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Mesa: Nacionalismo, etnicidad e identidades

THE RELIGIOUS ORIGINS OF SPANISH
NATIONAL IDENTITY, 1793-1812.

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From the perspective of the Spanish monarchy during the transition from the Ancien Régime to liberal government during the early nineteenth century, including overseas territories as well as the metropole, patriotism and nationalism overlapped as older forms of identification based on hierarchical claims and loyalty to the figure of the king changed with newer conceptions of sovereignty and the implementation of a liberal model of government.

Nationalism describes an ideological process of attachment and collective identification with a nation initiated by political elites and popular movements, merging emotional sentiments with political philosophies that conflate the nation with a number of shared values and cultural traits. In contrast to patriotism, the love of the fatherland, which signified devotion to the place of one's birth during an era of monarchy and hierarchical relationships across much of the world, eighteenth-century Enlightenment ideals of rational state-building and representative institutions provided the context for ideologies of nationalism to begin to be articulated in the Atlantic world. In Spain, popular rhetoric denounced the treachery of the French and eulogized the Spanish people and nation during the War of Independence (1808-1814). The experiences of those living through the revolutions of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries inspired a new political vocabulary. Yet Lynn Hunt cautions that "revolutionary language did not simply reflect the realities of revolutionary changes and conflicts, but rather was itself transformed into an instrument of political and social change." Accordingly, "language itself helped shape the perception of interests and hence the development of ideologies."¹ The emphasis on the national community, what Benedict Anderson understands

¹ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 1984), 24.

as the way in which nationality and nationalism “command such profound emotional legitimacy,” began to be built into language.²

In charting the plurality of positions advocated by Spanish nationalists, the concepts of civic, or voluntarist, and ethnic, or organic, nationalism are useful tools.³ Civic nationalism grew out of the French revolutionary model of the sovereign people as national citizens. Ethnic nationalism, on the other hand, has often been tied to Germany and an exaltation of the uniqueness of a particular people.⁴ I want to avoid a binary opposition, however, and problematize the notion that civic and ethnic nationalisms are tied to specific national histories. Instead, the case of the Spanish monarchy demonstrates that both civic and particularist impulses influenced patterns of identification, and competing discourses of national identity emerged in the context of ideological struggle and war between nations. In sum, liberal Spanish nationalism in the early decades of the nineteenth century displays a wide range of attributes which do not conform to simplistic categorization as civic or ethnic, traditional or modern.

NATIONALISM, MODERNIZATION THEORY AND RELIGION

Scholars working on questions of nationalism and national identity have often argued for a divorce between religious and national identification. Grounded implicitly or explicitly in modernization theory, these works posit an evolution from traditional religious belief to the modern identification with the nation-state. For example, from a perspective privileging the secularizing Enlightenment, Benedict Anderson has remarked that “in Western Europe the

² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991), 4.

³ See John Plamenatz, “Two Types of Nationalism,” in Eugene Kamenka, ed., *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea* (New York, 1976); and Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background* (New York, 1944).

⁴ Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, “Introduction: From the Moment of Social History to the Work of Cultural Representation,” in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., *Becoming National* (New York, 1996), 4-5.

eighteenth century marks not only the dawn of the age of nationalism but the dusk of religious modes of thought.”⁵ Ernest Gellner similarly focuses on a transition from a “culture-religion” to a “culture-state,” and maintains that “in the industrial world high cultures prevail, but they need a state not a church, and they need a state *each*.”⁶ These authors share an approach to nationalism which relegates religion to a pre-modern worldview and finds in the nation a successor to the sacred and the divine.

Yet nationalism in Spain did not stem from a purely secular tradition. Adrian Shubert has drawn attention to the weakness of “secular nationalism [that] stands in stark contrast to the energy and enthusiasm with which the symbolic representation of Spain’s religious identity was promoted.”⁷ He maintains that “a secular national identity did not displace a religious one before the Civil War.”⁸ Other scholars have similarly posited a dichotomy between secular and religious identities in Spain. According to one recent work, “Catholicism did not engage secular loyalty to the same extent it would in France or that Protestantism would in England.”⁹ Yet it may not be possible to extract a clearly articulated secular Spanish national identity from its religious foundations during the early nineteenth century, as liberals as well as advocates of enlightened despotism and absolutism tied the nation to roots in the Catholic faith.

I argue that in the case of the Spanish monarchy, religion and the clergy played a decisive role in the construction of national identity. Clerics transformed the discourse of *el Pueblo de Dios* and *el Pueblo Católico* into *el Pueblo Español*. They posited the essentialist notion that all Spaniards were Christians, and as each term had the exact same meaning accor-

⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 11.

⁶ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1983), 72-73.

⁷ Adrian Shubert, *A Social History of Modern Spain* (London, 1990), 204.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁹ Anthony W. Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford, 2003), 184.

ding to church doctrine, moved seamlessly from using one to the other. In order to trace the ways in which people identified themselves vis-à-vis the Spanish state, I will trace patriotic and nationalist discourses articulated across the Spanish monarchy as they fit into religious and political culture during the age of revolutions in the Atlantic world.

SPANISH PATRIOTISM

Ancien Régime authority centered upon relationships and bonds that mirrored the patriarchal structure of the family. Sermons such as that of the Capuchin missionary Miguel de Santander commonly emphasized the central pillars of society—order and deference: “in all the kingdoms the Monarchs reigned like fathers: their vassals obeyed like sons for the love of their king and for the principles of their sacred religion.”¹⁰ The language used—*gente* rather than *pueblo*, *vasallo* rather than *ciudadano*, *estado* rather than *nación*—reinforced the idea of obligation and submission in contrast to the emotional ties of patriotism.

In the aftermath of the French Revolution and the French invasion of 1793, the Spanish clergy became protagonists in the War against the Convention. Ecclesiastics preached a doctrine of holy war against the savage specter of anarchy and sacrilege, and explicitly appealed to the faithful to defend themselves against the enemies of religion. Miguel de Santander gave a battlecry typical of the time: “It will be better to die gloriously in war than to see the formidable evils that menace our fatherland and our sacred religion come to pass.”¹¹

Most ecclesiastics during the War against the Convention did not conceive of Spain in terms of *patria* or *nación*, instead referring to *el Reyno*, *la Monarquía*, or *el estado*. The emo-

¹⁰ Miguel de Santander, *Sermon IV. Divinidad de la religion católica*, in *Sermones dogmáticos*, Tomo I (Madrid, 1805), 102.

¹¹ Santander, *Tres exordios de otras tantas pláticas hechas en los tres días de rogativas públicas, que en cumplimiento de real orden de S.M. (que Dios guarde) hizo la ciudad de Toro en 24, 25, y 26 de agosto de 1794*, in *Sermones panegíricos*, 368.

tional connotations of patria had not supplanted Ancien Régime conception of the state. Thus Villanueva's *Catecismo del Estado* from 1793 represented the traditional view of the state and the centrality of religion within Spanish society. Writing at the height of the radical phase of the French Revolution, Villanueva firmly warned against all forms of unrest and disorder. He demanded that loyalty be sworn to the person of the sovereign king rather than to abstract notion of a fatherland. In constructing the religious foundations of the state, Villanueva denied the sovereignty of the people and insisted that "the authority and power of Princes emanates from God, who does not affirm even once that it comes from the people."¹²

Various models of authority and legitimacy continued to develop after the War against the Convention within the church. In his *Carta de un religioso español, amante de su patria* from 1798, Miguel de Santander vehemently argued for a system of representative government and limits on royal power. He praised the Cortes of Aragón as an early example of republicanism to be emulated:

In Aragón the form of government was monarchical as in Castilla, but in some parts the spirit and the principles of their constitution were republican. The actual exercise of sovereignty pertained to the Cortes or to the Estates General....This simple enumeration of privileges inherent to the Estates General of Aragón and to the rights enjoyed by Justice, clearly shows that no more than a portion of very limited powers remained in the hands of the king.

He grounded the new ideology of liberalism with references to the past assemblies of the Cortes, which represented the true republican spirit of Spain. He justified his position by claiming that "in Castilla the king exercised a rather limited executive power, and legislative power resided in the Cortes....These assemblies of our nation were ancient and their origin

¹² Joaquín Lorenzo Villanueva, *Catecismo del Estado según los principios de la Religión* (Madrid, 1793), 93.

can be found in the first constitution of our civil state; that is to say in the most remote centuries.”¹³ By this time, Santander supported constitutional monarchy and a civic nationalism increasingly at odds with particularist notions of national identity.

Prior to the War of Independence, most clerics continued to combine the language of patriotism with a fundamentally Ancien Régime discourse. Relationships between nations were emphasized rather than antagonisms, and conflicts continued to be interpreted in terms of religion. In 1801, Antonio Tavira spoke of France as “a nation united with ours in a firm alliance and friendship through close ties.” In addition, he noted that “in spite of the freedom of religion in the French Republic, and of the calamitous times that followed their Revolution...it has nonetheless been said in public tracts..., that seven and a half of eight parts profess the Catholic religion.” He emphasized “the mildness with which the actual government comports itself and has turned to receive in the heart of the nation many that only fury and cruelty had obliged to emigrate.”¹⁴ Clerics did not view the French nation as the enemy, and praised the moderation of their government.

A NATIONALIST STRUGGLE? THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

French troops began occupying Spanish forts and military installations in a southward drive during the first months of 1808. As troops entered Madrid and sent the royal family packing, popular protests turned violent on May 2. News of the events and the massacre of civilians spread quickly, and local elites across Spain and Spanish America spontaneously organized committees to reestablish order and coordinate their response. At the same time that

¹³ Miguel de Santander, *Carta de un religioso español, amante de su patria, escrita a otro religioso amigo suyo sobre la constitución del reino y abuso del poder* (1798), in Elorza, “Cristianismo ilustrado,” 104-106, 102.

¹⁴ Antonio Tavira, *Carta pastoral del 4 de junio de 1801*, in Joël Saignieux, *La Ilustración Cristiana Española: Escritos de Antonio Tavira (1737-1807)* (Salamanca, 1986), 173, 174-75.

many pledged fidelity to the monarch Fernando VII, held captive by Napoleon in France, the contractual theory of government dominated the thinking of those ruling in his name. In order to justify organizing *juntas* to reestablish the rule of law and resist the French, leaders claimed that sovereignty had reverted to the people in the absence of a king. Although Enlightenment intellectuals had premised their ideas of *pactismo* on their firm adherence to absolute monarchy, the political crisis that engulfed the Hispanic world in the aftermath of 1808 precipitated new justifications for national sovereignty, based on an original contract between the king and the people. The immediate ramifications of this principle took shape in declarations upholding the sovereign rights of the people as the voice of the nation. Rather than being subjected as obedient vassals of the king, Spaniards claimed an identity as integral components of the national community with the accompanying rights of the national citizen. As early as September, 1808, one bishop argued that *el pueblo español*, as the original repository of sovereign power, had reclaimed its natural rights to govern:

The interest and the spirit that strengthen the valor of the soldier are one, as are the anxieties of those who direct and lead, and the hardships of those who, driven by their zeal for religion, for the King and the fatherland, are brought together as representatives of the people and as loyal repositories of their knowledge and their trust, to guard parts of the government until the fundamental laws regain their authority and vigor....Now the Provincial Juntas, sending their commissioners to Court, deserve pure zeal and disinterest for the common good, returning to the center that part of authority that the people had conferred upon them temporarily.¹⁵

¹⁵ Pedro Luis Blanco, *Don Pedro Luis Blanco, por la gracia de Dios y de la Santa Sede Apostólica, Conde de Colle, Señor de las Arrimadas y Vegamian, Obispo de la ciudad de León y su obispado, del Consejo de S.M. &c.* (León, 1808), in *Colección Gómez Ímaz* (C.G.I.), Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, 17-18.

His sentiments echoed the proclamation issued on June 1, 1808 in León, one of the first regions to rise up against the French in the name of Fernando VII. Similar to the dozens of similar documents from 1808, the Junta General de Gobierno asserted its rights to represent the province as the legitimate local authority: “a Junta, composed of individuals from the Town Council and of other notables that wanted to join it, some of that class, and others of the class of Deputies of the People themselves, in whom are deposited Sovereign authority...dictates all the necessary measures to shake off the domination of the French.”¹⁶ The radical notions explicit in the language of national sovereignty became common currency after 1808 and changed the relationship between the king and the people of the newly defined nation.

During the War of Independence, the clergy increasingly directed their sermons and religious instruction to el Pueblo Español rather than to *los feligreses* or el Pueblo de Dios. Although Spanish priests had exhorted the faithful to take up arms against the French in the War against the Convention, the discourse was largely limited to religious rhetoric and imagery, and terms such as el Pueblo Español were rarely used. By 1808, most Spanish clergy began to appeal to their parishioners as the Spanish people rather than or often in addition to utilizing the Ancien Régime terminology of *vasallo* and *súbdito*. The war was propagated as a fight against the French nation and people, not simply against a select few seditious and impious men. The new language represented a critical break from the past, ushering in the age of nationalism in Spain.

The sovereignty of the Spanish people was declared throughout all regions of Spain in the aftermath of French occupation, breaking with the language of absolutism and the idea that all power emanates from God. No longer did the king reign by divine right, but authority resided in the people of the nation. Liberals as well as absolutists exalted the virtues and he-

¹⁶ *La Junta General de Gobierno* (June 1, 1808), in Sabino Delgado, ed., *Guerra de Independencia: Proclamas Bandos y Combatientes* (Madrid, 1979), 31.

roic nature of el Pueblo Español. In order to legitimate the power of the provincial Juntas, the Junta Central, and later the Cortes of Cádiz, representatives proclaimed the sovereignty of the people in whose name they would govern. The term el Pueblo Español became central to the new ideology of liberal nationalism. The Spanish people formed the nation, and elected representatives governed in their name and that of the captive king Fernando VII. The nation and the people were synonymous, and terms such as monarchy, kingdom and state fell into disfavor among ardent liberals. Whereas prior to 1808, few clerics utilized the term el Pueblo Español with its radical implications of national sovereignty, by the summer and fall of 1808 nationalist ecclesiastics all over Spain delivered their message of resistance to el Pueblo Español. Bishops such as Pedro Luis Blanco argued that

your pained voices accelerated armament, ended the apparent apathy of your sons, who raced to pursue the enemy and drive them from your houses that they were infesting; and with the help of God the few will be taken from our Spain who have not died or been taken prisoner by our glorious armies, vanquishers of those judged invincible. Now the loyal Spanish people with experience have seen how laudable were their clamors for defense.¹⁷

Similar to the accounts appearing in the press and in pamphlets from the time, the clergy began to disseminate the idea of the Spanish people as protagonists in the struggle against the French nation. Emblematic of the period, one priest maintained that “In light of these cruelties, of these horrors and blasphemies, we should assume in our hearts that our powerful warriors, and even all of the Spanish people, share the same greatness of faith, the same sense of piety, the same religious zeal.”¹⁸ The Spanish clergy constructed the basis of national identity

¹⁷ Pedro Luis Blanco, *Don Pedro Luis Blanco, por la gracia de Dios y de la Santa Sede Apostólica*, 13.

¹⁸ Fr. Manuel de la Virgen del Rosario, *Oración fúnebre que en las solemnes de los militares difuntos en la jornada de Baylén y anteriorer* (Málaga, 1808), in C.D.F., vol. 16, sig. 31, 32.

on the idea of the people as the spirit of the nation and upon their will to unanimously resist Napoleon. Victories in battles such as Bailén were not simply attributed to God but were portrayed as the result of the heroic struggle of the Spanish people.

Representation of all the territories of the Spanish monarchy occurred for the first time in Cádiz beginning in September of 1810. The debates of the Cortes took place in the cathedral hall of San Felipe Neri, thus establishing the church itself as the center of rational and critical debates over the ways in which a new representative state would be formed to govern the nation. In addition, clerics had been charged with conducting the elections across the Spanish monarchy, and certain stages of the indirect electoral process took place within the space of parish churches.¹⁹ According to the constitution, mass was to follow the selection of parish electors, bestowing solemnity to the electoral system. In New Spain in 1813, a priest involved with elections in Guadalajara urged parishioners to use their rational faculties in voting: “Your vote has to be entirely free, entirely yours. But it should be at the same time rational, dispassionate and in all decent for your credit, for your own profit and for the community.”²⁰ The integration of the functions of church and state symbolizes the ways in which a public sphere was constructed within a religious framework and a Catholic language of spirituality and legalism. Not only were political spaces potent symbols, but many ecclesiastics were elected to local and provincial office, and a third of the deputies that served in the Cortes of Cádiz were clerics. Religion was infused into the political system. On the first day of the national assembly, September 24, 1810, following three days of public prayer, the Archbishop of Toledo gave a mass and received an oath of loyalty from deputies who swore

¹⁹ For the case of elections in Oaxaca, see Jaime E. Rodríguez O., “‘Ningun pueblo es superior a otro’: Oaxaca y el federalismo mexicano,” in Brian Connaughton, ed., *Poder y legitimidad en México, siglo XIX. Instituciones y cultura política* (Iztapalapa, 2003).

²⁰ José Francisco Arroyo, cited in Jaime E. Rodríguez O., “*Rey, religión, yndependencia y unión*”: *el proceso de la independencia de Guadalajara* (México, 2003), 32.

in defense of religion, the integrity of the Spanish nation and their king Fernando VII. Mass continued to be celebrated daily by a deputy of the Cortes in the halls of the church prior to the often vitriolic disputes over how best to conceive of the functions of the state in the absence of the king.²¹

The constitution, promulgated in March of 1812, enacted the core principles of nineteenth century European liberalism. The Constitution of 1812, as the liberal interpretation of natural law epistemology, was presented as the logical extension of contract theories dating to the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Yet it also enshrined the basis of state authority and national identity in religion. Article 12 definitively established Spain as a confessional nation. According to Joaquín Lorenzo Villanueva, deputy of the Cortes from Valencia, representatives in Cádiz not only divinely sanctioned the Constitution and its laws as based upon Catholic principles, but shared the religious sentiments and faith of the Spanish people:

In it [the Cortes], first as the most solid foundation of this great edifice, we proclaim the holy apostolic Roman Catholic religion, as the true and sole religion of the state, establishing that the nation protects it as it will always protect it following the example of our elders, with wise and just laws. To this incomparable and most solid good, without which it is not possible to move forward on the path toward happiness, and that manifests the true piety and religious sentiments of the deputy representatives that have sanctioned it, we add the august and solemn declaration that sovereignty resides essentially in the nation.²²

Spaniards, accordingly, formed a nation on the basis of their common Catholicism, which provided the most solid foundation for the construction of the nation. Villanueva exhorted

²¹ Ramón Solís, *El Cádiz de las Cortes: La vida de una ciudad en los años de 1810 a 1813* (Madrid, 2000), 301.

²² Joaquín Lorenzo Villanueva, *Discurso que restituída a la ciudad de Valencia la Audiencia Territorial, pronunció al tiempo de su apertura D. Lorenzo Villanueva, ministro más antiguo, el día 27 de julio del año 1813* (Valencia), in C.G.I., 9.

priests and the religious at all levels to preach the new political doctrines of liberal nationalism to their parishioners in the name of God: “This is the fortunate occasion on which respectable prelates, the venerable parish priests and the rest of the ecclesiastics of all classes, will be able to and even should teach the people, as the holy religion of Jesus Christ commands, proper submission and obedience to the powers, that is, to our legitimate actual government and their decrees.”²³ Thus a public sphere had emerged which encompassed the church and placed religion squarely within the parameters of debates over state formation and national identity.

CONCLUSION: UNANIMITY OF FAITH

The clergy helped to create a mythological aura which defined and gave meaning to the War of Independence. In a sermon given in 1809, Ignacio Gutierrez y Polop articulated a version of Spanish nationalism representative of many ecclesiastics. He venerated the people of Spain and predicted that the war would be forever remembered by all nations: “THE SPANISH PEOPLE are made immortal in your cause, and their name will be respected in all nations as the UNRELENTING DEFENDER of the rights of their God.” In addition, he argued for a religious interpretation of the people and the nation: “the SPANISH PEOPLE are the *loyal repository of the laws of their God.*” Just as liberal nationalists argued that the people were the original repository of sovereignty and the laws of the nation, traditionalists used similar language to claim the people had been entrusted with God’s laws. By 1808, the people had become the focus of the discourse rather than the protagonism of God and references to Bibli-

²³ Ibid., 18.

cal events. While clerics continued to highlight religion and the importance of faith, they used the language of liberal nationalism in glorifying el Pueblo Español.

Nationalist clergy predicated their campaign against Napoleon upon anti-French propaganda. While clerics targeted the French National Assembly as the clear enemy during the War against the Convention, the entire French nation became the enemy during the War of Independence. The Spanish clergy portrayed the French as capable of all forms of evil: “those unnatural men have made, make at present and will make without doubt in the future all manner of evil, perfidy and treason.”²⁴ Reducing the enemy to the status of non-human, one priest denounced France as a nation “moving in a few years from Christian to Atheist, from civil to barbarous, from human to fierce and bloodthirsty.”²⁵ Tomás de Salas argued that “all Spaniards abhor the French.”²⁶ The effect of the new ideology of nationalism on the war against the French was recognized by clergy of the time. For example, Molle saw that the war had taken shape in an entirely different manner than past conflicts:

The war in which the Nation is engaged is not one of those we are accustomed to seeing ordinarily between Princes. They have their struggles without for the most part consulting the interest of the people, and they are guided by obscure politics and cannot count on more troops or auxiliaries than their strength allows them. The luck of these wars is delivered by fortune and by the good or bad calculations of the Cabinet. But at present that which the Peninsula is enduring is national war, the nation will

²⁴ Manuel María Rodríguez y Romero, *Sermón Moral en que se reconviene a Sevilla* (Sevilla, 1808), in C.D.F., vol. 16, sig. 32, 33.

²⁵ Fr. Francisco Alvarado, *Sermón del glorioso martir e inquisidor San Pedro de Arbues, predicado en la aniversario solemidad que le consagra el Santo Tribunal de la Inquisición de Sevilla, en el Real Convento de San Pablo* (1809), in C.D.F., vol. 43, sig. 252, 6.

²⁶ Fr. Tomás de Salas, *Carta Primera: El Verdadero Patriotismo Demostrado por el evangelio escritas por el P. Fr. Tomás de Salas*, in *Cartas Patrióticas* (Sevilla, 1809), in C.D.F., vol. 61, sig. 285, 7.

persevere in mass as long as is necessary until the destruction of the monster it detests.²⁷

The impact of nationalism had dramatically changed war between states. An entire people fought against an enemy nation, and dehumanized the other through a discourse which denigrated all members of an oppositional national community.

Spanish nationalist discourses during the French occupation epitomize the tensions between older notions of power and government and the new ideology of the sovereignty of the people. Impacted by the French Revolution and the ideology of liberalism, patriotism had transitioned from an essentially traditional hierarchical conception, infused with religious imagery and language, into nationalist discourses that served as a mobilizing rhetoric. Whether conceived of in terms of civic or ethnic nationalism, the nation emerged as a “continually contested terrain.”²⁸ Ecclesiastics attempted to raise battlefield morale and encourage enlistment through the political language of Spanish nationalism. They directed their sermons and instruction to the people of Spain, referring to the faithful in religious—but more importantly, in national—terms. Newspaper editors and politicians similarly addressed their audiences in the singular, as *el Pueblo Español*. The prominence of Spanish nationalist discourses during the war does not imply an interpretation of unanimous resistance or common sentiment—an entire nation mobilized as one to fight against the enemy. Yet it attests to the importance of the fact that nationalists shared a rhetorical commitment to *el Pueblo Español* as the embodiment of the nation united through the bonds of the Catholic church.

²⁷ Molle, *Efectos de la lealtad y del valor heroyco de los Españoles*.

²⁸ Wilson, *The Island Race*, 4.