

Latin American Bureaucracy
and the State Building Process
(1780-1860)

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Edited by

Juan Carlos Garavaglia and Juan Pro Ruiz

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P U B L I S H I N G

Latin American Bureaucracy and the State Building Process (1780-1860),
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PROLOGUE

This book is part of the research project *State Building in Latin America*, funded by an Advanced Grant from the European Research Council, of which it can be considered the second stage. After examining the foundations of the fiscal system in the first five decades of independence at a workshop organized by the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, in April 2009, the results of which were published the following year¹, we embarked on this subsequent stage of our research, the study of certain fundamental aspects of the history of bureaucracy and public administration from the end of the colonial period until the 1860s and 1870s. A second workshop, held at San Martín University in Buenos Aires in August 2010, afforded us the opportunity to start raising some of the issues that we now present in this book. Finally a third workshop, “America and Eurasia: Serve the Power(s), serve the State,” also held at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, in March 2011, allowed us to considerably broaden our perspectives, comparing Eurasian experiences with those of the Americas. This book is the result of this newly expanded research.

It is commonly believed that, in the case of Latin America, the relationship between war, the financing thereof and bureaucracy was quite weak² and thus that this conjunction had little bearing on the state-building process. However, in analyzing the numbers and the specific national cases of the unfolding of this process in Latin America, as we have done with regard to war in a recent publication³, and as we do in this book with regard to bureaucracy, we find an overall picture that is rather more complex. While almost all the cases we examine herein indicate a lack of significant growth of bureaucracies as a whole over the period 1810–1865, the areas related to accounting and finance are, as a rule, an exception to this apparent inertia, and above all it would be incorrect to say that there were no structural changes within this ambit, given the regulatory innovations aimed at “rationalizing” the work of these state servants to promote more effective revenue extraction. We also find cases in which a state agency (such as the tobacco monopoly in Costa Rica or the postal monopoly in Colombia) served as a structural “model” in the sphere of state finances. In any event, it cannot be said in an unqualified way that, in general, the relationship between war, the finance to sustain it and the

bureaucracy to obtain such resources was absent from the state-building process in Latin America. Several of the studies herein provide data in this sense.

Finally, we note that all of our studies on the issue of state servants are based on analysis of contemporaneous primary and secondary Latin American sources, and combine these with the equally essential theoretical discussion of the different classic European models of state building, which serve as a “mirror.” For a historian, to speak of theoretical models without documentary support is as great an offense as doing the opposite, that is, drawing on bare source materials. This challenge of treading the thin line of our *métier* as historians, of perpetuating this tension between the Scylla of theory and the Charybdis of document, is something we have sought to sustain throughout our work.

Juan Carlos Garavaglia and Juan Pro Ruiz
Paris/Barcelona/Madrid,
January 2013

Notes

¹ Garavaglia, J. C. 2010. *Illes i Imperis*, 13.

² Centeno, M.A. 2002. *Blood and Debt. War and the Nation-State in Latin America*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

³ Garavaglia, J. C., J. Pro Ruiz and E. Zimmermann (Eds.) 2012. *Las fuerzas de guerra en la construcción del Estado: América Latina, siglo XIX*. Prohistoria Ediciones: Rosario.

CHAPTER ONE

CONSIDERING THE STATE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF BUREAUCRACY: LESSONS FROM THE LATIN AMERICAN *SATTELZEIT*

JUAN PRO RUIZ

The sweep of the research presented in this volume on the formation of state bureaucracies in several Latin American countries—including Guatemala, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Chile, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay—over the course of the nineteenth century allows us to make certain reflections on the historical significance of this phenomenon. Inherent in this approach is a certain originality, highlighting the intellectual ambition of the research project *State Building in Latin America*.

On the one hand, it uses the historian's method and discourse to contribute arguments that go beyond positive data to the current broad debate in the social sciences surrounding the question of the state. This contribution is an explanation of origins—a genetic vision of modern states that for the first time does not arise from a historical sociology that works with second-hand materials, but from historical research that adds to our knowledge using primary sources.¹

In order to understand this historical starting point of the Latin American states, it is necessary to consider the interim period between the old colonial regime and the new regime, of the independent nations, heralded by revolution, i.e., the *Sattelzeit* (saddle period), an expression coined by Koselleck.²

On the other hand, the project is of special interest because, by focusing on the Latin American sphere, it redresses an ongoing “omission” of the social sciences, whose models have been constructed either from European experiences³ or from comparative studies of European and Asian cases.⁴ Latin America has been little more than an exception, a

“special case,” when it has not been wholly missing from major theoretical concepts of the state. The approach here, then, is to reintegrate an entire continent into the mainstream discussion of the concept of *the state* and its historical formation. It is certainly a challenge to the unwritten conventions of the scientific community to address a key issue such as this from a discipline, and focusing on territories, heretofore condemned to the margins of the social sciences.

To this is added one specific approach of the many admitted by the *objectified state*; thus, given the truly global scope of the phenomenon, a case study is, or multiple case studies are, required to keep research within manageable dimensions.

Why a global object? Why a specific approach?

A Specific Approach to a Global Object

The process of nation-state building is a salient feature that is constant throughout modernity, from the revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the virtual worldwide ubiquity of the nation-state formula in the latter half of the twentieth century. Discrete in its origins, as seen from the scarce financial and human resources and penetration of institutions in the territory, the process led to increasingly firm control over societies and resources: states acquired increased powers, hired civil servants in greater numbers and bolstered their capacity to recruit personnel, to raise revenue, to increase their true potential to impose their will by legal means, to govern territories without negotiating with local intermediaries, etc. This happened while the formula of the nation-state, emerging from Western revolutions, spread, through imperialism, to other cultural areas of the world and emerged as the standard formula for the political and administrative organization of human populations in the period of decolonization.

Needless to say, the long and complex process by which the state formula eventually triumphed over alternative configurations of power—empires, city-states, tribal confederations, networks of notables—had consequences for all spheres of social life. Far from being merely an institutional phenomenon, the formation of states redefined economic systems; affected the distribution of power; determined new social alignments and categories; dictated new rules regarding relationships; impressed new cultural realities on the minds of people; transformed languages and altered spaces and their perception. It was, in this sense, a global phenomenon, implicit in all of the histories of recent centuries that we can reconstruct. Nation-state building is, therefore, a true paradigm of

the interpretation of modern history, to which all the key processes of change in recent centuries are linked and in which such processes can be observed while providing them with meaning.

Thus the state is a global phenomenon: a phenomenon that, from the perspective of the historian, is the result of state building. And as a global phenomenon it can only be grasped by means of a process of simplification to break down the big (huge—in fact incomprehensible) problem into several smaller ones. This requires a specific approach to the problem. There are several possible approaches, and indeed, the research programme of the *State Building in Latin America* project encompasses a number of them in a series of case studies. Here the researchers take one of these approaches to the historic problem of state building—bureaucracy: the human resources at the disposal of rulers to exercise power and make it effective in governing the territory.

The focus on bureaucracy requires, as a first condition, a correct understanding of what the concept of the *state* embraces: to understand that the state is neither a subject nor a social actor; that it cannot be attributed a will of its own without engaging in the sort of personification that belongs to mythical thought; that therefore it makes no sense to speak of the state in terms such as *the state wanted...*, *the state was concerned about...* or *the state succeeded in...* Only at a metaphorical level, with poetic licence, are such anthropomorphic images admissible. Rather than being an actor, the state is a space in which the different social actors converge—a *field* in which the power relations among all other *social fields* are clarified, to use Bourdieu's terminology.⁵ This immateriality of the state implies a practical problem for historians, since it impedes the understanding of processes which we have dubbed—also metaphorically—*building, growth, development, consolidation* or *crisis* of the state. How does one measure the growth of a force field devoid of material content?

Taking bureaucracy as a material support of the state and, therefore, as an indication of its processes of growth, consolidation or crisis, is an approach to the problem that can be taken legitimately without betraying its essential meaning. This does not confuse the state with the bureaucracy of the state: it does not identify the abstraction of power with its servants. But it provides an initial idea of the scope of the configuration of state power and its development over time by counting the people who work for the state, classifying them, examining how they are organized and observing their behaviour. This enables us not only to think about the dynamics of the state and its historical processes, but also to compare different spaces—to contrast one national experience with another in order to define causal relationships more precisely.

The study of public bureaucracies as a reliable indicator of state-building processes undoubtedly has different degrees of relevance depending on the specific historical context that it addresses. However, they remain, in every possible context, a necessary element for the understanding of the state. In the Anglosphere, more importance should perhaps be given to justice as a basic skeleton around which the state is built; while in continental Europe it was the administration that guided the process, rendering justice a part of bureaucracy like any other, subject to administrative logic (from which came the expression *administration of justice*). Between a model based on the protection of rights by judges and one based on the uniform application of laws by a hierarchical administration from the centre outwards, there is an entire range of conceivable combinations and possibilities. Within the evident diversity of national or even provincial configurations, Latin America most likely lies closer to the administrative model of Bonapartist imprint that is typical of continental Europe. If so, the emphasis on the birth and development of public bureaucracies is more than justified, since this was the foundation on which the respective incipient nation-states were built.

Emphasis on Bureaucracy

The relevance of the development of bureaucracies is undeniable, because it constitutes the very realization of the revolutionary project. National sovereignty, the division of power and an elected parliament, which are the maximum expressions of the political change that led to modernity, would mean nothing without the deployment of an effective public administration able to implement on the ground acts of parliament and the executive decisions of the government of the nation. The revolutions of the period of independence involved a transition from monarchies, which sought to maintain the traditional order and resolved disputes through courts of justice, to governments charged with transforming the social reality, promoting the economic development of the territory and meeting goals related to the happiness of citizens and the glory of the nation. This is the state, properly speaking, and it can work only if the government has a compliant bureaucracy that ensures that its dictates are complied with across the country.

The importance of bureaucracy, however, went unnoticed during the entire formative period of nation-states, except where it was treated as a problem—a scourge afflicting society and politics. The ever-conservative *Real Academia* (Spanish Royal Academy) did not include the term *burocracia*, theretofore considered to be a pure Gallicism, until the

thirteenth edition of its dictionary in the late nineteenth century; even then it was to give this word a single pejorative meaning: “*influencia excesiva de los empleados públicos en los negocios del estado.*”⁶ This judgmental definition was not amended with another, more descriptive one until the supplement to the following edition, of 1914, which added that *burocracia* could also refer to the “*clase social que forman los empleados públicos.*”⁷

It should be borne in mind that the new words that entered Castilian and Latin American Spanish over the course of the nineteenth century as a result of the changes we associate with modernity were not generally accepted by the Academy until the last few years of that century, by which time they were already in common usage and had lost much of the political and innovative charge that they had held when they first appeared perhaps fifty, sixty or a hundred years earlier; thus we see how the Academy, a parastatal institution under the patronage of the Spanish Crown, understood its mission as one of fixing and cleaning up the language.

When, in an advanced stage of building of the nation-states (1899-1914), scholars decided to accept the idea of *bureaucracy* as an identifiable human group in society composed of public employees, certainly this was already an incontrovertible fact, the product of developments which had occurred in previous centuries. The added nuance of the fear that these public servants might wield political influence was, equally, the recognition of all that earlier critical literature denouncing *empleomanía*, or state job fever, which was prominent in the mid-nineteenth century. The dictionary of the *Real Academia* acted as a posteriori testament to a well-established lexicon (perhaps even at times introducing words that already had fallen out of use or were on the verge of doing so), and not as an indicator abreast of linguistic innovation, let alone as an instrument to expand the possibilities of the language.

For the historian, *bureaucracy* has two meanings; these do not coincide strictly with those of the *Academia*. It indicates the group of people who are the employees of the state, characterized by numbers, training, mentality and economic and social conditions; and also—and this the *Academia* did not include until the twenty-first century—the form of organizing rationally these human resources so that they might constitute an institutionalized administration.⁸ A *bureaucracy*, then, would not be just a group of people who apply a certain degree of professionalism to their tasks, but a structure into which such persons are integrated: a form of hierarchical organization that secures the centre of all power of decision, rendering the rest of the organization a chain of command designed to implement and enforce the decisions of the centre.

We find signs of this way of organizing human resources in the service of power from the time of the ancient empires, especially, with regard to the West, in Rome; we see them pass from the Roman Empire to the Catholic Church, the epitome of an efficient bureaucracy; they are reproduced in the monarchies of the Modern Age, at the service of the—allegedly absolute—power of the prince; and they become the key instrument with which nation-states emerging from revolution sought to realize the principle of national sovereignty and to transform society by means of government action. At one point, the success of this form of organization, evident in the rise of state power, became so great that the bureaucratic formula spread to large companies, as Max Weber has pointed out.⁹

But this abstract path of the concept of *bureaucracy*, which relates it to an ideal form of organizing rationally the human resources available for achieving political objectives, takes us away from the specific paths of the bureaucratic phenomenon during the historical period of formation of nation-states, which for Latin America we should situate between roughly 1810 and 1870. Instead of measuring reality by its abundance of exceptions and deviations with respect to the norm or the *ideal type* of a completely rational bureaucracy, our historical research starts with the reconstruction of the bureaucracies actually existing in the countries studied, in order to deduce certain common features that might form a model. In this way, a number of features have been found which characterize the incipient bureaucracies of the nation-states under construction in Latin America in the period of the nineteenth century from the crisis of the Spanish monarchy until the 1870s.

Lesser Bureaucracies and Porous States

The first outstanding feature is the scarcity of human resources available to these embryonic states: there are few men, and most of them are employed in more or less regular armed forces; alongside the army and militias, which comprise the bulk of human resources in service of the state, we find poorly developed civil bureaucracies, most of which are engaged in the collection and management of the financial resources necessary to sustain the army and the fiscal bureaucracy itself. Thus from the outset, the public finance administration *hacienda* (treasury) was the primitive organism from which subsequent civil bureaucracies developed; and hence we find certain characteristic forms of recruitment and of organization of the civil service born from these fiscal origins (as shown in the work of Pilar López Bejarano on New Granada, Elvira López Taverne

on Chile, and Evangelina de los Ríos on the Argentine province of Santa Fe).

That is also why the features adopted by the Treasury in each nation's initial period of independence determined not only long-term fiscal models, but also models of state determined by a specific type of bureaucratic human resource created and trained within the country's own fiscal structures. However, the reasons why the Treasury Secretariats were the embryos out of which state civil services grew are not simple. Beyond the materialist bias that would suggest that the sections of bureaucracy which dealt with financial resources would thus hold the power to attain a certain hegemony within the public function, we must consider the importance of the technical content of the tasks that Treasury employees carried out. In order to work in the offices of the Treasury, one was required to have certain knowledge of economics, accounting, tax law, financial mathematics and so on, which meant that in this domain a rationale of merit—recruitment according to training and promotion based on ability—superseded the prevailing rationale of personal favour, kinship and patronage-based loyalties. This technical specialization isolated the Treasury from political and social logics, thus making it the prototype of the fully developed bureaucracy; and perhaps for that reason it became a model in turning other ministries and offices of the state into true, effective bureaucratic apparatuses.

The simple view of tiny, almost completely militarized states with small bureaucracies must be qualified in light of a second consideration, which is precisely one of the contributions of this book. A second feature of Latin American states in the first half of the nineteenth century, derived in part from the first, was the importance of human resources other than actual public employees, who could be mobilized in support of the state. In the absence of a sufficient number of real civil servants within the institutions of public administration, governments had another type of human resource to stand in for them: secondary personnel, parallel administrations or *shadow bureaucracies*.¹⁰

In some cases (like that described by Mario Etchechury in his study of the Banda Oriental del Rio de la Plata) it has been shown how states with few fiscal and financial means of their own left the collection of taxes—and thus a fundamental attribute of sovereignty—in the private hands of bankers or traders able to advance the money to meet governments' immediate needs. With this privatization of fiscal functions, the employees of these private financiers became indirect public servants. Similar situations seem to have existed, although to a lesser extent, in Colombia, Ecuador, Central America and Chile (as seen in the studies by Pilar López

Bejarano, Viviana Velasco, Juan Carlos Sarazúa, Pablo Rodríguez Solano and Elvira López Taverne respectively).

In other cases (such as that of the *Colegio de la Unión del Sud* in Buenos Aires, studied by Rodolfo González Lebrero) we find public institutions only partially integrated into the state, insofar as they were largely self-financing and acted with a large measure of autonomy. Juan Carlos Garavaglia (on Buenos Aires) and Wilma Peres Costa and Andrea Slemian (on Brazil) have drawn attention to the figure of the justice of the peace, also located on the border between public and private (as was the National Guard in Brazil). Elvira López Taverne, writing about Chile in the period 1820-1860, mentions the existence of *pro bono* functionaries, who were not paid salaries but who carried out tasks for the administration at critical periods, and then formed a pool of human resources for the reconstruction of offices upon the return to a certain normalcy.

In addition to these parallel or peripheral bureaucracies, we should add others, such as the Catholic clergy, which were assigned multiple administrative functions (in education, civil registration, population censuses, statistics, tax collection, monitoring of behaviour, etc.), and who were to some degree accountable to the new independent governments, perhaps not as proper bureaucrats, but not as agents of a universal church that was purely an abstraction either.

Here and there we also see larger or smaller numbers of auxiliaries and assistants who figure neither among the ranks of bureaucratic ministry personnel nor in official government budgets, but who in some way served as instruments of government action in the manner of appendages of the administration proper: servants who were not paid out of public funds, or who were paid out of funds that were not recorded in the state accounts, and about whom we know almost nothing. They comprised an obscure sub-world of the state, performing, nonetheless, much of the work of state building and of creating the popular image of what exactly was meant by *the state*.

All of these appendages of state bureaucracy complicate the task of the researcher, who finds in them an added difficulty in measuring accurately the size of the Latin American states in the first half of the nineteenth century. They require a special effort of terminological precision, defining what is meant by *state bureaucrat* in the strictest sense, because the concept requires not so much a dictionary definition as a historical problematization to avoid the anachronism of calculating their numbers and including them in long-term international comparative contexts. For each country and for each historical moment, one must ask just what a given post involved, taking into consideration the legislative framework

that defined it. How we define the concept of bureaucrat will depend in large part on the conclusions that we draw from the evolution of their numbers with regard to the state-building process, because in order to interpret what those numbers mean, it is essential to consider their degree of professionalization, integration and permanence in the bureaucratic organization.

Clearly, we do not give the same weight to a professional occupying a permanent position as we do to an unskilled labourer or porter hired and fired summarily; to a bureaucracy that grows in terms of postmen as to one that grows in terms of teachers, soldiers or revenue clerks; to a number of paid bureaucrats as to an equal number of unpaid or low-paid employees; to a bureaucracy of full-time civil servants as to one of part-time employees whose primary means of support is private enterprise; or, finally, to the lifelong bureaucrat pursuing a career in administration, adding merits and promotions to his service record, as to the occasional employee who fulfils public duties sporadically. Thus the need for a terminological scale to distinguish real *bureaucrats* (paid, professional, permanent, integrated into a chain of command, subject to specific rules, dedicated to an administrative career) from *public employees* in a wider sense, who were paid for their work in the service of the administration but did not share all the features of the ideal type; and among these mere *servants of the state*, in the loosest sense of the term, we might include this entire large and diverse workforce that performed tasks for the state but whose links to it were much more tenuous.

Nonetheless, the most important thing is not this precision of terminology, a routine taxonomic task that is part of the historian's job, but rather to note the existence during the formative stages of the nation-state—in the nineteenth century—of these supplementary networks of indirect servants of the state who, while in a position to promote their private interests to the detriment of their public duties, also enabled state action to reach areas from which it would otherwise have remained absent until much later (probably until the next century, when the state gained the capacity to reach them through administrative means of its own). Paraphrasing Alberdi, this was the *possible bureaucracy* the Latin American states could rely on while they awaited the conditions for a *true bureaucracy* to arise.¹¹

The third feature of the bureaucracies studied here is related to the previous two, since it refers to the thin line separating them from civil society. We barely find in them the classical concept of the state as a space segregated from, and operating according to, logics different to those of society, a concept found in both Marx and Weber. It's true that we are

talking about embryonic states that took more than half a century to advance beyond that early formative stage marked by the hegemony of the military, by the instability of their institutions and by the narrowness of civil bureaucracy; perhaps this affirmation would need to be qualified if we sought to apply it to Latin America in the period which began after the 1870s.

But in the previous period, that which concerns us here, we certainly find porous states highly susceptible to the penetration of the logics present in the social fabric. We find in such states a civil service enmeshed in kinship and client networks, one which displays loyalty to those ties equal to, or greater than, its loyalty to the hierarchical superiors from whom, in theory, it receives its orders as part of the public administration.

The case studies which comprise this book portray a political culture shaped by basic assumptions so widely shared that it was unnecessary to formulate them explicitly; rather they were implicit in the discourse, and especially in the practices of the actors. These shared assumptions, which are easily overlooked, are essential to an understanding of the logic of action of the different actors involved in bureaucracies during the formative period of these nation-states. Among them there prevailed, of course, the assumption that in order to exercise political power one needed a network of loyal people to place in administrative positions so that, to a man of the state, patronage networks were an asset rather than (as moral judgment ignorant of the political culture of the time might suppose) a burden. In the same sense, it was perfectly acceptable for public employees to recommend the relevant merits of their relatives in their service records and the petitions for jobs, promotions or reassignments that they presented to their superiors.

The public and private spheres remained a continuum with blurred edges. Standard practice sanctioned the use of state posts and resources for private purposes, without loss of legitimacy for the state. Conduct which in later periods would be deemed corrupt might at that time be considered within the bounds of honesty: perhaps due to the legacy of the *Ancien Régime*, the centuries of colonization when the buying of posts and honours (which Francisco Andújar deals with extensively in his work) was common practice.

In a certain sense, the interpermeation between state and society goes hand in hand with the initial narrowness of civil bureaucracy, the lack of administrative resources and the use of parabureaucracies as implied in the enlisting of the help of the church or private financiers. But beyond this evident consequence of the lack of means, what we find in most nineteenth-century states is the desire to transfer the logics of hierarchy

and action present in society as a whole to the public space, which means respect for the ordinary attributes of social power, for the established essential loyalties of the private sphere, and for the “natural” power of local elites and their position as intermediaries.

Despite all the above-mentioned limitations, and despite how far the reality of those incipient Latin American states was from the standard-types established by social scientists from other parts of the world in light of subsequent experiences, we are talking about genuine states that embodied revolutionary changes with respect to the practices of colonial institutions. In some aspects it could even be said that statehood manifested itself more purely than it did at any later time, to the extent that the utopian expectations of the revolutionary project had not yet been frustrated and thus no compromise with reality had been negotiated.

The work of Alejandro Rabinovitch, for example, a micro-case study of Río de la Plata in the period 1810-1830, shows the military administration as a paradigm of the state as the disciplining and guiding hand of society, especially of rural society. While the study shows the limitations of this ability to transform society around a moral order (limitations we assume to be even more difficult to overcome in other areas where there was neither the immediate threat of force nor any regulatory reference as strict as a military code), it also shows that the elites of the time still harboured hopes of re-educating the vast rural Latin American population, bringing it into structures such as a regular army. The moment is unique, because later that hope was seen to be frustrated, the task was held to be impossible and it was decided to import civilization directly from Europe through massive immigration, relieving the state project of that initial educational mission.¹²

Considering Nineteenth-Century States as Nineteenth-Century States

All of this obliges us to consider the nineteenth-century Latin American states as nineteenth-century Latin American states, with their specific historical features, rather than as ideal types seen from a European perspective by social scientists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Without doubt one of the principal features of nineteenth-century states—clearly visible in Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula—was that combination of a core of a civil bureaucracy, much smaller than the armed forces, and a pre-state periphery comprising instruments which, without actually belonging to the state bureaucracy, enabled that core to broaden the scope of its action. In some countries we find this

quasi-state periphery in the merchants and financiers who assumed some aspects of revenue collection; in others, in semi-public institutions that provided essential services with one foot in the state and the other outside it; and in all of them, personal and kinship networks that ensured the exercise and reproduction of power, such as those represented by the dynasties of local and provincial bureaucrats and elites.

The interpermeation of state and society becomes evident from these considerations and from any examination of nineteenth-century states based on primary sources: social power in all its forms is reflected in the state in all its forms, including the shape of bureaucracy. This feature is seen in all of the countries studied here, and probably also in others in Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula. We might even sustain the hypothesis that this high degree of embedding of society in the state characterizes the Iberian and Latin American spheres on both sides of the Atlantic, and is more marked in this sphere than in other European countries. But this is a simple hypothesis yet to be demonstrated, and may well result from differences in the observers' perspectives due to different research traditions. In any event, the differences would not be qualitative but rather a matter of degree, where the Latin American states represent extreme cases of a tendency common to all nation-states of the time, whose practices of power had little to do with the theory proclaimed in their constitutions.

On the other hand, features such as those we have noted for the Latin American states in the first half of the nineteenth century (small bureaucracies, militarization, subordination to the social logics of power) must be seen in the context of certain objective conditions of the period. It is not clear that at the time the human resources necessary to build *any* sort of state were available. Certain models of bureaucracy would have required more human resources with a higher level of technical training than actually existed in that place and time, and therefore such models were discarded from the outset. The choice of having a small number of civil bureaucrats, entrusting the military with administrative tasks or using the patronage networks of elites to carry state action to the furthest corners of the territory can be seen as political decisions; however they must be placed in the context of the availability of human resources in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies, considering in each case whether or not the means to build a different type of bureaucracy would have existed.

In any event, some caution is due here. We have taken a giant step from conceiving of the state as an actor to conceiving of it as a space—a field of struggle between opposing forces. But this shift in perspective, in which historians do little more than follow the boldest thinkers in the

political and social sciences, requires one more step: from conceiving of the state as a structure to conceiving of it as a process; thus as a changing rather than—as its Indo-European linguistic root (*sta-*, to stand) would suggest—a static thing.

The state is a process, and the Latin American states of the nineteenth century all constitute an early, formative stage in their respective national processes of state building. Many of the phenomena that can be observed in the initial stages of the process—let's say the first half of the nineteenth-century covered here—underwent gradual change, such that the same phenomena would not manifest themselves in the same way if we shifted the focus to the latter half of the nineteenth century, much less the first half of the twentieth century or later. Thus each categorical statement about the state will be false if it is not framed within a certain time and space to give it validity. This is especially true for phenomena such as those considered here, which essentially were in flux: the level of development and professionalization of the civil bureaucracy of the state; the consequent need to depend on networks of “external” or parastatal partners to carry out state action; the degree of the public administration's involvement with social powers; the weight of the civil bureaucracy in relation to the military and police forces, etc. In all of these aspects, our research on the first half of the nineteenth century has enabled us to break with the prevailing anachronism in which the term *state* is assumed to refer to realities—or mental constructs—like those which this concept reflected in the twentieth century. This is owing to mere nominalism: the nineteenth-century states were called *states*, but they were something else. We will not fall into the opposite anachronism by assuming that the features found in those embryos of state in the first half of the nineteenth century enlighten us as to the true essence of the *Latin American state* in the abstract.

Additionally, the studies presented herein show clearly how diverse the specific historical processes of Latin American state building were. They were also processes to which we cannot always attribute conscious intent following a planned course. Beyond phenomena attributable to the projects of particular political groups and actors, it is easy to find many other phenomena which resulted from struggles between different projects and forces, and which did not satisfy the aims of any of the actors; and which historians should not attribute *a posteriori* to wilful actions which never held any such aims or which lacked the strength to impose them unilaterally.

The processes of change to which we have been referring varied from country to country and were the outcomes of different combinations of

forces, projects and factors for each one; but, above all, each followed its own historical pace, in many cases with periods of stagnation, advances and reversals. Having discarded from the outset the possibility of a single model of the Latin American state and any generic concept of a predetermined plan to achieve the actual states that ultimately evolved, we now also discard any notion of some (nonexistent) linear progress towards statehood.

Continuities and Ruptures

The state, understood as a process, is determined by the rhythms of historical change. In this sense, the balance of rupture and continuity, which has been one of the classical debates of historiography in its effort to understand what revolution was and how far we have come since the pre-revolutionary world, can be approached from a fresh perspective such as that of the state-building process; and undoubtedly the study of bureaucracy is an interesting avenue to go down in the attempt to resolve the question.

To begin with, and solely in terms of the people who served them, the newly independent states showed certain features which clearly differentiated them from the previous *Reinos de Indias**. The loss of bureaucratic human resources following independence (which is very clear in Pilar López Bejarano's work on Nueva Granada, for example) seems to have been a fairly widespread phenomenon, at least in the territories of the old Spanish monarchy—mainland Spain included. To the extent that subsequently an administration needed to be built virtually from scratch, the first impression is that the building of the new nation-states owed very little to the legacy of the Spanish monarchy. However, there are significant exceptions—complete apparatuses that survived the revolutionary period intact, such as the Tobacco Monopoly in Costa Rica (which Pablo Rodríguez Solano addresses in his study). Wilma Peres Costa and Andréa Slemian also maintain in their study that the administration of the Brazilian Empire in the early decades of the nineteenth century was something new: neither a continuation of the apparatuses of colonial government nor the result of a transplant from Portugal.

The states we find after independence were much more militarized than their colonial forebears, some of which had no armed forces worthy of the name. Undoubtedly, the crisis of the traditional mechanisms of symbolic domination—eroded in the final years of the *Ancien Régime* and all but destroyed in the process of independence, war and revolution—translated into the immediate need to invest in material means of

domination to maintain order. This gave the nascent states the appearance of armies, with bureaucracies reduced to the bare minimum necessary to sustain and arm them.

From this perspective, it is imperative to ask how long it took to overcome this critical situation. The wars of independence were themselves followed by other political, civil and border conflicts, prolonging militarization—but until when? Certain significant signs of increased spending on education appeared in the latter half of the nineteenth century, but not before then. Undoubtedly, the pace and stages were different in each country, but in all of them ultimately emerged forms of symbolic domination strong enough to supplant physical force as a means of asserting state power. These mechanisms of symbolic violence were, as we know, improvised from the early days of independence; but it would take time for states to give them the human and financial resources they would need to supersede the early hegemony of the military.

In contrast to these points of rupture, the records on Latin American bureaucracies show a point of continuity: families and individuals who remained in public service through the clear rupture implied by independence, making a direct transition from employees of the Spanish monarchy to bureaucrats within the new national governments, if not within the lower ranks of their political classes. Since we do not know how many, in relative terms, remained in their posts and how many did not, it is impossible to determine from the quantitative point of view whether or not these cases of continuity made bureaucracy the main factor of stability through the Latin American *Sattelzeit*. But the very presence of these ties binding the new nations to their colonial past would seem to invalidate any simple idea of revolutionary change as an absolute, complete inversion or rupture.

However, the existence of such people and families, who preserved social status gained through the holding of administrative posts despite revolution, does not in itself mean that bureaucracy was the principal mechanism of conservatism, able to slow the forces of change arising from political power or the demands of society. It does not mean this, first of all because other factors of continuity that were resistant to rapid change came into play, such as geographic and geopolitical contexts and economic and social structures, cultures and mentalities. In short, the immediate possibilities of profound change were countered by the inertia common to all spheres not directly dependent on, and thus beyond the reach of, immediate government action.

Secondly, the continuity of bureaucratic human resources does not mean that the bureaucracy will act conservatively, no matter how much the

anti-state bias implicit in the above-cited dictionary definitions might give us that impression. To begin with, the same staff can act as the executors of different policies in the context of a transformed administrative structure, especially if the latter secures more direct obedience to the dictates of political power as it changes hands.

The administration may act as a stabilizing factor or as an instrument of transformation of social, economic or cultural realities. Indeed, the changes implemented through its actions tend to have a more profound and irreversible impact than those derived from any merely political disposition of the government. What is clear is the discrepancy between the time spans in which the government and the administration act: the former acts in the short term; the latter at least in the medium and perhaps in the long term. Hence the frequency of historical situations in which a political power considers the administration it has inherited unfit to attain its immediate goals, and thus brands it anachronistic, disloyal or responsible for the failure of reforms. This charge is found uncontested in many of the discourses from the period, which historians have used as sources, because politicians propagandize while bureaucracy does not.

With regard to this matter of continuity of colonial human resources in the newly independent states of Latin America, by comparing the case studies herein we find that the break was most pronounced in Río de la Plata and Chile, and least pronounced in Central America. This leads us to broach further questions which, beyond the study of the bureaucracies themselves, call for a fresh interpretation of the set of national histories from the perspective of the paradigm of state building. We should first ask ourselves which proved more efficient in the long term: the bureaucracies inherited from the colonial state or those created from scratch, a question to which we do not yet have an answer. Then we might ask ourselves if this initial choice of whether or not to maintain the bureaucracies of the *Ancien Régime* led to different policy lines in the early period of independence—more conservative in some countries and more revolutionary in others.

After all, we do not know what it was that these crown officials who went on to serve the new American nations conserved: the political values of the *Ancien Régime*? Loyalty to the old metropolis? Localism? Catholicism? The traditional administrative style? The weight of jurisdiction in government? Or simply their personal interests or those of the groups or networks to which they belonged? Depending on how we answer this question, the particular paths of continuity of the bureaucracies of the early Latin American states will acquire one meaning or another.

Alongside continuity we find, of course, change: to a greater or lesser extent, change abounded in the bureaucracies of each of the countries, at a time of upheaval when few things remained unaltered. But, as with the continuities, the changes are difficult to interpret, because their significance is not univocal. From 1810, Latin America was subject to three very different forces of change which, from a broad perspective, appear to be intertwined; thus it is important to establish to which of the three main forces each of the changes mentioned here is due. The first force of change is the break with the Spanish or Portuguese monarchies and thus the move from being part of a world empire to constituting a nation-state of more moderate size. We must distinguish this from revolution, a second force of change which prompted the reorganization of government and administration inspired by new principles that generically we might term *liberal* or *republican*.

These two forces of change are easy to distinguish analytically, although in the actual course of historical events they were closely interrelated and operated in both the Iberian Peninsula and the former American colonies of the Spanish and Portuguese monarchies, albeit each with its own chronology and distinct features. Spain and Portugal were, in this regard, just two other realms of the historical monarchies that in the nineteenth century began their transformation into nation-states within a delimited territory; or, if you like, just two of the colonies that severed themselves from the Spanish and Portuguese monarchies and began independent lives following the crisis of 1808-1810.

In contrast, the third force of change in this period is peculiar to the Latin American nations: the transfer of the political centre from Madrid or Lisbon to the capital of each of the newly independent states, with all that this move implied in terms of the reconstitution of power, its networks and its social and territorial logics. While the Spanish and Portuguese states of the nineteenth century inherited the capitals of the respective monarchies of Madrid and Lisbon, in Latin America independence was accompanied by a relocation of the ultimate centre of power to a city much closer to home, theretofore the seat of a viceroyalty, an *audiencia**, a provincial government or a general captaincy. The sort of change brought about by this sudden proximity to the centre of power in America clearly did not occur in the Iberian Peninsula.

By assigning the changes seen in the bureaucracies of *Sattelzeit* Latin America to one force or another, exploiting fully the possibilities of comparative history, we can attribute to each effect its most probable cause, ruling out, for example, that independence itself (the gaining of sovereignty free from the remote rule of Lisbon or Madrid) might be the

cause of the changes that also took place in the bureaucracies of Portugal or Spain at around the same time. The explanation of those changes, which occurred on both sides of the Atlantic, of course, leads us back to the other two main operative causes: revolution and reduction in scale.

Undoubtedly, continuity played out differently at different levels of government, from local to national. The work of Evangelina de los Ríos on the province of Santa Fe in the latter half of the nineteenth century shows how we might approach the study of state bureaucracies at another, sub-state scale—provincial in this case—where sophisticated public bureaucracies also existed. The balance of power established after independence among the three territorial levels of public administration—local, provincial and national—varied widely across the former Spanish and Portuguese territories in America. There were differences in their respective shares of tax revenues, the administrative functions they fulfilled and the political autonomy and authority of the institutions on one level with respect to the others. And yet, only the structure combining all three levels can be termed the *state*.

Any study of the development of the state bureaucracy of a Latin American country will be of limited validity if based solely on budget figures and numbers of employees in the central (national) administration, and ignoring the state's resources and capacity for action through its provincial and municipal agencies. Because federalism predominated in America, as opposed to the triumph of unitarism in peninsular Spain and Portugal in the same period, we cannot skate over the reality of the provincial states; these are the subject of our monographic studies and are included in some studies of national administrations in order to give a broader picture.

However, despite the strength of localism throughout Latin America—localism that was expressed strongly when the crisis of the Spanish and Portuguese monarchies weakened subordination to the higher levels of power and strengthened primordial loyalties—few of the studies contemplate the municipal level in their overall analyses. Pablo Rodríguez Solano and Juan Carlos Sarazúa, who deal with Central America, and Viviana Velasco, writing about Ecuador, show clearly the vitality of local identities in the period of independence, and the role of local power in the early stages of state building, when it seems that a lack of rootedness and resources of their own rendered all of the structures built above the municipal level largely inoperative. But this phenomenon of localism was not limited to Central America, or even to the former American possession of the Iberian monarchies; and it highlights the importance of including