

Re-Imagining Democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1770s-1870s

Fourth reading group meeting, 24 February 2017, 11.00 am, Oxford Maison Française, 2-10 Norham Road, Oxford

Independence and the emergence of new nation states, 1804-1830

Participants: Francesco Buscemi, Gonzalo Butrón Prida, Rolando de la Guardia, Michael Drolet, John Elliott, Ludovic Frobert, Peter Hill, Graciela Iglesias-Rogers, Joanna Innes, Alan Knight, Raymond Lavertue, Hussein Omar, Anthony McFarlane, Nicola Miller, Juan Ignacio Neves, Mark Philp, Eduardo Posada Carbó, Cecilia Tarruell, Sarah Washbrook, Laurence Whitehead

The session was introduced by Eduardo – with thanks to Ludovic Frobert and the Maison Française.

Mark Philp: a brief introduction to the broader project

Eduardo Posada Carbo: reminded participants that the broader project had three broad themes: the trajectory of use of the term democracy; how people theorised it; and the institutions and practices that developed sometimes alongside, sometimes before, sometimes after - changes in discourse.

Scope of today's session: 1804-30 – mainly post 1814 – and the defeat of Napoleon. Haiti is an outlier achieving independence earlier, in 1804. In 1814 we get the return of Ferdinand; and the development of a 'civil war', turning into an anti-colonial war. Sequence, from Argentina 1816 to Uruguay 1830. Over 10 new states by 1830. Is this a process of fragmentation – is that the norm or the rule for collapsing empires?

Can we for analytical purposes distinguish – new states – as distinct from new nations – domestically creating new states – reconstructing new social and political bonds as a way of linking – degree of popular participation. Attempts to create new states – sometimes large over-arching states. And there is also an attempt to secure international recognition of new and republican states. Long process of recognition from Spain – 1830s – Honduras 1890s. Earlier recognition – by US and Britain.

This is also a story of attempts to create national states in areas of heterogeneity – very different circumstances., and very different ethnic compositions –there's also a lot of regional diversity. How helpful is the simple dichotomy *Creole*/ Spanish descent vs Indian origin. Place of *mestizos*? - accusations in scholarship of 'whitening' the Latin American story. Emergence of new states – from subjects to citizens; but also from very heterogeneous populations to national identity.

Looking at forms of government that emerge – republicanism widely adopted, division of powers, mixed government, degree of experimentation in the region – how does it compare to US – major period of innovation.

Joanna Innes – is the distinction between state and nature a way of trapping us in a certain framework? What are we talking about in talking about nations. We shouldn't drain the state of the cultural – as if it is merely a set of formal institutions.

Ray Lavertue – trying to figure out America and American romanticism – is there a South American aspect of romanticism in the early 19th C?

Francesco Buschemi - some of the reading identified points to how you build a nation where diverse ethnicity exists - get a multi-ethnic nation that's one of the main features of Bolivarian nationalism. Maybe ethnicity should be understood as the outcome of state building.

Laurence Whitehead: two big areas I expected to hear something about – taxation and the church. Core of Bolivian republic becomes the silver mining sector and then the question of who prints the money – there's a whole tax/state issue that ties to issues of foreign recognition that in turn is connected to the possibilities of new markets and new places for investment. Also related to the question of the church – which has lots of resources, and is economically and socially powerful, and which perform functions that are state-like before there is a state. Most of Bolivian tax goes to pay for the military and courts – very basic residual public sector – and the church performs a lot of the other functions that later become taken over the state.

John Elliott – it's best in many ways to see the construction of state and nation as coterminous from the 18th C onwards – Romantic movement adds extra freight to idea of an organic community – so they give legs to nation in a way that can subsequently out-run the state. With respect to the creation of new states when empires fragment – and succession - David Armitage's new book addresses this problem and points to the importance of Vattel who describes 1688 as a civil war - if there is a fragmentation then it's open to other states to enter the war to lend assistance to legitimate rebellion or civil war.

JJ – closely related to that – one of impetuses is to create a responsible authority to avoid chaos, and where doing so is seen as valid intervention.

MP – and you can do that when there isn't a state and what you are doing is trying to set up a system of authority in a context where the boundaries remain very unclear

JE – Indian, creole, nation and state – there are a multiplicity of terms and the boundaries can be drawn very differently for example in Buenos Aires you get a distinction between natives –whether Indian, gaucho, and descendants – and keep apart from Spanish born

Nicola Miller – I agree that you can't drain the culture from the state. Moreover, there are lots of romantic elements from early on, some introduced by Humboldt – picked up in 1820s – for example, the concerns with landscape, territory, scientific examination, etc.

Sarah Washbrook – how does the contract frame the relations between cities and environments - growth of communication is an example of practical state creation – and aspects of nation are very similar.

EPC – asked how far the army is a factor here – very few military schools – not same sense of training – with the exception of Royal armies. Army of Rosas is a local army - not national because very locally based;

SW – change in military only at the end of 19th c – get conscription

Alan Knight – we might better understand the situation as one in which there is organised violence by lots of different groups – whole spectrum of groups – both support but also cannibalise states - can use recruitment as signal of popular organisation but not on ethnic basis

JJ: Just to clarify the point about the state. I'm concerned that we should see the state as engaged – in part constructing itself through a series of performances – that it is not just a mechanical object – that's what I mean by saying that the culture shouldn't be bled out of our thinking about the state.

AK – these are very rudimentary states – they would like to have national sentiments – but they don't have the resources. But it is a mistake to assume that a weak state is compatible with ideas of the nation. State can be parasitic on other identities – if there are a set of cultural resources this is identification with patria. Church is one of the greatest resources of culture – but don't necessarily get behind these states

Tony McFarlane – states don't make wars in the way they do in Europe – on the other hand there's an argument about Bolívar as organising the army as a proto-state – drawn from various classes and regions. The people who get recruited tend to be seen as driven by particularistic reasons – very local reasons – not aiming at an independent state, but at protecting their basic concerns. And in the case of loyalists, such as Blacks and Indians in SW Colombia – and the ordinary people who were largely supporters of monarchy in Peru – their monarchism comes from a sense that they have a better deal under the crown

Graciela Iglesias-Rogers – the Spanish Monarchy accepted some groups as a separate nation, so that's one way in which localism felt protected by monarchy but might be uncertain what republicanism might deliver.

TMcF – indeed, there may be only one example of anyone trying to forge a black republic.

GIR – Spanish Monarchy seen as supra-national, so not necessarily as incompatible with other local options.

LW – in upper Peru Spanish monarchy had repressed Tupamaros – so those concerned to protect their conditions subsequently did not set themselves against the Spanish monarchy –

Peter Hill - different kinds of cultural resources available – which should encourage us to think about the state building polity and the extent to which it can deploy those options. Also possible to see Throne and Altar becoming detached from monarchy. How might we look at the variations in which we put these different projects together?

Ludovic Frobert – re: tension between nation and state – what was the state of reflection around this – esp in relation to the place and function of intermediary societies in commercial field and politically in relation to cities. They are very dynamic in 19th C France – liberals organised round cooperative, commercial associations – in the case of France romantic socialists they gradually discovered that it is at the intermediary levels that you could build a democratic republic.

JJ: what is the role of the *pueblo*?

EPC – already a very rich local politics from 1814 onwards. Mentioned example of Oaxaca – begin to get contested elections in second half of the 1820s, as studied by Guardino. Elections in the 1820s in many cases lead to civil war as they expose the depth of divisions.

SW – also, we should recognise that the meaning of nation changes – doesn't have to go together with the state – struggles in Guatemala over indigenous organisations which saw them abolished

and then brought back. Waves of attempts to try and control local bodies in an often very long process. In Mexico regional and local structures remain.

EPC – Mentioned revisionist Chilean literature for the 1820s on the basis of highly local and participatory elements

Rolando de la Guardia – lots of registering of local interests in the demands being made

LW – Benedict Anderson has an important point in relation to print media – new opportunity for writers and for rickety states – allows them an authority and the spread of debate – ephemeral and parochial but hadn't existed before - urban, small, need to be mapped in relation to printing presses, a lot depends who can pull together small groups that are enough to tip balance re authority. Not ethnically Indian but not anti-indian.

EPC – lot of pamphlets from the period. Who produces them? Sometimes local authorities – citing each other – creating community of discussion and news. Creating through the papers a wider notion of community

NM – but we also need to recognise a wider impact of print culture that concerns more than newspapers, - eg: broadsides circulated very widely.

AK – Although we don't know how widely they were disseminated – so it's a bit hit and miss on how widely they were circulated – In many respects the Church was more effective as a communicator of ideas – looks as if sermons were widely disseminated. Church is a crucial medium. Later the balance starts to shift.

EPC – Also in Oaxaca – institution of liberal arts – disseminating ideas.

GIR – but we should also recognise that people were so used to church that the first forms of propaganda came in the form political catechisms

Michael Drolet – Its also not clear that oral and written should be sharply divided – have symbolic resonance – also paintings cartoons.

EPC – 120,000 people in Mexico city – artisans play an important role – get a middle layer that tends to be missed – and they can influence the poorer sectors and are very quickly affected

PH – was this print culture trying to operate on an oral culture and what does this produce?

JI – eg popular monarchists – are they interacting with print culture, are they engaging with popular culture.

GIR – also way people dress is important in symbolic forms of communication.

TM – if we are interested in impact of texts then we should recognise that most people were more likely to be affected by documents drawn up for courts – and for many people their literacy and their activity revolve around legal texts and the rights and privileges that people believe that they grant, and that they strive to protect..

EPC – We should think about indigenous people as communities – wonder if we need to think about mestizos – many academics are reluctant to use the term – and as a group they are not really a part of the colonial architecture. They found space within independence as individuals – rather than working on a creole-native polarity.

SW – mestizos have very different meanings in different places. 1795 rebellion influenced by Haiti – pro-royalist in Venezuela because legislation protected – Mexico mestizo is positive – in Peru very negative

NM – citizenship – very vibrant debates about that in the 1820s and especially around property – esp. around constituent assemblies

JI – Wondered to what extent do constitutions and republic become mobilized and mobilizing terms

AK – Guardino would say that there's quite a rapid diffusion of citizenship and elections and constitutions.

TM when people thinking about citizenship they are thinking about their access to the law in courts

EPC – nonetheless there is evidence of constitutions being widely circulated so that people read them and had some understanding of them and the rights they distributed - also public servants might play a role in this

LF - do you have from 1810s and 20s a specific reflection on the intermediary institutions?

EPC – elaborate reflections may exist but are likely to be in things like presidential addresses

RdIG – In many respects 'constitutional' is seen, in and of itself as opposed to Spain and Spanish rule.

SW – citizenship and legal rights – we do see the development of a culture of legal citizenship – from the 1830s. Women had a separate status until end of 19th C-and slave law continues until the 1830s and 50s. Often get people acting and claiming as citizens when they don't have the formal right to do so.