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## Pedro Padilla and his Mathematical Course (1753-1756): Views on Mixed Mathematics in eighteenth-century Spain <sup>[2]</sup>

Submitted by [monicablanc](#) <sup>[1]</sup> on Fri, 24/02/2012 - 13:15

### Symposium:

Mathematical Courses in engineering education in the seventeenth and eighteenth century in the Iberian Peninsula <sup>[3]</sup>

In 1717 the King Philip V established the Royal Guards Headquarters (Cuartel de Guardias de Corps), mirroring the French garde du corps du roi. Intended mainly for noblemen, it was an elitist institution, all its members having the rank of officers and benefiting from huge privileges. Towards the end of 1750 an Academy of Mathematics (Academia de Matemáticas) was created within the Royal Guards Headquarters, under the direction of Captain Pedro Padilla (1724-1807?). This academy was ruled by the same regulations as the Military Academy of Mathematics of Barcelona. Attendance was not mandatory, it was only devised for those interested in getting a deeper mathematical knowledge. In fact, rather than its real practical use for the Royal Guards, mathematics was studied as a mark of prestige.

Padilla held the position of Headmaster up to the closure of the Academy of Mathematics in 1760. In 1753 Padilla started publishing his *Curso Militar de Matemáticas, sobre partes de esta ciencia, para uso de la Real Academia establecida en el Cuartel de Guardias de Corps (1753-1756)* [Military Course of Mathematics, about some parts of this science, for the use of the Royal Academy established in the Military Academy of the Royal Guards]. Of the twenty mathematical treatises that Padilla originally intended to develop, only five were finally published. Yet, from the preface of his first volume it is evident that Padilla aimed to show the basic principles of each branch of mathematics, useful enough for military training, in general, and for engineering training, in particular. Besides, Padilla's approach to the general division of mathematics, elaborated in the preface, is similar to that of D'Alembert's tree of knowledge in the *Discours préliminaire* of the *Encyclopédie* (1751), including of course the division of Mathematics into pure and mixed. Therefore Padilla's classification illustrates the reception and circulation of the ideas of the *Encyclopédie* in Spain.

The aim of this contribution is to explore the connection between theory and practice in Padilla's mathematical course and to examine this course to understand what Padilla regarded as useful mathematics for engineers.

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