



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Itinerant shelves: a glimpse of informal book trade in Real de Chiapa (New Spain, XVII)

Reyes Elizondo, A.E.; Arnooi, W. van; Dlabáčová, A; Geleijns, E.; Schaeps, J.; Warnar, G.; Zanen, S. van

Citation

Reyes Elizondo, A. E. (2020). Itinerant shelves: a glimpse of informal book trade in Real de Chiapa (New Spain, XVII). In W. van Arnooi, A. Dlabáčová, E. Geleijns, J. Schaeps, G. Warnar, & S. van Zanen (Eds.), *Om het Boek* (pp. 1-6). Hilversum: Verloren. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3256443>

Version: Accepted Manuscript

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3256443>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Itinerant shelves: a glimpse of informal book trade in

Real de Chiapa (New Spain, XVII)¹

Andrea Reyes Elizondo, Leiden University²

In 1636, captain Cristóbal De Velasco presented to a notary an inventory of books he had or had owned following an edict of the Inquisition. In the severely damaged document, De Velasco recounted the books he had sold to Alonso Larios, the brother superior of the convent of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy in Real de Chiapa (Captaincy General of Guatemala). These volumes had been in the possession of Diego Sánchez de Pinos, an Inquisition commissioner who had named De Velasco as executor. This document presents us with a glimpse of the informal book trade that took place in New Spain. Especially of interest is that this exchange took place in the periphery of the viceroyalty, attesting to the books that men of the Church deemed necessary for their work and the networks to which they belonged.

The different paths of book circulation in the Viceroyalty of New Spain can present a patchy geographical overview which focuses on the centres of power such as Mexico City and Puebla, a large Archbishopric.³ Nevertheless, some archives also provide a glimpse of informal book trade in the periphery of the Viceroyalty, as with this case from the southern city of Real de Chiapa.

Real de Chiapa was a Spanish city in the Captaincy General of Guatemala, more than a thousand kilometers from Mexico City (fig.1). It was located in what is now San Cristóbal de las Casas in the state of Chiapas in Mexico and was for long the capital of the surrounding region. The most important city in the whole captaincy was however Guatemala City, at 500 kilometers from Real de Chiapa. During the second half of the seventeenth century, Guatemala City saw the foundation of a university (1676) and the introduction of a printing press (1660). In comparison, the university in Mexico City was established in 1553 and the first press in 1539.

¹ I thank Pedro Rueda Ramírez and Joaquín Martos-Crespo for kindly sharing their records from Puebla and Chiapas with me.

² This short chapter appeared in Dutch in Anrooij, W. van. and Dlabáčová, A. *Om het boek: cultuurhistorische bespiegelingen over boeken en mensen*. Hilversum: Verloren, 2020. I thank the editors and publisher for allowing me to share the original in English.

³ The Viceroyalty of New Spain was divided in eight kingdoms (New Spain, New Galicia, Captaincy General of Guatemala, New Vizcaya, New Kingdom of Leon, New Mexico, New Extremadura, and New Santander) and four captaincies (the Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Santo Domingo).



Fig. 1 New Spain in Juan López' Map of North America (1801), BNE.⁴

The document at the heart of this paper is dated 1636 (fig.2). At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Real de Chiapa had a cathedral where Diego Sánchez de Pinos was the reverend superior, and a convent of the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy where Alonso Larios was brother superior. It is unclear if both were in their positions at the same time given that before 1636, Sánchez de Pinos had died and left captain Cristóbal de Velasco as his executor who sold thirteen volumes to Larios.

⁴ <https://datos.bne.es/edicion/bica0000002841.html>

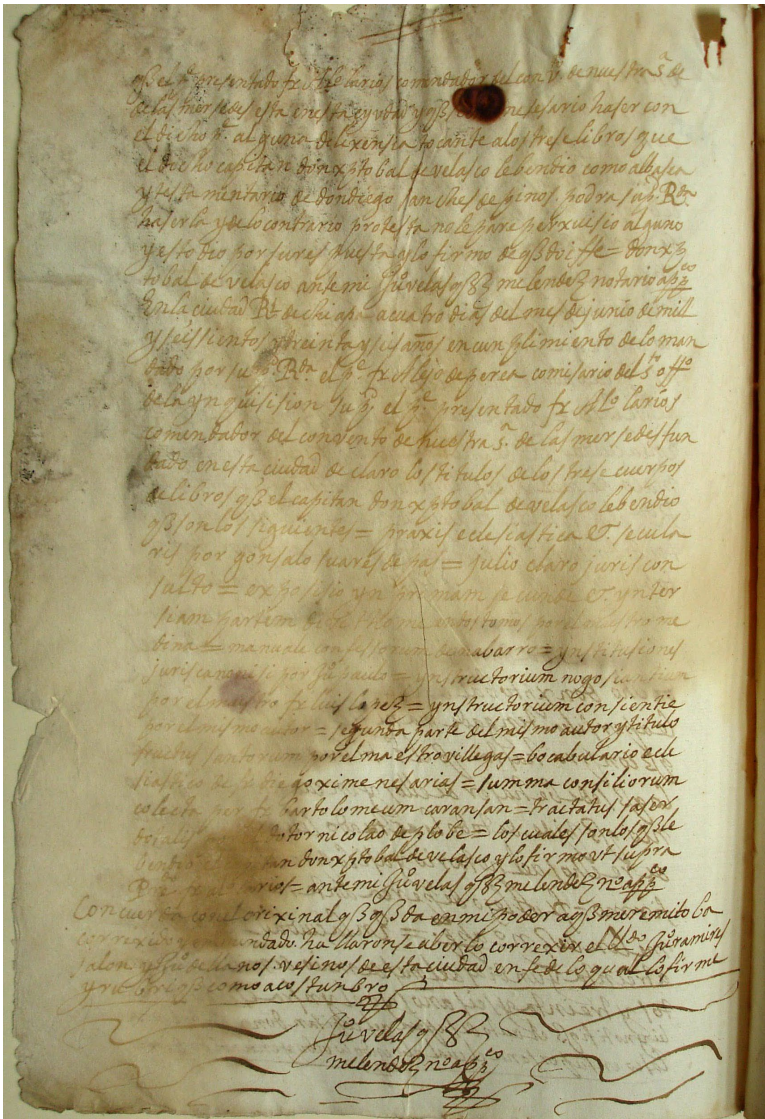


Fig. 2. The list of books, AGN, Inquisición 1579, 145, exp. 28.

Inquisition edicts called upon the faithful to submit a list of the books they had in their possession. At a notary, De Velasco made his list of the books he had, mentioning three unnamed romance novels he recalls his son had, as well as the books sold to Larios. Due to missing pages and water damage, the books De Velasco owned as well as those from his son Francisco are unknown. The thirteen volumes sold to Larios are still visible and although the bibliography is lacking, the information provided allows us to reconstruct the possible titles and most common sizes:

1. praxis ecclesiastica et secularis por gonsalo suares de pas (Gonzali Suarez De Paz, *Praxis ecclesiasticae et secularis cum actionum formulis*, 2^o)
2. julio claro juris consulto (Julius Clarus, *Opera omnia*, 2^o)

3. expositio yn primam secundi et yntersiam partem divi thome en dos tomos por el maestro medina (Bartholome de Medina, *Expositio in primam secundae angelici doctoris divi Thomae Aquinatis*, 2º)
4. manuale confessorum de navarro (Martin de Azpilcueta, *Enchiridion, sive Manuale confessoriorum et poenitentium*, 4º, 8º, 12º)
5. instituciones juris canonisi por Juan paulo (Giovanni Paolo Lancellotti, *Institutiones Juris Canonici*, 4º)
6. instructorium nogosiantium por el maestro fr luis lopez (Luis López, *Instructorium Negotiantium*, 2º)
7. instructorium consientie por el mismo autor (Luis López, *Instructorium conscientiae*, 2º)
8. segunda parte del mismo autor y titulo (Luis López, *Instructorii conscientiae, secunda pars*, 8º)
9. fructus sanctorum por el maestro villegas (Alonso de Villegas, *Flos Sanctorum, y Historia general, de la vida y hechos de Iesu Christo*, 2º)
10. vocabulario eclesiastico de fr diego ximenes arias (Diego Jiménez Arias, *Lexicon ecclesiasticum latino hispanicum*, 2º)
11. summa consiliorum colecta por fr bartolomeum caransan (Bartolomé Carranza de Miranda, *Summa omnium conciliorum*, 8º)
12. tractatus saserdotalis por el dotor nicolao de plove (Thomas Aquinas, *Tractatus sacerdotalis, d. Nicolao de Plove*, 4º, 12º, 16º)

The books sold were predominantly in Latin, covering canonical law and theology, and half of them were most likely in folio. The index against which these books would have been checked was Zapata's version from 1632.⁵ As one would expect of a commissioner from the Inquisition, Sánchez de Pino's books do not appear in it. Yet these books might have not been all the ones he owned.

The incomplete and damaged document is a copy of the original elaborated in Real de Chiapa. Book-related edicts required regional commissioners to send reports to Mexico City, where many are still located nowadays. The original and complete version might be in Chiapas. However, the state does not have a colonial notarial archive and the diocesan archive has few documents prior to 1700. Other sources, mainly from the inquisitional archives, provide further information on our characters.

⁵ Antonio Zapata. *Novus Index Librorum Prohibitorum Et Expurgatorum*. Hispali: ex typographaeo Francisci de Lyra, 1632.

Diego Sánchez de Pinos was born in New Spain in an unknown date and place. He was a *licenciado* or *bachiller* indicating he had studied at university, most likely in Mexico City. In 1619 he was named commissioner of the Inquisition in Real de Chiapa and in 1624 he became the treasurer of the cathedral.⁶ In fact, there are records that in his role as commissioner, Sánchez de Pinos read out edicts of the Inquisition in public, very similar to the one that caused the drafting of the list where his books are mentioned.

Alonso Larios was the brother superior of the convent of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy in the city of Real de Chiapa. Another brother of this order, Jeronimo Larios, purportedly wrote in 1609 ‘Arte de la Lengua Mame’, a grammar book on the Mayan language Mam.⁷ It is unknown if both Larios were related, nevertheless, Alonso appears two times more in the Inquisition records. The first is in 1628 and concerns a curious case in which an impersonator claiming to be the archbishop of Myra instigated a ceremony in Guatemala to crown the Virgin Mary and give out indulgences. Larios read a text from the pulpit during this unsanctioned ceremony.⁸ The second notice is from 1637, one year after the list of books was drafted, where he is named as a notary for the Inquisition.⁹ Clearly, his mishap on the heretic ceremony did not damage his career options.

Lastly there is captain Cristóbal de Velasco, who belonged to the powerful De Velasco clan. The records for Real de Chiapa show Cristóbal de Velasco as *regidor* (municipality commissioner) in 1620 and 1637.¹⁰ The De Velasco family was one of the lineages which controlled Real De Chiapa between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.¹¹ It is therefore unsurprising that a member of this family would act as executor for a commissioner of the Inquisition and be well connected with the elite of Real de Chiapa.

The subjects of the books reflect the professional interests of Sánchez de Pinos and Larios, as well as a resemblance with some books owned by men with similar professions. For example, the books left after the passing of Inquisitor Gonzalo Messía Lobo in Mexico City in 1625 contain a volume by ‘Julio Claro’ and three by ‘Nabarro’ (Azpilcueta).¹² In 1620, Domingo Lázaro de Arregui, a cleric in Tepic (Nueva Galicia), sent a list of the books he owned including the Spanish version of Medina’s book: *Instruccion de curas por. fr. br.me de medina*.¹³ Also in 1620, the notary

⁶ S. Alberro, *Inquisición y sociedad en México, 1571-1700*. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2015 and Archivo General de la Nación, Méxicio (AGN), Inquisición, vol. 86, exp. 108.

⁷ J. Toribio Medina, *La imprenta en Mexico: 1539-1821, vol. 2* (Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1965).

⁸ *Boletín del Archivo General de la Nación, tomo IV, vol.3* (Mexico: 1933), pp. 344-378.

⁹ AGN, Inquisición, (cajas) 1572, exp. 27.

¹⁰ J. Martos-Crespo, El ayuntamiento colonial de Ciudad Real de Chiapa. El control de unas pocas familias. Siglos XVI-XVIII, *Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*, 6.2 (2019), pp. 67-84.

¹¹ J. Martos-Crespo, *Venalidad, Poder y Familia. Las Relaciones Sociales de los Alcaldes Mayores y las Elites de Ciudad Real de Chiapa, Siglos XVII-XVIII*, CIESAS: thesis, 2016.

¹² AGN, Inquisición, Vol. 354, Exp. 45, ff. 370r-371r, 504v-506r.

¹³ AGN, Inquisición, Vol. 486, Exp. 5, f. 22r-23r

Francisco de Omaña from San Miguel included in his list the *Manual de Confesores* by De Azpilcueta.¹⁴

There are however stronger differences than similarities. The twelve books in thirteen volumes sold to Larios were solely on canonical law and theology, with the majority of them being in Latin. Messía Lobo's estate lists eighty-two titles in 146 volumes that cover canonical law, theology, history, and the sciences both in Latin and Spanish. In comparison, Lázaro de Arregui's list contains thirty-seven books in thirty-seven volumes on theology, history, science, as well as literary and devotional works, mostly in Spanish but with a few in Latin. Finally, De Omañas list contains 9 titles in 31 volumes both in Spanish and Latin.

Not knowing which other books did Sánchez de Pinos read or owned, it is impossible to assert he was not interested in other reading materials. What the list shows is that informal book trade on certain subjects was most likely to happen between men of the same profession, especially in locations where other buying channels were lacking.

Until the end of the nineteenth century there is no notice of booksellers active in Real de Chiapa.¹⁵ In the seventeenth century there are news of an itinerant merchant active in the region who took consignments from a bookseller in Puebla.¹⁶ We still do not know enough about the trade channels outside of the centre of the viceroyalty. Merchants with a wide variety of wares might have focused on easily salable printed materials although they may have also worked with special orders. However, a couple of heavy folios in Latin were perhaps too much of a risk given the long journey through mountains and jungles. It is likely that Larios could have only got hold of these volumes through a post-mortem sale.

While colonial book history in Latin America is constantly being enriched, informal trade and the stories of how books passed between lesser-known individuals are less-known. This list provides us with a glimpse of informal trade that took place in the periphery of the viceroyalty of New Spain. Whether Larios had read the books before or after acquiring them is a different matter. The Julius Clarus in folio and the other volumes were of such importance to this brother superior in Real de Chiapa that he decided to acquire them. Further tracing similar cases of informal book trade such as this can open possibilities for the study of ownership networks, allowing us to map these traveling books.

¹⁴ *Boletín del Archivo General de la Nación, tomo X, vol. 4* (Mexico; 1939) pp. 681-683.

¹⁵ O. Moreno Gamboa, *Comercio y Circulación de Libros en Nueva España: Dos Autos de la Inquisición en México (1757 y 1802)* (Puebla: Ediciones EyC, 2016).

¹⁶ Archivo General de Notarías del Estado de Puebla (AGNEP), not. 4, año 1622, fol. 290r-291v.