on translations will be edited by Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia.

² Robert Muchembled, 'Frontières vives: la naissance du Sujet en Europe (xve–xviiie siècle)', introduction to Eszter Andor and István György Tóth (eds.), *Frontiers of Faith*, pp. 1–8.

³ Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950–1350* (London, 1993).

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of intense conflicts. If those conflicts were destabilising, they also created a dialectic which contributed to the overall advance of European civilisation.⁴ Following Norbert Elias's argument, I believe that every human society is constantly seeking to attain a 'balance of power' through a mechanism of 'reciprocal dependency' which produces a clear evolutionary trend. Culture is a symbolic arena for both collective negotiations and the fashioning of the Self.⁵ The enormous importance of the Self in today's Europe (and in the United States) is the result of a major cultural change which began during the Renaissance. In the face of the tragedy of real life, this new individualism provided a fresh means of expressing the continent's collective vitality and produced a growing conviction of its superiority and differences from all other places and people in the world.⁶

The 'culture' analysed in this series may be defined as that which simultaneously holds a society together and distinguishes it from other societies. If the Europe of 1400–1700 had little obvious regard for human rights, it did at least prefigure the time when they would be important. The humanistic lights which glimmered from time to time in the two dark and bloodstained centuries after 1520 were never to be completely extinguished. The Enlightenment revived them and honoured their Renaissance origins. But the tragic events that polluted its soil during the first half of the twentieth century proved that the Old Continent was not yet fully free from intolerance and persecution.

I should like to thank Wim Blockmans, who warmly supported the creation of this research programme; the European Science Foundation for its constant help; the eighteen institutions which provided generous funding over four years;⁷ all the scholars who participated

⁴ Robert Muchembled, 'Echanges, médiations, mythes unitaires, 1400–1700', plenary conference address, published in the programme's *Newsletter* no. 1 (2000), pp. 7–26.

⁵ Norbert Elias, *The Society of Individuals*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford, 1991).

⁶ Robert Muchembled, *A History of the Devil: From the Middle Ages to the Present* (Cambridge, 2003); *L'Orgasme et l'Occident: une histoire du plaisir du XVII^e siècle à nos jours* (Paris, 2005, forthcoming in English translation).

⁷ Austria: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften; Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung (FWF); Belgium: Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique (FNRS) / Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek – Vlaanderen

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in the experience, notably E. William Monter without whom this series would probably not have been published, and the late István György Tóth, codirector of volume 1, who passed away unexpectedly on 14 July 2005; and last but not least Cambridge University Press for producing four superb books proving the great vitality of past and present European culture.

Robert Muchembled

Chair of the ESF programme

'Cultural Exchange in Europe, 1400–1700'

(FWO); Denmark: Statens Humanistiske Forskningsrad; Finland: Suomen Akatemia / Finlands Akademi; Germany: Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG); Greece: National Hellenic Research Foundation (NHRF); Hungary: Hungarian Academy of Sciences; Italy: Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR); Netherlands: Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO); Norway: Norges Forskningsråd; Poland: Polska Akademia Nauk (PAN); Portugal: Instituto de Cooperação Científica e Tecnológica Internacional (ICCTI); Slovenia: The Slovenian Science Foundation; Spain: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC); Sweden: Humanistik Samhällsvetenskapliga Forskningsradet (HSFR) / Kungliga Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien (KVHAA); Switzerland: Schweizerischer Nationalfonds zur Förderung der Wissenschaftlichen Forschung (SNF); United Kingdom: The British Academy.

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Preface

This volume has been organised through a series of meetings in Strasbourg, Lisbon, Naples, Paris, Amsterdam and Leibnitz, Austria, in which historians from different countries defined the project and discussed their research. Our starting point was a shared interest in information and communication: we created a team dedicated to this issue inside the European Science Foundation project on Cultural Exchange in Europe, 1400–1700, launched by Robert Muchembled in 1999.

A collective book is always the result of a tension between aims and possibilities. We soon realised that the study of correspondence in its different dimensions on a European scale would be much more efficient than a loose and fragmented study on information and communication. The volume became coherent and we managed to integrate the theoretical discussions on the broader issue of communication, which helped to reshape our chapters.

The book also benefited from the general framework of the project on cultural exchange and from the different researchers who shared our discussions. The final volume does not include all the contributions collected over the years, because we decided to focus on the main aspects of correspondence, trying both to reinforce connections and to avoid repetitions. Thus, the chapters are a result of a long process of discussion and exchange between the authors.

We would like to thank the European Science Foundation for their support of the several meetings, which enabled us to organise this experimental project across European academic frontiers. We are especially grateful to William Monter, who was always available and played a major role in the final editing of the texts.

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Preface

This volume is dedicated to the memory of István György Tóth, a brilliant researcher and friend, with whom we shared other initiatives, who was an outstanding example of a creative intellectual and productive academic. He left an unforgettable imprint as a cooperative, gentle and humorous person with whom it was a real pleasure to work.

Francisco Bethencourt and Florike Egmond