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IDENTITY, ENLIGHTENMENT AND POLITICAL DISSENT IN LATE COLONIAL SPANISH AMERICA

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DURING the long crisis of the Spanish empire between 1810 and 1825, the creole leaders of Spanish American independence asserted a new identity for the citizens of the states which they sought to establish, calling them 'Americanos'. This general title was paralleled and often supplanted by other political neologisms, as movements for independence and new polities took shape in the various territories of Spanish America. In New Spain, the insurgents who fought against royalist government during the decade after 1810 tried to rally fellow 'Mexicans' to a common cause; at independence in 1821, the creole political leadership created a 'Mexican empire', the title of which, with its reference to the Aztec empire which had preceded Spain's conquest, was designed to evoke a 'national' history shared by all members of Mexican society. In South America, the leaders of the new republics also sought to promote patriotic feelings for territories which had been converted from administrative units of Spanish government into independent states. Thus, San Martín and O'Higgins convoked 'Chileans' to the cause of independence in the old Captaincy-General of Chile; shortly afterwards and with notably less success, San Martín called upon 'Peruvians' to throw off Spanish rule. Bolívar was, likewise, to call 'Colombians' to his banner in the erstwhile Viceroyalty of New Granada, before advancing south to liberate Peru in the name of 'Peruvians', and Upper Peru in the name of 'Bolivians', where the Republic which his military feats and political vision made possible was named after him.

Here, it seems, were signs of Latin American nationalism. Indeed, one of principal theses in Benedict Anderson's influential work on nationalism is that its origins are found in the New World during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and not in Europe, as Eurocentric analysts have for so long insisted.¹ Anderson acknowledges that the traditional explanations of the rise of nationalism do not work

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (2nd ed., London and New York, 1991), xiii.

for Latin America: language was not an issue, the independence movements did not stem from the middle classes, nor bring mobilisation of the lower classes. Nonetheless, he insists that Latin American independence were national independence movements because, in colonial provinces which usually contained large, lower-class, non-Spanish-speaking populations, the creoles who led the movements against Spain 'consciously redefined these populations as fellow-nationals'.² Why, Anderson asks, were conceptions of the nation found so early among the creole communities of Spanish America, and why did the Spanish empire quickly break down into a number of separate states?

Proceeding from his definition of the nation as an 'imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign',³ Anderson argues that, prior to independence, creoles throughout the different regions of Spanish America had formed an image of their communities that was to be conducive to the construction of nation-states. In his view, creoles were able to conceive of national communities because their long experience of Spanish colonial rule had imbued them with a sense of identity based in specific territories. In the first place, the experience of creole colonial functionaries had long fostered a sense of separate identity, different from that of metropolitan Spaniards and linked to the particular territories in which creoles served as officials; secondly, the spread of print-capitalism to the colonies during the late eighteenth century provided the creoles with another, stronger means of envisaging themselves as communities separate from Spain, while also providing a medium for inventing and experiencing a 'public' interest. From here, Anderson argues, it was a short step to claim that these communities should be sovereign, and the occasion arose when the Spanish monarchy collapsed under the pressures of revolution and war in Europe. This is not, of course, intended as an explanation of the origins of independence movements in Spanish America; it aims, rather, to explain why the Spanish American empire divided into states which, because they were based on notions of nationality, proved to be 'emotionally plausible and politically viable'.⁴ Nonetheless, because Anderson insists that the construction of creole identity was a crucial element in shaping Spanish American independence, his arguments provide a good starting-point for discussing the issues considered in this paper: namely, the origins and character of creole identity under Spanish rule, its relationship to political change before independence, and its contribution to shaping national states after independence.

² *Ibid.*, 50.

³ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 47–65.

Consider, first, Anderson's observation that the experience of creole officials—what he calls the 'pilgrimages of creole functionaries'—nurtured a sense of creole identity that was not only different from that of metropolitan Spaniards but also associated with the territory created by the administrative entity within which creole officials moved. This is a very useful observation. For it goes beyond the conventional view that creole desire to hold offices simply generated a negative identity which derived its meaning solely from resentment against metropolitan Spaniards, and focuses instead on the way in which the creole experience of office-holding within a confined territory provided a positive identification with a specific territorial community, and thus later allowed Spanish administrative units to be reconceptualised as American 'fatherlands' capable of commanding an emotional attachment and loyalty. It is, however, also an oversimplified and perhaps misleading account of the ways in which creole cultural identity was both formed and fixed to a particular territory. The confinement of creoles to lateral movement within an official habitat that was territorially cramped (compared to the wider horizons of transient metropolitan officials who moved from colony to colony, and colony back to metropolis) was by no means the sole, nor even the most important, way in which creoles found their identity and identified with particular territories. As David Brading and others have shown, the development of 'creole patriotism' had deeper, more complex origins and characteristics, arising from the fundamental dualism of American identity—European or native—that stemmed from the Spanish conquest of indigenous peoples.⁵

The sense of cultural difference between Spaniards in America and those in Europe was present from the first years of settlement. It arose, first, from the cultural diversity of Spain itself, as Spanish immigrants brought to America their regional and cultural identities as Galicians, Catalans, Aragonese, Navarrese, Andalusians and so on. Indeed, it has even been said that the early sixteenth-century chronicles and missionary works on Indian cultures were 'creole in spirit' because they expressed the difference felt by those of long residence and experience in the New World from newly arrived Europeans. To be 'creole' in this early American world was not necessarily to be born in America, but simply to be physically and culturally acclimatised to it. The conquerers' sense of difference from Europeans was, moreover, underpinned by their view of themselves as the architects of new kingdoms who deserved to be treated as a feudal aristocracy comparable to that of Spain, in return for their services to the crown in bringing new lands under its sovereignty. The disappearance of the conquest elite eroded such claims,

⁵ For an early, key essay on creole patriotism, see David A. Brading, *Los orígenes del nacionalismo mexicano* (Mexico, 1978).

but creole elites continued to see themselves as landed nobles who, as the societies and economies in which they lived developed in ways which set them apart from Spain, had rights to political autonomy in their own lands.⁶

The creole elites' sense of affinity with a particular land and *patria* was both expressed and reinforced by creole writers who sought to meet creole needs for a cultural personality that was separate from, but comparable to that of Spain. Throughout Spanish America, especially in Mexico, a tradition of creole writing emerged during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to meet this need, through the construction of histories which mythologised the Indian past and the creation of religious cults which claimed that America and its peoples held a special place in the plans of Divine Providence.⁷ Creoles also drew on Hispanic political traditions to advance their claims to parity within the Spanish world by drawing on the conception, derived from the theory and practice of government in Habsburg Spain, of the Spanish monarchy as a cluster of kingdoms which were united under a single, Catholic king, but which retained their own identities and forms of government. Thus, Castile, Aragon, the Netherlands and so on were regarded as separate kingdoms, each with a distinctive history and culture, different customs, laws and *fueros*, and a territorial nobility with claims to govern under the overarching sovereignty of the king.⁸ This image of the Spanish monarchy as a combination of kingdoms was used by the American elites to stake their own claims to identity and autonomy. They professed to be nobles descended from the Spanish conquerers and settlers whose services to the crown had made possible the creation of American kingdoms—in Peru, New Granada, Quito, Chile and so on—and, by the same token, they claimed rights to hold the offices of Church and State in the lands brought under Spanish rule by their forebears. These ideas enabled American Spaniards to see themselves as part of the Spanish 'nation', but distinct from it. They were politically separate from Spain's kingdoms in Europe, but united by political ties to the same monarch; their social milieux and customs made them culturally different from Spain, but shared ethnicity, language and religion also bound them to the mother country.

⁶ Anthony Pagden, 'Identity Formation in Spanish America' in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500–1800*, ed. Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden (Princeton, 1987), 51–93. Also Bernard Lavallé, *Las promesas ambiguas: criollismo colonial en los Andes* (Lima, 1993), *passim*.

⁷ David A. Brading, *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots and the Liberal State, 1492–1867* (Cambridge, 1991), 292–390; Jacques LaFaye, *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness, 1531–1813*, trans. B. Keen (Chicago and London, 1976), esp. 51–98; 177–253.

⁸ John L. Phelan, *The Kingdom of Quito in the Seventeenth Century. Bureaucratic Politics in the Spanish Empire* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1967), 120.

The underpinnings of creole patriotism were, then, those of an *ancien régime* society. An aristocratic conception of society and a Hispanocentric conception of ethnic hierarchy gave the creole elites a sense of themselves as a ruling class by reason of their noble, Spanish descent. The *History and Genealogies of the Kingdom of New Granada*, written by Flórez de Ocariz in 1672, reflects this clearly. To establish his credentials as a member of the nobility in Bogotá, Flórez asserted that he descended directly from a Spaniard who had participated in the conquest of New Granada more than a century earlier. The nobility he defined as men who descended from the conquistadors and nobles who had settled New Granada, and who thus had rights to occupy the prime position in society and to provide the dignatories and officers of state which the crown appointed through the king's patronage.⁹ Like their counterparts in Europe's nobility and gentry, members of leading American families found a primary identity in claims to nobility which conferred not only prestige but also the right to privileged access to public office.

Creole belief in, and identification with, regional *patrias* did not, however, promote the concept, vital to nationalism, of one 'people' within the territorial *patria*. In the first place, this was a *creole* patriotism, and it was predicated on the belief, implanted at the time of Spanish conquest, that American societies were ordered in a racial hierarchy in which whites occupied the top position. Under Spanish rule, social identities in the Indies were shaped primarily by the Hispanocentric conception of the American social order as a sequence of three major ethnic groups, with *españoles* (Spaniards and their descendants) in the first rank, and Indians and Africans in positions of legal and cultural inferiority. This simple social order became increasingly complicated over the centuries, as the three primary groups were supplemented by intermediate groupings of people of mixed ethnic origin: the mestizos born of Spanish-Indian mixture; the mulattos of Spanish-black miscegenation; the zambos who came from Indian-black unions. By the eighteenth century, the clarity of the system of ethnic categorisation had also been blurred by the Hispanicisation of these subordinate groups. Especially in the urban environments of the more economically developed regions, they became more like each other in language and culture, and, by the same token, more like the Hispanic elites who dominated colonial societies. This trend towards ethnic convergence was reflected in the censuses taken in the late eighteenth century, which enumerated whites or *españoles*, Indians, slaves (or blacks), but employed the generic term of 'castas' to include all other groups formed from

⁹ On Flórez de Ocariz, see Juan A. and Judith E. Villamarin, 'The Concept of Nobility in Colonial Santa Fe de Bogotá' in Karen Spalding (ed), *Essays in the Political, Economic and Social History of Colonial Latin America* (Newark, Delaware, 1982), 125-50.

ethnic fusions.¹⁰ The early schema of ethnic classification thus tended to lose its simplicity and clarity, and identification based on supposed biological criteria gave way to ascription defined by local social criteria. Difference defined by birth and blood nonetheless remained an important marker of social standing, since ethnic origins had important practical implications for individuals, especially at the upper and lower ranges of the social order. Indians had to pay tribute and, together with blacks, were not treated equally under the law. Mestizos and mulattos found their origins were a bar to education in the universities and thus to entry into the professions, and to membership of corporations regarded as the exclusive preserve of *españoles*. Conversely, Spanish descent conferred a superior status, opening opportunities to education, to office-holding, the professions, and the priesthood. In short, being *español* brought legal as well as social privilege, and creole concern to protect this status, which intensified with the blurring of barriers and changes in Spanish law, precluded identification with the wider population.¹¹

The evolution of creole patriotism into a sense of nationality was also impeded by the character of American political life. According to Anderson, creole involvement in government at the level of the audiencias, with their wide territorial jurisdictions, fostered among creoles the concept of a distinct American identity and the sense of a territorial *patria*. But it is doubtful that this conception of community extended very far beyond small groups of high-ranking creole officials and the equally small creole intelligentsia with which it overlapped. For most creoles, experience of government and politics was at the less exalted level of town and city administration. Unlike North American colonials, Spanish Americans had no representation in regional assemblies, and, aside from the few who were rich enough to secure offices at the regional level, creole political horizons and experience were largely confined to the jurisdictions of urban centres. This did not prevent them from having a lively political life, with a much higher degree of participation than was once supposed. Far from slumbering in a long

¹⁰ For a general analysis of these phenomena, James Lockhart, 'Social organisation and social change in colonial Spanish America' in *Cambridge History of Latin America*, (Cambridge, 1984), II, 265-319; for studies of this process set in two colonial cities, see John K. Chance, *Race and Class in Colonial Oaxaca* (Stanford, Calif., 1978), 144-85, and Martin Minchom, *The People of Quito, 1690-1810: Change and Unrest in the Underclass* (Boulder, San Francisco and Oxford, 1994), 158-90. On the blurring of ethnic and race divisions in colonial Peru, see David Cahill, 'Colour by Numbers: Racial and Ethnic Categories in the Viceroyalty of Peru, 1524-1824', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 26 (1994), 325-46.

¹¹ 'On creoles' concern to protect their superior status against encroachments from people of colour, see Jaime Jaramillo Uribe, 'Mestizaje y diferenciación social en el Nuevo Reino de Granada en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII', in his *Ensayos sobre Historia Social Colombiana* (Bogotá, 1968), 163-233.

'colonial siesta', the inhabitants of Spanish American cities, towns and villages had an intense political life in which both patricians and plebeians participated actively, which often involved the assertion of village, town and city autonomy, and which did not involve identification with a broader region.¹²

The intense localism of creole politics was reflected in the fact that, until the eighteenth century, regional challenges to royal government were few and far between; unlike the rebellions of the Catalans, Portugal, Sicily and Naples in the mid-seventeenth century, American protests had no nationalist or separatist undertones.¹³ Nor, unlike the Catalans, did Spanish Americans take advantage of the crisis of succession at the start of the eighteenth century to press their own political agendas. Throughout the War of Succession, they remained loyal to the monarchy and allowed a smooth, largely unquestioning transition from the Habsburg to the Bourbon dynasty. Creoles' consciousness of pertaining to a *patria* should not, then, be confused with separatist or nationalist aspirations; it referred only to the quasi-aristocratic rights to the prerogatives of local office which members of creole elites claimed to possess, and was perfectly compatible with universal monarchy. The 'creole patriotism' reflected in the literature and culture of colonial elites reflected a cultural effort to resolve the dilemmas faced by whites who felt both Spanish and American: it was a quest for an identity which would reconcile the 'civilised' world of Europe with the 'barbarism' of the New World. Advances in this quest were, however, without any clear political counterpart at the end of the seventeenth century. Creole intellectuals had created histories which legitimated their cultural identity, even to the point where the Mexican creole Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora affirmed the existence of a 'creole nation' rooted in pre-Hispanic Mexican civilisation. But this was a fragile construct: after the uprising of Indians and *castas* in Mexico City in 1692, Sigüenza y Góngora fell silent, and interest in rooting creole cultural identity in an historic, ethnic past were not revived for decades.¹⁴ Creoles might have identified with a *patria* of their birth and residence,

¹² For examples of local political life, see Anthony McFarlane, 'Civil Disorders and Popular Protest in Late Colonial New Granada', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 64:1 (1984), 17-54; also Margarita Garrido, *Reclamos y representaciones: Variaciones sobre la política en el Nuevo Reino de Granada, 1770-1815* (Bogotá, 1993), 116-225; and Oscar Cornblit, *Power and Violence in the Colonial City: Oruro from the Mining Renaissance to the Rebellion of Tupac Amaru, 1740-82* (Cambridge, 1995), 37-80.

¹³ For a brief comparison of rebellions in the seventeenth-century Spanish monarchy, see Anthony McFarlane, 'Challenges from the Periphery: Rebellion in Colonial Spanish America' in *Rebelión y Resistencia en el Mundo Hispánico del Siglo XVII*, ed. Werner Thomas and Bart de Groof (Leuven, 1992), 250-9.

¹⁴ Anthony Pagden, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination* (New Haven and London, 1990), 97.

but this was by no means inconsistent with holding another identity as a member of the Spanish 'nation', the source of their common descent. Affirmations of creole identity were cultural, not political, and did not envisage an existence outside the Spanish monarchy. This was a development which arose only late in the eighteenth century, when colonial societies were affected by significant changes to their social, political, and intellectual environments.

How, then, did creole cultural identity become politicised? According to Anderson, the crucial catalyst was the advance of print-capitalism during the later eighteenth century. With the publication of colonial newspapers, he argues, the creoles' sense of an identity rooted in a particular territory became sharper and, with exposure to Enlightenment ideas, capable of conversion into the 'imagined communities' which became the basis of the nation-states which replaced Spain's empire in the early nineteenth century.¹⁵ It is true, as we shall see, that new ideas and new means to receive and disseminate them played a key role in politicising and territorialising the creole sense of identity forged in previous centuries. But this, again, was a more complex process than Anderson's summary argument allows, and did not lead ineluctably towards the expression of Spanish American nationalisms.

The development of a deepening sense of creole identity was bound up, first, with the impact of changes in Spanish imperial policy in societies whose elites felt a growing sense of self-confidence in an era of demographic and economic expansion, and resented the modernised imperialism of the Bourbons, which aimed at turning Spain's American dominions into dependent satellites run in the interests of the metropolitan power.¹⁶ When the Bourbon dynasty succeeded the Habsburgs at the start of the eighteenth century, it inherited an American empire which depended for its government on the active co-operation of American-born Spaniards. Not only did the creole gentry dominate local government through the municipal corporations, but they had also penetrated the royal bureaucracy at many levels, including the upper echelons of the church and the benches of the audiencias (high courts) which were the foremost expression of royal authority in most regions of the Indies.¹⁷ Thus, although Habsburg kings did not formally recognise the rights of the American-born to political office and

¹⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 62-5.

¹⁶ Colin MacLachlan, *Spain's Empire in the New World: The Role of Ideas in Institutional and Social Change* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988), pp. 67-88.

¹⁷ On creole penetration of the royal bureaucracy, Mark Burkholder and D. S. Chandler, *From Impotence to Authority: The Spanish Crown and the American Audiencias, 1697-1808* (Colombia, 1977); on creole elites in local government, see Peter Marzhal, *Town in the Empire: Government, Politics and Society in Seventeenth-Century Popayán* (Austin, Texas, 1978).

autonomy, political practice had allowed creoles to take a substantial share of power, particularly within local government. This in turn fostered the creole belief in a pact under which the creoles were entitled, by reason of their place of birth, to control local affairs under the overarching authority of the Spanish king. While the Habsburg monarchy had implicitly accepted that creoles should play a part in their own administration, Bourbon ministers took a different view. Early in the century, they began to try to reverse the 'Americanisation' of colonial government, and in so doing drew on old stereotypes which portrayed creoles as inferiors who were congenitally incapable of administering their own affairs. The official Spanish identification of the creole 'other' tended to reinforce and politicise the creoles' sense of separate and distinctive identity in two ways. It encouraged creoles to embrace their American identity by forcing them to defend it (being caused by birth, creoleness was a condition which could not be escaped, but only defended); secondly, treatment as the 'other' encouraged creoles to use this identity in their political disputes with Spaniards and with Spanish governments.

A clear reflection of the revival of the creole 'other' in official metropolitan circles as a means of both explaining the ills of government in the Indies and justifying closer metropolitan control is found in the famous memorandum which Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa submitted to the crown following their mission to Peru in the 1740s. In it, they reported that a growing gulf divided European Spaniards and creoles:

In Peru, it is enough to be a European ... to declare oneself immediately against creoles. To be born in the Indies is sufficient for one to hate Europeans. This mutual antipathy reaches such an extreme that in some ways it exceeds the unbridled fury of two nations, completely at odds, who vituperate and insult each other. But if the differences between nations are finally resolved, this is not the case with the whites in Peru. Despite better lines of communication, the welding of kinship bonds, and other good reasons for being conciliatory, united and friendly, discord increases all the time.¹⁸

To explain this antagonism, Juan and Ulloa offered an analysis which reflected the disdain for creoles felt in metropolitan official circles. The conflict, they argued, had causes which were attributable to the creole characteristics of 'excessive vanity, presumption and pride'. The problem with the creoles was that their 'vanity dissuades them from

¹⁸Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa, *Discourse and Political Reflections on the Kingdoms of Peru*, trans. John J. TePaske and Besse A. Cement (Norman, Oklahoma, 1978), 217.

working and becoming traders, the only occupation in the Indies capable of maintaining a consistent standard of living', and thus led them into the 'innate vices associated with a licentious, slothful existence'. Spanish immigrants, on the other hand, used enterprise and hard work to amass fortunes, to escape their humble origins, and to become political leaders in their communities. This caused great jealousy, Juan and Ulloa argued, because creoles failed to understand class distinctions. Creoles believed that the Spaniards had prestige and should be well-treated simply because they were from Europe. They therefore went out of their way to help metropolitan Spaniards who, 'because of some disadvantages of birth or upbringing, would not have the opportunities to make their way out of their humble position', were they still in Spain. This, in turn, encouraged Spaniards in the Indies 'to raise their goals to a very lofty plane'. Jealous of such social mobility, creoles ridiculed these metropolitan *parvenus* for their lowly social origins; Europeans then took revenge on creoles 'by throwing in their faces the defects of the exaggerated nobility they boast so much about'.¹⁹

These observations were of course coloured by traditional metropolitan prejudice against the American-born, and by the proclivity of educated, well-born and condescending metropolitans to dismiss colonials as benighted provincials.²⁰ The comments made by Juan and Ulloa are nonetheless interesting in two respects. On the one hand, they reflect the extent to which metropolitan Spaniards had constructed a stereotypical image of American-born whites which consisted largely of negative characteristics and was applied indiscriminately to all creoles. On the other hand, by portraying creoles and metropolitans as people with different attitudes and modes of behaviour, Juan and Ulloa also draw attention to the real part which differences in cultural norms played in generating and perpetuating conflict. For, when Spaniards like Juan and Ulloa talked of creole 'vanity, presumption and pride', they were simply belittling the creoles' awareness of themselves as a social elite whose position rested on certain canons of behaviour and demanded recognition and respect. Equally, what seemed to immigrant Spaniards to be their just reward for enterprise, hard work and thrift was to creoles an unfair intrusion into social and political arenas which they believed to be the rightful preserve of the American-born gentry. And when Spaniards disparaged the creoles' excessive concern with genealogy, they failed to recognise that such concern was not simply frivolous, but reflected claims to the political primacy which American

¹⁹ Quotations from Juan and Ulloa, *Discourse and Political Reflections*, pp. 218-22.

²⁰ For an assessment of Antonio de Ulloa, the report's principal author, and the continuity of his writing with the Spanish imperial tradition of commentary on America, see Brading, *The First America*, 424-8.

social elites believed to be just rewards of their nobility. This Juan and Ulloa ignored. They simply called for control to ensure that only the right kind of metropolitans were able to take office in Peru, through a system of licensing.²¹

Seen from a creole perspective, such portrayals were infuriating, and led creoles, not just to insult and vituperate the Spaniards in order to satisfy their rancorous souls (as Juan and Ulloa scornfully observed),²² but to defend their creole identity and to invest it with political meaning. A striking and eloquent example of such a politicised defence of creole identity, coupled with a striking rebuttal of the crass stereotypes used to justify discrimination against creoles, is found in the celebrated petition submitted by the Mexico City council to the king in 1771. Written by Antonio Joaquín de Rivadeneira, a creole lawyer who had been a judge on bench of the Mexican Audiencia, the petition was prompted by a report in which a prominent metropolitan official said of creoles that, 'if raised to authority or office, they are prone to the greatest errors', and so recommended creole exclusion from any but 'positions of the middle rank'. In response, Rivadeneira commented bitterly that this was another shot in 'a war we have suffered since the discovery of America', in which creoles had been characterised, like Indians, as lacking in reason. Noting that creoles had recently observed with dismay the tendency of the crown to grant them fewer favours, Rivadeneira went on to argue that to exclude creoles from office was 'to overturn the law of peoples', and he declared 'the rights of the native inhabitants to be appointed to offices in their own countries, not only in preference to foreigners but to their exclusion'. European Spaniards were not, Rivadeneira conceded, foreigners in the Indies from a legal point of view, since they were, with Americans, part of the same body politic under the single head of the Catholic Monarch. However, unlike Americans, they did 'not derive their identity from the Indies', since their homes, families, and ties were all in Old Spain not New Spain. They were merely transients who were primarily concerned 'to return wealthy to their own home and their native land'. Nor was their tendency to use political offices as a means of personal enrichment their only flaw. In countries with 'their own laws of government' which Europeans had not studied, the metropolitan official was incapable of good government because 'he comes to govern a people he does not know, to administer laws he has not studied, to encounter customs he does not understand, to deal with people he has never met. And ... he comes full of European ideas which do not apply in these parts.' American Spaniards, on the other hand, were

²¹ Juan and Ulloa, *Discourse and Political Reflections*, 231–2.

²² *Ibid.*, 217.

worthy of the highest office, since in 'talents, application, conduct and honour, they cede nothing to any of the other nations of the world'.²³

This paean of praise for creoles, with its references to creole parity with other nations, was not an unabashed nationalism, however, since it certainly did not embrace all Mexico's people. Rivadeneira made it abundantly clear that he was not speaking of the Indians or people of mixed race who constituted the overwhelming majority of the population, but only of 'Spaniards born in these regions' who traced unbroken descent from conquerors and early colonists or from more recent Spanish immigrants, and 'whose blood is as pure as that of Spaniards from Old Spain'. The Indians, by contrast, were 'victims of their race . . . born to poverty, bred in destitution and controlled through punishment'.²⁴ Here, then, was a claim for the equality of creoles and metropolitan Spaniards as members of the same nation by virtue of their race, or 'purity of blood'. Indeed, 'purity of blood' was a deeply traditional Spanish concept: it derived from the test of 'limpieza de sangre' which Spaniards had used in the sixteenth century to discriminate against, and exclude from office 'New Christians' of Jewish descent.

Creole exasperation at Bourbon realignments of policy did not stop at verbal assertions of creole identity and political rights of the kind made by Rivadeneira. It was much more forcibly expressed in the rebellions which confronted officials charged with implementing government administrative and fiscal reforms during the reign of Charles III (1759–88). Major rebellions occurred in the city of Quito in 1765, and later, on a larger scale, in New Granada and Peru in 1780–2, when lower-class protests against new fiscal demands fused with creole dissatisfaction with administrative and fiscal reform, and allowed creoles to use the sharp edge of popular protests to propel their own claims for redress of grievances.²⁵ In differing degrees, these rebellions all reflected the way in which Bourbon policies activated the problem of identity which lay at the heart of Spanish American colonial societies. The incursions of the Bourbon state impinged upon both the political authority and economic interests of local creole oligarchies, and, by thus attacking the standing of creoles in their own communities, led them to assert the American part of their dual identity as *españoles americanos*.

²³ 'Representación que hizo la Ciudad de México al rey D. Carlos II al rey D. Carlos III en 1771 . . .' in *Latin American Revolutions, 1808–26: Old and New World Origins*, ed. and trans. John Lynch (Norman, Oklahoma and London, 1994), pp. 58–70; quotations from 59, 61, 62–3, 64, 66.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

²⁵ For a general, comparative analysis of these rebellions, see Anthony McFarlane, 'Rebellions in Late Colonial Spanish America: A Comparative Perspective', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 14:3 (1995), 313–38.

This rejection of Spanish identity was mirrored in attacks on metropolitan Spaniards. The rebellions of Quito, New Granada and Peru all revealed antagonism towards metropolitan Spaniards, sometimes leading to violent attacks on their property and persons, and demands for their expulsion. This was especially true of Peru and Upper Peru where, during the great rebellion of 1780–2, Spaniards were singled out for violent, systematic persecution. Túpac Amaru, the first rebel leader, called for the expulsion or execution of European Spaniards, and his followers enthusiastically executed his orders by killing ‘Spaniards’ without discrimination between Europeans and creoles. To justify such slaughter, they invoked a powerful counter-image of ‘Spaniards’ as traitors to Christianity and the Spanish King, and demonised them as beastly, devilish creatures who deserved inhuman treatment.²⁶ The rebellion was, moreover, informed by a current of Andean messianic thinking in which anti-Spanish sentiments blended into visions of restoring an Inca kingdom in Peru, ruled by descendants of the ancient Inca dynasty which the Spaniards had deposed in the sixteenth century. This phenomenon, which has been called ‘Inca nationalism’, was peculiar to the southern Peruvian highlands, particularly in and around the city of Cuzco.²⁷ There, Indian *caciques* (nobles) and creole families who also claimed noble descent had underpinned their sense of group identity and claims to autonomy from Lima, the viceregal capital, by rooting themselves in a mythologised Inca past. Harking back to an Inca kingdom not only offered a respectable past; it provided an alternative to Spanish monarchy that was in keeping with a traditional, *ancien régime* belief in the necessity of kingship, while also providing a means of mobilising support among the Indian peasantry. Here, then, was a potent blend of creole and indigenous cultural traditions which, because it openly envisaged a new political order outside Spanish rule, sets the Túpac Amaru rebellion apart from the creole-led rebellions of Quito and New Granada. Its potential was severely limited, however. The idea of an ‘Inca kingdom’, though never clearly formulated, was possible in principle: Indian nobles were members of the privileged classes in Peru, and creoles and mestizos were often eager to emphasise their descent from, and family links with, the ancient Incan aristocracy, since, in an *ancien régime* society, noble blood conferred both prestige and prerogatives of power. But, if the idea that they might come

²⁶ Jan Szeminski, ‘Why Kill the Spaniard? New Perspectives on Andean Insurrectionary Ideology in the 18th Century’ in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Consciousness in the Andean Peasant World, 18th to 20th Centuries*, ed. Steve Stern (Madison, Wisconsin, 1987), 166–92; on rebel violence towards both Spaniards and non-Spaniards, see Scarlett O’Phelan Godoy, *La Gran Rebelión de los Andes: de Túpac Amaru a Túpac Catari* (Lima, 1995), 105–37.

²⁷ John Rowe, ‘El movimiento nacional inca del siglo XVIII’, in *Túpac Amaru II. Antología*, ed. Alberto Flores Galindo (Lima, 1976), 13–62.

together in a state separate from that of Spain was possible in principle, in practice, it had little appeal outside the Indian world. For, although Túpac Amaru envisaged a place for creoles and mestizos in his putative kingdom, together with a continuing link to the Catholic King of Spain, whites and mestizos found it difficult to take seriously the idea of rule by an Indian rather than a Spanish king. Moreover, the widespread ethnic violence of the rebellion undermined alliances between Peruvians: creoles were terrified by Indian uprisings, while the Indian rebels—themselves a heterogeneous force, divided by regional and ethnic differences—were unable to find any unity of purpose, and were defeated area by area.

So, although creoles involved in the late eighteenth-century rebellions asserted their identity as 'Americans' and explicitly demanded that 'Americans' should be given preference to metropolitans in the distribution of offices, their interpretation of the rights of native-born whites did not generally indicate desire for independence from Spain. It was, rather, a defence of the traditional notion of a 'pact' between the king and his kingdoms, nurtured by the experience of the Habsburg period; it aimed at perpetuating past practices, not overthrowing them. Nor did such protest enlarge the scope for creating a general political identity that embraced not just creoles but the other peoples of their territories. Enmity towards metropolitan Spaniards was insufficiently strong or widespread to underpin nationalistic sentiment or to provide a focus for rebellion against Spain. The heart of the major rebellions was found in the cities, towns and villages which were the primary locus of social identity and political action in Spanish American societies, and rebels rarely succeeded in transcending the concerns of those communities. Essentially, the rebellions of the *Comuneros* of New Granada and of Túpac Amaru in Peru were clusters of local insurrections, driven by divisions and disputes in local politics and only briefly bound by any sense of allegiance to a wider common cause. Thus, in all the late eighteenth-century rebellions, creole coalitions with lower-class rebels soon foundered, as fear of Indians and other people of colour outweighed creole dislike of Spaniards and Spanish policies. Creoles involved in the rebellions saw the rights of 'Americans' as the rights of creoles within the Spanish 'nation', and were still far from framing a cultural identity which embraced all the populations of their territories, envisaged as potentially unified nations. Moreover, aside from the concept of the Inca kingdom that was briefly promoted by Túpac Amaru in 1780-1, the idea that the colonies might become independent had yet to be voiced. Creole ideas about cultural identity and political rights were still expressed in the political language of the *ancien régime*, and, if creoles accorded themselves distinct identities within the Spanish monarchy, they did not imagine themselves outside it. This

occurred only after the ideas of the Enlightenment offered creoles a new medium for understanding and expressing their identity as Americans, and when the dissolution of the Spanish monarchy at its centre provided them with the chance to turn their complaints against Spain to demands for equality.

The part played by Enlightenment ideas in strengthening creole identity was noted by Alexander von Humboldt during his travels in Mexico and South America in 1799–1804. Humboldt observed that following the American and French revolutions, it had become increasingly frequent for creoles to assert that ‘I am not a *Spaniard*, I am an *American*’. This Humboldt attributed to ‘the workings of a long resentment, which arose from ‘the abuse of laws, the false measures of the colonial government, the example of the United States of America, and the influence of opinions of the age . . .’²⁸ These phrases draw attention to the significance of the new elements which entered into the culture and politics in the Spanish world in the closing decades of the century. As the Bourbon reforms reached their apogee, the ideas of the European Enlightenment began to circulate more widely and freely in Spanish America. At the same time, news of the American and French Revolutions entered America by official and unofficial channels during the late 1780s and the 1790s, at a time when, thanks largely to a small but burgeoning press, creoles had unprecedented opportunities for receiving news and absorbing new ideas from the world outside. But what were the political implications and repercussions of this assertion of an ‘Americanness’ among creoles? Did it signal the translation of a creole sense of cultural identity into a desire for political independence and lead to the foundation of new nations?

One way in which Humboldt’s ‘opinions of the age’ impacted on Spanish American political culture was by supplying creoles with liberal and republican ideas which directly inspired demands for political independence grounded in appeals to universal human rights. As evidence for this, historians have drawn attention to the penetration into Spanish America of the writings of the *philosophes*, the circulation of key texts from the American and French revolutions—such as the Constitution of Philadelphia, the Federal Constitution, and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen—and the activities of that small but famous group of men—Francisco de Miranda, Antonio Nariño, and the Jesuit Juan Pablo Viscardo y Guzmán—who dedicated themselves to preaching and promoting independence from Spain. Tracing the dissemination of ideas through books and the incubation

²⁸ Alexander von Humboldt, *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain* (1811 edition, reprinted New York, 1966), I, 205.

of separatist sentiments through the careers of a few idealists is, however, a flawed approach to understanding political change in late colonial Spanish America. Reading about new philosophical principles and political experiments was not the same as believing, or wanting to implement them. Indeed, at the end of the century, only a tiny number of creoles took the American and French revolutions as models applicable to Spanish America. The American War of Independence seems to have passed virtually unnoticed in Spanish America at the time that it was happening, even in New Granada and Peru where major rebellions broke out in 1780–1. The French Revolution attracted more attention among creoles, partly because the official Spanish press was so ready to draw attention to the impious horrors which flowed from the overthrow of an anointed king. But the prospect of following this revolutionary path excited only a tiny number of creoles, whose conspiracies were ill-conceived and unsuccessful, and whose idealism found no wider resonance among either their fellow creoles or the larger populations.²⁹ Moreover, early creole revolutionists such as Miranda and Nariño were republicans rather than nationalists. Their concern was not simply to change government in Spanish America or to affirm the rights of pre-existing Spanish American nations; it was, rather, to overthrow the system of absolutist monarchy throughout the Spanish world (including Spain itself), and to replace it with governments based on the principles of popular sovereignty and consent of the governed.

The inspiration that some creoles took from the radical political ideas of the Enlightenment was, then, only one way in which 'enlightened' ideas influenced creole thinking and behaviour. More important were the slower, more subtle ways in which the Enlightenment emphasis on reason, the rights of the individual, and the possibilities of human progress altered creoles' perceptions of themselves and undermined their respect for Spanish cultural and intellectual leadership. And, if these new perceptions allowed creoles to take a more critical approach to their relations with the metropolitan power, equally important was the development of new means of communicating and disseminating such ideas.

The influence of enlightened thinking in sharpening creole identity came partly through contemporary scientific debate about the New World which raised in new form the old issue of differences about Europeans and Americans, and, by implication, the fitness of creoles for self-government. Denigration of the New World by European

²⁹ For an account of one of these creole conspiracies inspired by American and French revolutionary ideas, see Anthony McFarlane, *Colombia before Independence: Economy, Society and Politics under Bourbon Rule* (Cambridge, 1993), 285–93.

scientists such as Cornelius de Pauw, who drew highly unfavourable comparisons between the Old and the New World, brought educated creoles to the defence of the American environment, focused their interest in the geography and resources of the regions they inhabited, and thereby stimulated their sense of identity with the lands of their birth.³⁰ Modern scientific thinking invigorated creole thinking in other ways, too. Reform of university curricula, designed to introduce the 'useful sciences' into the colonies, exposed creoles in leading cities to new ways of thinking as well as creating new areas for contention with European Spaniards. For, while the academic establishment, dominated by the regular orders with their roots in Spain defended the old ways, creoles who were seeking academic positions tended to align with the currents of reform.³¹ But perhaps most important was that the new emphasis on improving communication with Spain and disseminating 'useful knowledge' promoted the development of a periodical press which also provided a medium for criticising Spain and for cultivating the American side of creole identity through new circuits of debate and sociability.³² Although they seem bland politically, the new periodicals published in the major colonial cities made an important contribution to the elaboration and diffusion of new attitudes and ideas. They took up the practice, started by Bourbon officials early in the eighteenth century, of criticising traditional ways and calling for the elite to take up reform, while at the same time strengthening a sense of regional identity by directing news and comment to specific regional audiences. The *Gazeta de Guatemala*, the *Papel Periódico de Santafé de Bogotá*, the *Telégrafo Mercantil* of Buenos Aires, the *Mercurio Peruano*, and so on, aimed at readers who, in the act of reading news of the region, became members of a public identified with it. Editors and authors also assumed that there was a 'public good' which might rationally be pursued, and addressed an 'enlightened' public in the belief that it should promote the public good. In their articles on such topics as improvements to economic life, these journals employed a 'modern' style of criticism,

³⁰ On creole responses to the debate, see Antonello Gerbi, *The Dispute of the New World. The History of a Polemic, 1750-1900*, trans. Jeremy Moyle (Pittsburgh, 1955), pp. 289-324. For a Mexican response, from the Jesuit Clavijero, see Pagden, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination*, 104-16; on Chile, see Simon Collier, *Ideas and Politics of Chilean Independence, 1808-30* (Cambridge, 1967), 21-30.

³¹ Thomas F. Glick, 'Science and Independence in Latin America (with Special Reference to New Granada)', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 71:2 (1991), 307-34; Jeanne Chenu, 'De la Terre aux Etoiles: Quête Scientifique et Identité Culturelle en Nouvelle Granade', in *L'Amérique Espagnole à l'Époque des Lumières*, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Paris, 1987), 247-60.

³² For a general discussion of the emergence of modern forms of sociability in Spanish America, see François Xavier Guerra, *Modernidad e Independencias. Ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas* (Madrid, 1992), pp. 85-113.

which stressed the superiority of empirical investigation of nature over the repetition of texts invested with only traditional authority. Contributors also reformulated the claims of creoles to participate in government, by stressing the need for educated men to shape and dictate policy. This argument is reflected in explicit attacks on the principles of 'nobility' and family honour, conferred by birth, which stood at the heart of traditional elite political culture. Instead, creole writers proposed an alternative form of nobility, based on merit and the exercise of talent for the public good.³³ The idea of replacing an 'aristocracy' with a species of 'meritocracy' was in effect a modernisation of creole claims to exercise influence and power in their own land, restated in the language of the Enlightenment.

These claims all lend weight to Anderson's proposal that the arrival of print capitalism in Spanish America played a key part in shaping creole nationalism. In his view, the provincial periodicals which were printed in late colonial Spanish America, with their juxtaposition of commercial news, news of events in the world outside, and items pertaining to local society and government appointments, ensured that, when creoles broke with Spain, they thought of their regions as nations. Because these periodicals were published in and for a specific community and aimed at local readers, they were conducive to the formation of a sense of territorial community; secondly, they provided forums of information and discussion which, although often politically innocent, were in time politicised. Thus the presses of colonial Spanish America completed the role played by creole functionaries in shaping the image of the proto-national community which was to assert its interests against the metropolitan power.³⁴ But, if creoles' confidence in their separate identity and in the potential for economic and social progress in their homelands grew stronger towards the end of the century, did it build into a sense of 'national' identity capable of generating movements of independence and building new states?

There are several reasons for doubting this. First, it is easy to exaggerate the importance of the press as a force for shaping a proto-national community. It may well be true that these publications generated a more intense creole consciousness, but this effect was concentrated in the very restricted circles of an educated creole minority concentrated in leading cities, and did not spread far beyond their ranks. There were some scientific *savants* and enthusiasts for enlightened ideas in the provinces. In New Granada, for example, creoles educated

³³ This discussion draws on the study of the *Papel Periódico* of Bogotá, in Renan Silva, *Prensa y revolución a finales del siglo XVIII: Contribución a un análisis de la formación de la ideología de independencia nacional* (Bogotá, 1988), pp. 28-5; 104-6.

³⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 61.

in the viceregal capital at Bogotá returned to the provinces but kept up contact with new ideas through correspondence;³⁵ in Mexico, the provincial parish priest Miguel Hidalgo (later the leader of a rebellion against Spanish rule in 1810) was another striking example of the spread of enlightened ideas beyond a colonial capital.³⁶ Nonetheless, if enlightened ideas had reshaped attitudes within the educated minority of the creole elites, older structures of thought and feeling continued to prevail within the wider ranks of creole society, particularly in the many small provincial towns where the influence of universities and the new periodical press was slight. Nor had new ideas diminished identification with local communities. In New Granada, for example, concern to promote economic and social progress during the 1790s and early 1800s was conceived largely in terms of local interests. Prominent members of the *cabildo* and *consulado* (the municipal and commercial corporations) of Cartagena de Indias, New Granada's principal port, focused on promoting their own commercial connections with the exterior, and paid little attention the needs of the interior. Towns and cities inland in turn sought to diminish Cartagena's privileges, and pressed the government for policies designed to further their interests.³⁷

The influence of new ideas did not, then, necessarily mould creoles into a proto-national community, much less unite them with other social and ethnic groupings in a shared sense of cultural identity. What such ideas did was, rather, to strengthen the self-consciousness and inflate the aspirations of creole patricians in the capital cities of the audiencias; as the leading groups in such cities, these creoles later became 'nationalist' to the extent that they presumed to inherit the power which the high-ranking royal officials who were their social peers exercised over the territories of the audiencias. In provincial towns, creoles clung to localised identities with their towns and their hinterlands, identities which did not necessarily translate into a sense of affinity with the jurisdictions of the larger political entities established under Spanish rule.

Nor did the development of a sense of autonomous cultural identity among creoles lead inexorably to demands for a separate, independent political status. So long as Spain remained politically stable, creoles' defence of their character as Americans, their exaltation of the American environment, and criticism of Spanish government were all comfortably contained within the existing political structure. Even when Spain's economic and political power was visibly deteriorating after the end of

³⁵ Margarita Garrido, *Reclamos y representaciones*, 36-54.

³⁶ On Hidalgo's career, see Hugh Hamill, *The Hidalgo Revolt; Prelude to Mexican Independence* (Gainesville, Florida, 1966), pp. 53-88.

³⁷ McFarlane, *Colombia before Independence*, 314-21.

the Peace of Amiens in 1804, and when leading creoles had increasing reason for complaining about Spain's commercial and fiscal policies, the threat that creoles would rebel against the parent power was slight.³⁸ Evidently, the incipient 'nationalism' among the creole elites of colonial capitals was insufficiently powerful to propel creoles into the political organisation needed to demand equality with, or independence from the metropolis. That was achieved only after Napoleon's seizure of the Spanish throne in 1808 collapsed the Spanish state at its centre and provoked a crisis throughout the empire. But, if external events rather than internal developments provoked political change, why did Spanish America become a series of nation-states, each with a republican, representative form of government?

This was, Anderson rightly argues, a precocious development, antedating the emergence of nation-states in most of Europe. Seeing this as an early expression of nationalism, Anderson seeks to explain it in largely cultural terms: he suggests that the roots of the nation lay in creole cultural identities formed under colonial rule, in the 'imagined community' created by creole functionaries and consolidated by the effects of print-capitalism. François Xavier Guerra also stresses the precocity of Spanish America, in setting up some of the first modern political regimes, adopting national sovereignty as a legitimating principle and creating the representative republic as a form of government; however, he advances a different, more historically sensitive explanation for the early creation of nation-states in Spanish America. According to Guerra, the transition into nation-states had a fundamental political logic. It began as a quest to legitimise defence of the traditional order by proclaiming that, in the absence of the legitimate monarch, sovereignty temporarily reverted to the 'people' with whom the monarch had, in the terms of traditional Hispanic political thought, formed a 'pact'. Once it was accepted that legitimacy could only be based in society, representation of the 'people' became necessary. Debating representation then prompted debate about who the 'people' were, and what constituted the 'nation'. As this debate unfolded, creole demands for autonomy, based in the traditional 'pactist' political thinking of the colonial period and justified by a traditional notion of popular sovereignty, took on new coloration, influenced by the republican principles of the French Revolution. Defining the 'people' meant creating the 'nation', and thus, as Spanish Americans sought to find representative

³⁸ See, for example, the response of the Mexican nobility to the Consolidation decree of 1804 in Doris Ladd, *The Mexican Nobility at Independence, 1780-1826* (Austin, Texas, 1976), 95-104.

forms of government, so they engendered nation-states.³⁹

The transition from defence of the established order into development of nation states was driven, as Guerra shows, by a search for a means of legitimating Spanish resistance to France. Started in Spain itself, this continued in Spanish America with a defence by creole patricians of the Spanish *nación* against France that was rooted in a Spanish patriotism founded in a common language, culture and religion. Thus, for the first two years of the Spanish crisis, political mobilisation in Spanish America initially moved along lines similar to, and largely inspired by, the emergency political reorganisation which took place in Spain itself.⁴⁰ There, the war of independence against France was founded first on the corporate groupings of *ancien régime* society. In the absence of the legitimate king, Ferdinand VII, sovereignty was claimed to have reverted to the people (the *pueblo*), but the powers of the sovereign people were taken up by juntas which were largely extensions of traditional municipal corporations and were run by local notables.⁴¹ And, when the Central Junta, focus of Spain's resistance to Napoleon, sought to gather support for their cause in the Americas, they instituted the election of American deputies using the traditional criteria of corporate representation practised in the *ancien régime* Spanish monarchy: the deputies were chosen by, and from the ranks of, urban notables, who received from their cities power to act as spokesmen for the wider communities which were subject to these cities.

Creoles participated enthusiastically in these elections of 1809, showing their firm commitment both to the Spanish nation and to the political concepts of *ancien régime* society. But creole loyalty was soon undermined when government in Spain proved unwilling to accord equality of representation to the overseas dominions. Now the old problem of equality between European and American Spaniards, which had long centred on the issue of access to public office, came to the centre of political debate, and led creoles to assert their rights to self-government through autonomous juntas like those of Spain. Throughout Spanish America, creoles called for the establishment of governments which would represent the 'people' to whom sovereignty had reverted, then moved, from 1810, towards the principle of national representation based in a community of citizens.⁴²

³⁹ For a brief exposition of this position, see François-Xavier Guerra, 'The Spanish American Tradition of Representation and its European Roots', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 26 (1994), 1-33; for a fuller account, see François-Xavier Guerra, *Modernidad e Independencias* (Madrid, 1992).

⁴⁰ For a succinct narrative, see Timothy Anna, *Spain and the Loss of America*, (Lincoln, Nebraska, and London, 1983), 15-63.

⁴¹ Raymond Carr, *Spain, 1808-1939* (Oxford, 1966), 86-92.

⁴² Guerra, *Modernidad e Independencias*, 115-225.

The sense of creole identity formed under colonial rule and sharpened by the effects of Bourbon policy played a part in this process of political and ideological change, but it did not easily translate into nationalism or result in the foundation of 'emotionally plausible and politically viable' nation-states. Only in Mexico were demands for autonomous government quickly linked to the revindication of the rights of an existing 'nation', when, in 1810 the priest Miguel Hidalgo raised a great popular revolt under the banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe, and called for the expulsion of European Spaniards, in the name of a 'Mexican nation' which had been oppressed by Spain. Under Morelos, the country cleric who succeeded Hidalgo, rebellion became a prolonged insurgency whose intellectual spokesmen proclaimed the existence of a Mexican nation ready for independence and called for ethnic equality in which all people, regardless of their ethnic origins, would share an identity as Americans. Thus, it is said, 'creole patriotism, which began as the articulation of the social identity of American Spaniards, was here transmuted into the insurgent ideology of Mexican nationalism'.⁴³ If, however, the ideologues of Mexico's insurgency conjured up a nationalist rhetoric, it was of a peculiar kind, deeply influenced by religious conservatism and the desire to protect the privileges of the Church. The insurgency flourished in only a few regions of Mexico, where it took its energy from local social and political conflicts and the desire of local groups to take advantage of the crisis of the state for their own ends, rather than from any identification with the 'Mexican nation'.⁴⁴

In Spanish South America, identifying the 'people' and the 'nation', and creating 'emotionally plausible and politically viable' nation-states, was also fraught with problems.⁴⁵ In some areas, fear of the 'people' long inhibited political change. The Viceroyalty of Peru, for example, remained under royalist control largely because creoles feared a recrudescence of ethnic warfare of the kind that had occurred in Túpac Amaru's rebellion. In other areas, where creole leaders set up autonomous governments based on popular sovereignty, the absence of any widespread sense of commitment to a 'nation' quickly became apparent.

⁴³ D. A. Brading, *Prophecy and Myth in Mexican History* (Cambridge Centre of Latin American Studies, 1984), 43.

⁴⁴ On the regional bases of the Mexican Insurgency, see Brian Hamnett, *Roots of Insurgency: Mexican Regions, 1750-1824* (Cambridge, 1986), 47-67, 178-201; John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750-1940* (Princeton, 1986), 99-122; Peter Guardino, *Peasants, Politics and the Formation of Mexico's National State: Guerrero, 1800-1857* (Stanford, 1996), 44-80.

⁴⁵ On the problems of defining the 'people' and the 'nation' see Monica Quijada, 'Que Nación? Dinámicas y dicotomías de la nación en el imaginario hispanoamericano del siglo XIX' in *Imaginar la Nación*, ed. François-Xavier Guerra and Monica Quijada (AHILA, Cuadernos de Historia, Münster and Hamburg, 1994), 19-31.

When creoles sought to define their new condition in proclamations and written constitutions, they were rarely intent on locating an historic 'nation' to legitimate projects for independent states.⁴⁶ Indeed, in many regions, creoles had no myths of a glorious Indian past to which to turn.

The absence of any sense of an underlying 'national' unity was also apparent, after 1810, in the civil wars which not only set the defenders of the old order against its challengers, but also pitted newly autonomous cities and towns against each other. For, having cast off Spanish command, their leaders often refused to acknowledge the authority of new governments which attempted to inherit the central command previously exercised by the capitals of viceroalties, audiencias and captaincies-general from which Spanish officials had once ruled. Such divisions have been attributed to creole political inexperience. Bolívar, for example, thought that the failure of the patriot cause in Venezuela and New Granada was due to a political naiveté which meant that 'Each province governed itself independently; and, following this example, each city demanded like powers, based on the practices of the provinces and on the theory that all men and all peoples are entitled to establish arbitrarily the form of government that pleases them'.⁴⁷ Bolívar repeated the point in his famous 'Jamaica Letter', in which he stated that America had not been ready for secession, and had 'risen rapidly, without previous knowledge of, and, what is more regrettable, without previous experience in public affairs ...'.⁴⁸ But such political fragmentation was not so much the result of political inexperience as an extension of the political experience common in Spanish America under colonial rule. For, as we observed above, political life had focused primarily on towns and cities during the colonial period, and the habit of asserting local autonomy and pursuing local interests died hard. Thus, although leaders like Bolívar insisted on the importance of creating a sense of nation which would override other ties, the creoles who provided local leadership were unable to see their political struggle as embedded in a people who shared a history and culture.⁴⁹ If creoles shared a sense of affinity and identity, this did

⁴⁶ Venezuela moved quickly to secession, and in 1811 became the first, very short-lived independent republic in Spanish America. Elsewhere constitutions of a republican kind were drawn up without declarations of independence from Spain. Excellent examples of such constitutions are found in Manuel Antonio Pombo and José Joaquín Guerra (eds), *Constituciones de Colombia* (2 vols, Bogotá, 1951).

⁴⁷ Simon Bolívar, 'Memorial to the Citizens of New Granada' (1812), in *Selected Writings of Bolívar*, ed. Vicente Lecuna and H. A. Bierck (2 vols., New York, 1951), I, 21.

⁴⁸ Simon Bolívar, 'Reply of a South American to a Gentleman of this Island (Jamaica, 1815), in *Selected Writings*, I, 112.

⁴⁹ On Bolívar's nationalism, see Simon Collier, 'Nationalism, Nationalism, and Supranationalism in the Writings of Simón Bolívar', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 63:1 (1983), 37-64.

not easily extend to other ethnic groups, nor beyond the boundaries of their own cities. The first movements towards independence foundered on this disunity; lack of common cause among the 'patriots' allowed Ferdinand VII to reaffirm his authority over most of Spanish America with only a moderate military effort. There were no 'nations-in-arms' to defy Spanish reconquest, only city and regional governments which commanded dwindling allegiance and scarce resources, and by 1816 the River Plate region was the only major territory that remained outside royalist rule.

In the event, restoration of royal control was short-lived. This was not, however, a sign that incipient nations, forged in the crucible of war, rose from the ashes of defeat. For, while renewed resistance to Spain owed something to the sense of freedom kindled in the first phase of independence in 1810-15, the political errors and weaknesses of the restored royalist regime played a large part in provoking the empire's second collapse. In Spain, Ferdinand's absolutism won brief popular acclaim but few lasting adherents, while his policy towards Spanish America was ill-informed, poorly conceived, and badly financed.⁵⁰ In 1820, the struggle between absolutists and liberals in Spain pushed the metropolis into another political crisis, which, combined with the efforts of 'patriot' guerrillas and generals in America, reopened the way towards independence. Power was, however, usually seized at the top, by military leaders whose power came more from their successes in arms than from the popularity of their political ideas.

The new states were generally inaugurated amidst fanfares of optimistic and reformist rhetoric, as the heirs of the creole enlightenment sought to create nation-states in which centralised, neo-Bourbonist governments would reform society from above, along lines learned from the Enlightenment. But the political ideals of the Enlightenment enthusiastically espoused by men like Bolívar did not fit easily into the social, political and cultural contexts of Spanish America. 'Bolívar's *patria*' was, as Pagden points out, 'an "Enlightened Illusion" ... generated by a body of texts';⁵¹ as such, it did not command much understanding or commitment outside the small circles of educated and Europeanised elites in the leading South American cities. And, however much they tried to create a sense of collective, national identity, the creole liberals' political projects attracted scant support.⁵² Indeed,

⁵⁰ Michael Costeloe, *Response to Revolution: Imperial Spain and the Spanish American Revolutions, 1810-1840* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 52-116.

⁵¹ Pagden, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination*, 151.

⁵² On efforts to replace colonial with republican images and rituals in Mexico, see Annick Lempérière, 'Nación moderna o república barroca? México, 1823-1857' in *Imaginar la Nación*, ed. François-Xavier Guerra and Monica Quijada (AHILA, Cuadernos de Historia, Münster and Hamburg, 1994), 135-77; on New Granada, Hans-Joachim

centralist reformers intent on promoting their project for reform provoked antagonism among provincial elites who wanted government to express their identity and interests, while also failing to find popular support, since the political and legal reforms of the new regimes had little practical meaning to the common people.⁵³ In 1815, after the first failures to achieve independence, Bolívar had likened the state of America in 1810–15 to that of Rome after its fall, when ‘each part of Rome adopted a political system conforming to its interest ... or was led by the individual ambitions of certain chiefs, dynasties or associations’.⁵⁴ And, for all Bolívar’s efforts to prevent it, the new states which emerged after the second crisis of the Spanish monarchy in 1820, when Ferdinand was forced to return to constitutional government, generally followed the same pathway into fragmentation and civil conflict between warring provinces.

Such fragmentation cannot be attributed to a failure among creole leaders to imagine the political future of their countries as nation-states. The fusion of creole patriotism with the ideals of the Enlightenment had nurtured an American identity, the experience of ‘patriotic’ war against ‘foreign’ Spaniards had promoted projects for independent states, and the republican ideals of popular sovereignty and equal citizenship legitimated the constitutional bases of independent states. Moreover, the construction of the new liberal states was not solely the work of urban creole elites. For, recent revisionists insist, the peasantry in Mexico and Peru were willing to adopt the political language of the creole elites and to engage in the politics of the new states for their own purposes, and thereby shared in national political life and contributed to shaping the nation-state.⁵⁵ But, if it is true that the new nation-states of Mexico and Peru developed from processes of negotiation across class and ethnic lines, it is equally true that generating a sense of national identity continued to be highly problematic in

Köenig, ‘Símbolos nacionales y retórica política en la independencia: El caso de la Nueva Granada’, in *Problemas de la Formación del Estado y de la Nación en Hispanoamérica*, ed. Inge Buisson et al. (Cologne and Venna, 1984), 389–406; also, at greater length, his *En el camino hacia la nación: Nacionalismo en el proceso de la formación del estado y de la nación de la Nueva Granada, 1750–1856* (Bogotá, 1994), 189–415.

⁵³ For a study of the alienation of the enlightened political elites from their ‘national’ constituencies, see the analysis of Rivadavia’s government in Argentina during the 1820s in Nicholas Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991), 81–111. ⁵⁴ *Selected Writings of Bolívar*, I, 110.

⁵⁵ See Guardino, *Peasants, Politics and the Formation of Mexico’s National State*, 81–109. On the linkages of popular, local and national politics later in the nineteenth century, see Guy Thomson, ‘Popular Aspects of Liberalism in Mexico, 1848–88’, *Bulletin of Latin American Research* (1991), 265–92; Antonio Annino, ‘Otras naciones: sincretismo político en el México decimonónico’ in *Imaginar la Nación*, ed. Guerra and Quijada, 215–55; Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Post-Colonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley, 1995), esp. chaps. 2–3.

countries where, under Spanish colonial rule, people had acquired social and cultural identities which tended to separate rather than unite them, and where post-independence political leaders invariably reflected the outlook of social elites which, while they proclaimed a shared national identity, continued to see the social order as an ethnic hierarchy. Their idea of a nation was based in the identity which the white elites had formed under colonial rule, and, by failing to encompass the ethnic diversity of their countries, proved too narrow to underpin the foundations of any shared sense of commitment to new nation states.

The frailty of Spanish America's newly independent states was soon reflected in civil conflicts, as *caudillos* asserted family and regional interests, federalists fought centralists, and conservatives fought liberals. Frustrated by such turbulence, the 'enlightened' creoles who tried to build nation-states based on the sovereignty of the people and equality of individual rights were often persuaded that political problems in the new states derived from the inherent incapacity of some of their fellow citizens. Just as 'enlightened' eighteenth-century Europeans had denigrated creoles as racial and cultural inferiors who were incapable of running their own affairs, so 'enlightened' nineteenth-century creoles maligned people of mixed race and Indians as incapable of becoming responsible, economically productive citizens. And, just as eighteenth-century Europeans based their views of Americans on the authority of contemporary biologists, so nineteenth-century creoles appealed to the equally spurious scientific authority of an emerging Social Darwinism.⁵⁶ Ironically, moulding nations from native materials seemed so difficult that some creole statesmen concluded that the nation state could only be secured on the basis of European immigration, or even, in the eyes of some disillusioned politicians, through absorption into the United States. Affirmation of creole identity had facilitated a transition from colonial to independent status and, once formed, the newly independent states had widened the basis of political participation and encouraged commitment to the 'national' order. But nationalism was not yet a hegemonic concept capable of overcoming division; indeed, the efforts of centralising creole elites to impose their vision of the nation was often itself divisive. The new liberal states continued to be fundamentally the creation of creole elites who saw 'reform from above' on the Enlightenment model as the path to the future, and they had yet fully to translate their affirmation of American equality with Europe into a

⁵⁶ For examples, see Monica Quijada, 'Que Nación?' 40-51; also Frank Safford, 'Race, Integration and Progress: Elite Attitudes and the Indian in Colombia, 1750-1870', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 71:1 (1991), 20-33. For a contrary example, showing how Social Darwinism could be used to defend people of mixed race as the basis of the nation, see David Brading, 'Social Darwinism and Romantic Idealism: Andrés Molina Enriquez and José Vasconcelos in the Mexican Revolution' in Brading, *Prophecy and Myth*, pp. 63-71.

broader inclusion of the many identities within their ethnically diverse societies. Thus the problems of building a political order based on a clearly defined territory, a sense of political community and shared, national values continued into the nineteenth century and, in some regions, extended into the twentieth.⁵⁷

⁵⁷David A. Brading, 'Nationalism and State-Building in Latin American History' in *Wars, Parties and Nationalism*, ed. Eduardo Posada-Carbó (London, 1995), 89-107.