



Asociación Española de Historia Económica

DATOS SOBRE TESIS DOCTORALES

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Título de la Tesis: Three essays in human capital formation. From colonial institutions in the Americas to early Catalan industrialization

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Resumen: This doctoral thesis aims to investigate the role of human capital in some of the most economically dynamic areas under the control of the Hispanic monarchy. The period covered by this study extends from the 18th century, in regions that formed part of the colonial empire during the Old Regime, or in the peninsula itself during the pre-industrial period, to the creation of the 19th-century mass education systems during the transition to the liberal state. First, this research attempts to contribute to the debate on the role of institutions in human capital formation, transmission and persistence. With this objective in mind, an analysis of the case of the Guarani missions, which were established and led by the Jesuits in the 18th century, was performed. Moreover, it

presents new quantitative evidence that encompasses a theoretical framework for reviewing the paradox of human capital and early industrialization in Catalonia from the beginning of the 18th century until the eve of the Civil War. In order to provide new indicators that contribute to a quantitative discussion on economic history, this research focused on the simplest form of human capital: basic literacy (the ability to read and write) and numeracy (the ability to count). After a review of the existing literature linking human capital and economic development in the introduction (Chapter 1), three essays are presented. The first, in Chapter 2, uses the age-heaping methodology to analyse the level of numeracy achieved by the Guarani missions during the 18th century, in which the Jesuits were responsible for educating the indigenous population, within the colonial context of the modern period, and allows for an assessment of the weight of institutions in human capital formation and transmission. The results reveal the high levels of numeracy achieved by the Jesuit missions and a wide diversity of institutions and situations within territories under the colonial rule of the Hispanic kings during the modern period, when the areas with the greatest economic dynamism had some institution that facilitated the transmission of elementary human capital; they also reveal, however, that the more extractive institutions hindered this process. Next, Chapter 3 focuses on Catalonia at the beginning of the 18th century and, using the same age-heaping methodology, examines the level of human capital in a varied sample of Catalan localities and by various occupations and social classes. Early 18th-century Catalonia had arithmetic levels that were relatively high in certain sectors, occupations and social groups and, more importantly, that were comparable to other dynamic areas of Europe. These contributions are consistent with the literature that examined the role that may have been played by useful knowledge in the promotion of innovation in the early phases of the Industrial Revolution to explain how economies embarked upon the path to modern economic growth. The third essay, in Chapter 4, then sets out to study the municipal-scale evolution of literacy rates in Catalonia between 1860 and 1930, for both men and women, in a key period for Catalan society and economy. The results show that in 1860, urban areas of Catalonia had higher literacy rates, although there were notable exceptions, and that the evolution between 1860 and 1900 was marked by a significant improvement that did not lead to increased territorial inequalities unlike the situation in Spain as a whole. Finally, Chapter 5 of the thesis presents some conclusions and proposes that a reassessment of the human capital paradox and early industrialization by means of new quantitative indicators from the European periphery, specifically in the case of Catalonia, may contribute to the debate on the measurement of human capital accumulation and its relationship with economic development.

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