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Nationalism and the Public Sphere: Tracing the Development of Nineteenth-Century Latin American Identities

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Nationalism and the Public Sphere:
Tracing the Development of Early
National Identities in Argentina and
Mexico

A Thesis Presented

by

Lisa Katherine Ponce

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Nineteenth-Century Latin American Identities

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ABSTRACT

NATIONALISM AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE: TRACING THE DEVELOPMENT OF
NINETEENTH-CENTURY LATIN AMERICAN IDENTITIES

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Through the combined usage of primary source documents and secondary source research, this thesis seeks to discern how the individual national identities of Argentina and Mexico came to fruition. This thesis will demonstrate that the early national period of each region was directly influenced by the colonial context out of which Argentina and Mexico arose. Additionally, this thesis is focused on the ways that a national identity is developed within the public sphere, and how the public sphere might be defined beyond printed newspaper accounts.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

On November 6, 2012 citizens of Puerto Rico voted in favor of petitioning to become the fifty first state in the United States. Amongst arguments both for and against admitting the island as the next state are questions pertaining to identity, both Puerto Rico's and the United States'. One need only to scan the comment section of any news article to see the prominent place that identity holds in the debate. For example, a comment arguing against Puerto Rican statehood at the end of the Huffington Post's article "Puerto Rico Statehood: Luis Fortuño Pushes Bid to Become 51st State After Status Vote" reads, "We need to sustain an identity as well as our culture and language not to mention our self-pride. Latin America is growing and we need to be a part of that renaissance. We are Latino..."¹ This particular comment, reminiscent of Rodó's 1900 essay *Ariel*, reflects the fear that Puerto Rican identity would eventually be diluted and replaced with an American identity.² For their part, many U.S. mainlanders are wary of changing the flag to reflect the addition of another state, with many pointing to the flag as a representation of American identity; a comment of

¹ Roque Planas, "Puerto Rico Statehood: Luis Fortuño Pushes Bid to Become 51st State After Status Vote," The Huffington Post, published November 16, 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/16/puerto-rico-statehood-luis-fortuno_n_2146880.html

² José Enrique Rodó's *Ariel* was concerned with the modern world debilitating Ariel's (symbolizing Latin America) spirit, or identity.

another Huffington Post article “Puerto Rico Statehood: Latinos Share Their 51st State Flag Mock-Ups After Island Status Vote” reads simply, “Don’t touch the flag.”³

The above comments demonstrate that questions surrounding the evolution of a national identity can inspire volatile reactions. While the example of Puerto Rico’s potential addition to the United States as the fifty first state serves as a contemporary example, such debates date back to the late eighteenth century in the Western Hemisphere. In Latin America the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century witnessed the shifting of colonial loyalties away from the Spanish Crown and towards a local national identity. How the nation was defined and how it was represented, along with how it was distinguished from other nations, came to evolve into what might be defined as a national identity. The late colonial period in Latin America, typically ranging from 1808 through the 1820s, provides a fascinating opportunity to examine national identity because these regions were made up of peoples who had supposedly considered colonies to be extensions of the European country who presided over a territory.⁴ However, one-by-one, the majority of Europe’s overseas colonies rebelled after various perceived injustices on the part of the parent country and declared independence. Having declared independence, the former colonies then had the task of developing a distinct national identity.

³ “Puerto Rico Statehood: Latinos Share Their 51st State Flag Mock-Ups After Island Status Vote,” The Huffington Post, published November 8, 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/08/puerto-rico-state-flag_n_2090769.html

⁴ This argument has been made most recently by Jaime Rodríguez in *We Are Now the True Spaniards*, in which Rodríguez argues that Spanish Americans did not consider the Spanish American empire to be colonies, but instead considered Spain’s overseas territories to be integral parts of the Spanish Crown.

The former Spanish American colonies present a challenging case study, because though many regions of the empire began their independence movements concurrently, each declared independence not only from Spain, but from one another. This thesis will compare two of those former colonies: Argentina and Mexico.⁵ These two regions represent two poles of the Spanish American empire, both literally and figuratively. While Mexico had close ties to Spain, Argentina was a peripheral region of the empire, and was far less lucrative, and thus had a highly different colonial history. This thesis will argue that the roots of each region's distinct national identity can be found within their colonial contexts, as the colonial and national history of the regions cannot be neatly separated from one another. This thesis will also seek to investigate how those distinct identities developed during each region's early national period. Through the combined usage of secondary literature and primary source material from the early national period this thesis will demonstrate that each region's colonial histories led to vastly different responses to Napoleon's 1808 invasion of Spain, and that these public responses to the invasion and the independence movements that followed led to highly distinct Argentinean and Mexican national identities.

As this thesis research will demonstrate, investigating the public development of national identities necessitates drawing on a broad range of sources. Print sources have been invaluable in this research if, at least in the case of Argentina, difficult to come by. While both Mexico City and Buenos Aires had active printing presses, access to those

⁵ For the sake of a clear and concise narrative I will refer to both regions as "Argentina" and "Mexico," while recognizing that these regions have each gone by various names over the course of their Pre-Columbian, colonial, and national histories.

archives is difficult without traveling to Mexico and Argentina. Luckily, the Center for Research Libraries has digitized thirty five Latin American newspapers published between 1805 and 1922. For this project the *Diario de México*, published in Mexico City between 1805 and 1816, has been vital to researching Mexico's public sphere. Argentinean print sources are not as easy to come by digitally, however published collections of primary sources provided an excellent research base. One collection in particular, *The San Martín Papers*, compiled newspaper articles, public edicts, and private letters written by or about General José de San Martín, the hero of Argentina's independence movement.⁶ Of course, the vast majority of sources in *The San Martín Papers* are biased in favor of the independence movements, while the *Diario* was printing pieces that were largely supportive of Spain's colonial system. The published primary sources do not give a thorough picture of how the late colonial and early national periods developed in either region as the presses were largely under the control of either Mexican colonial officials or supporters of Argentinean independence. This is just one reason that published sources do not paint a sufficient enough picture and other potential sources must be considered when studying the development of Argentinean and Mexican national identities.

The other foremost reason that published materials are insufficient as sole sources of evidence is that the vast majority of the Spanish American subjects living in Argentina and Mexico were illiterate. As historian William H Beezley argues, this dilemma "opens the difficult but fascinating question of the relationships among orality,

⁶ *The San Martín Papers* (Washington, D.C.: The San Martín Society, 1988).

literacy, and memory.”⁷ One of the challenges in researching for this thesis was locating the aspects of the public sphere that did not include the written word. How might monuments, public celebration, or even the more macabre public display of severed heads influence a developing national identity, for example? In locating examples of non-written evidence, the works of previous scholars have proven invaluable.

When embarking upon a study of national identity there are certain works which one would be remiss not to reference. The first such book is undoubtedly Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.⁸ Anderson argues that for the citizens of nations, the nation is an “imagined community.” It is a community because all citizens are able to participate equally in belonging to their nation in a horizontal comradeship, rather than a hierarchical organization such as a monarchy or caste system, and all feel a deep connection for others in their imagined community. It is imagined because even in the smallest of nations a citizen will never meet all others in the community face-to-face. Additionally, Anderson argues that nations came into mass consciousness due to the spread of “print-capitalism,” as printers began to work in vernacular languages and allowing for the solidifying of language. Thus, local dialects eventually began to adjust to the printed version of languages, and individuals from throughout the emerging nation were able to understand and communicate with one another.

⁷ William H Beezley, *Mexican National Identity: Memory, Innuendo, and Popular Culture* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2008), ix.

⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).

Another central text when studying emerging nations is E.J. Hobsbawn's *Nations and Nationalism since 1870: Programme, Myth, Reality*⁹. Hobsbawn focuses on the cultural factors that go into creating a sense of community with others in an emerging nation; it is those invented cultural ties and traditions that are later used to define both a nation's exceptionalism and determine who does or does not belong to the community. Most importantly, Hobsbawn argues that while nations are created by societal elites, but should be analyzed from the vantage point of the popular classes, as many times feelings of nationalism and the desire for social reform are intimately connected. Hobsbawn's arguments become increasingly critical when analyzed in light of Mexico's independence movement and early national history: while the final break from Spain may have come at the hands of conservative elites, the break followed a decade of guerilla war fought by the popular masses that were fighting against a colonial system that had underserved them for centuries.

Of course, Latin America provides its own unique set of challenges when attempting to analyze how a region that had uniformly consisted of Spanish subjects eventually declared independence not only from Spain but all cited individual national identities. Many Latin American historians have felt that Anderson and Hobsbawn's analyses do not sufficiently apply to the Latin American context. A collection of essays titled *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* is one such work that seeks to enhance the writings of previous

⁹ E.J. Hobsbawn, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1870: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

scholars and refine them so that they better serve Latin American historians.¹⁰ One of the primary criticisms that the historians in *Beyond Imagined Communities* present of Anderson's work is that the emergence of newspapers was, in many regions of Latin America, observed after the region's individual identity has developed. Instead, cultural distinctions in each region aided the rise of nationalism, such as the secular educational system in southern South America or the discussions held in public salons in Latin American urban centers. The contributors to *Beyond Imagined Communities* provided invaluable insights into the various ways that the public sphere could develop outside of a literate community over the course of this thesis' research. Another work that criticizes the application of Anderson's definition of nationalism within the Latin American context is Claudio Lomnitz-Adler's *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism*, in which Lomnitz-Adler argues that nationalism in Latin America did not form a horizontal comradeship. Nationalism still exists within a hierarchical structure because, as Lomnitz-Adler argues, it "systematically distinguishes full citizens from part citizens or strong citizens from weak ones (eg. children, women, Indians, the ignorant)."¹¹ The inherent hierarchical nature of nationalism becomes critical especially in the Mexican context, as the struggle for independence was fought by groups that were largely separated by social and racial lines, and those stratifications carried over into Mexico's early national period.

¹⁰ Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen, eds., *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

¹¹ Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 12.

In addition to the historiography of nationalism, works on comparative history also prove instrumental in the development of this thesis. J.H. Elliott's *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830* is an excellent study from which scholars wishing to embark upon a comparative exploration might begin their work.¹² Elliott argues that "there has been a growing realization that certain aspects of local experience in any one part of the Americas can be fully appreciated only if set into a wider context... comparative history may prove a useful device for helping to reassemble the fragmented history of the Americas into a new and more coherent pattern."¹³ Placing Argentina and Mexico into a comparative context uncovers both similarities and differences between the two regions and without upholding one alongside the other such instances may not have stood out. For example, Argentina's long history of smuggling may not appear irregular unless it is compared with the likes of Mexico, where comparatively little smuggling took place. Alternately, despite vastly different histories, both Argentina and Mexico's independence movements were spurred to action by Napoleon's invasion of Spain. Both of these observations are telling when questions of national identity emerge. In the case of Argentina's smuggling history it becomes clear that Argentineans began to separate themselves from the Spanish American empire long before other regions of Latin America. The fact that both regions responded (eventually) similarly to Napoleon's invasion of Spain suggests that both regions had somewhat defined themselves as being tied to their monarch and once

¹² J.H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

¹³ Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, xv.

that status quo was ruptured Spain's Atlantic colonies began to gaze inward, rather than across the ocean to their mother country.

The final historiographic base that this thesis draws on is the literature contemplating how gender has been used to analyze questions of nationalism and participation in an imagined community. Some of the primary source research for this thesis reveals how highly gendered language was utilized to present the emerging Latin American nation as superior to Spain. Additionally, especially in the Mexican context, female images were utilized as a visual symbol for the new nation. However, little has been written that specifically questions the uses of gender in Latin American revolutionary rhetoric in comparison with other fields of inquiry. Therefore, the majority of the sources consulted for this thesis offered observations about how gender was used in other contexts. For example, historian Mary Beth Norton has done a great deal of work on how gender, society, and politics interact with one another in the early American context. *Founding Mothers and Fathers: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* and *Separated by their Sex: Women in Public and Private in the Colonial Atlantic World* are two such examples. *Separated by their Sex* is especially applicable as it is also a comparative history, analyzing the experiences of American and British women. Noting that previous histories had focused exclusively on one context or another, Norton states that the emergence of Atlantic World as a prominent field of study – or, as she terms it, the Atlantic-world paradigm - encouraged historians to embark on comparative studies. Norton notes that women in early American had to utilize covert means such as rumor and slander to lessen a rival's

political power, and in Britain, following the English Civil War, women who attempted to become politically active were met with ridicule and sexual innuendo from men. Norton argues that, “conceptually gendering the public (political and government affairs) as exclusively male require that gendered manhood, rather than ungendered status, define appropriate wielders of political power.”¹⁴

Norton’s argument that the public and political spheres were gendered male is certainly observed in the Argentinean context, as the revolutionary rhetoric emphasized the strength and masculinity of Argentina as opposed to the Spanish “motherland.” In visual images of the nation, however, artists often imagined the new nations as female, especially in the case of Mexico where the Virgin of Guadalupe came to represent Mexico. In analyzing gendered imagery Joan B. Landes’ work, especially her book *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France*, proved an invaluable resource. Landes argues that visual imagery helps to foster a feeling of affection for an abstract concept such as a nation or nationality.¹⁵ An image of a female figure, be it Lady Liberty in post-revolutionary France or Mexico’s Virgin of Guadalupe, serves such a purpose in that the female image is almost always depicted as young and chaste. Additionally Juliana Barr’s *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* notes that in Spanish-Indigenous encounters in colonial Texas witnessed an intimate connection between gender and politics, as gender operates as a system of identity and representation and is

¹⁴ Mary Beth Norton, *Separated by their Sex: Women in Public and Private in the Colonial Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 3.

¹⁵ Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

therefore functional as a communicative tool. Barr notes that many Spanish mercenaries would bring images of the Virgin of Guadalupe on diplomatic missions as the presence of women often indicated the peaceful nature of the mission and early Spanish America was lacking in live Spanish women.¹⁶

Investigation of gender in Latin American revolutionary contexts is still in its nascent stage. Stephanie J Smith stands out for her work on gender during the Mexican Revolution, nearly a century after the struggle for independence. The only monograph-length study on gender and Latin American independence movements is a collection of essays titled *South American Independence: gender, politics, text*. The essays in this collection focus on the argument that gender, rather than race or class, was the primary criterion for political exclusion.¹⁷ There were, however, women who participated in the emerging national consciousness of various regions of Latin America, from Manuela Saénz's political writings between herself and her lover, Simón Bolívar, to those who dressed as men and served in revolutionary armies. Studies of the interplay of gender and Latin American revolutionary rhetoric have yet to be fully realized, but the studies that have been done prove that it is a line of inquiry that would prove highly fruitful should future historians investigate such a question.

A nod to the scholarship of the postcolonial Western Hemisphere has witnessed a boon in studies regarding how newly developed nations negotiated the development

¹⁶ Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 11, 35-38.

¹⁷ Catherine Davies, Claire Brewster, Hilary Owen, *South American Independence: gender, politics, text* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006).

of a culture distinctly different from that of their former mother country. One key text is Kariann Yokota's *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation*. Yokota argues that establishing both cultural equality with, and yet a cultural separation from, Great Britain was particularly challenging in the early national period for the United States. Yokota notes that societal elites such as Thomas Jefferson placed a premium on establishing their own legitimacy, and aimed to construct a "civilized" nation on the periphery of the transatlantic world.¹⁸ Works such as Yokota's, along with Benjamin Orlove's *Allure of the Foreign: Imported Goods in Postcolonial Latin America* stress the importance of analyzing material culture in exploring the tension between desiring the perceived societal status that was tied to fine European goods and the need to differentiate a distinct culture on the western side of the Atlantic.¹⁹

Finally, two additional works must be acknowledged, as they provided crucial insights in the contexts out of which Argentina and Mexico arose on the eve of Napoleon's invasion of Spain. The first is David J. Weber's *Bárbaros: Spaniards and their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment*. Weber's study focuses on the borderlands of the Spanish American empire, and how the Spanish had to negotiate not with other Europeans, but with independent Native American tribes that would not be subjugated. His work demonstrates that Argentineans were largely affected by these tribes, especially when they began poaching Spanish livestock or smuggling goods to other

¹⁸ Kariann Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 8-10.

¹⁹ Benjamin Orlove, *Allure of the Foreign: Imported Goods in Postcolonial Latin America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

Spanish colonies in the South American interior. Weber's work demonstrates that the illegal means that Argentineans resorted to for survival were not merely a result of neglect by Spain, but also a result of other South American inhabitants.²⁰

The second work of note is Eric Van Young's *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and the Mexican Struggle for Independence, 1810-1821*. Van Young's work investigates the popular insurgents during Mexico's struggle for independence, and concludes that centuries of social, political, and economic inequities led to the mass uprisings led by Father Hidalgo and José María Morelos.²¹ As issues of the *Diario de México* were written to an elite audience that supported the colonial system, Van Young's work was crucial to understanding the motivations of the masses, as well as how the illiterate in Mexico utilized the public sphere for their benefit.

By illustrating Argentina and Mexico's contrary colonial histories, this thesis will demonstrate that the two regions' individual identities were highly different even upon Napoleon's invading Spain in 1808. That invasion did not cause the independence movements to begin, it merely provided the necessary rupture to the status quo to allow those identities to become public, lived realities. While the public sphere in independence-era Argentina was largely in control of the anti-colonialists, the very opposite was true in Mexico. Therefore, the public spheres in each region provide nothing short of blatant differences. However, each region was still developing its own

²⁰ David J. Weber, *Bárbaros: Spaniards and their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

²¹ Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and the Mexican Struggle for Independence, 1810-1821* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

identity. This thesis will develop how each identity came to fruition after emerging from a shared history of Spanish colonialism.

CHAPTER 2

THE JEWEL OF THE SPANISH EMPIRE: POWER AND INFLUENCE IN COLONIAL MEXICO

From the earliest years of the Spanish American Empire, Mexico stands out as having been exceptional when compared with other Spanish New World holdings. After spending the twenty five years after the arrival of Christopher Columbus systematically conquering and settling the Caribbean islands, the Spanish explorers were hungry for new and lucrative land holdings. While the Caribbean had proven to be a profitable region for Spanish settlers, the riches derived from Mexico would far surpass those of the Spanish Caribbean island colonies. This thesis will demonstrate that the riches and prestige derived from Mexico would directly affect Mexico's early national history several centuries after the arrival of Europeans on New World soil. Mexico proved to be one of the most lucrative Spanish American colonies, and as a result Mexico was also one of the most politically influential Spanish overseas holdings. Following Napoleon's 1808 invasion of Spain leading Mexican political figures were focused on preserving ties with their mother country, while thousands of historically marginalized populations embarked upon a quest to disentangle Mexico from the "bad government" practices of Spain. The disparate reactions from different factions of colonial Mexican society were derived from the colonial histories out of which they arose, and these differing histories also directly affected the development of Mexico's national identity that emerged following the 1821 Declaration of Independence.

Early European explorations of Mexico began in 1517, and upon making contact with mainland indigenous tribes the Spanish *conquistadores* began to hear rumors of a powerful indigenous empire that was centered further inland. Seeking out this empire, an expedition led by Hernán Cortés departed from Cuba in February 1519, landing on the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico. Through a combination of military tactics, alliances with indigenous Aztec rivals, and the influx of diseases for which the indigenous populations lacked immunity, the Aztec capital city was defeated two years later and Mexico City was founded on top of the ruins of Tenochtitlan.²² Defeating the Aztecs – undeniably the most advanced indigenous society that the Spanish had encountered when compared with island Caribbean societies – brought glory and riches to both Spain and the *conquistadores*. Most importantly for the founding of Mexico City, even with the massive indigenous population decline due to European diseases, the Spanish had thousands upon thousands of Aztecs to build the city and cultivate the agriculture needed to feed an already massive population. Therefore, with an infrastructure already in place and the labor force to continue city-wide operations, Mexico City quickly became one of the foremost overseas centers of any European colony.

One way that powerful Spaniards cultivated their newfound territory and facilitated the usage of large indigenous labor forces was via large landed estates. In the early colonial period these estates came in the form of *encomiendas*, parcels of land granted by the king to *conquistadores*. In return for the land grant, *encomenderos* would cultivate the land and were also expected to provide for the indigenous peoples living under their care, both with life

²² While the notion that Cortés defeated the mighty Aztec empire with only a few hundred soldiers via military might alone has long been disproven, historians have gone to great lengths to try and analyze the varied reasons that went into Tenochtitlan falling so quickly. Some have argued that the “conquest” is an inaccurate description of the events of 1521, as it took several hundred years for the Aztec civilization to be completely subdued. Matthew Restall’s work *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* provides an excellent analysis of the various factors that led to Cortés’ success and Bernal Diaz’s *The Conquest of New Spain* is a primary source account of the events.

essentials and a Christian education. This system led to the early conquistadors growing very politically influential, and many of them maintaining large *encomiendas* that made them and their families extremely wealthy. Cortés' *encomienda* encompassed the entire Valley of Oaxaca and had tens of thousands of indigenous laborers, making him undeniably the colonial version of a Spanish noble. The Crown eventually abolished the *encomienda* system in 1542, fearing that *encomenderos* such as Cortés were gaining a dangerously feudalistic power in the New World, and replaced it with a new draft labor system for the indigenous peoples called the *repartimiento*.²³ The wealth gained from the *encomienda* system had a lasting effect on the rest of colonial Mexican history, despite its comparatively short lifespan. Those who had been granted large *encomiendas* became very economically and politically influential in the new colony. Those descended from the *conquistadores* maintained their economic and political influence for the duration of colonial Mexican history, often being equated to the Mexican version of nobility. It also set the precedent for both the large landed estate in Mexico, as well as the social and racial caste system that would arise, which will be discussed more later in this chapter. While the staple of colonial Mexican economy was not the large estates (those were more typical of the Caribbean colonies) Mexico did have a significant number of plantations within its borders. The discovery of gold and silver mines, however, irreversibly changed the course of colonial Mexican history.

While the earliest stages of colonial Mexican history brought much glory to the Spaniards, aside from those holding extensive *encomiendas*, it did not prove as lucrative as the Caribbean plantation colonies. The discovery of silver deposits in northern Mexico, however, solidified Mexico's place as what has colloquially come to be known as the "Jewel of the Spanish

²³ Alan Knight, *Mexico: The Colonial Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 15-27. Knight provides an excellent overview of the colonial Mexican transition from *encomiendas* to the *repartimiento* and *haciendas*.

Empire". Silver mining was the driving force behind the period of 1550-1650 being termed the Spanish Golden Age, during which the Spanish economy became one of the most robust in the world, and Spain maintained a near-monopoly upon New World colonies.²⁴ Silver mining grew into an industry that included commodities from all corners of the Spanish American empire, and inspired Spanish officials to implement a systematic mercantilist economic system in which Spain exercised sole trade benefits from its colonies. Under the mercantilist system, the Spanish monarch controlled a closed economy. By preventing the Spanish colonies from trading with other nations, Spain ensured that the highest profits were generated for the monarch and that taxation revenues could be heavily controlled. Unfortunately for New World merchants, this also meant that they were unable to control commodity pricing the way they would have been able to in a free trade market that included other world trading partners. In the long-run this closed mercantilist economy caused colonial economies to be underdeveloped, as they were forced to remain dependent upon Spain rather than becoming self-sufficient. This closed economic system was especially detrimental to colonial economic development as it closed the colonies off from trading with Britain, who at the time was arguably the most important world-wide trading partner, and Spain's economy proved not to be strong enough to support its colonial economies.²⁵

During the Spanish Golden Age silver mining and the products needed to sustain it affected the economy in the entirety of the Spanish American Empire. To begin with, Spanish mining officials utilized the process of amalgamation to increase silver yield from the ore that

²⁴ During the early stages of the Spanish Golden Age the English overseas empire consisted of privateers who preyed upon the Spanish fleets. France did not successfully enter into the realm of permanent American colonies until 1605. The only other European power to possess American colonies during this period was Portugal, though the Portuguese colonies were nowhere near as large as Spain's New World possessions.

²⁵ Knight, *Mexico: The Colonial Era*, 64-65.

was mined.²⁶ With mercury deposits found in both Spain and in the South American Andes mountains, the Spanish Crown came to control the worldwide mercury trade. However, mercury was only one portion of the world trade empire that built up around silver mining, as commodities from throughout the Spanish American Empire were needed to support the mines. For example, timber from the forested areas of the empire was used to support the walls of mine shafts. Wheat and wine from Chile were used to feed mine workers.²⁷ Pack animals from Argentina both mixed the silver ore and mercury early on in the colonial period, and were also needed to transport the silver from the mines to the port cities for export.

Finally, a worldwide commercial shipping system was needed to bring colonial products back to Spain for trade. In an effort to maintain control over their colonial trade Spain demanded that only designated port cities in each viceroyalty be utilized to export trade goods (in the case of Hapsburg-era Spanish America, this meant Vera Cruz for the Viceroyalty of New Spain, and Callao for the Viceroyalty of Peru).²⁸ Spanish merchant ships arrived in Spanish America once each year, strategically timed to avoid Atlantic hurricanes. They would depart Seville (where the Consulate managed all New World trade) where upon arrival in the Caribbean

²⁶ During the amalgamation process, the ore was crushed into a powder and then combined with mercury. This mixture was then stirred in a giant pool at first by driving pack animals – mules or horses – through it until it was fully mixed. Eventually, miners found that the mixture was contaminated by using the pack animals, and instead had mine workers – usually indigenous peoples – walk barefoot in the mixture and then use heat to drive off the mercury, leaving only silver in its place. This system, while widely lucrative for the Spanish merchants and bureaucrats, led to extremely high levels of mercury poisoning in the indigenous workers.

²⁷ Early in the Spanish colonial period foodstuffs such as wine, olive oil, and wheat were shipped to the New World from Spain, as Spanish living in the New World craved the diet that they had grown used to back in Spain. Unfortunately, the climate in Spain's early New World territories did not support these crops, meaning that colonists were dependent upon imported foodstuffs. The discovery that Chile could, in fact, produce these products both lessened the expense of maintaining a European diet, as shipping costs were much less, and made what would have otherwise been a remote outpost of the Spanish American Empire an important colonial location.

²⁸ Again, Argentinean pack animals were needed to transport the silver from the mines to the port cities. In the case of South American mines, the silver was transported to Lima where it was shipped north to present-day Panama, transported overland by more pack animals to the Caribbean port of Portobelo, and finally shipped up to Mexican port cities.

the fleet would divide, with some ships travelling to Portobelo to pick up trade goods produced by the South American colonies, and the other half heading to Vera Cruz for goods produced by Mexico. Finally, the fleet would reunite again in Havana before heading back to Spain. Spanish American colonists depended upon the fleet for goods, new settlers, and communication from Europe. With the entire annual silver haul on these ships the colonial trade also led to a boom in military and naval products, as heavily armed ships were needed to guard the precious cargo.²⁹ Mexico's place at the center of a booming economic empire that encompassed much of the Western Hemisphere solidified its position of superiority amongst other Spanish colonial holdings. Mexico's close political and economic ties to Spain would have direct consequences on Mexico's early national development several centuries later, as Napoleon's 1808 invasion was arguably more disruptive for Mexico than Argentina.

An individual's race had a great impact on their economic and societal mobility, and this social trend also came to have repercussions in late colonial Mexican history. Unlike, for example, British American society there existed a great deal of interracial unions, both official and unofficial, in colonial Mexico. Eventually mestizos and *castas*, or those who were racially mixed or could not directly trace their genealogy, came to represent the largest racial groups in Mexico.³⁰ Therefore the lived experiences of colonial Mexicans was quite different from other regions of Spanish America where racial intermixing was not as prominent. However Mexico also allowed for racial fluidity – a marked difference between Spain's colonies and the other

²⁹ This was especially true after Dutch privateer Piet Heyn captured the entire Spanish silver fleet outside of Havana in 1628 – easily one of the most lucrative heists in history.

³⁰ The racial diversity of colonial Mexico has witnessed many historical analyses. Some crucial interpretations include those of George Reid Andrews' studies on Africans in Latin America and R. Douglas Cope's *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720*. Ilona Katzew's *Casta Paintings: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* offers a strong visual interpretation of colonial Mexico's diversity.

European societies in the Americas.³¹ A Spanish man who formally recognized his mixed-race child could offer the child a gateway to opportunities normally reserved for Spanish individuals, meaning that one's race was often determined by that of their father and his social standing. For example, the illegitimate son of Cortés and his indigenous mistress (the infamous Doña Marina, also known rather cruelly in history as La Malinche, a take on the term *malinchista* meaning a disloyal Mexican), Luís Cortés was declared a legitimate son of Cortés via a Papal order, and later served the king of Spain.³² Therefore Mexico also distinguished itself from other European New World societies by a potentially diverse elite class, though as the colonial period continued the most lucrative government positions were reserved for Spanish immigrants and *castas* had ever-diminishing opportunities for advancement.

Even given the opportunity for racial fluidity, the population of colonial Mexico was statistically dominated by indigenous peoples. Eventually, demographics and racial clustering began to take shape, with indigenous and mestizos living in rural areas of colonial Mexico, and elite Spanish residents becoming an overwhelmingly urban population. These demographics would remain in place throughout the colonial period and, as Eric Van Young has demonstrated, racial and economic tensions directly influenced early violence during the Mexican struggle for independence.³³ Within the cities, yet another hierarchical structure evolved during the colonial

³¹ While one might colloquially say that class trumps race in Spanish America, the opposite was true in the English colonies, for example. Kathleen Brown's *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* provides an excellent analysis of the ways that racial constructions evolved during the colonial period. Most importantly for this discussion, she demonstrates how a child's race followed that of the mother; the child of a white man and an African woman would also be considered black, and therefore had extremely limited social mobility.

³² Anna Lanyon, *The New World of Martín Cortes* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2004). Martín Cortés is also known as "the first mestizo" as well as "the first Mexican", though perhaps these nicknames are more symbolic than realistic – Spanish had been in contact with indigenous Mexican peoples for years prior to Cortés arriving in the region, and it is difficult to believe that interactions between them and indigenous women had never before produced children.

³³ Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion: popular violence, ideology, and the Mexican struggle for independence, 1810-1821* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

period, this time bringing urban Mexican society into greater focus: the distinction between those born in Spain versus those born in the New World. Whereas social mobility did exist for the likes of Luís Cortés, overwhelmingly societal elites isolated themselves from the poor, artisan, and merchant societal sectors, especially as the colonial period continued that marriageable Spanish women entered the colonial social fray. As women's historians have noted, colonial Mexican families solidified their social standings through a variety of means, one of which was procuring advantageous marriages for their children.³⁴ As a result, elites typically married exclusively within their own class, making the most influential ranks a very closed social circle. Those with the most economic and political influence were overwhelmingly Spanish and, more specifically, born in Spain as opposed to Spanish America. The viceroys, for example, were with very few exceptions born in Spain – called *peninsulares* – rather than hailing from Spanish America – *criollos*.³⁵ While the reasons behind the Crown's preference that *peninsulares* hold the most influential positions in the New World have been much debated, the result was that it contributed to a growing and distinct *criollo* identity – undoubtedly a contributing factor once the independence movements began in earnest.³⁶

Finally, any discussion of colonial Mexican society is empty without a discussion on the Catholic Church. The Church played a central role throughout the history of colonial Mexico from the very early stages, as Cortés brought priests with him during his conquest of the Aztecs, and these priests began the tradition of actively trying to convert those that they came into contact with.³⁷ Once the Spanish conquistadors began transitioning from a focus on conquest to

³⁴ See the works of Asunción Lavrin, or Susan Migden Socolow's *The Women of Colonial Latin America*.

³⁵ Some pregnant women demanded to make the perilous journey to Spain to prevent their children from being labeled a *creole*, and therefore providing them with greater opportunities in adulthood.

³⁶ Historian Marshall C Eakin notes that growing cultural differences between *peninsulares* and *creoles* began to develop, such as changes in fashion, diet, and regional accents, further dividing *peninsulares* and *criollos*.

³⁷ Burton Kirkwood, *The History of Mexico* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 48-49.

one aimed at long-term living, churches were built often on top of sites held in high esteem in indigenous religions. The most famous example involves the Basilica of Guadalupe, built in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe, on top of the Hill of Tepeyac. This site was reportedly also the site of the Temple of the indigenous goddess Tonantzin.³⁸ Especially in the early colonial period many Catholic missionaries – usually Dominicans, Franciscans, or Jesuits – were frustrated to discover that many of their indigenous students combined aspects of Christianity with aspects of their pagan beliefs rather than fully converting to Catholicism.³⁹ This frustration did not dampen an aggressive campaign to Christianize the indigenous peoples, however, with one Franciscan cleric named Motolinía claiming to have baptized 300,000 indigenous people in one five-day stretch.⁴⁰ As a result, colonial Mexico was inundated with a strong religious presence, and church officials maintained a great deal of influence in the politics of the New World. Many high religious officials were appointed by the Spanish Crown, and others gained positions as personal confessors to high government officials. The first institutions of higher learning in Spanish America were also founded by religious orders, thereby solidifying the influence of religious men who taught those attending universities – almost always elite young men being primed for influential positions.⁴¹ Additionally, as the colonial period continued the Catholic Church became the colony's only money-lender in the absence of banks. As a result, the Church was both politically and financially influential throughout colonial Mexico.

³⁸ Knight, *Mexico: The Colonial Era*, 39. See also Stafford Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Legend* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 78-81.

³⁹ Whether or not this combination was a form of resistance on the part of the indigenous peoples or was done in earnest has been debated by historians. See Inga Clendinnen, *Ambivalent Conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517-1570* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁴⁰ Knight, *Mexico: The Colonial Era*, 34. Knight points out that for this claim to be true Motolinía would have had to baptize at a rate of 142 converts an hour, or one every forty seconds, with a precision that would have made a modern assembly-line worker proud.

⁴¹ *Conquest of the Americas; Lecture 16: The Sword and the Cross*. DVD lecture series. Marshall C Eakin, lecturer. The Teaching Company, 2002.

Clearly, colonial Mexico was in a position of great power and influence within the Spanish American empire, mainly due to its central place, both geographically as well as politically and economically. However, colonial Mexico encompassed a vast amount of territory and an even vaster amount of people living within its borders. In an effort to maintain control over its new empire, the Spanish Crown divided the Spanish American empire into viceroalties – during the Hapsburg reign this meant that two viceroalties were created. Mexico City was named the capital of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, which governed the entire Spanish American empire in continental North America and the Caribbean islands. The Viceroy headed a vast network of secular and religious officials in the governing of the viceroyalty.⁴² The most powerful government positions were filled from a closed circle of societal elites, leading to the increased gap in political and economic influence between *peninsulares* and *criollos*. As Alejandro Cañeque has demonstrated, this social buffering was not the only method of solidifying power in colonial Mexico, as there was a cultural element as well. The viceroys and their courts often mimicked the monarch's court practices in Spain, and even attempted to make the viceroy look as similar as possible to the king's portrait.⁴³ This way, a message was sent to the population of colonial Mexico that the monarchical power had been duplicated in the colonies, and that power was concentrated in the heart of colonial Mexico.

Colonial Mexico's central place in the Spanish American empire largely defined its colonial experiences, and later had a direct effect on the Mexican experience during the Age of Revolution. Mexico was a combination of profitable and powerful within Spain's New World holdings. As a result, Mexico was also both closely watched by and dependent upon the Spanish

⁴² This network of government officials grew exponentially as the Golden Age came to an end and the Spanish Crown found itself in an ever-deepening economic hole. In an effort to raise money, the Crown began selling government positions. Instead, this led to a less concentrated power as one headed down the chain of command from the viceroy.

⁴³ Alejandro Cañeque, *The King's Living Image: the culture and politics of viceregal power in colonial Mexico* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

Crown, though Burton Kirkwood argues that by the end of the colonial period Spain was more dependent on her colony than Mexico was on Spain.⁴⁴ As the next chapter will demonstrate, Argentina's colonial experience on the fringes of the Spanish American empire led to a much different experience. It is almost impossible to conceive that the two locations could have had more divergent experiences within the empire, and thus it comes as no surprise that separate identities came to emerge during the Independence movements in each colony.

⁴⁴ Burton Kirkwood, *The History of Mexico* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 76.

CHAPTER 3

COLONIAL ARGENTINA: ON THE PERIPHERY OF AN EMPIRE

If colonial Mexico represents the geographic, political, and economic center of the Spanish American empire then colonial Argentina would undoubtedly be its antithesis. Situated in a remote region in southern South America, Argentina lacked the rich mineral deposits or large plantations that made other Spanish colonies so profitable, and therefore also lacked much allure for immigrants during the majority of its colonial history. While Mexico's early colonial population was bolstered by the hundreds of thousands of indigenous peoples brought under Spanish rule, indigenous peoples near Argentina were generally more sparsely populated and difficult to subjugate. As David J. Weber has demonstrated, the city of Buenos Aires would spend its entire colonial history in a precarious balance of defending against and trading with Patagonian and Pampas tribes who retained high degrees of autonomy.⁴⁵ Therefore, Argentina remained a rather remote outpost of the Spanish American empire up until Buenos Aires was named the capital of the new Viceroyalty of the *Río de la Plata*. The vastly different colonial experiences of those living in colonial Mexico versus colonial Argentina had direct repercussions on the Age of Revolution. After sharing in such differing collective histories the inhabitants of

⁴⁵ David J. Weber, *Bárbaros: Spaniards and their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

colonial Mexico and colonial Argentina inevitably identified as different from one another, and therefore had highly divergent revolutionary experiences.

The earliest period of Spanish presence in Argentina is similar to early Mexican colonial history only in that Spanish explorers first entered the region in 1516 on a quest to find riches on the mainland of the New World. This, however, is where the similarities end. Not finding the mineral deposits they were looking for, and also not finding wealthy or friendly indigenous empires, the explorers promptly left the region. The Spanish largely avoided the Pampas for the next twenty years, eventually founding the city of Buenos Aires at the mouth of what came to be known as *Río de la Plata*, or “River of Silver”, named for the silver trinkets traded with tribes upriver in present-day Paraguay. Buenos Aires was founded to serve as a base of operations for exploring the Pampas region in South America. Unfortunately, the indigenous tribes native to the Pampas did not take kindly to the Spanish explorers, and the colony was abandoned within a year of its founding following attacks by the local indigenous peoples.⁴⁶

For the next four decades the region was once again ignored by the Spanish, during which time the Crown’s treasury was inflated by the revenues of the more prized colonies in Mexico, Peru, and the Caribbean. Colonial Argentina remained largely unsettled by Europeans, with the exception of a few intrepid Jesuit missionaries who founded missions in what is today Paraguay to convert those indigenous peoples living in the interior jungle. However, in comparison to colonial Mexico the Catholic Church had far less influence in colonial Argentina. As the previous chapter demonstrates, the Catholic Church was not only an integral player in maintaining Spanish control over colonial Mexico, but also received monetary benefits from its influential position in the colonial heartland. Frontier regions such as Argentina, however, did

⁴⁶ Daniel K Lewis, *The History of Argentina* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 20.

not offer the Church the same opportunities in terms of the number of potential parishioners or the financial gains. Therefore Argentina was not seen as a significant region for the Catholic Church. For example, the interior city of Asunción was granted the first bishopric in southern South America in 1547, thirty years after the first priests arrived in Mexico alongside Cortés. The bishop himself, however, did not arrive in Asunción until 1556.⁴⁷ From its earliest colonial roots, the value that both the Spanish Crown and the Catholic Church placed on Argentina, in contrast with Mexico, was noticeably slimmer.

The settlement of Buenos Aires remained abandoned until 1580, when a few settlers returned to the region at the behest of the Crown – fifty-nine years after the founding of Mexico, eighty-eight years after the initial Spanish encounter with the New World, and thirty years into the Spanish Golden Age – due to concerns of rival European powers entering the region. Portugal, also craving New World riches, began colonizing permanent settlements in Brazil in the 1530s.⁴⁸ The growth of the south eastern port city São Vicente – far too close to where Buenos Aires once was for Spanish liking – was of particular concern. Spain was eager to protect the territories in southern South America that it still claimed, despite not maintaining a physical presence in the region. Therefore, Buenos Aires was resettled atop the ruins of the 1536 settlement amidst fears that without a military presence at the mouth of the *Río de la Plata* that foreign military forces would occupy the river and utilize it as a means to launch an attack against the silver mines of Upper Peru.⁴⁹

Buenos Aires' population was slow to grow, for numerous reasons. For one the Pampas and Patagonia tribes were not any more agreeable to assimilating into Spanish culture than they

⁴⁷ Lewis, *The History of Argentina*, 23.

⁴⁸ Lewis, *The History of Argentina*, 25.

⁴⁹ David Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 27.

had been decades earlier. The small numbers of Spaniards living in Buenos Aires were unable to forcibly subdue the natives the way Cortés had in Mexico, especially without other indigenous allies from the region. Additionally, as mentioned in the previous chapter, due to Spain's rigid control of commercial shipping all merchant vessels had to dock to load and unload cargo in approved ports, usually ports that directly connected to the capital of the viceroyalty. In the case of Buenos Aires, in the Viceroyalty of Peru, this meant that any immigrants to the city had to arrive overland from Lima after their ship docked in Callao. Historian J.H. Elliott estimates that by the mid-eighteenth century the population of Buenos Aires was only 12,000 people, in comparison to Mexico City's 112,000 inhabitants.⁵⁰ This slow population growth could have made trade even more difficult, as the population was not large enough to procure large amounts of trade goods. However, the commodity that would become synonymous with Argentina – and remains so to the present day – was an accidental result of the failed colonization attempt from decades prior.

While the Pampas may not have been rich in mineral wealth, the region was prime grazing territory for livestock. When the original settlers had fled Buenos Aires they left their livestock behind. These herds of cattle and horses, left to their own devices on the Pampas, thrived and multiplied many times over.⁵¹ Buenos Aires residents quickly took advantage as cattle and their hides became the primary exports of Argentina.⁵² Livestock became important to Argentina for multiple reasons. The wild herds were ideal for a small, backcountry settlement

⁵⁰ J.H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World; Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 262. This was the earliest population figure that I could find, but even this number is probably far more than lived in the city in its early period.

⁵¹ Lewis, *The History of Argentina*, 25.

⁵² In addition to being a naturally optimal grazing territory, Argentina's geographic location in the southern hemisphere also bolstered its cattle trade. Given that Argentina is experiencing summer when the northern hemisphere – and the majority of other cattle grazing lands in the Atlantic World – are experiencing winter, Argentinean cattle were primed and ready for export just when the rest of the world's cattle trade was slowing down for the year.

such as Buenos Aires, as they did not require much in the way of manpower, as the herds were largely self-sufficient. Additionally, the livestock created a buffer zone around the settlement, protecting the residents from the indigenous peoples who had driven them out of the original settlement decades before.⁵³ Finally, cattle had another great impact upon the history of Argentina: the methods that merchants had to utilize in order to export their products.

Buenos Aires merchants were at a significant disadvantage in exporting trade goods, as Spanish regulations stipulated that they must export cattle and their hides via ports outside of Lima. Transporting any product north through the Amazon and then west over the Andes Mountains was an arduous and expensive task, even when the commodity being traded was not as difficult to transport as a herd of cattle. Additionally, as it took many hands and many ports to import and export from Buenos Aires to Spain, Argentinean merchants were subject to higher taxes than merchants in other cities.⁵⁴ Not only were merchants in Argentina being paid less for their exports than if they had been located in, for example, colonial Mexico, they were also subject to higher taxes on trade goods brought to the colonies by Spain. While the Crown and merchants in Lima benefited from this system, merchants in Argentina certainly were on the losing end of the bargain.

Rather than passively settle for fewer profits and expensive imports, Argentinean merchants began a long history of contraband trade with other European powers, especially the Portuguese and the British. Buenos Aires sat at the mouth of the *Río de la Plata*, an ideal port

⁵³ As cattle were not a part of the indigenous diet, they were not hunted by the nomadic tribes in the Pampas. See David J Weber's *Bárbaros: Spaniards and their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* for more on how the indigenous peoples did – or did not – adapt to the introduction of European livestock to the Pampas.

⁵⁴ Lewis, *The History of Argentina*, 26. Buenos Aires ranchers also faced competition from smaller ranches nearer to Lima. While the grazing lands at Peru's high altitudes were not as rich as the plains of Argentina, the lower shipping costs attracted many Lima merchants to trade with nearer ranchers rather than pay for the more expensive, if higher quality, product from Argentina.

for marine shipping that was a comparatively easy Spanish American port for foreign vessels to dock at.⁵⁵ Indeed, the port was so neglected by Spanish merchants that historian David Rock estimates that by 1660 only seven Spanish ships had ever docked in Buenos Aires, making the odds that a foreign vessel would be caught at port very slim.⁵⁶ This is not to suggest that the smuggling traditions in Buenos Aires led to open and amiable relations between the Spanish colonists and foreign merchants, for relations with both Portuguese and British personnel in southern South America were complicated, at best.⁵⁷

The Portuguese, having recently regained independence from Spain, spent the 1660s attempting to reconstruct, solidify, and expand their Atlantic empire.⁵⁸ After regaining parts of Brazil that had been captured by Dutch privateers, the Portuguese began to expand their colonial holdings southward towards Buenos Aires. In 1680 the Portuguese established a colony on the northern side of the mouth of the *Río de la Plata* called Nova Colonia do Sacramento. Portuguese presence immediately alarmed Buenos Aires residents, who quickly took up arms against the new colony. Buenos Aires governor José de Garro authorized the attack, and the military encounter ended with 100 out of 1,000 Colonia colonists perishing and many more being captured – including the governor of Colonia. When news of the capture reached Europe,

⁵⁵ This may lead to the question of why independent Spanish merchants who were not bound by official Spanish shipping regulations did not make the occasional trip to Buenos Aires, given the atmosphere of embracing illegal trade. My only guess is that, given that it took much longer to sail to Buenos Aires as opposed to Caribbean ports, merchants were unlikely to sail twice as far to dock at a port that would not provide valuable exports such as silver.

⁵⁶ Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987*, 31.

⁵⁷ Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987*, 31. Rock notes that contraband relations were especially strained between Buenos Aires and Brazilian merchants during the 1640-1660 Portuguese Restoration War. However, the six annual Portuguese merchants that docked at Buenos Aires still far outstripped the six Spanish merchants that had ever docked at Buenos Aires by 1660.

⁵⁸ In 1578, Portuguese King Sebastian died in battle with the Moors in Morocco without leaving an heir to the throne. A crisis ensued in which those with competing claims to the Portuguese throne vied for control of the tiny Iberian country with incredibly wealthy overseas holdings. Eventually, Spanish King Phillip II's claim was the most direct, and all of Iberia was under the rule of a single monarch. During this time, Portugal's international interests were put to the side in favor of supporting Spain's overseas empire. Eventually, in 1640, a war of independence was launched against the Spanish monarchs and Portuguese autonomy was restored.

the Portuguese Crown threatened to invade Spain if the Spanish did not retreat from Colonia and allow Portuguese colonists to return peacefully. As historian David Rock states, “in its enfeebled state under Charles II, the last of the Hapsburgs, Spain quickly capitulated.”⁵⁹ By 1682 Portuguese colonists had returned to Colonia, and within a year merchants began smuggling commodities between Colonia and Buenos Aires. Economically, the arrangement was mutually beneficial: Portuguese merchants were able to gain access to Argentinean cattle and hides (in high demand during times of military campaigns in Europe), and Buenos Aires merchants were able to purchase everyday commodities at a much lower price than those heavily-taxed items bought via Lima’s merchants. Rock suggests that by 1700 merchants in Colonia were trading four to five thousand hides each year to merchants in Rio and Lisbon.⁶⁰

Relations between Buenos Aires and Colonia remained highly complex throughout the colonial period, with periods of military clashes overlapping with economic cooperation. Over the period of 1683 – 1780 Buenos Aires either occupied or lay siege to Colonia four times. The reasons behind these military maneuvers ranged from international friction between Spain and Portugal to local disputes over who had the right to claim wild cattle and horse herds on the east bank of the *Río de la Plata*.⁶¹ However, throughout this period contraband trade continued to thrive between the two colonies, merchants clearly being undeterred by mere political disputes. In many cases, government officials looked the other way as some Portuguese merchants took up residence in Buenos Aires, demonstrating that even the highest officials recognized that it was in the colony’s best interest to defy Spain’s orders regarding trade regulations. Additionally, this history between Buenos Aires and Colonia demonstrates that

⁵⁹ Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987*, 41.

⁶⁰ Rock, *Argentina 1516 – 1987*, 41.

⁶¹ Eventually the Spanish founded the city of Montevideo, the future capital of Uruguay, in 1724 in an effort to curb Portuguese claims to the wild herds.

Argentines also had a long history of defending their own borders. Specifically, the initial capture of Colonia by Argentinean forces, and subsequent conflicts over livestock rights, demonstrate that Argentina was fully capable of raising arms to defend its own interests. Spain, on the other hand, constantly served Buenos Aires' occupying forces with cease and desist orders. Whereas Mexico's best interest often lined up with Spain's, clearly the opposite was true in the colonial Argentinean context.

The Portuguese in Brazil were not the only illegal trade partners for those in Buenos Aires. Buenos Aires became a prime entry point for slaves in southern South America. Portugal frequently smuggled slaves into Argentina, as did the British following the 1703 Methuen treaty allying Portugal and Britain, and bringing the two nations into an economic partnership.⁶² Smuggling of human traffic continued up until the early eighteenth century when Spain expanded upon their slave trade regulations. In 1702 the new Bourbon king Philip V began the first of many operational changes in the Spanish American colonies, changes that would become known as the Bourbon Reforms, mostly implemented in the latter half of the eighteenth century. In a gesture of gratitude to the French king Louis XIV's assistance in supporting Philip's claims to the Spanish throne, Philip granted the French Guinea Company the right to export slaves to several Spanish American port cities, Buenos Aires among them.⁶³ The agreement stated that the French were to only import slaves, as the trade in European goods was to remain a Spanish monopoly. However in keeping with tradition in Buenos Aires such regulations were ignored and a healthy trade in French goods began, boosting Buenos Aires' commercial expansion of the eighteenth century and flooding the entire Pampas region with a wealth in foreign trade goods.

⁶² Rock, *Argentina 1516 – 1987*, 41.

⁶³ Rock, *Argentina 1516 – 1987*, 42.

The number of slaves imported to South America via Buenos Aires in this period was not large compared with other Spanish American ports, especially in the Caribbean islands. Rock states that approximately 3,500 slaves were imported by the French Guinea Company in the nine years after Philip V granted them the right to import to Buenos Aires.⁶⁴ In reality, the city of Buenos Aires had little demand for slaves in the early eighteenth century (though this would change as the century progressed). While the colonies with plantation economies relied heavily on slave labor, the hide trade in Buenos Aires had no such need given the low labor requirement, and thus most of the imported slaves were smuggled to inland provinces to supplement indigenous laborers. As J.H. Elliott has stated, urban slavery was more the hallmark of the Spanish American empire, as opposed to the large plantation economies elsewhere in the New World. Large urban centers such as Lima or Mexico City could have between 10 and 25 percent of their population made up of free or enslaved Africans, as Africans were often utilized as household servants, or when Spanish craftsmen could not keep up with consumer demand Africans often learned skilled trades.⁶⁵ However, despite little early demand for slave labor, it is important to note that foreign slave traders had a massive impact on the Argentinean economy, and changes that resulted from this impact would eventually come to shape the city of Buenos Aires into a thriving urban center in Spanish America.

A period of boom and prosperity for Buenos Aires, more so than other Spanish American port cities, occurred following the international events of 1714: after the War of Spanish Succession concluded, the Treaty of Utrecht forced King Philip V to transfer slave trading rights in Spanish America from the French Guinea Company to the British South Sea Company. The British slave ships brought an estimated 8,600 slaves through Buenos Aires

⁶⁴ Rock, *Argentina 1516 – 1987*, 42.

⁶⁵ Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 100-101.

between the years 1714 – 1739 as well as myriad British products that demonstrate that the population of Buenos Aires was no longer simply interested in survival, but also in the finer cultural items common in other large cities.⁶⁶ In addition to the items imported into Buenos Aires the British slave traders recognized the high demand for Argentinean hides, widely considered to be of better quality than those produced elsewhere in the world. The five thousand hides smuggled to Portuguese merchants in Colonia forty years earlier paled in comparison to the sixty thousand hides traded to British slave merchants in 1724 alone.⁶⁷

This boom in hide trade transformed the city of Buenos Aires, and by the 1740s large urban brick houses were beginning to appear, usually the homes of wealthy hide merchants. The city became home to craftsmen, as silversmiths and cobblers (amongst other tradesmen) began forming artisan guilds. The elite classes in Argentina took on a very different character from those in Mexico, reflecting Argentina's long history as a frontier society whose customs developed separately from significant Spanish influence. Where in Mexico City the politically influential elite were *peninsulares*, and *criollos* hoping to gain a foothold in elite Mexican society needed to trace their ancestry to the sixteenth-century conquistadors, *criollos* in Buenos Aires were not nearly as burdened by birthplace or bloodlines. In Argentina, the wealthy hide merchants quickly emerged as the most influential members of Argentinean society. By the mid-eighteenth century the Buenos Aires merchants were lobbying in Spain for the abolishment of all remaining trade restrictions, as well as requests to end Buenos Aires' supposed subservience to Lima in South America.⁶⁸ Clearly, those in Buenos Aires were already beginning

⁶⁶ Rock, *Argentina 1516 – 1987*, 43. Some of these items listed on page 43 include arms and clothing, beer and spirits, powder, cotton and rice, tobacco, wax and medicines, cutlery and telescopes, combs and nails, buttons, stockings, and glassware.

⁶⁷ Rock, *Argentina 1516 – 1987*, 43.

⁶⁸ Rock, *Argentina 1516 – 1987*, 45. The merchants and Buenos Aires governors argued that the city's trade was hindered by its inability to trade directly with Spain, as merchants in Lima charged a high fee for all exports. Without a fully developed economy, Buenos Aires could not support a military sufficient to

to define themselves as separate from those in other parts of the Spanish American empire, and were endeavoring to see those differences reflected in the political and economic realities of the Spanish American empire.

In 1776 one of the major Bourbon Reforms came into effect, as the Viceroyalty of Peru was split, and the Viceroyalty of the *Río de la Plata* was formed, with Buenos Aires as its new capital.⁶⁹ The northernmost region of the new viceroyalty included Upper Peru and the Andes mining center of Potosí. Despite Potosí's depleted late colonial mining output the region had built a thriving agricultural economy, and Upper Peruvian merchants were displeased at having to sever tradition ties with merchants in Lima in order to ship via their new viceregal capital in Buenos Aires.⁷⁰ Despite the chagrin of Upper Peruvian merchants, the promotion of Buenos Aires to viceregal capital led to many improvements in the infrastructure of the city. Additionally, the primary export of Argentina, hides, was refined and a robust leatherworking trade grew in the city. The population of the city also rose dramatically, as the city of twenty-seven thousand inhabitants in 1780 grew to forty-two thousand on the eve of independence in 1810.⁷¹ However, despite its new place of prominence within the empire, Buenos Aires merchants still held true to the roots of the colony, and the contraband trade continued to flourish underneath the newly appointed viceroy's nose.

However, repercussions from the creation of the new viceroyalty were not all positive, as jealousies and rivalries broke out amongst the regions in the *Río de la Plata*. Interior regions

ward off threats from British or Portuguese invasions. Predictably, Lima merchants were strongly opposed to giving Argentina autonomy from the Viceroy in Lima.

⁶⁹ Whether the Argentinean merchants had much influence in this decision or not can be debated – I have not seen any studies that pursue this question.

⁷⁰ Brooke Larson's *Cochabamba 1550-1900* is an excellent reference for the indigenous and mestizo agricultural industries that built up during the decline of Potosí's silver mines.

⁷¹ Rock, *Argentina 1516 – 1987*, 64. Again, however, this still pales in comparison to Mexico City's 100,000+ residents.

saw little benefit to the new political landscape, especially when Buenos Aires had been receiving city improvements such as a printing press. Finally, Montevideo, so close to Buenos Aires and similar in trade commodities, resented the newfound affluence of those living right across the river.⁷² Clearly individual regional identities were beginning to take form. Given Buenos Aires' long history of self-sufficiency in the face of Spanish laws designed to protect the Crown, it should come as no surprise that southern South America was the first region to rebel against Spanish rule during the independence movements of the early nineteenth century.

⁷² Rock, *Argentina 1516 – 1987*, 68.

CHAPTER 4

ARGENTINA'S AGE OF REVOLUTION AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Argentineans currently celebrate Independence Day on July 9th each year, commemorating the signing of the *Acta de la Declaración de la Independencia Argentina* on July 9, 1816. In reality, the signing of this document signifies the end of a long struggle for independence that had encompassed the majority of the previous decade. While most historians generally agree that the start of Latin America's independence era began with Napoleon's invasion of Spain in March 1808, Argentina once again proves itself to be an anomaly since Buenos Aires was forced for fight for liberation from invading British forces in both 1806 and 1807. In this chapter I will demonstrate that the local pride in repelling the British, as well as a long history of self-sufficiency in Argentina, led to an independence movement in which the *Declaración* was merely the dramatic finale in Argentinean national identity emerging out of Argentina's colonial history. The methods utilized by revolutionaries were diverse and, by and large, were more focused on local pride and heroism than on deprecating Spain.

The British invasions of Buenos Aires must be considered when analyzing the development of Argentinean national identity. Most importantly, these events spurred regional pride and confirmed Argentinean self-sufficiency (as well as Spanish military impotency) in the years directly preceding the Argentinean independence movement. Argentinean trade had

suffered since 1804, when war between Spain and Britain was revived and British ships blockaded the southernmost Spanish American ports. Financial strains, as well as limited communication with the outside world, stressed Buenos Aires merchants, but the strains of Spain's war with Britain would soon become a much more immediate threat to those living in the viceregal capital. In June of 1806 British naval and military forces numbering 1,600 men invaded Buenos Aires, easily brushing aside the Spanish militia quartered there.⁷³ In response, the Spanish viceroy, the Marquis de Sobremonte, quickly fled inland to Córdoba and brought the remaining Spanish military forces with him.⁷⁴ Buenos Aires, it would seem, had been abandoned to the British forces.

The people of Buenos Aires outwardly submitted to the invading military, but secretly were making plans to oust the British from their city. For the next two months the people of Buenos Aires secretly took stock of the number of British troops stationed in their city, as well as their strengths and weaknesses, and formed a local militia led by French-born sailor Santiago Liniers. The militia attacked the unsuspecting British force, capturing Brigadier General William Beresford, while the remaining British troops fled across the river to Montevideo. The following year a subsequent British force, this time led by Lieutenant General John Whitelocke, landed on the west bank of the river and marched into the city streets of Buenos Aires. His troops were met by a fierce resistance made up of not only the militia forces, but also everyday Buenos Aires residents; as historian Mark D Szuchman states, "*Porteños* fought house to house, employing all weapons at their disposal, while *porteñas* poured boiling water and oil on English marines

⁷³ It should be noted that the invasion of Buenos Aires was unplanned and unauthorized by the British government. Still, the invasion was welcome news in London, whose newspapers were recently reporting the suffering of British trade at the hands of Napoleon's blockade of European markets. As at this point the Spanish monarchs were allied with Napoleon, British merchants viewed the hostage city of Buenos Aires as a means to revive Spanish American trade.

⁷⁴ Daniel Lewis, *The History of Argentina* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 37.

unaccustomed to urban guerilla tactics.”⁷⁵ Following the ousting of the British military forces, Liniers became the interim viceroy until a permanent successor to the disgraced Sobremonte could arrive.⁷⁶

The successful liberation of Buenos Aires had an enormous impact on the morale and local pride of Argentineans. For the first time in Spanish colonial history, a force comprised solely of *criollos* had risen up to defend their home when the supposedly superior Spanish army had failed.⁷⁷ Whereas previously military officers were almost exclusively *peninsulares*, or at the very least had received their military training in Spain, now, as Lyman L. Johnson argues, a “politically confident and militarily experience Creole officer corps with close ties to the regional elite [as opposed to bureaucrats in Spain]” were in charge of local defense.⁷⁸ Local pride swelled in the critical period prior to Napoleon’s 1808 invasion of Spain and imprisonment of the newly crowned King Ferdinand VII. Also, critically, the establishment of the local militia meant that nearly thirty percent of the local male population was employed by the military and thus state funds to pay the militia meant that much of the state’s wealth was being transferred to the general populace rather than lining the pockets of Spanish bureaucrats.⁷⁹

This shift in wealth distribution disrupted the standard balance of power witnessed in the majority of Spanish colonial holdings, with the elite *peninsulares* in Argentina having to

⁷⁵ Mark D Szuchman, “From Imperial Hinterland to Growth Pole: Revolution, Change, and Restoration in the Río de la Plata” in *Revolution and Restoration: The Rearrangements of Power in Argentina, 1776-1860*, eds. Mark D Szuchman and Jonathon C Brown (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 13.

⁷⁶ David Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 71-73.

⁷⁷ Lewis, *The History of Argentina*, 37.

⁷⁸ Lyman L. Johnson, “The Military as Catalyst of Change in Late Colonial Buenos Aires,” in *Revolution and Restoration: The Rearrangements of Power in Argentina, 1776-1860*, eds. Mark D Szuchman and Jonathon C Brown (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 41.

⁷⁹ Lyman L. Johnson, “The Military as Catalyst of Change...” in *Revolution and Restoration: The Rearrangement of Power in Argentina, 1776-1860*, Mark D Szuchman and Jonathon C Brown, eds. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 34.

share their state influence with local *criollos*. This shift in political influence directly impacted the turn of events following Napoleon's 1808 invasion. While Buenos Aires fell into a brief period of uncertainty following Napoleon's deposing King Ferdinand, the 1809 arrival of the latest viceroy – Viscount Balthasar de Cisneros – eventually demonstrated just how dedicated the people of Buenos Aires had become to their own well-being over that of Spain. Cisneros attempted to quell the international trade that had been central to the city's economic history. Predictably, his actions led to less state revenue, but more importantly led to less money to pay the newly influential local militia. By May of 1810 Viceroy Cisneros was overthrown by the local militia, a local junta had been established in Buenos Aires, and the Argentinean struggle for independence officially begun in what became known as the *Revolución de Mayo*.⁸⁰

Celebrations commemorating the *Revolución* were held beginning the following year, grand affairs meant to include the whole population of the city of Buenos Aires and inspire a patriotic fervor amongst Argentineans. The main plaza in the center of the city was renamed the *Plaza de Mayo* and the year after the *Revolución* a grand statue the beginning of the independence movement was installed at the center⁸¹ of the plaza. Called the *Pirámide de Mayo*, the monument stands over sixty feet high and is topped with an allegory of Lady Liberty. Clearly intended to be in the center of political happenings, the grandeur of the monument was undoubtedly meant to inspire patriotism in those who viewed it. The inclusion of Liberty at the top was an homage to the revolutions that came before Argentina's – namely, the French and American Revolutions, who also utilized images of Liberty in imagery for the Revolutions and the new governments. Perhaps the new leaders of the revolution were trying to ally themselves with those nations who had shirked monarchies and had joined the modern world. Either way,

⁸⁰ Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987*, 74 - 76.

⁸¹ See especially Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

the *Pirámide* was a central feature of all celebrations in Buenos Aires during the Age of Revolution, being decorated for national celebrations.⁸²

While the *Pirámide* stood as a permanent reminder to the greatness of the revolutionaries, public celebrations commemorating the independence movement were also spectacular, and undoubtedly meant to impress the might of the new nation upon the masses. The first anniversary of the *Revolución de Mayo* witnessed a grand public celebration in the central plaza. Festivities included the inauguration of the *Pirámide* and four days' worth of dancing, raffles, and even the manumission of slaves. The symbolism of freedom for all could hardly have been lost on those who saw slaves being freed from their bonds, and Argentina joined nations such as Britain in abolishing the slave trade. As historian John Charles Chasteen has noted, cultural functions were often utilized to spread nationalism, and to propagate a national identity. City-wide dances were often utilized to commemorate the anniversary of the *Revolución*, or Chasteen also notes a dance held to celebrate a military victory in 1814. The celebrations were meant to both keep the public informed of military successes and to promote pride in the new nation struggling against those who would see Argentina's independence movement fail. By utilizing celebrations and impressive displays such as the *Pirámide*, the nation was associated with enjoyment, but also provided a way for the masses to participate in celebrating the nation – especially since attending and participating in the celebrations were anything but optional for the people of Buenos Aires. Chasteen states, "Romantic notions of national identity, based on the idea of a deeply rooted folk culture, contributed to the valorization of a supposedly representative and generic 'common people' whose presumably

⁸² It remained synonymous with the modernization of Argentina. For example, gas light was first brought to Argentina in 1852, the first structure lit was the *Pirámide*; the public, accustomed to small oil lanterns, were reportedly awestruck by the sight.

distinctive aesthetic sense found expression in dance.”⁸³ In a society that was largely illiterate, celebrations and monuments were a necessary method of implementing a new national identity on a people who had once been Spanish subjects.

Of course, while Buenos Aires was fostering a sense of patriotism through public celebrations other regions of the now-former Viceroyalty of the *Río de la Plata* were not nearly so keen to follow Buenos Aires. In fact, the majority of the independence-era was spent trying to unify the provinces of southern South America, as opposed to expending resources fighting Spain. Initially the junta that was ruling post-1810 Buenos Aires had extended invitations to other provinces and cities within the region to send representatives to join the junta, not all accepted. Most notably, Montevideo, the region of Upper Peru, and the interior jungle region largely made up of religious missions (present-day Paraguay) who already resented the dominance of Buenos Aires within the viceroyalty were unwilling to follow the revolutionaries against Spain. Buenos Aires sent military expeditions to each region, and each returned to Buenos Aires failing to have subdued resistance to the independence movement. Upper Peru returned to their ties with Peruvian merchants, and the interior region severed ties with Buenos Aires entirely and declared local autonomy, founding Paraguay in 1811.⁸⁴ Montevideo was largely populated by Spanish loyalist elites, and in addition to the long-standing rivalry between that city and Buenos Aires, Montevideans were disinclined to follow Buenos Aires revolutionaries and make their subservience to their rival city permanent.

⁸³ John Charles Chasteen, “Patriotic Footwork: Social Dance and the Watershed of Independence in Buenos Aires,” in *State and Society in Spanish America During the Age of Revolution*, ed. Victor M Uribe-Uran (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2001), 182.

⁸⁴ Paraguay, in fact, became a bit of an anomaly amongst South American regions and emerging nations in that it became highly reclusive, not engaging in diplomatic relations with any country for the period immediately following its declaration of independence. Having always been “on the periphery of the periphery,” as Marshall C Eakin states, the self-sufficiency needed to shun diplomatic ties was already ingrained in the culture.

Thus, the early years of the Argentinean independence struggle were hardly a resounding success. Upper Peru, Paraguay, and Montevideo had been lost and the interior regions that had not declared regional autonomy were disinclined to remain subservient to Buenos Aires. As Mark D. Szuchman states, “The animosity between Buenos Aires and the interior was also sustained by competing self-identities and perceptions of what comprised the *real Argentina*.”⁸⁵ It was at this point that the tide of Argentina’s independence movement turned with the arrival of José de San Martín, a career military officer born in the interior of Argentina but trained as an officer in Spain’s military.⁸⁶ Rather than center the independence movement in Buenos Aires and attempt to dominate the interior factions of the region from the city San Martín moved his headquarters from Buenos Aires to the interior city of Tucumán and focused his efforts on eradicating Spanish loyalist forces as well as uniting the provinces. His larger goals, however, were to liberate all regions of South America currently under Spanish rule. This period ushered in a revived public wave of both pro-Argentinean public displays. However, the public sphere also began to include anti-Spanish propaganda in an effort to deemphasize regional rivalries and instead emphasize the strength of a unified Argentina.

Wartime publicity regarding Spain began in an effort to emphasize Spain’s weakness in comparison with Argentina, but eventually evolved into accusations of brutality. For example, it was common during the colonial era (and indeed remains so today) to refer to nations as feminine beings. The *Gazeta de Buenos Aires*, for example, stated in March of 1812 that it was

⁸⁵ Szuchman, “From Imperial Hinterland to Growth Pole,” 10.

⁸⁶ San Martín began his military career in Spain at the young age of eleven, and saw his first combat in North Africa at age twelve. Much of his personal leanings and motivations are unknown, though one key bit of his history came to influence his tactics in Argentina: in 1808 a Spanish mob, angry at Napoleon’s invasion and the royal family’s lack of fight, seized and killed San Martín’s commanding officer. San Martín never forgot both the power of the mob, and never trusted the masses again after 1808. As far as his own conversion to the revolutionary cause, little is known. What is known is that the British helped him to abandon a twenty-plus year career in the Spanish army, and in March 1812 he returned to Argentina for the first time in twenty seven years.

“impossible for her [Spain] to persevere” given the “dreadful state of anarchy” throughout the nation.⁸⁷ Where the clever revolutionary rhetoric makes its entrance into the public sphere, however, is not necessarily in the repeated references to Spain as a “her,” but in the consistent references to Argentina as a masculine being. For example, the *Gaceta Ministerial* published the dying words of an Argentinean soldier: “Long live the Fatherland. I die happy for having beaten the enemy.”⁸⁸ Referring to Argentina as “the Fatherland” became the common colloquial term for the new nation, both in print and in speech. The implications are clear: the feminized Spain had been unable to suitably nurture her Argentinean colony throughout the colonial period, forcing them to seek support elsewhere. Spain had also been unable to protect Buenos Aires in the face of British hostility in the period leading up to the independence movement. Argentineans, in fact, had a better protector and provider: their own masculine, strong, Fatherland.

In the print media, not only was Spain feminized, but as the independence movement progressed Spain was continually perverted in the newspapers. For example, an 1815 proclamation called citizens to arms against an approaching Spanish army, or as the proclamation referred to them, the “wild beasts ready to devour us.”⁸⁹ The proclamations were often read aloud, in public plazas or during church services, so even the illiterate were exposed to revolutionary rhetoric. Later, a public edict in the city of Cuyo called upon the people to take arms and defend their city lest they suffer a “return to the slavery that awaits you if [the Spanish] prevail.”⁹⁰ Another proclamation declared that the United Provinces in South America (as revolutionaries came to call Argentina) seeks to “sever the bloody chains that bind you to the

⁸⁷ *Gazeta de Buenos Aires*, 16/3/1812. Published in *The San Martín Papers* (Washington, D.C.: The San Martín Society, 1988), 5.

⁸⁸ *Gaceta Ministerial*, 27/2/1813. Published in *The San Martín Papers*, 10.

⁸⁹ Proclamation, City of Mendoza, 5/6/1815. Published in *The San Martín Papers*, 37-38.

⁹⁰ Public Edict, City of Cuyo, 14/8/1815. Published in *The San Martín Papers*, 39.

infamous chariot of the tyrants.”⁹¹ Much as the early celebrations commemorating the *Revolución de Mayo* freed slaves in a symbolic gesture emphasizing freedom from the shackles of Spanish colonialism, so too did the public rhetoric emphasize ideas of freedom versus slavery during the struggle for independence. Argentina – never having been a slavery-dependent society in their colonial history – utilized their rejection of slavery to symbolize their entry into the modern, civilized era and also employed the imagery of slavery to support their own independence movement.

While the public sphere in cities fearing an approaching Spanish army certainly evinced colorful condemnations of Spain’s forces, other public spheres merged the battlefield condemnations with celebrations of the glory of the new nation of Argentina. A perfect example is Argentina’s National Anthem, originally composed in 1813 at the behest of the ruling members of the Buenos Aires junta, and titled “Marcha Patriótica.” From the very first lines of the song, the anthem refers to terms that had become commonplace amongst independence movements: equality, freedom, and breaking the chains that bind.⁹² Just as the allegory of Liberty atop the *Pirámide* linked the Argentinean struggle for independence with the French and American Revolutions, so too did the opening lyrics to the national anthem, clearly signifying Argentina’s entrance into the modern world. The opening stanza emphasizes Argentina’s ascension from a colonial territory to a new nation having defeated the once-mighty Spain: “A Nation glorious and new/ Her head is crowned with laurels/ And a lion lies at her feet.”

The middle section of the anthem is not dedicated to Argentina, but instead to other realms of the Spanish American empire where struggles for independence were beginning: “Don’t you see them over in Mexico and Quito/ throwing themselves with tenacious

⁹¹ Proclamation, city unknown. December, 1816. Published in *The San Martín Papers*, 58.

⁹² Please reference Appendix I for the lyrics to “Marcha Patriótica.”

viciousness?/ And how they cry, bathed in blood/ Potosí, Cochabamba and La Paz?/ Don't you see them over sad Caracas/ spreading mourning and weeping and death?"⁹³ The anthem presents much of Spanish America as being brutally repressed by Spain, and Argentina – whose forces were working to support other South American independence movements – as the heroic savior to those provinces. However, the anthem also does something else in this stanza: it defined regions that are *not* Argentina. Included in this stanza are territories that had been a part of the Viceroyalty of the *Río de la Plata*, but these regions are recognized as not being included in Argentinean territories. This is made even clearer in a later stanza that lists regions belonging to Argentina: "San José, San Lorenzo, Suipacha/ both Piedras, Salta and Tucumán/La Colonia and the same walls/ of the tyrant in the Banda Oriental"⁹⁴./ They are eternal signboards that say:/ Here the Argentine arm found triumph/ here the fierce oppressor of the Fatherland/ his proud neck bent." The anthem thus serves several functions in celebrating the success of Argentina's struggle for independence, noting the atrocities and failures of Spain, and clearly defining which regions of the Spanish American empire are now Argentina.

Thus the public sphere during Argentina's struggle for independence drew upon the roots of national identity that had been brewing for all of the colonial period. Clearly, regions such as Upper Peru (modern-day Bolivia) which were included in the Viceroyalty of the *Río de la Plata* did not necessarily come to identify with the dominant regions of the viceroyalty during the Age of Revolution. During the years following the *Revolución de Mayo* the leaders of the emerging nation worked to harness the colonial roots in the public sphere, both lauding

⁹³ The anthem was revised in the early 20th century, removing the lyrics which paint such a brutal portrait of Spain, as well as those that reference other regions of Latin America, and kept only those that celebrate Argentina.

⁹⁴ This was the term for the region that would become known as Uruguay. Clearly, the animosity between Buenos Aires and Montevideo had not yet subsided.

Argentina and attacking Spain in the public sphere in order to solidify a sense of nationalism for the new nation, creating what Benedict Anderson would call an “imagined community.”⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Verso, 1991).

CHAPTER 5

MEXICO'S AGE OF REVOLUTION: THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW SOCIAL ORDER

Whereas the struggle for Argentinean revolutionaries was uniting the provinces of southern South America, Mexico's independence period was plagued by violent struggles between Mexico's social classes. Whereas the poor Indian and mestizo populations quickly rose up in a bid for independence following Napoleon's 1808 invasion of Spain, the wealthy *peninsular and criollo* populations were more concerned with preserving a conservative Spanish monarchical political system. Eventually, colonial Mexican history came to a close not with a decisive battle or dramatic declaration of independence, but with a quiet government agreement by conservative elites. As historian Burton Kirkwood states, "the process of breaking away from Spain was more reactionary than proactive," though it could be argued that the culmination of the independence era was even better described as an accommodation.⁹⁶

However, whereas the public sphere in independence-era Argentina was filled with clear distinctions between Argentineans and Spanish, Eric Van Young points out that in Mexico the "colonial regime" was in control of the printing presses and therefore "the reading of insurgency-era written documents for explicit elements of popular political thinking is likely to yield limited results."⁹⁷ Additionally, searches for written documentation from insurgents in the

⁹⁶ Burton Kirkwood, *The History of Mexico* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 75.

⁹⁷ Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and the Mexican Struggle for Independence, 1810-1821* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 312.

rural regions of Mexico are unlikely to be fruitful given that the vast majority – Van Young estimates ninety five percent of the population – was illiterate.⁹⁸ Therefore, given the combined illiteracy rate and the strict control over the print media by colonial authorities the public sphere in Mexico becomes, in some ways, more challenging to read than in the Argentinean context. More often it is productive to pay close attention to the absences in the public sphere. It is those absences, along with extrapolation from what the public sphere *does* contain, that paints the picture of what Kirkwood terms a growing *Mexicanidad*.⁹⁹

On the eve of Napoleon’s invading Spain, the *Diario de México* was brimming with international news. Merchant seamen arrived in Veracruz on the ship *Dorotea* after having stopped in New York, Charlestown, and Havana bringing news of the changing political landscape. The entire front page of the October 21, 1807 issue of the *Diario* contained news from overseas, from the treaties being negotiated between France, Russia, and Prussia to the mediation of Russian leaders in the peace talks between Napoleon and Britain.¹⁰⁰ The top of the front page, the news that presumably most interested the *Diario*’s audience, was the “reconquista” of southern South America from the invading British: Spanish subjects had ousted British troops from the city of Montevideo, where they had escaped to after fleeing Buenos Aires.¹⁰¹ It was the joyful end to a saga that had played out in the pages of the *Diario*, with the people of Mexico City shocked at the foreign occupation of Spanish soil.

These early *Diario* issues bring up important points, both practical and rhetorical. Practically, attention must be given to the merchant seamen who are mentioned as being the bearers of international news in the one particular *Diario* issue. Mariners were worldly men,

⁹⁸ Van Young, *The Other Rebellion*, 311.

⁹⁹ Kirkwood, *The History of Mexico*, 75.

¹⁰⁰ *Diario de México*, 21/10/1807; Volume 7, Issue 756, Page 249. Mexico City, Mexico.

¹⁰¹ *Diario de México*, 21/10/1807.

sailing between many nations and New World colonies in the Atlantic world. Often, people depended upon the arrivals of new ships for not only trade but for information about world events. If the *Dorotea* is any indication, merchant seamen were world travelers who undoubtedly collected news at each port they stopped in. Those who lived in urban centers and port cities were knowledgeable about the world around them and they were undoubtedly aware that, as John Lynch points out, that Spain depended on Mexico far more than Mexico depended on Spain.¹⁰² Additionally, Alicia Hernández-Chávez points out that news and opinions travelled orally across Mexico, making even the more remote portions not entirely cut off from world news.¹⁰³ The second point that must be addressed is that in referring to the ousting of the British from the *Río de la Plata* region as the “reconquista” the Mexican press was harkening back to the glory of the Spanish past when the Spanish retook their Iberian homeland from the Moors of northern Africa after a prolonged conflict that lasted for centuries. Just as the most influential *criollos* had to tie their roots back to the original conquistadors, contemporary victories were tied to triumphs of the past. Whereas in Buenos Aires the local heroes were celebrated after the British were defeated, in Mexico the emphasis was on the success of the Spanish people as a whole. Already clear differences in the public spheres of the two regions are coming into focus.

The *Diario* does not, however, give any indication to the struggles that local Mexicans were having during this time. A widespread drought led to a crop shortage and a famine in rural Mexico. Concurrently, Spain raised taxes to help pay for the ongoing war against the invading British; this effort both squeezed the Mexican population financially, but also led to the confiscation of Catholic Church assets. The Church, in turn, sought to have its debts repaid by

¹⁰² Cited in Kirkwood, *The History of Mexico*, 76.

¹⁰³ Alicia Hernández-Chávez, *Mexico: A Brief History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 101.

those who had in the absence of banks borrowed money from colonial Mexico's only money lender.¹⁰⁴ Thus, it was the common people who felt the financial burden of the celebrated "reconquista" of southern South America fall upon their shoulders. This period in late colonial Mexican history would also prove to be the indicative of much of Mexico's public sphere during the Age of Revolution whereby a significant discrepancy is evident between the writings of the "colonial regime" and the experiences of the Mexican populace.

This discrepancy is quite clear once the authorized publications are compared with historical events that followed Napoleon's invasion of Spain. If the foreign occupation of Buenos Aires and Montevideo was shocking, Napoleon's invasion and capture of King Ferdinand was appalling to the people of Mexico. The *Diario* erupted with condemnations of Napoleon, with several issues leading with poems composed about the sad political state of an occupied Spain. One December 1808 issue led with a poem that called upon the Virgin of Guadalupe to protect Spain in the face of Napoleon's army.¹⁰⁵ The same issue featured a letter written to "Señor Diarista" stating that the author had thought of the perfect solution to Spain's occupation. If nations currently opposing or occupied by Napoleon's army spread proclamations amongst his troops stating that any and all who deserted the French military would be granted safe harbor in any country opposed to the Emperor's tyranny.¹⁰⁶ With Napoleon's army cut off at the knees, Spain would clearly be able to overthrow the usurper. However, as 1808 came to a close and King Ferdinand was not yet reinstated to the Spanish throne, the poetry published in the *Diario* took on a darker tone. A February 1809 poem drew a bleak picture of Spain under Napoleon. The poem contained images of a demon waiting outside a mausoleum door which opened onto a "blaspheming Spain" – a Spain under the control of "an infidel, and of a rogue." Lest the

¹⁰⁴ Hernández-Chávez, *Mexico: A Brief History*, 100.

¹⁰⁵ *Diario de México*, 19/12/1808; Volume 9, Issue 19176, Page 705.

¹⁰⁶ *Diario de México*, 19/12/1808.

reader is left questioning the writer's loyalties, the poem ended with: "death to the unworthy Napoleon; and long live the great Ferdinand!"¹⁰⁷

The *Diario* issues of 1808-1809 would suggest a unified Mexico, with all Mexicans outraged at the foreign occupation of Spanish soil. However, whereas the *Diario* accounts of the British occupation of Spain's southern South American colonies provided detailed descriptions of the events and clearly expressed joy at the defeat of the British, the *Diario* reactions to Napoleon's occupation of Spain were far more visceral and angry. This phenomenon ably illustrates what the two regions' colonial histories indicate: that Argentina was a peripheral region of the Spanish American empire, and Mexico was a central region with close ties to Spain. Therefore, while victory over the invading British was certainly celebratory, there was a far more removed feeling about the *Diario* accounts of the British invasion of Buenos Aires and Montevideo in comparison with reactions to Napoleon's invasion of Spain. However the *Diario* accounts, aside from outrage at the occupation of Spain, do not indicate that life in Mexico was not continuing as usual. Following literary attacks against Spain's occupiers are notes on everyday life in Mexico City. One family lost their big black dog and posted a notice in the *Diario* calling for its return. Another family was selling four mules and a chair for three hundred fifty pesos.¹⁰⁸ The only indication as to the reality of Mexico in this time – that it was seething with class conflict that was about to erupt into a violent independence movement – came in a tiny notice that on the fifth of December several guns had been stolen from downtown Mexico City.¹⁰⁹

The economic hardships brought on by drought and raised taxes had been simmering, and the fallout from Napoleon's invasion sent Mexico onto the path towards independence.

¹⁰⁷ *Diario de México*, 28/2/1809; Volume 10, Issue 10246, Page 243.

¹⁰⁸ *Diario de México*, 19/12/1808.

¹⁰⁹ *Diario de México*, 19/12/1808.

The *criollos* of Mexico City went to Viceroy Iturrigaray in July 1808 asking that a junta be created (much like the junta in Spain which attempted to rule in the name of the deposed monarch), and more importantly that representatives be included from all principal cities in Mexico. *Peninsulares*, however, feared that this arrangement would cost them their political and economic influence since some Mexican cities did not boast *peninsulare* presence. Viceroy Iturrigaray did not take immediate action, as he was caught between the two elite groups of Mexico City. As a result, the *peninsulares* led a coup that seized Iturrigaray and replaced him with a new viceroy sympathetic to *peninsulares* and *criollos* reacted, perhaps predictably, with anger. The in-fighting amongst the elite of Mexico led the popular classes to fear the power vacuum left by their absent monarch. Coupled with the animosity from generations of racial and social marginalization the masses eventually rose up in what would become the beginnings of the independence movement. Led by a priest, Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, the masses would eventually call for independence from Spain. The elites, however, simply viewed them as insurgents that had to be stopped.¹¹⁰

Father Hidalgo had been initially trained by the Jesuits prior to their expulsion from the Spanish American empire. He was, however, far from a traditional clerical figure in that he did not advocate for nor live the traditional lifestyle expected of religious figures, enjoying dancing, gambling, and openly living with a woman.¹¹¹ Once he was assigned to the parish in Dolores in 1803, Hidalgo sought to make the indigenous peoples in his parish more self-sufficient in an effort to end their dependence upon the colonial system that had oppressed them for

¹¹⁰ Kirkwood, *The History of Mexico*, 78-79.

¹¹¹ Kirkwood, *The History of Mexico*, 80.

centuries.¹¹² By the end of the decade, Hidalgo was involved with a group who opposed the Spanish colonial system and advocated for Mexican independence.

In September of 1810 Hidalgo learned that the colonial government had begun arresting suspected conspirators, and Hidalgo gathered his parishioners at his church calling for mass rebellion. This speech – called the *Grito de Dolores* – is one of the most famous speeches in Mexican history, yet an exact transcript of what Hidalgo told his followers has never been known. Burton Kirkwood claims that Hidalgo was initially rather conservative and that the *Grito* contained the phrase “Long live Ferdinand VII” alongside “Death to bad government.” Kirkwood claims that the phrase that most drew the ire of the colonial elites was “Death to *Gachupines*.”¹¹³ By contrast, Marshall C Eakin claims that the *Grito* stated “Long live independence and death to Spaniards.”¹¹⁴ Eric Van Young presents a more moderate interpretation as he suggests that Hidalgo’s message evolved over the course of his revolt, from advocating for regional autonomism within the empire to advocating a complete break with Spain.¹¹⁵ Undoubtedly the *Grito* contained elements of all of three historians’ works and word of mouth carried the different phrases throughout rural Mexico, providing a variety of impetuses for rural Mexicans to join in Hidalgo’s revolt.

The sentiments that rang out from Dolores also provided the elites with no shortage of reasons to fear the masses. These fears were confirmed when Hidalgo’s forces descended upon the mining center of Guanajuato, pillaging the town and killing hundreds of men, women, and

¹¹² Kirkwood, *The History of Mexico*, 80. Hidalgo went about making his parishioners self-sufficient in teaching them textile and pottery manufacturing techniques and planting olives and grapes. This violated Spain’s mercantilist policies, which stipulated that manufactured goods must be run by urban trade guilds that were highly regulated by the Crown, and that olives and grapes could only be grown in Chile or in Spain.

¹¹³ Kirkwood, *The History of Mexico*, 81. “Gachupines” was another term for *peninsulares* in colonial Mexico.

¹¹⁴ *The Americas in the Revolutionary Era; Lecture 17 – Mexico: Race and Class Warfare*.

¹¹⁵ Van Young, *The Other Rebellion*, 2.

children. While Mexico's written public sphere was devoid of any accounts of *peninsulare-criollo* disputes, there was no lack of condemnations of Hidalgo's revolt. In the first month of the revolt the *Diario* published an edict by order of the Holy Office of the Catholic Church written to Father Hidalgo. The edict first draws on Hidalgo's history of being called before the Inquisition, and then states, "you are a man seditious, schismatic, and heretic..." and finishes with "you spoke with contempt of the Popes, and the government of the Church..."¹¹⁶ This edict undoubtedly echoed the sentiments of the societal elites who feared the violent masses led by Hidalgo. Perhaps by invoking his questionable history with the Catholic Church officials were hoping to blemish his credibility amongst the devout, rural classes. The edict would have fit easily into the societal elite's fears of the rogue priest. Certainly the rhetorical vitriol from both the Mexican elites and from Hidalgo against one another echoed throughout Mexico, driving up tensions and feeding ideas to the masses – ideas of either fear of the uncontrolled and uneducated, or calls for independence from out-of-touch ruling elites.

The peasant insurgents in Mexico had to utilize non-written forms of communication with one another, as Hidalgo's forces were largely illiterate. The most prominent was the usage of the Virgin of Guadalupe as the symbol of the revolt. Several historians have studied how the image of the Virgin was utilized during the Mexican struggle for independence. In the early stages Hidalgo invoked the Virgin in his *Grito*, and later an image of the Virgin carried by the insurgents worked as an identifier of those who were sympathetic to independence.¹¹⁷ Using a pocket-sized image of the Virgin to reveal oneself as an insurgent sympathizer was rather ingenious, as it allowed the illiterate to not have to carry around a document with words that they could not understand, but also was easily explained to a colonial official who might

¹¹⁶ *Diario de México*, 15/10/1810. Volume 13, Issue 10839, Page 425.

¹¹⁷ See Van Young, *The Other Rebellion*.

question them. After all, one who carried around religious images must have simply been a devout Catholic.

While the Virgin began this period of Mexican history as a symbol utilized by Hidalgo and his insurgent army she eventually took on a deeper meaning as a symbol of Mexico itself. It is no surprise that she gained such widespread devotion. After all, the Virgin Mary has always been central to the Roman Catholic faith. However, in the case of the Virgin of Guadalupe, she is given special significance to Mexico because in this case her image refers to the specific appearance of the Virgin to Juan Diego near Mexico City. According to the account of her appearance to Juan Diego, the Virgin spoke to him in his native language – Nahuatl. This undoubtedly gave Hidalgo’s army, largely made up of mestizos and indios, a personal connection to the Virgin. As the next chapter will demonstrate, images of the Virgin not only played a significant role in the independence movement, but also helped to develop a Mexican national identity post-independence.

Eventually Hidalgo was captured in March of 1811, where he was tried and convicted of heresy and sentenced to death. The priest’s severed head hung on the gate of the granary (along with those of other insurgent leaders who had been captured) in Guanajuato for a decade following his execution, sending a message to all – literate and illiterate – that public edicts could not hope to duplicate, no matter how fiery the language: any who fought against the colonial status quo would meet a similar fate. Other celebrations of Hidalgo’s execution – celebrations which were also, intrinsically, celebrations of royal authority – were more joyful rather than ominous. Two months after Hidalgo’s execution a notice appeared in the *Diario* stating that a man named D. Manuel Corral had written music commemorating Hidalgo’s defeat. Ever the gentleman, Corral “arranged different catalogs, each composed of six beautiful songs

which he dedicates to the ladies of the capital..."¹¹⁸ Much like the mandatory city-wide dances held in Buenos Aires, celebrating Hidalgo's defeat with the arts would enhance support for the colonial government amongst the Mexico City elites. While Hidalgo and the rebellious masses were associated with death and violence their defeat and the continuation of the colonial system was equated with much more pleasant images – in this case, of Mexico City ladies singing Corral's lovingly composed songs.

As previously mentioned, however, the *Diario* only provides a clear picture of the Mexico City that the colonial government supported. Despite the picture drawn by the *Diario*, Mexico was far from politically stable. Not only was Hidalgo's revolt causing the elites to fear the masses, but *peninsulares* and *criollos* agreed on little regarding how to govern Mexico in the absence of their monarch. Additionally, another priest names José María Morelos had stepped into Hidalgo's vacated space and continued to lead the rural masses against the colonial government.

Diario issues treated Morelos in much the same way that they had Hidalgo: a heretic who was dangerous to Mexicans and must be brought to justice. More interesting during this period was the absence of other international affairs. Namely, the independence movements in Argentina were never discussed in the *Diario*. Considering that a few short years earlier the newspaper had given detailed descriptions of the British occupation of Buenos Aires, Argentina was not so remote that the newspapers did not pay it any heed. In fact, the region appeared fairly frequently in the *Diario* up until 1811 when it disappeared completely from the pages of the Mexico City publication.

¹¹⁸ *Diario de México*, 14/5/1811. Volume 14, Issue 20050, Page 548.

Perhaps colonial government officials were fearful of addressing the independence movement in Argentina at all, given the internal strife closer to home. However, as demonstrated by *Diario* issues from years prior, the literate population of Mexico City was a worldly society, aware of political negotiations in places as far away as Russia. This indicates that the absence of Argentina's independence movement from the *Diario* was a conscious choice made by those who were in charge of dispersing information to the Mexico City masses. By this point the American, French, and Haitian Revolutions would have been enough to frighten any colonial official into doing whatever they could to prevent the wave of independence movements from reaching the shores of Mexico.¹¹⁹ The existence of an independence movement in Spanish America that had gained widespread support from all social classes would have struck fear into the hearts of the ruling elites who were worried about peasant insurgents calling for independence on their own doorsteps. Perhaps the fear in presenting the events in Argentina – even in a negative light – would have given insurgent movements a boost that Mexico's colonial government certainly hoped to prevent.

Unfortunately for Mexican colonial officials, it was highly probable that a significant portion of Mexicans had heard at least rumors of a widespread independence movement at the southern end of the Spanish American empire. The very same news-bearers that brought political updates from Europe would have likely also had heard of Argentina's independence movement: the merchant seamen. Mariners, often not bound by national borders in their travels, would have undoubtedly been able to bring news of Argentina to the shores of colonial Mexico. James C. Scott has argued that word of mouth and rumor can work as excellent means of resisting those in power for the simple reason that private conversations are extremely

¹¹⁹ It should be mentioned that historian Alicia Hernández-Chávez argues that the American and French Revolutions sparked conservative responses in colonial Mexico. See *Mexico: A Brief History*, 100.

difficult to monitor, and thus nearly impossible to control.¹²⁰ Erasing insurgent Argentina from the pages of the *Diario* and other public venues was the closest that the colonial government could come to controlling the spread of potentially dangerous information.

By the end of 1814 Captain Agustín Cosme Damiáno de Iturbide y Arámburu (more commonly known as Agustín Iturbide) had marginalized any organized popular rebellion. It was at this point that much of the elite in-fighting ceased as well. After years of peasant insurgency it became clear to the *peninsulares* and *criollos* that their anger at the peasant insurgents was greater than any anger they held towards each other, at least for the time being. Instead, elite Mexicans began to punish peasant insurgents. Their first move was to place Morelos' severed head alongside Hidalgo's at the gate of the Guanajuato granary in a continuing message to all that violence against the colonial system would be surely punished. However, as Eric Van Young has pointed out, the most violent retaliations were reserved for insurgent leaders. Government officials appeared to be more concerned with exacting a quick punishment on the masses and then sending them back into the workforce. According to Van Young's research nearly eighty percent of those convicted of being a part of Hidalgo or Morelos' forces were sentenced to hard labor, and those sentences rarely lasted longer than two years.¹²¹ Regardless, these sentences could have done little to achieve the government's undoubted goal: to suppress any future uprisings against the colonial system.

For much of the remainder of the colonial period any counter-colonial insurgents utilized guerilla warfare primarily in the rural regions of Mexico. By the beginning of the 1820s, events in Spain once again influenced the status quo in Mexico and irrevocably altered Mexican

¹²⁰ See Scott's *Weapons of the Weak and/or Domination and the Arts of Resistance*.

¹²¹ Van Young, *The Other Rebellion*, 55-56.

history.¹²² Liberals in Spain, influenced by the French Revolution and the Enlightenment, had grown continually frustrated at the reinstated Ferdinand's refusal to abide by the liberal constitution drawn up in 1812 while Ferdinand was unable to rule. Buckling under pressure, Ferdinand agreed to the changes that liberals were demanding. Unfortunately for Ferdinand, these changes angered the extremely conservative ruling elites in Mexico. Amongst the reforms that elite Mexicans were opposed to included a free press, an atmosphere conducive to frank and open discussion of policy, anticlerical policies, and the release of political prisoners.¹²³ Iturbide, the royalist officer who had captured Morelos six short years earlier, now turned to the remaining anti-colonial insurgent leaders and asked that they put down their arms and join in the movement to declare an independent Mexico which would be free of the increasingly liberal policies of Spain. Despite attempts by Spanish royal officials to stem the tide of conservatives calling for independence, Iturbide marched into Mexico City on September 27, 1821 alongside the rebel leaders Vicente Guerrero and Guadalupe Victoria and declared what became known as the Three Guarantees: independence for Mexico, equal treatment of *peninsulares* and *criollos*, and the Catholic Church remained the sole form of religion for Mexico.¹²⁴

Independence in Mexico, despite over a decade of rural insurgent warfare still appeared to take many in Mexico by surprise. The day after marching into Mexico City and declaring independence, Iturbide ordered surprised government officials to draw up a declaration of independence. Phrases such as, "The Mexican Nation, which for three hundred years had neither had its own will, nor free use of its voice, leaves today the oppression in which it has lived," seem as if they had been lifted from the liberal declarations of other nations, especially

¹²² Issues of the *Diario de México* are not available in the database that I was using post-1816. Whether this is because the *Diario* ceased printing at this point or simply has not been digitized past that date, I do not know. Unfortunately, my access to primary sources from the final years of colonial Mexico is quite limited.

¹²³ Kirkwood, *The History of Mexico*, 85.

¹²⁴ Kirkwood, *The History of Mexico*, 86.

given that the freedoms the declaration claimed to have been denied were some of the very same that conservative Mexicans were angry that Ferdinand had implemented.

Perhaps as Mexicans had always had such close ties to Spain (the Declaration promised to maintain a “close friendship”) they had never had to ponder what being Mexican meant outside of also being Spanish. As Jaime Rodríguez argues, many Mexicans did not consider themselves colonists, but integral parts of the Spanish Crown who were seeking home rule rather than independence. It was only after the suggestion to allow home rule was rejected by the Crown that the Three Guarantees were turned to instead.¹²⁵ More than likely this explains why the Virgin of Guadalupe was adopted as the Roman Catholic icon of Mexico, as she had once been the symbol of the rebel army: she was the closest that Mexico had to a figure that was exclusively indicative of Mexico and the diverse peoples that now called themselves Mexicans. Unfortunately, the early national history of Mexico was filled with power struggles and violence as Mexicans struggled to define what it meant to be Mexican, rather than Spanish.

¹²⁵ Jaime Rodríguez, *We Are Now the True Spaniards: Sovereignty, Revolution, Independence and the Emergence of the Federal Republic of Mexico, 1808-1824* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 3-5.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In the years following independence both Argentina and Mexico initially struggled to define the course that the newly formed nation would follow. This struggle is understandable in both contexts, but for vastly different reasons. In Argentina the focus had been on obtaining independence and unifying the interior provinces with Buenos Aires to such a degree that once those goals had been met it was a struggle to define the nature of the Argentinean government – namely, how dominant would Buenos Aires be in Argentinean politics? In the case of Mexico, the reign of Agustín Iturbide was short-lived, as the new nation dissolved into political in-fighting and assassinations that lasted for years. As Jaime Rodríguez argues, Mexicans had spent the majority of their colonial history identifying themselves as an integral part of the Spanish Crown.¹²⁶ Once they had been severed from the Spanish Crown, how would Mexicans go about finding an identity distinguished from their former identity as Spanish subjects? Despite early struggles in both nations, Argentina’s clearer picture of a separate and distinct national identity from Spain’s, along with its long history of distinguishing itself from other Spanish American territories, meant that Argentina’s path post-independence was notably smoother than Mexico’s.

After formally announcing independence in the 1816 declaration, Argentina named Juan Martín de Pueyrredón director of the new nation. Within three years he had passed a constitution that asserted the dominance of Buenos Aires over the rest of the region and

¹²⁶ Jaime Rodríguez, *We Are Now the True Spaniards: Sovereignty, Revolution, Independence, and the Emergence of the Federal Republic of Mexico, 1808-1824* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 3-4.

ordered tight controls over river traffic at the mouth of the *Río de la Plata*; as a result, Buenos Aires was the sole port for national imports and interior cities were met with a distinct economic and political disadvantage.¹²⁷ Interior resentment of Buenos Aires' dominance was not new, as its roots can be traced throughout Argentina's colonial history, however the Argentinean government was too new to be able to assert this dominance, and militias in the interior cities were quickly formed. The nation was starkly divided between the *Unitarios*, who supported Buenos Aires' dominance, and the Federalists, who preferred an open and decentralized government.¹²⁸ Disputes over the nature of the national government continued for decades, and it was not until mid-century that a national government began to take shape, with Buenos Aires transforming into a federal capital that housed the President, Congress, and Supreme Court of the nation. Despite political turmoil, important developments in the country took shape during this period that led to Argentina's becoming one of the region's wealthiest nations.

The nation's educational and cultural sectors saw great improvement early in Argentina's national history. The University of Buenos Aires was founded in 1821 independent of the Catholic Church, in contrast to the Jesuit-founded University of Córdoba which had been the central institution of learning in southern South America since its founding in 1618. Additionally, the creation of a national museum and public library aimed to create a public that was alter to political and civic matters.¹²⁹ However, it was largely a result of economic changes that led to the development of a more modernized Argentina.

Immediately following independence, Britain was Argentina's primary international trade partner, with the relationship now evolving from the long-standing contraband trade from the colonial era. However, during the 1820s Argentina's civil wars led to a tightening national

¹²⁷ Daniel K Lewis, *The History of Argentina* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 41.

¹²⁸ Lewis, *The History of Argentina*, 41.

¹²⁹ Lewis, *The History of Argentina*, 42.

budget, and Argentina defaulted on a loan from the British government; this dried up much of the Argentinean-British trade, and British ships were seen less and less frequently in Argentinean ports. In the 1830s, however, international trade diversified to include French, American, German, and Spanish merchants; despite each trade relationship accounting for less exchange than Argentina had had with the British, collectively they far outstripped Argentina's previous trade partnership.¹³⁰ As the first century of nationhood continued, David Rock argues, political unity was directly brought about by economic growth, which in turn resulted from three key factors: foreign investment, foreign trade, and immigration. Sheep eventually overtook cattle as Argentina's most economically important livestock, and the increasingly high-quality wool led to a booming garment industry. In turn, foreign nations looking to have access to Argentinean garments invested in the country, most notably in building a railroad system that connected ocean ports to interior settlements. As a result, by the 1880s many Argentines enjoyed housing, education, and consumption standards that resembled the most advanced nations of the day. Predictably, immigrants were attracted to such a society, and Argentina became a nation with many urban centers and large international communities.¹³¹

Argentina is regarded by many as a relative nineteenth-century success story when compared with other Latin American nations. Despite the continued competition between Buenos Aires and the interior regions, Argentina's history of comparative self-sufficiency during its colonial history allowed for an easier transition into independence. Additionally, its distinct identity promoted during the independence struggle – via memorials, proclamations, and its new national anthem – meant that post-independence internal disagreements were over the nature of government rather than what it intrinsically meant to be an Argentinean. While the

¹³⁰ David Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 107.

¹³¹ Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987*, 118, 129-131.

collapse of international economic ties following World War II led to an undeniable economic and political crisis for much of the second half of the twentieth century, Argentina's colonial history led to a comparatively stable post-independence period when compared, certainly, with Mexico.

Post-independence Mexico experienced political and economic challenges in the wake of a decade of insurgent guerilla warfare and the sudden loss of Mexico's sole trade partner. Iturbide's reign as the head of Mexico's government lasted for only one year, and between then and 1857 no fewer than fifty different governments claimed control over national affairs.¹³² However, the government was not the only ruling body that must be taken into account when examining Mexico's early national period: regional governments, the Catholic Church, and the caudillo systems controlled the masses through a system of violence and politics. In exchange for supporters carrying out a caudillo's orders, the caudillo would demand that his supporters use threats and acts of violence to support him in the face of any perceived threat.¹³³ Thus, fears of violent armed forces sweeping the country did not end with independence, but continued throughout the early national period. A series of international wars on the Mexican borderlands – Texas' fight for independence and the U.S.-Mexican War to name only two – ran concurrently with Mexico's prolonged internal war resulted in Mexico's economy in shambles and its infrastructure, agricultural, and mining centers ravaged by decades of violence.

Mexico's early national history makes clear that the colonial context out of which the national period rose had direct effects on how a Mexican national identity developed. Mexico spent centuries being tied so closely to Spain that it became difficult to discern what distinguished Mexicans from Spanish. Additionally, social inequities from the colonial period

¹³² Burton Kirkwood, *The History of Mexico* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 89.

¹³³ Frank Safford, "Politics, Ideology, and Society," in *Spanish America after Independence, c. 1820-c.1870*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 72-76.

were also transferred to Mexico's national history as the urban, wealthy elites and the rural, poor masses undoubtedly appeared to belong to two different worlds altogether. As Eric Van Young states, "Looking downstream from 1821 at the chaotic first half-century of the country's existence, it is difficult to miss a link between certain enduring problems in its economic life, social structure, and political culture..."¹³⁴ Postcolonial studies can assist in our understanding of how and why cultural decolonization did not readily occur in early national Mexico, despite postcolonialism not being directly involved in narratives regarding state-building. Early American historian Kariann Yokota states that, "the newly empowered settler population did not dismantle the newly evacuated structures of power and inequality they helped build..."¹³⁵ Yokota's analysis of the early United States is also quite pertinent to early national Mexico, where certain aspects of Spanish culture were held onto from the colonial era while *Mexicanidad* was simultaneously celebrated in a quest to define Mexican national identity.

Given the context that Mexico rose out of it is not surprising that the Virgin of Guadalupe was the figure that came to represent Mexico, both as a religious icon and as a visual symbol for the nation. Given that one of the few ideas that all who vied for government power agreed upon was that the Mexican state should remain closely tied to the Catholic Church, the Virgin is an apt choice for a national symbol. Additionally, the story of the Virgin's appearance to Juan Diego, an indigenous man, in which she spoke the indigenous language made her a Catholic icon that could be identified as uniquely Mexican, rather than a figure that could be appropriated for a number of nations. The fact that the Virgin spoke to Juan Diego in Nahuatl

¹³⁴ Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and the Mexican Struggle for Independence 1810-1821* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 2.

¹³⁵ Kariann Yokota, "Postcolonialism and Material Culture in the Early United States," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 64 (2), 264. Also see Yokota's *Unbecoming British*.

gave the story special significance for the indigenous masses, thus allowing the varying factions of the Mexican population to unite around the Virgin.

Mexico is certainly not unique in its usage of a female image to represent the nation. Historian Joan B. Landes has analyzed the usage of female icons, especially the French usage of Lady Liberty, in the development of new nations. On the importance of the visual in defining a new nation Landes states, "It is well appreciated that a nation-state's political legitimacy is founded on consent, not just on force, but less often acknowledged is how visual imaginings may be part of the process by which a citizen learns to love an abstract object with something like the individual lover's intimacy and passion."¹³⁶ Especially in cultures with limited literacy the visualization of the new nation can play an important role in allowing one to feel a kinship or a sense of belonging. Given that the majority of the illiterate population of Mexico was composed of the rural indigenous and mestizos, the incorporation of the Virgin of Guadalupe, would have had the compounded effect of providing an image that directly appealed to their community's history.

Landes continues on to argue that, "...decent and correct manners and morals, as well as a proper attitude toward sexuality, were intimately connected with the development of modern nationalism. And female propriety, chastity, and fidelity, along with monogamy, all became tropes of civilized or virtuous nationhood."¹³⁷ If female propriety and chastity were tropes of a civilized nation, then what better figure to uphold as a national symbol than the Virgin of Guadalupe? Not only was the Virgin upheld in Mexico as the ultimate in chastity, but as the mother of Christ she also served as a symbol for the fruitful nation that Mexicans hoped

¹³⁶ Joan B Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 2.

¹³⁷ Landes, *Visualizing the Nation*, 5.

their country would surely become.¹³⁸ In the face of political factionism and widespread violence, the Virgin was a prominent positive symbol of the new nation.

Historian William H Beezley argues that following the ousting of Agustín Iturbide from power the celebration of Mexico's Independence Day shifted from the day that independence was officially declared to instead commemorate Father Hidalgo's *Grito*; this way, independence was celebrated as an ongoing process in an ever-evolving nation.¹³⁹ This focus on evolution is certainly reflective of, and inevitably affected, Mexican national identity. In the early national period Mexicans were still struggling to define their identity now that it was not intrinsically tied to Spain's. Most interesting is the sudden shift in the Mexican government's public perception of Father Hidalgo: the once-abhorred insurgent was instead upheld as an early beacon of Mexican nationalism, encouraging independence long before anyone else had. Hidalgo began to be referred to as a father of Mexico, also a highly gendered term indicating that the priest had been the paternal protector of the nation in the waning stages of Mexico's colonial history.

Argentina's and Mexico's public spheres tell divergent stories about each nation's individual identity, though further study is certainly needed as more published primary sources become available. A challenge for any historian is how to ensure proper depth of analysis when the available published primary sources offer only a limited view of the subject at hand. The solution is to broaden the pool of primary source research when print media does not provide a sufficient basis for objective analysis. Material culture, the study of monuments, and the

¹³⁸ Women's historians have written at length about upholding the Virgin as an ideal for women in any society. Referred to as the "Marian ideal," many argue that the Virgin Mary presents an impossible task for mortal women, as she is both a mother and sexually chaste, therefore setting women up for inevitable failure to live up to the Virgin. While historians of many regional disciplines have tackled this issue, a strong example within Latin American historiography is Jean Franco's *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico*.

¹³⁹ William H Beezley, *Mexican National Identity: Memory, Innuendo, and Popular Culture* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2008), 56-57.

theories of memory and orality pursued in this thesis are all means by which sources such as the *Diario* can be enhanced. When these various sources are analyzed in conjunction with one another it becomes quite clear that Argentina's position as a colonial outpost as compared to Mexico's central position to Spain's colonial empire directly led to divergent independence-era developments. Argentina, long left to fend for itself, had already developed a clear sense of separation from Spain come its early struggle for independence. Mexico's public sphere, on the other hand, demonstrated a strong kinship with Spain. In fact, it is only after Mexico declared independence in an effort to preserve the conservative policies that Spain had diverted from that Mexico was forced to isolate a national identity of its own. While this cannot be entirely to blame for its violent early national history, and while Argentina's early national period was not without struggle, Mexico was clearly less prepared for nationhood than Argentina, as Mexicans had always been secure in their close relationship with Spain. The public developments of each of these national identities demonstrate that Argentina and Mexico, despite sharing a common bond as former Spanish colonies, clearly demonstrate that throughout their histories they represent the poles of the former Spanish American empire.

APPENDIX

ARGENTINEAN NATIONAL ANTHEM: SPANISH AND ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Marcha Patriótica (1813)

¡Oíd, mortales!, el grito sagrado:
¡Libertad!, ¡Libertad!, ¡Libertad!
Oíd el ruido de rotas cadenas,
ved en trono a la noble igualdad.
Se levanta a la faz de la Tierra
una nueva y gloriosa Nación,
coronada su sien de laureles,
y a sus plantas rendido un león.

De los nuevos campeones los rostros
Marte mismo parece animar
la grandeza se anida en sus pechos:
a su marcha todo hacen temblar.
Se conmueven del Inca las tumbas,
y en sus huesos revive el ardor,
lo que ve renovando a sus hijos
de la Patria el antiguo esplendor.

Pero sierras y muros se sienten
retumbar con horrible fragor:
todo el país se conturba por gritos
de venganza, de guerra y furor.
En los fieros tiranos la envidia
escupió su pestífera hiel;
su estandarte sangriento levantan
provocando a la lid más cruel.

¿No los veis sobre México y Quito
arrojarse con saña tenaz

English translation

Hear, mortals, the sacred cry:
"Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!"
Hear the noise of broken chains,
see the noble Equality enthroned.
On the surface of this land now rises
A Nation glorious and new,
Her head is crowned with laurels,
And a Lion lies at her feet.

From the new Champions their faces
Mars himself seems to encourage
Greatness nestles in their bodies:
at their march they make everything tremble.
The dead Inca are shaken,
and in their bones the ardor revives
which renews their children
of the Fatherland the ancient splendor.

Mountain ranges and walls are felt
to resound with horrible din:
the whole country is disturbed by cries
of revenge, of war and furor.
In the fiery tyrants the envy
spit the pestiferous bile;
their bloody standard they raise
provoking the most cruel combat.

Don't you see them over Mexico and Quito
throwing themselves with tenacious

y cuál lloran, bañados en sangre,
Potosí, Cochabamba y La Paz?
¿No los veis sobre el triste Caracas
luto y llanto y muerte esparcir?
¿No los veis devorando cual fieras
todo pueblo que logran rendir?

A vosotros se atreve, argentinos,
el orgullo del vil invasor.
Vuestros campos ya pisa contando
tantas glorias hollar vencedor.
Mas los bravos, que unidos juraron
su feliz libertad sostener,
a estos tigres sedientos de sangre
fuertes pechos sabrán oponer.

El valiente argentino a las armas
corre ardiendo con brío y valor,
el clarín de la guerra, cual trueno,
en los campos del Sud resonó.
Buenos Aires se pone a la frente
de los pueblos de la ínclita unión,
y con brazos robustos desgarran
al ibérico altivo León.

San José, San Lorenzo, Suipacha,
ambas Piedras, Salta y Tucumán,
La Colonia y las mismas murallas
del tirano en la Banda Oriental.
Son letreros eternos que dicen:
aquí el brazo argentino triunfó,
aquí el fiero opresor de la Patria
su cerviz orgullosa dobló.

La victoria al guerrero argentino
con sus alas brillantes cubrió,
y azorado a su vista el tirano
con infamia a la fuga se dio.
Sus banderas, sus armas se rinden
por trofeos a la libertad,
y sobre alas de gloria alza el pueblo

viciousness?
And how they cry, bathed in blood,
Potosí, Cochabamba and La Paz?
Don't you see them over sad Caracas
spreading mourning and weeping and death?
Don't you see them devouring as wild animals
all people who surrender to them?

To you it dares, Argentines,
the pride of the vile invader;
your fields it steps on, retelling
so many glories as winner.
But the bravos, who united swore
their merry freedom to sustain,
to those blood-thirsty tigers
bold chests they will know to oppose.

The valiant Argentine to arms
runs burning with determination and bravery,
the war bugle, as thunder,
in the fields of the South resounds.
Buenos Aires opposes, and it's leading
the people of the illustrious Union,
and with robust arms they tear
the arrogant Iberian lion.

San José, San Lorenzo, Suipacha,
both Piedras, Salta and Tucumán,
La Colonia and the same walls
of the tyrant in the Banda Oriental.
They are eternal signboards that say:
"Here the Argentine arm found triumph,
here the fierce oppressor of the Fatherland
his proud neck bent".

Victory to the Argentine warrior
covered with its brilliant wings,
and embarrassed at this view the tyrant
with infamy took to flight.
Its flags, its arms surrender
as trophies to freedom,

trono digno a su gran majestad.

Desde un polo hasta el otro resuena
de la fama el sonoro clarín,
y de América el nombre enseñado
les repite: "¡Mortales, oíd!:
ya su trono dignísimo abrieron
las Provincias Unidas del Sud".
Y los libres del mundo responden:
"Al gran pueblo argentino, ¡salud!

Sean eternos los laureles,
que supimos conseguir.
Coronados de gloria vivamos...
¡o juremos con gloria morir!

and on wings of glory the people rise
the worthy throne of their great majesty.

From one pole to the other resounds
the sonorous bugle of Fame,
and of America the name showing
they repeat "Mortals, hear!:
For their most honorable throne have opened
the United Provinces of the South."
And the free ones of the world reply:
"To the great Argentine people, hail!"

May the laurels be eternal,
that we knew how to win.
Let us live crowned with glory...
or swear to die gloriously!

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