

Scholars and Literati at the University of Salamanca (1218–1800)

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This note is a summary description of the set of scholars and literati who taught at the University of Salamanca from its inception in 1218 to the eve of the Industrial Revolution (1800).

1 THE UNIVERSITY

The origins of the University of Salamanca can be traced back to the 12th century. However the first official documents date from 1218, when, to compete with the University of Palencia created by Alfonso VIII (1212), King Alfonso IX of León granted it the title of *Studium Generale*. Drawing inspiration from the University of Bologna, Salamanca initially gave priority to the teaching of law. In 1254, King Alfonso X gave the university a new institutional framework. He defined the funding system, established new teachings and created the position of librarian. In fact, the University of Salamanca was the first in Europe to have a public library.

The University of Salamanca was not indifferent to the humanist movement that was spreading to other university centers. At the end of the 16th century, the *Escuela de Salamanca* ("School of Salamanca") was formed. The members of the School revived theology, laid the foundations of the modern law of nations, international law and modern economic science, and actively participated in the Council of Trent. When seeking financing for his expedition, Christopher Columbus made his presentation to the King and Queen at the University of Salamanca. The geographers of the time had doubts about Columbus's calculations made for his journey. However, the University of Salamanca always defended the theory of unknown territories in the west and supported Columbus's voyage, believing that new territories could be discovered. In the following century Salamanca initiated a debate on the rights of indigenous peoples, something revolutionary for the time. In the 17th century, the University of Salamanca entered a period of relative decline.

2 SOURCES

We used several sources to compile the list of professors who taught at the University of Salamanca. There are gaps in the records for the first few centuries, so our list is not complete. We relied on books by Arteaga (1917) and Vidal y Diaz (1869), which relate the history of the University of Salamanca and its protagonists. In these two books, in addition to the list of professors who taught, we find a large number of biographies. We also used the *Bulario de la Universidad de Salamanca* 1966 which provides more information on the 14th century. We also consulted the *Diccionario Biográfico electrónico* from the *Real Academia de la Historia* (2018).

3 SOME STATISTICS

Table 1 displays some descriptive statistics. We have information on 1444 scholars. For the first two periods we have virtually no exploitable data. We start having some reliable information from 1348, although the share of people for whom we know the year of birth remains rather low. The period for which we have the most information about birth year is 1527-1617, for which we have data on 40.9

Period		nb. obs	% birth year known	mean age at appoint.	mean age at death	life exp. at 30	
Start	End						
1000	1199	2	0				
1200	1347	3	0				
1348	1449	67	10.4	30	66.3	68	
1450	1526	147	28.6	33.3	68.6	68.1	
1527	1617	269	40.9	34.5	63.4	66.3	
1618	1685	269	31.6	35.2	65.4	65.6	
1686	1733	317	23.7	33.1	68	72	
1734	1800	370	15.7	33.7	69.6	73.9	
1200	1800	1444	26.1	34	66.4	67.7	
		% birth place known	median distance birth-institution	% with Wikipedia	% with Worldcat		
1000	1199	0		0	0		
1200	1347	33.3		0	0		
1348	1449	32.8	94	11.9	14.9		
1450	1526	49	141	23.8	32.7		
1527	1617	79.2	185	29	46.5		
1618	1685	65.4	184	12.6	28.3		
1686	1733	37.9	296	6.6	12.3		
1734	1800	25.4	259	6.5	11.9		
1000	1800	48.3	224	13.9	23.7		

Table 1: Summary statistics by period

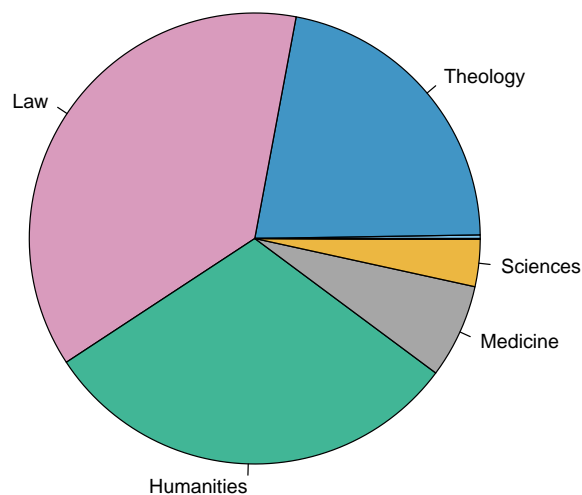


Figure 1: Broad fields at the University of Salamanca

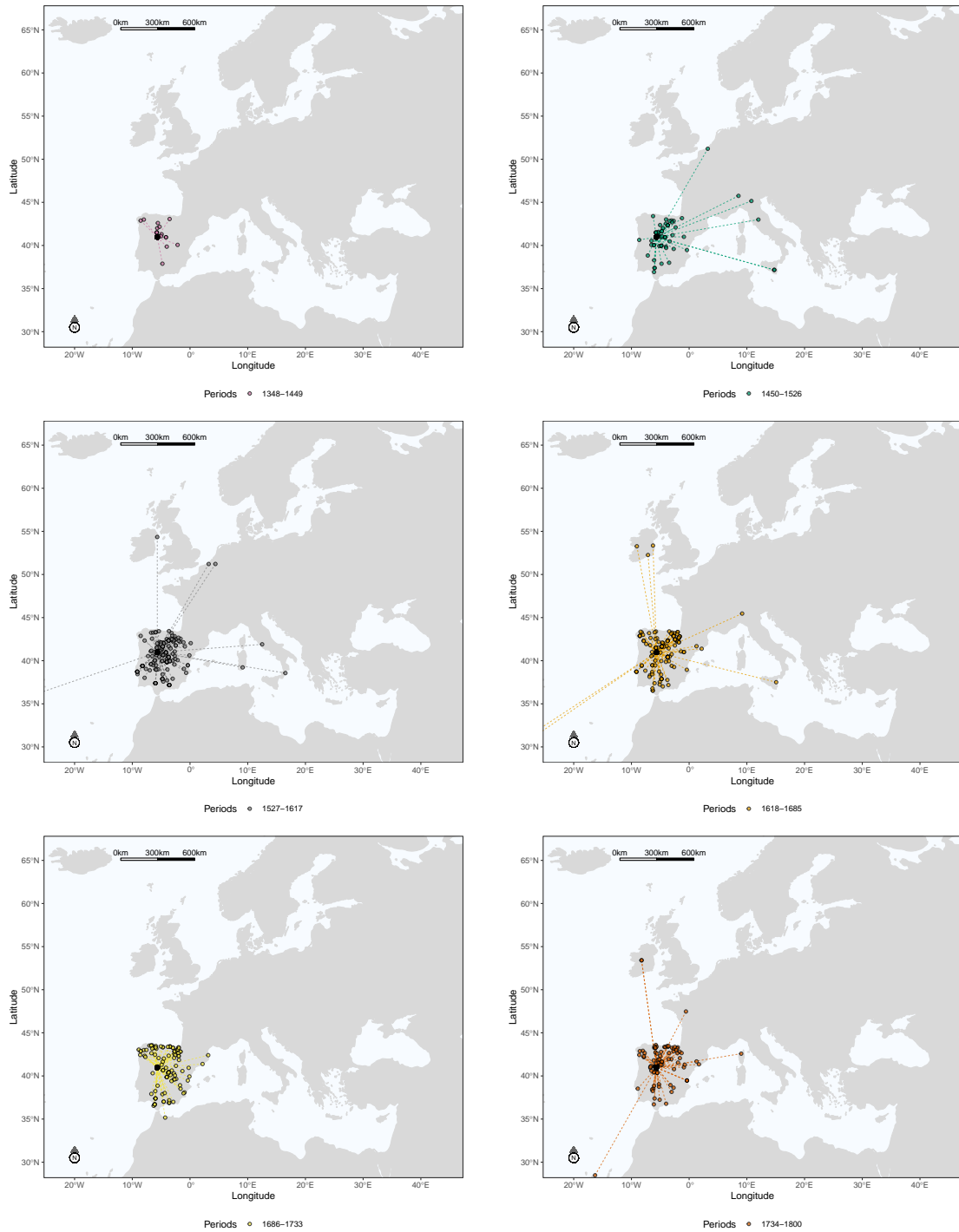


Figure 2: Places of birth of the scholars and literati at the University of Salamanca

per cent of scholars. This improves in the periods. In the last period it is higher than in Valladolid (De la Croix and Karioun 2021). The life expectancy conditional on living to at least 30 is 67.7 and corresponds to the overall estimate in the Holy Roman Empire (Stelter, De la Croix, and Myrskylä 2021). The life expectancy of the scholars of Salamanca is quite high throughout the sample period. The median distance between their birthplace and Salamanca is 224km, reflecting that few people came areas close to around Salamanca, and mobility seems to have been high within Spain.

4 FIELDS

Figure 1, shows the fields of specialization of Salamanca's scholars. Salamanca was created on the model of the University of Bologna, so legal studies were prominent. The law school of Salamanca was the most important in Spain. Furthermore, the Spanish monarchy, considered the teaching of law fundamental to the administration and maintenance of the rule of law. The humanities and theology are also among the most practiced disciplines and find an important number of professors belonging to the main religious orders, (namely Dominicans and Jesuits). By contrast, science and medicine play a very minor role.

5 PLACE OF BIRTH

Figure 2 shows the different birthplaces of the scholars affiliated with the University of Salamanca, by period. During the early years of the university, most of the scholars were born in the main urban centers of Spain. In the following centuries, Salamanca started attracting some scholars from abroad. However, foreign-born scholars all but disappear between 1686 and 1733, which coincides with the period of decline of the university, as can also be seen from Figure 3.

6 HUMAN CAPITAL OF SCHOLARS AND LITERATI

For each person in the database, we compute a heuristic human capital index, identified by combining information from Worldcat and Wikipedia using principal component analysis. We also compute the notability of the university at each date by averaging the human capital of the scholars active in Salamanca 25 years before that date. Details are given in RETE in volumes 1–5. Figure 3 shows the names of all the scholars with a positive human capital index. The orange line displays the notability of the university, based on how well published its top scholars were. Due to the lack of information, we have a rather small number of professors for the early centuries. We see, however, that the notoriety of many professors is quite high, particularly in the 16th century, the most prosperous period for Spain.

As we have already seen for the University of Valladolid (De la Croix and Karioun 2021), the Spanish Golden Age (*siglo de oro*) represents the period of greatest splendour also for Salamanca. During that time, we find the largest number of scholars with a high human capital index. In the following centuries, although we have a high number of scholars, we have not measured a high number of publications. In several cases we found that publications remained in manuscript form.

7 TOP 5 PROFESSORS

We now provide a brief overview of the five professors with the highest human capital index.

Francisco Suarez (Granada 1548 – Lisboa 1617) was a theologian, philosopher and jurist. He was a priest of the Society of Jesus. He taught in several Spanish universities (Alcalá, Valladolid and Coimbra) and in many important Jesuit schools, such as the Roman College. He is considered one of the major exponents of scholasticism. He has written many works on a large number of subjects: legal treatises, on relations between Church and State, metaphysics and theology.

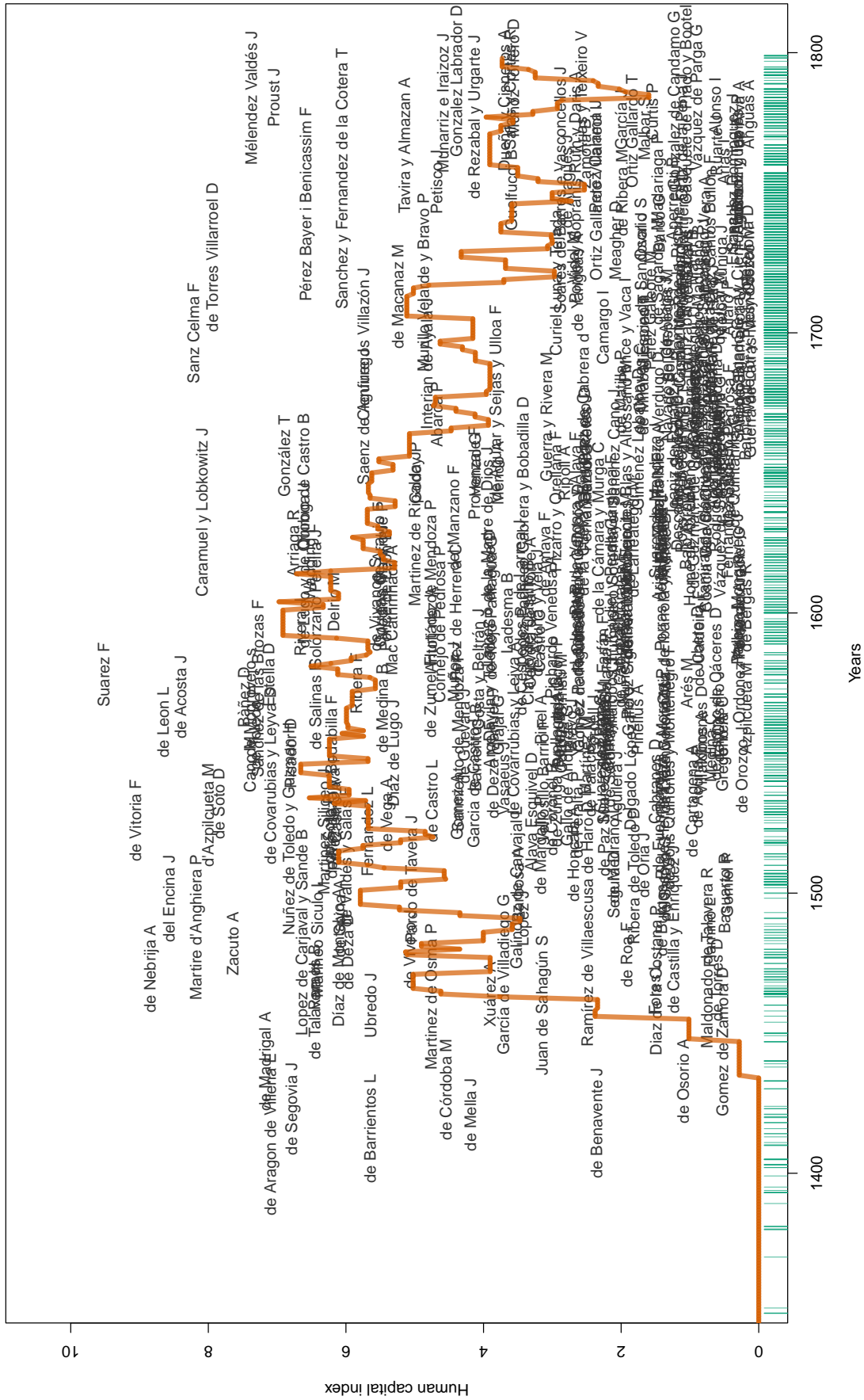


Figure 3: Famous scholars and university notability (orange)

Francisco Vitoria (Vitoria-Gasteiz 1483 – Salamanca 1546) was a theologian, philosopher and jurist of the Dominican order. He was the instigator of the *Escuela de Salamanca*. Vitoria developed theories that looked at economics from a moral point of view. For Vitoria, the natural order was based on the free movement of persons, goods and ideas; in this way men could know each other, thus increasing the feeling of mutual brotherhood. From this, Vitoria concluded that traders can not be blamed morally, but on the contrary, they serve the general well-being.

Antonio de Nebrija (Lebrija 1441 – Alcalá de Henares 1522) was a humanist and grammarian. Nebrija was the author of the Spanish Grammar (*Gramática de la lengua castellana*, 1492) and the first dictionary of the Spanish language (*Vocabulario español-latín* 1495). He also taught in Alcalá.

Luis de León (Belmonte 1527 – Madrigal de las Altas Torres 1591) was a lyric poet and theologian. At the University of Salamanca he taught several theological disciplines from 1560. Accused of heresy, he had to stop teaching and was imprisoned in Valladolid. In particular, his accusers blamed him for having translated the *Song of Songs* and the *Book of Job* into Castilian and for having maintaining that Jewish tradition had not altered the original text of the Bible. After four years in prison he resumed teaching. It is said that he commenced the lesson with *Dicebamus hesterna die...* ("As we were saying yesterday...").

Pietro Martire d'Anghiera (Arona 1457 – Granada 1526) was an Italian humanist, diplomat, writer and historian. He was a lecturer at the University of Salamanca in 1488. His main work *De orbe novo decades* (1516) is a collection of letters sent to the most important personalities of the time, where he recounts the discovery by Europeans of the New World. His information can be considered reliable because he personally met several participants in the European conquest of the New World, including Christopher Columbus.

8 RELATED SCHOLARS

Beyond those who taught at the University of Salamanca, at least two important individuals are related to the university. They are counted in the data for all figures but Figure 3.

José de Acosta (Medina del Campo 1540 – 1600) was a Jesuit and naturalist. He taught theology in several Jesuit schools and universities. In 1569 he went to Peru as a missionary. In 1594 he returned to Europe and taught at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. At the time of his death on February 15, 1600, he was rector of the Jesuit college in Salamanca.

Benito Jerónimo Feijoo y Montenegro (Pazo de Casdemiro 1676 – Oviedo 1764) was a monk of the Benedictine order. It is not certain that he taught in Salamanca. He certainly held a chair of theology in Oviedo. He was a great promoter of scientific and empirical thought and sought to dispel myths and superstitions. He is the author of "Defensa de mujeres" (1726), a work considered the first feminist treatise in Spain.

9 WHO'S WHO ON THE MOON

Another way to measure the notability of individuals is to look for signs of recognition such as street names, names of schools, research institutes, prizes and lunar crater names. Only one crater is named in honor of a scholar from the University of Salamanca.

Abraham Zacuto (Salamanca 1452 – Jerusalem 1515) was a historian, astronomer and mathematician. In addition to the university of Salamanca, he taught at the University of Zaragoza (according to Michaud (1811)). He was a rabbi and expert in *Halakhah* (Jewish Law). In 1492, following the Alhambra Decree, he was deported from Spain and took refuge in Lisbon. There

he became Royal Astronomer and Historian to King John II of Portugal. During the period of forced conversions, he escaped and took refuge first in Tunis and then in Jerusalem where he died in 1515 (other sources indicate that his last resting place was the Jewish community of Damascus and that his death occurred in 1520). Zacuto developed a new type of astrolabe that could determine latitude at sea. He is also remembered for the treatise on astronomy written in Hebrew entitled *Ha-ḥibbur ha-gadol* ("The Great Connection") completed in 1478.

10 FAMILIES OF SCHOLARS

The lack of information about the scholars from the University of Salamanca meant that we could not identify a large number of relationships. The Samaniego family caught our attention. Four members of this family have been professors at the university. With the marriage of Andrés Garcia Samaniego and María Manuela de la Serna, two other families which have scholars in Salamanca and Valladolid are brought together.

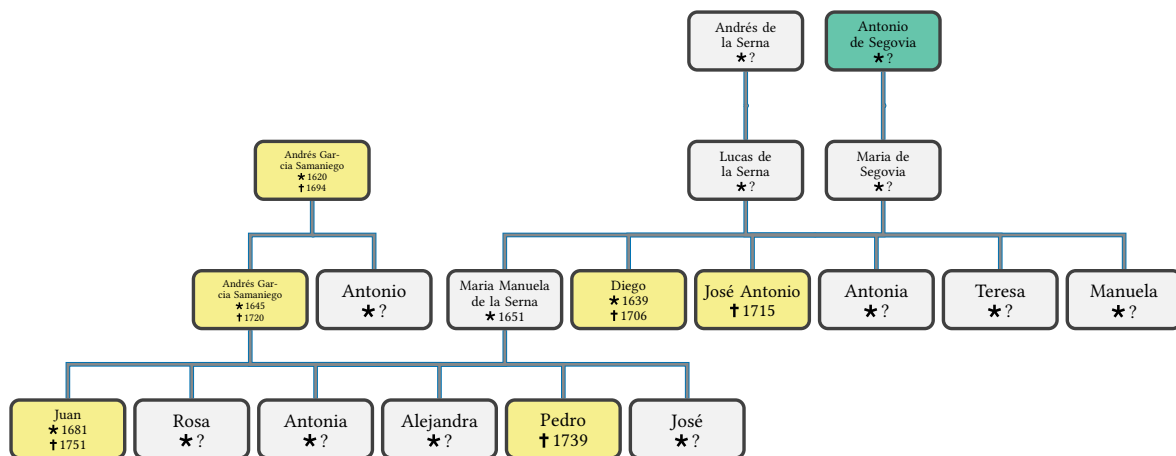


Figure 4: The Samaniego family. Professors at Salamanca in yellow squares and at Valladolid in green squares

11 UNIVERSITY NETWORK

Here, we assume that when a professor occupied a position in more than one university over their life, this established a link between those universities. The universities with which Salamanca was linked in each period are displayed in Figure 5.

In the 15th century, the links are mainly with the University of Bologna, with which Salamanca shares the study of law, and with the Universities of Paris and Rome for the study of theology. During the *Siglo de oro* (the golden century), the *peregrinatio academica* (academic pilgrimage) intensified both in Europe and within Spain. In the last two periods, there followed an important reduction in the number of links, both in terms of the number of scholars and in terms of geographical extension.

12 DIVERSITY

Very few women taught at the university in the period considered. We have seen that Bologna counts a very small number of women among its teachers (De la Croix and Vitale 2021). More generally, we have seen that the universities and academies of southern Europe were more open to women scholars (De la Croix and Vitale 2022). The University of Salamanca had a woman teacher: Pedro de' Torres, rector of the University of Salamanca in 1513, refers to Lucia in a handwritten note from her *Cronicón*, a copy of which is kept at the Academia de la Historia in Madrid. In this note it is said that Luisa de Medrano in 1508 held a reading of canons in place of Antonio de Nebrajia (Oettel 1935).

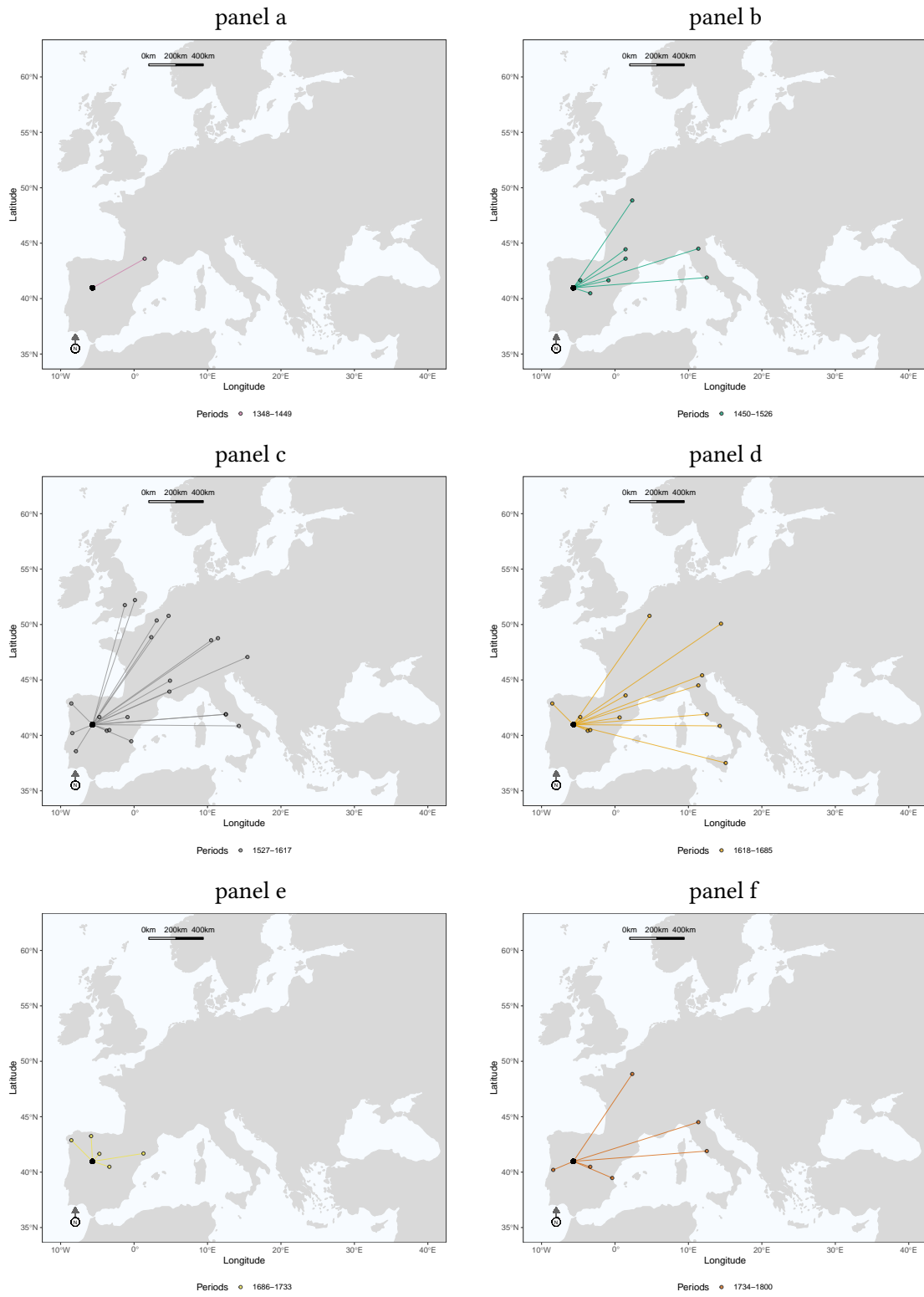


Figure 5: Links between Salamanca and other universities through scholars' mobility, by period

Starting in the 15th century, a peculiarity of the University of Salamanca was the presence of the Chair of Music. This discipline was included in the teachings of the *quadrivium* (Arithmetic, Geometry and Astronomy). Salary evidence shows that the Chair of Music, was the lowest paid (Fraile 1991). In the 18th century, a Capilla de Musica de la Universidad (1738-1801) was created, closely linked to the Capilla de la Catedral and the Chair of Music. Among the most distinguished professors were Martin Gonzalez de Cantalapiedra (1479- ?), Francisco de Salinas (1513 - 1590), Diego Verdugo (c. 1650 – 1717) and Antonio de Yanguas (1682 - 1753).

13 ANECDOTES

Fernando de Pedrosa y Meneses taught canons in Salamanca. In 1674, he left for Colombia as a prebendary (cleric with administrative functions). It is said that the King ordered his departure and his removal from the university because he had hearing problems. However, these alleged problems did not prevent him from continuing to teach at the University of Rosario until his death (Pacheco 1975).

Bartolomé Ramos de Pareja was a professor of music in the 15th century. It is said that he added to the musical scale the note SI (B), using the initials of Sancte Ioanes. In fact, until that moment, the musical scale established by the monk Guido of Arezzo was composed of six notes UT/DO (C), RE (D), MI (E), FA (F), SOL (G), LA (A).

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