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Regional, International, and Transatlantic Relations From the Iberian Peninsula to the World

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Preface

This volume, *Regional, International, and Transatlantic Relations from the Iberian Peninsula to the World*, emerges from the ongoing scholarly and institutional work of the Association for Contemporary Iberian Studies (ACIS). Aligned with its mission to foster critical dialogue and interdisciplinary exchange, ACIS hosts an annual conference that gathers scholars from diverse academic fields to examine the contemporary and historical challenges shaping the Iberian world. This publication features a curated selection of peer-reviewed papers presented at the conference, offering a representative cross-section of current research on the regional, international, and transatlantic dynamics that originate in, influence, or intersect with the Iberian Peninsula.

ACIS actively champions inter- and transdisciplinary approaches, underscoring its commitment to moving beyond traditional academic silos to better engage with the complex realities of the Iberian world. Rather than limiting inquiry to singular disciplines like history, literature, or political science, ACIS fosters cross-disciplinary dialogue that spans sociology, cultural studies, economics, international relations, philosophy, and the arts. This integrative model enables deeper, more nuanced analysis of the social, cultural, and political forces shaping the Iberian Peninsula and its global entanglements. It encourages research that is both conceptually innovative and attuned to contemporary challenges, mainly through the exploration of how local and regional dynamics in Spain and Portugal intersect with national narratives, and transatlantic exchanges, particularly with Latin America and Africa. These intersections bring to light the lasting legacies of colonialism, the evolution of post-imperial ties, the negotiation of cultural identities, and the strategic roles of Iberian nations within broader global networks.

In the contemporary world, the themes addressed in this volume resonate strongly. Issues such as political and cultural diplomacy, regional development, colonial and postcolonial narratives, and South Atlantic geopolitics remain central to international relations and global cultural flows. Whether through the promotion of Iberian cinema, the revival of regional languages and traditions, or the geopolitical

positioning of Portugal and Spain within European and transatlantic frameworks, the Iberian Peninsula continues to be a vital site of dialogue and exchange. The topics explored here contribute to a broader understanding of how local and historical specificities shape, and are shaped by, global trends and challenges.

This compilation brings together a diverse group of scholars from across the globe, highlighting its truly international scope. The contributors hail from countries such as Portugal, Spain, Japan, Brazil, Mexico, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Turkey, with academic affiliations extending from Scotland to the United States. This broad geographical representation not only enriches the perspectives offered throughout the chapters but also underscores the global relevance of the themes explored, ranging from cultural identity and political resistance to transnational cooperation and decolonial knowledge. The wide-ranging backgrounds of the authors reflect a shared commitment to interdisciplinary dialogue and a plurality of viewpoints, reinforcing the volume's aim to foster critical exchange across borders and disciplines.

The target audience includes scholars, researchers, and graduate students in the fields of Iberian Studies, Cultural Studies, Political Science, International Relations, and History. It also appeals to policymakers, educators, and cultural practitioners interested in understanding the evolving local, national, and transnational dynamics of the Iberian Peninsula. The volume's interdisciplinary approach and wide geographical scope make it particularly valuable for those engaged in comparative and regional studies, as well as anyone exploring the historical and contemporary intersections between Europe, Latin America, and the broader Atlantic world.

Local and regional studies have received increased attention in Iberian scholarship, particularly through decolonial and postcolonial lenses that foreground the region's internal diversity and potential contributions to both national and international development. These approaches challenge historically centralized narratives of power and highlight the significance of subaltern perspectives, from small cities in northern Portugal and the autonomous communities of Galicia and Navarre to Lusophone communities in Africa and Latin America, offering a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of the Iberian world's cultural and political complexities. Additionally, international and transnational approaches enrich this publication by positioning the Iberian Peninsula within a complex web of cross-border interactions that transcend conventional nation-state frameworks. These perspectives illuminate the movement of people, ideas, cultural practices, and political currents that have historically influenced, and continue to shape, the region's evolving identity and global significance. By engaging with case studies that encompass diplomatic relations, migratory flows, artistic exchanges, and shared colonial legacies, the book highlights the deeply interconnected nature of Iberian experiences within broader global processes.

Furthermore, Iberian and transatlantic studies have recently shifted toward a more critical, decolonial framework that challenges Western-centered narratives and highlights the enduring structures of colonial power. Influenced by thinkers like Aníbal Quijano and Walter D. Mignolo, this approach emphasizes the “coloniality of power” and seeks to center marginalized knowledge systems, particularly those of Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. New scholarship is reexamining Afro-Iberian histories, the Portuguese Empire’s global reach, and lesser-studied Spanish imperial territories such as North Africa. There is also a growing focus on how colonialism shaped identities through gender, race, and sexuality, as well as how literature, visual culture, and environmental histories reveal and resist colonial legacies. These trends mark a transformative moment in the field, aimed not only at reinterpreting the past but also at confronting ongoing neocolonial structures in the present.

This volume offers a comprehensive examination of the Iberian Peninsula from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century, combining local and regional perspectives to analyze political, economic, and cultural developments. It presents innovative research on tourism, economic development, and cultural heritage, while also addressing national dynamics through the lens of artistic and cinematic exchanges. A significant focus is placed on memory politics and historical revisionism, particularly regarding the Spanish Civil War and the legacies of Peninsular dictatorships. Intra-Iberian dialogues and cross-border interactions among communities are central to this scholarly volume, highlighting the region’s complex and interconnected history.

In addition, the book highlights international and transnational relations as central themes, examining political, historical, and economic interactions alongside cultural and religious influences. This broader scope situates the Iberian Peninsula within global networks, emphasizing its role in shaping and being shaped by cross-border exchanges and interconnected histories. Typically referring to distinctions between nation-states, their cultures, political systems, values, and institutions, international perspectives emphasize the comparative and often bounded nature of identity, viewing individuals and communities within the framework of their countries of origin or nationality. Through diverse lenses, the chapters explore a range of topics, from Anglo-Iberian political and economic interactions to intra-Iberian cultural connections between Portugal and Spain. On the other hand, transnational approaches, focusing on the flows, connections, and crossings that transcend national borders, are also carefully scrutinized. This perspective highlights how identities, experiences, and cultures are shaped by migration, diaspora, global media, and cultural hybridity. Rather than looking at countries as isolated units, transnationalism examines how people and ideas move and interact across spaces, often creating new, hybrid forms of identity.

Finally, the volume engages critically with colonial and postcolonial studies, which provide essential tools for ground-breaking research on the colonial period by challenging dominant historical narratives and introducing alternative perspectives that have long been marginalized. These fields encourage scholars to revisit and critically analyze colonial archives, oral histories, and cultural practices through decolonial and non-Western theoretical frameworks. By doing so, they enable the reconstruction of silenced or overlooked experiences, particularly those of colonized peoples, and open space for new narratives that reflect the complexity and plurality of historical realities. This approach not only uncovers previously ignored themes but also reframes well-known events, institutions, and power structures, helping to rewrite history in a way that is more inclusive, nuanced, and representative of diverse voices. In this sense, several chapters engage critically with colonial and postcolonial legacies, incorporating both theoretical insights and grounded case studies that address enduring inequalities and epistemic dialogues across the Atlantic and beyond, particularly transatlantic influences and exchanges between Iberia and Peru, Brazil, Cape-Verde, and Angola.

This collection is organized into four thematic sections that reflect the diversity and complexity of contemporary Iberian studies. Section One opens the volume with the topic, Local and Regional Affairs: Political, Economic and Cultural Challenges, encompassing four chapters devoted to local tourism, regional economy, political measures, cultural exchanges and religious influences. The first chapter by Makiko Narita examines the role of investment promotion agencies (IPAs) in influencing enterprise location decisions, focusing on Navarre, a Spanish region with strong economic performance despite its small population. Drawing on comparisons between Catalonia and the Basque Country, the chapter highlights how IPAs shape business settlement patterns by addressing factors such as labor costs, workforce quality, market potential, and institutional support. It underscores the strategic value of tailored policies and institutional engagement in fostering regional economic growth.

In Chapter Two, Carla Sequeira and Joana Lencart draw attention to a growing transformation in academia, from a traditional producer of knowledge to a collaborative partner with local communities. Focusing on the case of Gandra (Paredes), they examine how a partnership between the University of Porto and the municipal government fostered a heritage-based tourism initiative. This collaboration resulted in the 2023 publication of *São Miguel da Gandra throughout History*, a monograph that integrates scholarly research with community contributions to preserve cultural heritage and support sustainable regional development.

In the third chapter, Noa Amigo traces the activities of the folklore group *Cantigas e Agarimos*, particularly its *Teatro Galego* section, which was instrumental in preserving and promoting Galician identity and language during Franco's dictatorship by staging culturally significant performances that defied repression. The

study underscores the need for further research into the social and political role of folkloric theater in twentieth-century Galicia.

This section concludes with a chapter by Jesus Benitez-Baleato and Alfonso López Rodríguez, which highlights Galicia's enduring role as a cultural and political bridge between Spain and Portugal. Using an institutionalist perspective, the authors argue that examining regions like Galicia allows for a shift away from nation-centered narratives, offering deeper insight into the Iberian Peninsula's internal diversity and historical complexity. Their analysis reinforces the case for an Iberian Studies approach that embraces the Peninsula's linguistic, historical, and regional plurality through a regional lens.

Section Two, *National and International Perspectives on Cinema*, explores how film negotiates identity and cultural representation within both Iberian and global contexts. Comprising two chapters, it illustrates cinema's dual role as a national and transnational medium, capable of reinterpreting cultural icons and addressing complex socio-political themes across borders. Filomena Antunes Sobral's chapter focuses on *Our Consul in Havana* and its portrayal of José Maria d'Eça de Queiroz as a diplomat and humanist. Antunes Sobral blends historical fact with artistic interpretation to explore de Queiroz's anti-slavery stance and moral dilemmas in nineteenth-century Cuba. The film presents a nuanced figure navigating colonial politics and human rights, while the study reflects on biographical cinema's influence on public memory and cultural representation. It also calls for comparative research on cinematic portrayals of Iberian writers and their impact on cultural heritage and audience perception.

By contrast, Néstor Muñoz Torrecilla examines Pedro Almodóvar's *All About My Mother* (1999), focusing on its treatment of identity, gender, and emotion through international cinematic influences. The film redefines melodrama by blending Hollywood elements with a distinctly Spanish, humanistic aesthetic, using emotionally rich characters to explore themes of motherhood, love, and identity beyond traditional norms. Through intertextual references and a layered narrative, it amplifies marginalized voices while offering a cultural and political critique, especially of social inclusion and Spain's public health system. Almodóvar ultimately crafts a cinematic language that turns personal stories into universal narratives, positioning film as a socially transformative medium.

Section Three broadens the scope to inter- and extra-Iberian dialogues. Devoted to *International and Transnational Perspectives: Political, Economic and Cultural Relations*, this section explores the Iberian Peninsula's multifaceted interactions beyond its borders, through the lens of cultural, political, and philosophical dynamics. Collectively, these chapters illustrate how international and transnational approaches illuminate the Iberian Peninsula's embeddedness in broader intellectual and political currents.

In a similar fashion, Veronica Tartabini examines in Chapter Seven, how Carmelite mysticism, especially the thought of St. John of the Cross and Teresa of Ávila, continues to influence contemporary secular culture in Spain. The chapter highlights their Christ-centered vision of human dignity rooted in divine love, which transcends social and religious boundaries. Artistic representations, such as Salvador Dalí's *Christ of Saint John of the Cross*, reflect this mystical tradition and its relevance to modern existential concerns. The text argues that their philosophy, emphasizing the union with God and the rejection of materialism, has contributed to Spain's legal and cultural understanding of human dignity, blending spiritual and secular perspectives.

In the following chapter, Halil Bilecen analyzes the intersection of Johann Gottlieb Fichte's nationalism and Hannah Arendt's theory of totalitarianism to better understand Francoist Spain and the dangers of modern nationalist movements. While Fichte envisioned a nation based on individual freedom and shared purpose, Franco's regime suppressed regional identities and dissent, aligning more closely with Arendt's model of totalitarianism. The chapter warns that today's rising nationalism risks repeating these authoritarian patterns if diversity and individual liberties are undermined.

Carla Ribeiro examines, in Chapter Nine, António Ferro's influential role in early twentieth-century cultural diplomacy between Portugal and Spain, showing how cultural exchange was used to manage political tensions. Despite moments of rapprochement, Portuguese fears of Spanish dominance often hindered deeper cooperation. While Ferro promoted shared cultural initiatives under the Estado Novo, he also worked to protect Portuguese identity. His departure in 1949 marked a decline in cultural engagement, as rising anti-Spanish sentiment led to a more defensive diplomatic stance.

Finally, in Chapter Ten, Nick Sharman explores land reform within the broader context of the liberal revolution, highlighting how economic and ideological transformations influenced national development and revealed cross-border parallels. In nineteenth-century Spain, liberal reforms aimed to dismantle feudal structures and establish a free-market economy, but widespread resistance, especially from rural communities, slowed and reshaped these efforts. Drawing on Karl Polanyi's theory, the text shows how campesinos and allied groups opposed the disruption of communal traditions, resulting in delayed reforms, local compromises, and the persistence of collective land use. This resistance ultimately led to a uniquely Spanish path to modernization, blending liberal individualism with enduring communal practices.

Lastly, Section Four focuses on Transatlantic Influences and Crossings, exploring the intricate historical and contemporary connections between the Iberian Peninsula and regions across the Atlantic, particularly Latin America and Africa. Through a series of case studies, the section traces how Iberian ideas, political strategies,

and cultural practices have both influenced and been reshaped by transatlantic exchanges. In Chapter Eleven, Manuel López Forjas examines Joaquín Costa's engagement with Peruvian models of agrarian collectivism, showing how Latin American ideas shaped Spanish reformist thought. Drawing on colonial thinkers like Polo de Ondegardo and José de Acosta, Costa advocated a moderate collectivism that challenged capitalism while preserving private property. His historically rooted liberal vision of land reform highlights the ongoing relevance of collectivist traditions in contemporary land debates.

Chapter Twelve, by Jeferson Mendes, examines the Portuguese Crown's strategic efforts to occupy, fortify, and populate Santa Catarina Island in Brazil using Azorean and Madeiran settlers as part of a broader plan to secure its American territories. Despite decades of investment in defense infrastructure, the island was surrendered without resistance during the eighteenth-century conflict between Portugal and Spain, as part of the global Seven Years' War. The failure to defend the island led to severe consequences for Portuguese military personnel, who were punished and imprisoned, only regaining their status years later due to political shifts.

In Chapter Thirteen, Nadia Loureiro and António Teixeira analyze NATO's increasing engagement with Africa—particularly Angola—within the context of the South Atlantic's rising strategic importance. They argue that Portugal plays a complex yet pivotal role by leveraging historical and linguistic ties, while Angola asserts its autonomy through diversified alliances and regional leadership. The chapter advocates for a model of trilateral cooperation grounded in co-ownership, sovereignty, and equity, offering a potential blueprint for NATO's broader global outreach.

In Chapter Fourteen, Raphael Ribeiro explores the concept of *Orixality* as an aesthetic-epistemological space within Brazilian popular philosophy, focusing on Afro-diasporic religious traditions like Umbanda and Candomblé. He examines how these traditions shape contemporary cultural identities and serve as a form of resistance to colonial legacies. *Orixality* is presented as a dynamic, counter-colonial concept that integrates diverse cultural and philosophical elements, promoting Brazil's cultural plurality. The chapter emphasizes the contributions of theorists such as Marcelo Moraes, Luiz Antonio Simas, and Rafael Haddock Lobo, who link Afro-diasporic traditions to urban experiences and broader cultural expressions, helping to preserve and reinvent Afro-Brazilian traditions in a postcolonial context.

In the following chapter, Neblina Orrico and Camilo Negri explore the enduring effects of cognitive colonization, arguing that Western epistemologies still dominate academia while Indigenous, African, and peripheral knowledges are marginalized. Drawing on postcolonial theorists such as Walter Dignolo and Sérgio Costa, they call for institutional decolonization through curriculum reform, support for marginalized histories, and frameworks like the "sociology of absences". The chapter

urges the dismantling of structural inequalities to foster more inclusive and pluralistic knowledge systems.

In the final chapter, Jorge Ribeiro explores *batuko*, a traditional Cape Verdean music and dance form, as a dynamic expression of cultural identity, resistance, and historical memory. Rooted in the experiences of marginalized groups like the *badius*, *batuko* enabled performers—especially women—to assert autonomy and challenge colonial power. Ribeiro frames *batuko* not as a static remnant of African heritage, but as a Creole cultural form shaped by colonial and postcolonial histories. Its evolution embodies social imagination, community affirmation, and political critique in both Cape Verde and its diaspora, closing the section with a powerful reflection on music as resistance.

To conclude, the contributions gathered in this volume underscore the critical value of local, regional, national, and transnational lenses in deepening our understanding of the Iberian Peninsula's intricate historical and contemporary landscapes. By weaving together diverse disciplinary approaches and case studies, the book reflects ACIS's commitment to crossing academic and geographical boundaries. It not only enriches the field of Iberian Studies with multi-scalar, comparative insights but also positions the Iberian world as a key site for examining broader global transformations. In doing so, this volume affirms the enduring relevance of Iberian experiences in addressing complex questions of identity, governance, cultural memory, and international relations in today's interconnected world.

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