

Negotiating power: the Viceroyalty of Peru and the Spanish Crown in the second half of the 17th century

Responsible researcher: Margarita Suárez

Research assistants: Augusto Espinoza, Javier Jiménez and Brenda Contreras

Department of Humanities - History Section

The 17th century has been considered as the period of the political consensus in colonial America. The consolidation of the American power elite during the 17th century was a parallel process to the continuous weakening of monarchical power in the Indies (New World), which resulted in significant concessions at economic and political level to such an extent that a reform of the "colonial pact" was considered. However, there were especially dangerous and disruptive circumstances within the game of colonial "powers". In this context, the project aims to study the mechanisms of political balance in the colonial Peru during the Habsburg, through the study of the government of viceroy Count of Castellar, who was deposed by the King in 1678. The position of a viceroy was never before deposed, and as a result, the deposition of Castellar, who would upset the political balance, will allow shed light on various substantial aspects of the Hispanic political world and the elements that allowed the political stability in the colonial Peru. This research will use the voluminous documentation generated by his *juicio de residencia* (trial of residence), as well as the correspondence of the governor, the papers of *the Condado de Castellar* and those who are in the notaries of Lima. Therefore, it is a major project.

The deposition of Castellar can shed light on various substantial aspects of the Hispanic political world in America. First, it highlights the fact that the King decided, for first time in Peru, the deposition of a viceroy, that is, to depose himself, since the viceroy was the alter ego of the monarch. This "regal suicide" for Castellar is an indicator that the viceroy would have transgressed the limits of the practices of power agreed before the eyes of the center of the Empire. Likewise, Castellar was accused of sharing offices and districts among the members of his entourage and disregarding eminent Peruvians, to the point that the King decided that, onwards, it would be prohibited that viceroys in Hispanic America distribute offices among their relatives and servants. However, before Castellar all the viceroys in Peru and New Spain had done it, and this practice was fundamental in the Crony system and the "gift culture" that held the power of the viceroy. Why did then the king take such privileges to his representatives? What did Castellar do the king in order to take a very drastic measure? Finally, the actions of Castellar seriously damaged relations agreed with the power elite to interfere in economic spheres that were previously controlled by others: Does he exceed the use of "the economy of favor" or, simply, was he a corrupt viceroy? This case lets again discuss the relevance of talking about "corruption".

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The case of Castellar's dismissal will shed light on several major aspects of politics in Spanish America. First of all, this draws attention to the fact that

the King decided to dismiss a viceroy for the first time in Peru, which was tantamount to dismissing himself, for the viceroy was the alter ego of the King. In the case of Castellar, this 'royal suicide' indicates that the imperial centre believed the Viceroy had gone beyond the limits of the power practices reached by consensus. Castellar was likewise accused of distributing positions and *corregimientos* amongst the members of his entourage and of ignoring the Peruvian worthies, to the point that the King decided that in Spanish America viceroys would henceforth be forbidden to distribute positions amongst their relatives and retainers. But all viceroys in Peru and New Spain had done so before Castellar, and this practice was the linchpin of the patron-client system and of the "gift culture" that underpinned the power a viceroy had. Why, then did the King deprive his representatives of this prerogative? What did that Castellar do that made the King take such a drastic and unprecedented step? Finally, Castellar's conduct seriously impaired the relations established by consensus with the power elite when he intervened in the economic sphere that had been heretofore controlled by others. Did he go overboard in his use of the 'economy of favour exchanges,' or was he instead just a corrupt viceroy? This case thus entails once more a discussion of how pertinent it is to talk of 'corruption' in the Spanish colonial administration.