Building Nineteenth-Century
Latin America
Re-Rooted Cultures, Identities, and Nations

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Toikove Ñane Retã!

Republican Nationalism at the Battlefield Crossings of Print and Speech in Wartime Paraguay, 1867–1868

Michael Kenneth Huner

By the early months of 1867, writing was a difficult task in the Paraguayan encampment of Paso Pucú. The Brazilian warships that blockaded the Río Paraguay, the single viable trade artery in a landlocked country, exacerbated the privations of warfare. Paper and ink, among many other things imported, were scarce. The Paraguayan army only a year before had turned this sparse, dusty elevation along a grove of orange trees into a bustling military headquarters. It now had the appearance of a small town. The straw houses that lodged Paraguayan army commanders formed characteristic urban blocks, and a web of telegraph wires converged upon the village, spreading throughout the Paraguayan earthworks. Although it lay in an isolated swampland, Paso Pucú was now a center of administrative control. Writing was a logistical and ideological necessity. With the supply shortages, the Paraguayans took to rationing and innovation. Military officers penned their correspondence in preciously small handwriting on reused parchment. Meanwhile, technicians manufactured paper from the fibers of one native plant and extracted ink from another. A printing press at the encampment used these materials to continue to publish military orders, political proclamations, and even a newspaper.[1]

Paso Pucú resembled a curious *lettered city*.[2] This idea, first developed by Angel Rama, recalls the urban centers of administrative and judicial power that were pillars of rule in the colonial empires of Latin America, forged through assiduous control of the written word. Living in prominent towns and cities, cadres of lettered men and sometimes women—clerics, nuns, notaries, lawyers, and poets—had manipulated the pens that inked the essence of social and political power in illiterate societies. They produced the legal scripture for wills and testaments declared, property deeds

consolidated, lawsuits filed, testimonies given, judicial rulings issued, and government proclamations decreed.[3] Later, in the heady days of the post-colonial world, with independent countries now strewn from shattered empires, lettered officials preserved the scripted elements of state power and even further reconstituted them with printing presses and upstart newspapers, often operating in far less-formal settings than old provincial capitals. In this regard, the Paraguayan encampment at Paso Pucú featured the typical concentration of political authority in an urban landscape where lettered bureaucrats exploited the technology of writing to exercise their power of the state. It was indeed a rustic military headquarters whose lettered officials nonetheless included scribes who fought as soldiers, rough-speaking military officers who served as judges, and priests freshly ordained in the trenches. Amid gray mud, trenches, and cholera, these lettered officials operated the telegraph lines and worked the printing press. They also conducted meticulously documented tribunals, putting to death alleged traitors and deserters.[4] It was a lettered city on a war-footing in a desperate struggle for national survival.

More than two years before, the Paraguayan president Francisco Solano López had made a bid for geopolitical power in the Río de la Plata region of South America and invaded Brazil and Argentina on the pretext of defending American republicanism against the machinations of the Brazilian monarchy. In 1864, Brazil had invaded Uruguay with the tacit support of the Mitre government in Buenos Aires. López launched his attacks with the alleged purpose of rescuing Paraguay's "sister republic" from imperial domination. Yet in 1865, Argentina, Brazil, and its now client-state Uruguay quickly formed an unlikely alliance to destroy the government of Francisco Solano López. Their forces soon repulsed López's armies and by 1866 began a protracted invasion of their own into Paraguayan territory. Their advance stalled later that year, however, and combat operations settled into the grim stalemate of trench warfare. Deep in the swamplands of southern Paraguay, disease and hunger killed off more soldiers and camp followers than the constant barrage of bombs and bullets. For his part, López realized that his main hope lay in standing firm and wearing down the allies. More than ever, the López government required the active support of the population that it claimed to represent.[5]

The rustic lettered city of Paso Pucú churned out print propaganda that tactically exploited the intersection of written and oral cultures. Its newspaper—a satirical publication with the Guaraní title *Cabichuí*—employed humor, images, and song to rouse the patriotism of the mostly illiterate Paraguayan soldiers and camp followers who occupied the trenches. In so doing, it mobilized the native Paraguayan vernacular Guaraní in

prose and verse. Most Paraguayans could not read or speak Spanish, the traditional language of the state. Yet their lettered compatriots shared with them the common language of Guaraní, and with the print propaganda of *Cabichuí*, lettered agents of the state linked this indigenous American tongue to elite discourse on the nation, going so far as to promote Guaraní as the national language of Paraguay.[6]

The encampment at Paso Pucú featured a fierce battlefront struggle for hearts and minds in Guaraní-language print. The struggle, in fact, infused specific Guaraní words with potent nationalist meaning. More specifically, this effort attempted to reformulate the terms by which regular Paraguayans experienced politics and war. It thus rhetorically fused the defense of home against a foreign invader to the defense of the Paraguayan nation and, by extension, American republicanism against a hated racial Other. The maneuver effectively articulated the grandiose ideals of a patriotic cause in the familiar expressions and crass phrases running current in the trenches. Between 1867 and 1868, Paso Pucú was a lettered city whose officials embraced the oral culture of ordinary Paraguayans and filled their spoken Guaraní with songs of patriotic republicanism and nationhood.

The Print Combatant *Cabichuí*

In the early months of 1867, Francisco Solano López handed the assignment of publishing a popular satirical newspaper to the young lettered agents Juan Crisóstomo Centurión and Natalicio Talavera. Since adolescence, both had been favored pupils of the state and received European-style educations. The government even sent Centurión to study five years in England and France before the conflict.[7] Their worldly education and experience made them fluent in the broad political ideals allegedly at stake in the war. Serving as a sort of "embedded" war correspondent on the front lines for the state newspaper in Asunción, *El semanario*, Talavera wrote an article in March 1867 that mocked the "Brazilian cowards" as the ideological enemy of Paraguay. "The slave of a monarchy," he warned, "can never conquer the citizen of a free republic who defends until death his honor, his flag, and his government."[8] For it was in contrast to the manumitted slaves and black soldiers imperial Brazil used to prosecute the war that Talavera and Centurión were constructing their idea of Paraguayan republican liberty under threat of extinction.

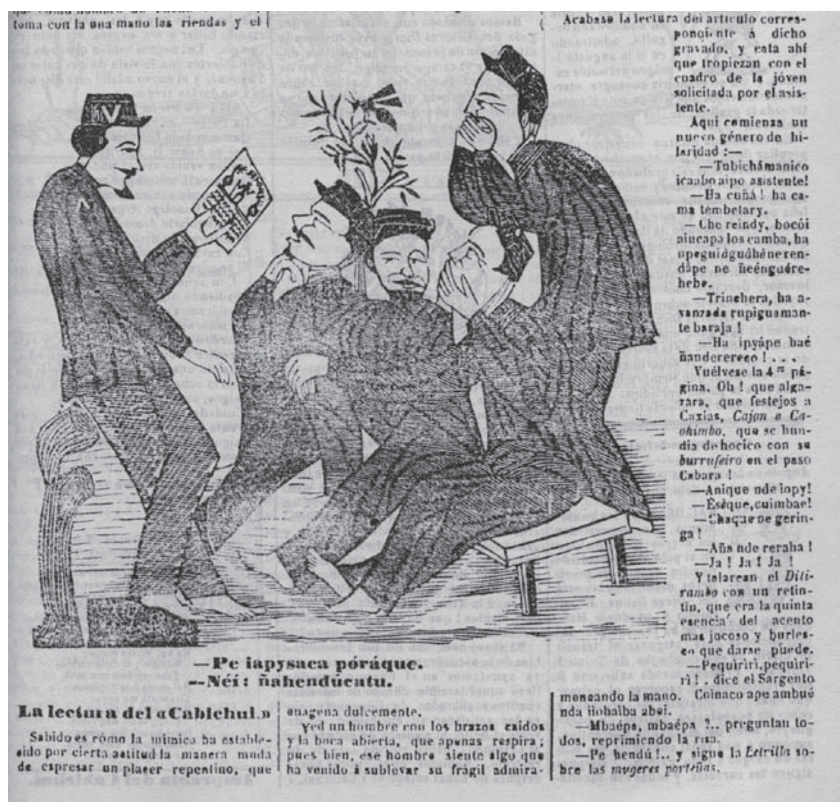
Through the popular satirical newspaper, Talavera and Centurión sought to impress these ideas on their illiterate compatriots in the trenches. To do so, they counted on a number of resources. Talavera was quite skilled

in verse and had a knack for composing rousing *coplas*, popular songs with an important lyrical component and, potentially, a political message.[9] For his part, Centurión had a talent for writing prose enlivened by soldiers' humor. They also relied on a team of amateur soldier-artists to produce lithograph illustrations for the newspaper. Proving handy with old knives and blocks of wood, the artists helped to put images in dialogue with the words on the page.[10] Priests were also available to help write the prose and verse of the newspaper and confirm to their soldier parishioners that their enemies were going to hell. Finally, this unlikely team of combatant publicists drew upon their familiar knowledge of the vernacular to place the printed word at the service of a dynamic culture of spoken Guaraní. They actively sought to make the printed Guaraní of their battlefront newspaper the jokes and songs the soldiers traded in the trenches.

The title of the newspaper proved crucial in this endeavor. Talavera and Centurión decided on the Guaraní word of *Cabichuí* for a black wasp known in Paraguay for its small size and swarming ferocity.[11] The intent was clear. The words of the newspaper were not to remain static but to swarm off of the page, entering the currents of speech. And indeed in the Guaraní prose and verse that filled its pages, *Cabichuí* became the combative printed word personified. He was to be a character in the songs and stories flying along the battlefront, listening, chatting, and passing all the gossip along to the ears of his audience.[12] He was also a fellow soldier, inflicting violence on the enemy with the printed word. One lyric sang in June 1867,

> Cabichuí flew
> through the middle of a bombardment
> and despite it all
> he stung the dirty monkeys.
>
> His stinger stuck them
> up to its very root.
> It made the kamba [the blacks] and their leaders
> shit themselves.[13]

Such themes were clear from the first issue of the newspaper published on 13 May 1867. The opening article in Spanish introduced *Cabichuí* to its readers through the wasp metaphor, echoing the animal imagery common to rural speech; the personification of animals and animal-like figures is common in the folklore of the Latin American countryside.[14] The article disclaimed pretensions of literary excellence, highlighted the importance



toma con la una mano las riendas y el

—Pe iapysaca póráque.
--Néi: ñahendúcatu.

La lectura del «Cabichuí.»

Sabido es cómo la mímica ha establecido por cierta actitud la manera muda de espresar un placer repentino, que enagena dulcemente.

Ved un hombre con los brazos caidos y la boca abierta, que apenas respira; pues bien, ese hombre siente algo que ha venido á sublevar su frágil admira-

Acabase la lectura del articulo correspondiente á dicho gravado, y esta ahí que tropiezan con el cuadro de la jóven solicitada por el asistente.

Aqui comienza un nuevo género de hilaridad:—

—Tobicháma nico icaabo aipo asistente!

—Ha cuñá! ha cama tembetary.

—Che reindy, bocói aiucapa los camba, ha upeguiáguáhêne rendápe ne ñeénguérehebe.

—Trinchera, ha avanzada rupiguamante baraja!

—Ha ipyápe baé ñandererecó! . . .

Vuélvese la 4ª página. Oh! que algazara, que festejos á Caxias, *Cajon e Cachimbo*, que se hundia de hocico con su *burrufeiro* en el paso Cabara!

—Anique nde iopy!

—Eséque, cuimbae!

—Chaque ne geringa!

—Añá nde reraha!

—Ja! Ja! Ja!

Y tatarean el *Ditirambo* con un retintin, que era la quinta esencia del acento mas jocoso y burlesco que darse puede.

—Pequiriri, pequirirí!. dice el Sargento meneando la mano. Coinaco ape ambué nda iiohaiba abei.

—Mbaépa, mbaépa?.. preguntan todos, reprimiendo la risa.

—Pe hendú!.. y sigue la *Letrilla* sobre las *mugeres porteñas*.

Figure 4.1: Note the *cabichuí* (wasp) in the center of the image, listening in on the conversation. Also, the soldiers are barefoot. *Cabichuí*, 8 August 1867, 3.

of the paper's illustrations, and pledged to publicize the deeds of the brave fighters who sustained "the war of the free against the slaves." Adopting a markedly popular tone, *Cabichuí* promised to huddle figuratively with the soldiers around their campfires "to speak with them in their typical light and joking tones."[15] With its broad humor and vulgar ridicule of the enemy, the publication clearly aimed to draw from, stimulate, and contribute to conversations in the Paraguayan trenches.

A woodcut illustration from August 1867 depicted this very process (Figure 4.1). In the picture, an officer reads *Cabichuí* aloud to four barefoot soldiers who listen intently and laugh. The Guaraní caption indicated that such group readings were almost mandatory. "Listen up good," commands the officer, to which the soldiers respond, "Yeah, we hear you!" An accompanying article narrates the details of such a group reading, in which the

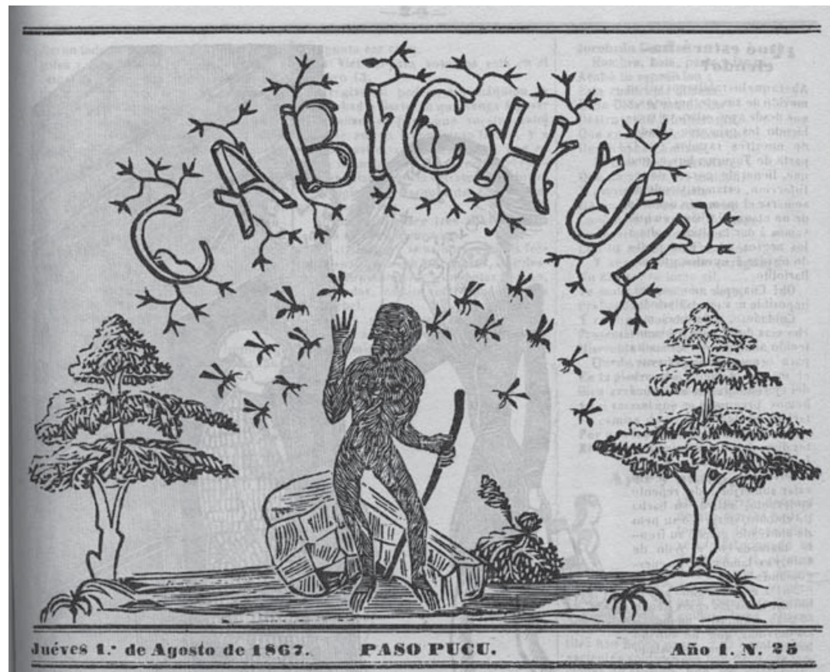


Figure 4.2: *Cabichuí*'s unsubtle logo.

soldiers comment on the articles—all, of course, in Guaraní. The session ends with the soldiers vowing to protect their womenfolk from the invading forces. Ultimately, the group bursts into patriotic song, just as the authors of *Cabichuí* hoped would happen with their published lyrics.[16]

In fact, the illustrated logo of the newspaper, which adorned the first page of each issue, further visually demonstrated *Cabichuí*'s role as an active print combatant (Figure 4.2). The drawing portrayed a hairy, black, ape-like character holding a stick and futilely waving his arm to dispel a swarm of wasps. This unsubtle image received more explicit elaboration in the racialized prose and verse that followed it. A Guaraní-language song ended each issue of *Cabichuí*, and these verses went to work making obscene ridicule of the enemy. The first song from May 1867 told how the Brazilian emperor Pedro II had foolishly sent impressed recruits to the battlefront. Stupid and cowardly, the Brazilian troops had dived into their trenches at the first sight of a Paraguayan and, cowering at the bottom, they had uselessly fired their cannons towards the clouds until an annoyed God, clearly on the Paraguayan side, sent them off to hell.

The lyrics referred to this condemned enemy as *kamba*, the Guaraní slur for a black slave. Brazilian troops were "the kamba of Pedro II," and it was the "many ugly kamba" who were carried away by Satan. The song then lampooned the kamba eyes that glowed monstrously in dark faces.[17] The slur betrayed a colonial legacy pregnant in the use of Guaraní itself, for *kamba* was not originally a Guaraní word, its semantic branches in the Paraguayan vernacular springing from unknown regions. It instead infiltrated the language as part of the colonial experience of slavery and caste, wherein the black slave sat at the bottom of the official racial hierarchy of imperial Spain. It is crucial to note in this regard that the word *kamba* is not found in the seventeenth-century Jesuit Guaraní dictionaries, suggesting the slur came into usage with the introduction of African slavery into the territory by the Spanish. Supporting evidence for this assertion comes from the very Guaraní-language songs and articles found in *Cabichuí*. References to *kamba* were often coupled with the word *tembiguai*, which indicated "servant" or "slave." The songs thus reinforced a close semantic association between the words, with *kamba* carrying the extra racial bite. They evoked the links between the colonial practices of slavery and racial caste that were fused in the everyday language of Paraguayans.[18]

These words still resonated with the social reality of nineteenth-century Paraguayans. By the end of the colonial period, the Paraguayan territory had had a sizable population of free blacks, mulattos, and African-descended slaves. Slavery even persisted as a legal practice in independent Paraguay through the 1860s, with the majority of slaves traded and owned by the state.[19] Well into the 1850s, regular Paraguayans had continued to evidence keen familiarity with the labels and restrictions of a still-breathing caste hierarchy, whereby blackness suggested the inferiority of the slave. Brothers fearful of the racial stain on a legally-white family lineage had still objected to potential black suitors pursuing marriages with their sisters. Meanwhile, fugitives apprehended by police officials had continued to toy with colonial-era racial labels to their best legal advantage. Paraguayans made caste distinctions in their everyday interactions, and the common sense of racial hierarchy persisted. The slur *kamba* spoke to this prevalent social logic.[20]

The incorporation of the word *kamba* into Guaraní thus reflected how the language, as it was spoken and written in mainstream Paraguayan society, was itself a product of colonial times. The use of Guaraní had long fallen unhinged from the social caste identity of *Indian*. Elites and peasants alike, with varying strains of indigenous descent, spoke the language in their homes and on the street. For the sake of preaching and convert-

ing, Catholic clergy had disciplined its sounds to the written expression of the Latin alphabet. This process forever altered what once had been a purely oral language of the indigenous Guaraní people. Spanish and other foreign words entered common usage, further assaulting the pre-Columbian purity of Guaraní. Yet such impurities were also evidence of the language's sustained vigor and cultural power. Spanish words incorporated into Guaraní speech were heavily modified, becoming detached from their original contexts. The assimilated Spanish words were even conjugated according to Guaraní rules. For example, the Spanish term *guapo*, meaning "handsome" or "tough," became *iguapó* (ee-wa-pó), meaning "laborious." The verb *disparar* signified in Spanish the discharge of a firearm; meanwhile, its "Guaranized" offshoot, *odispará* meant to run away. The Guaraní of mainstream Paraguay bore the impact of the colonial experience with an exuberant hybridism. It was, in sum, a colonial language with indigenous roots.[21]

The publicists of *Cabichuí*, Juan Crisóstomo Centurión and Natalicio Talavera, exploited Guaraní as such for its permeable boundaries between the worlds of print and speech. They drew from the predominately oral nature of Paraguayan Guaraní to write their songs and jokes, and in turn sought to channel such lyrics into the conversations and ballads of their compatriots in the trenches.[22] In so doing, they necessarily recalled a colonial legacy present in the language itself that was fraught with the slurs of slavery and caste. More than just familiar devices to engage an illiterate audience, however, such slurs and caricatures in the songs of *Cabichuí* also contained a nationalist vision with specific political aspirations.

Toikove Ñane Retã

To construct their nationalist vision in the Paraguayan vernacular, the editors and writers of *Cabichuí* seized upon the Guaraní word *retã* (and its derivatives *tetã* and *hetã*). Unlike *kamba*, *retã* was originally Guaraní. Seventeenth-century Jesuit priests recorded that *retã* referred to "place of origin" or "familial village." Typically, then, the impact of the colonial experience altered the meaning of *retã*, moving it closer to the Spanish concept of *patria*, one's country or homeland.[23] During the War of the Triple Alliance, the writers of *Cabichuí* made it an explicit synonym for republican nationhood. The related word *tetarã* indicated distant familial connection and "those from your patria." Many Guaraní words such as *tetã* had multiple forms, depending on their use in relation to the speaker. *Tetã* is the "origi-

nal" form of the word. However, I use its derivative *retã* in the text because it pertains in most cases to the first person, such as "I" or "we."

The verses taught to the Guaraní-speaking combatants in the trenches around Paso Pucú, who came from many rural patrias chicas, that they nevertheless shared a common retã: the Paraguayan nation. When a Guaraní poem from May 1867 dismissed boastful Allied claims to conquer "our retã," the homeland in question was explicitly the Paraguayan nation. Another poem from January 1868 replied with boasting of its own. In each battle, the Allied forces got an object lesson in bravery. They learned the hard way what Paraguay, "our retã," was made of.[24] A song from September 1867 made *retã* and the Spanish *nación* directly synonymous, using the two words in adjoining lines of a stanza: "If only Pedro II / does not seize our retã / our nación will be laborious / and we will be prosperous."[25] Numerous songs in *Cabichuí* joined "vivas" for president Francisco Solano López with the proclamation: *Toikove ñane retã* (Long live our retã).[26] In response to this call, according to a verse from December 1867, President López received his loyal adherents as "sons of the *tetã*."

If *retã* bespoke the notion of nation and homeland, the natural mission of its defenders was to throw out the kamba invaders, with the word *kamba* serving as the common caricature for all Allied soldiers. Recall that *kamba*, as the Guaraní slur for a black slave, was the derisive reference to the Brazilian soldiers of color. Presumably the Paraguayan soldiers exchanged other ugly names for their enemy combatants, particularly those from Argentina and Uruguay. Historians have suggested that *kurepi* (pig-skinned), the present-day derogatory term for an Argentine (especially for a *porteño*, or denizen of Buenos Aires) had its origins in the war.[27] If the combatants of Paso Pucú used the word, though, the editors of *Cabichuí* avoided putting it in print. In passage after passage, *kamba* stood metonymically for the invading forces. In part, this usage reflected the reality of the Allied ranks. By 1867, comparatively few Argentine and Uruguayan troops constituted the front lines; it was mostly African-descended Brazilians who filled the Allied trenches. Yet it is difficult to believe that the preference for the epithet *kamba* in the Guaraní verses did not also respond to political designs, specifically to those prone to propagandistic racism.

Cabichuí's Guaraní jeers were replete with vulgar and pejorative racial characterizations of the kamba, whom they described as filthy and smelly. *Kamba ky'a* (dirty blacks) appeared in the songs as a sort of set phrase.[28] One poem from December 1867 pursued this theme at some length:

> There is no trash among them
> as dirty as those dirty kamba.

Not even pig sties compare
to those disgusting animals.

Even from far away
our noses burn intensely
from the stink
that those devil slaves carry.

Intimating the threat that such beasts posed to "the beautiful girls of Paraguay," the song promised to protect them from the smell of the kamba.[29]

The kamba were also constantly compared to monkeys, a common animal in Paraguay and one proverbially considered to be filthy. Simian references constituted traditional sort of ridicule in the country. The ensemble was part of a racialized assault upon the *kamba karaja ky'a* (the dirty black monkeys), and such depictions were applied not only to the African-descended Brazilian soldiers, but also to the lily-white Brazilian emperor and his European wife. Pedro II normally figured as the *macaco tuja* (the old ape), while his spouse was the *karaja guaigui* (the old monkey-woman). Together, these "old apes" sent their kamba legions into the trenches to die hopelessly in droves.[30] The songs repetitively derided the stupidity of the kamba in marching to their inevitable defeat and death, and they further delighted in the image of their dead enemies being cooked in the fires of hell.[31]

With the ridicule of their Guaraní verses, the editors and contributors of *Cabichuí* mobilized the derogatory language of racial hierarchy and caste, still-living vestiges of colonial society in a post-colonial world. Early in its production, the periodical clarified its appropriation of the word with a Spanish-language article that frankly stated, "The Guaraní word *kamba* is applied to blacks, and more generally and properly, to the slave." It then went on to explain using the slur against Argentine and Uruguayan soldiers, few of whom were African-descended and none slaves. They were, nevertheless, "true kamba," maintained the article, because they were the "kamba of the Brazilian kamba"—the slaves of slaves, having sold themselves to the political designs of the Brazilian emperor. As a result, the article proclaimed anyone *kamba*—even Germans, Frenchmen, and Englishmen—"who come and sell their souls to Pedro II to enslave a people."[32] The term's use as a general label for the Allies thus reinforced the rhetorical ideology of the editors who neatly defined the republican liberty of the Paraguayan retã against a derogatory slur for a black slave. Paraguayans were free republicans precisely because they were not kamba and pursuing a righteous war against the enslaving monarchy of Brazil.

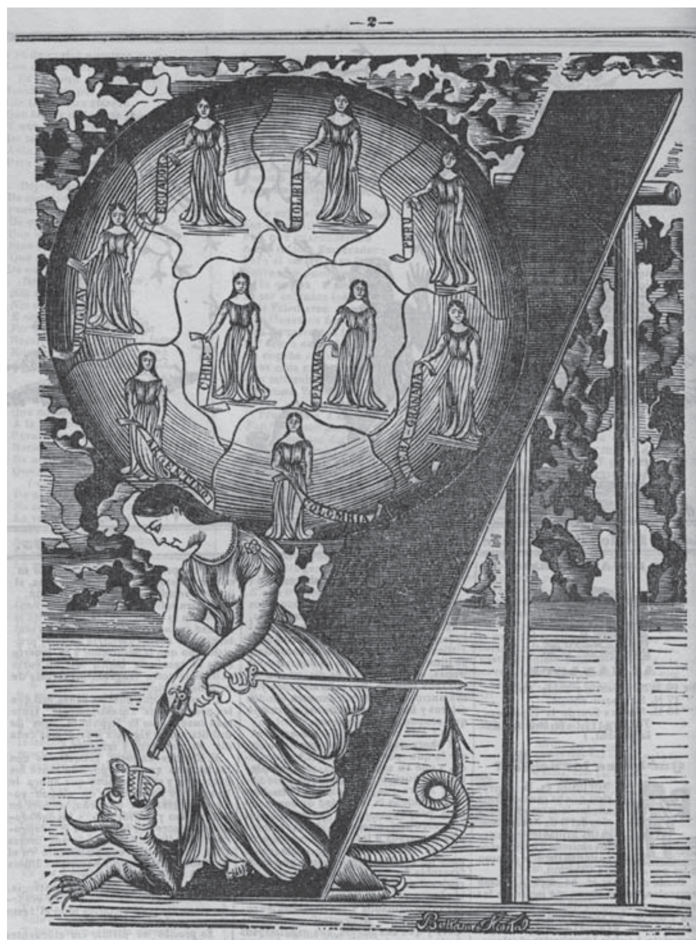


Figure 4.3: Paraguay defending the republics of South America. Note Uruguay and Argentina are also under "her" protection. *Cabichuí*, 16 December 1867, 2.

Contained in these messages, then, was the crass republicanism articulated by the lettered agents of the Paraguayan state throughout the war. The Spanish-language articles and lithographs of *Cabichuí* were all the more explicit in this regard. One article elaborated, "The ape monarch [of Brazil] understands that with the victory of Paraguay, American democracy is saved. The Brazilian monarchy . . . will soon falter, collapse, divide, and succumb like an exotic flower that with difficulty survives in the essentially republican world of Columbus." Paraguay sustained a heroic defense at "the vanguard of American rights." Several lithographs were explicit in

depicting this republican identity, similar in some respects to the republican images studied in Chapter 1 (Figure 4.3). They often portrayed female images of Paraguay defending all of republican South America—even her enemies Argentina and Uruguay—against the threatening monarchic beast of Brazil. Other images depicted Bartolomé Mitre and Venancio Flores, the leaders of Argentina and Uruguay respectively, under the control of Pedro II and working against the true interests of their people. Pedro II, always shown wearing a crown, was the main focus of this propagandistic ire.[33]

The Guaraní verses in *Cabichuí* contributed to this message. They tangentially jeered Argentines and Uruguayans as political traitors who had sold out their republics. Two songs from February 1868 in particular were dedicated to the "ex-Argentines," now slavish traitors to their retã. As a result, the Argentines no longer stood at the figurative side of General José de San Martín, the republican hero of Argentine independence.[34] Still, the main target in the verses was Pedro II. In June 1867, Natalicio Talavera composed a *cielito*, a popular lyrical and dance genre of the Río de la Plata, to poke vulgar fun at the Brazilian emperor and his kamba.[35] The song claimed that at the roar of the Paraguayan artillery, the kamba urinated and defecated out of fear: "Those dirty apes / shit themselves bad / and the artillery / made them piss on themselves, too." Later, the cielito assured victory over the monarchic enemy: "On the ground already / is the old crown / of Pedro II, / king of the kamba."[36] Here was another triumph for republican America and the cause of freedom.

Through incessant contrast to the slavish kamba, the Paraguayan soldiers became republican heroes. They defended the very freedom of the Paraguayan retã, with the concept of liberty properly articulated in the Guaraní form as *ñande libertá* (our liberty).[37] The overbearing irony, of course, is that before and especially during the war, Paraguayans knew few of the political freedoms and practices of what might be understood as republican liberty. Since independence, autocrats had ruled their country with the proverbial iron fist. This idea of republican liberty contrived its meaning and relevance instead through the familiar slurs of a colonial racial category reinvigorated by the violence of foreign invasion and war. Centurión, Talavera, and the other officials of the rustic lettered city of Paso Pucú spoke to the reality of their fellow soldiers' war with their call to defend the Paraguayan retã against the kamba invaders, and it was the racist image of black hordes desecrating family, home, and country that effectively made republicanism and freedom ring true.

Conclusions

Consider the news story of Francisca Cabrera, as reported in *Cabichuí*, to ponder fully how the conjured image of these black hordes spoke to the reality of the Paraguayans' war. The story emerged from gossip and rumor around Paso Pucú and reached the ears of the combatant publicists of the newspaper. They in turn published the story in August 1867 as a propagandistic feature of selfless patriotism. It told how Cabrera remained in her home with her small children as Allied soldiers, bent on raping and pillaging, were descending on their village near the southern pueblo of Pilar. Brandishing the family machete, Cabrera steeled her children for the coming onslaught. The publicists of *Cabichuí* were careful to record her words in Guaraní: "Those kamba are coming to carry us off," she warned her children, "and I am going to fight them with this knife until I die." She then instructed them to pick up the knife after her death to continue the fight, "stabbing and slicing the bellies" of their enemies. Finally, she urged them to submit to death themselves before falling as "slaves to the kamba."[38] The editors of *Cabichuí* later produced a lithograph of the scene with Cabrera's famous words in captions (Figure 4.4). However embellished, the story of Francisca Cabrera tugged at the emotions of Paraguayan soldiers and camp followers worried about their own homes and families. The lettered agents of the Paraguayan state hoped that they too articulated their anxiety in the derogatory language invoking the fight for republic and nation.

By mid-1868, the Paraguayan defensive positions around Paso Pucú collapsed. Soon afterward in July, *Cabichuí* ceased publication after ninety-four issues. The rustic lettered city of Paso Pucú disintegrated as quickly as it was built. It had been the death of Natalicio Talavera in October 1867 that did not bode well for the encampment and its print combatant *Cabichuí*. Publication of the newspaper had limped onward into the next year without its most talented poet. Centurión, on the other hand, survived until the bitter end of the war. After the retreat from Paso Pucú, he fled with Paraguayan forces as they conducted a desperate guerrilla war in the northeastern part of the country and was present at the conflict's final battle when Brazilian forces killed Francisco Solano López on 1 March 1870. By that time, Paraguay had lost over half of its prewar population of nearly a half million.[39]

As unusual the story of Paso Pucú and *Cabichuí* may seem, lettered cities on battlefronts thrived in nineteenth-century Latin America. Indeed, the rash of civil and international conflicts, starting with the independence wars, created a fantastic demand for the words and narratives that necessarily accompany acts of political violence.[40] Printing presses were fre-

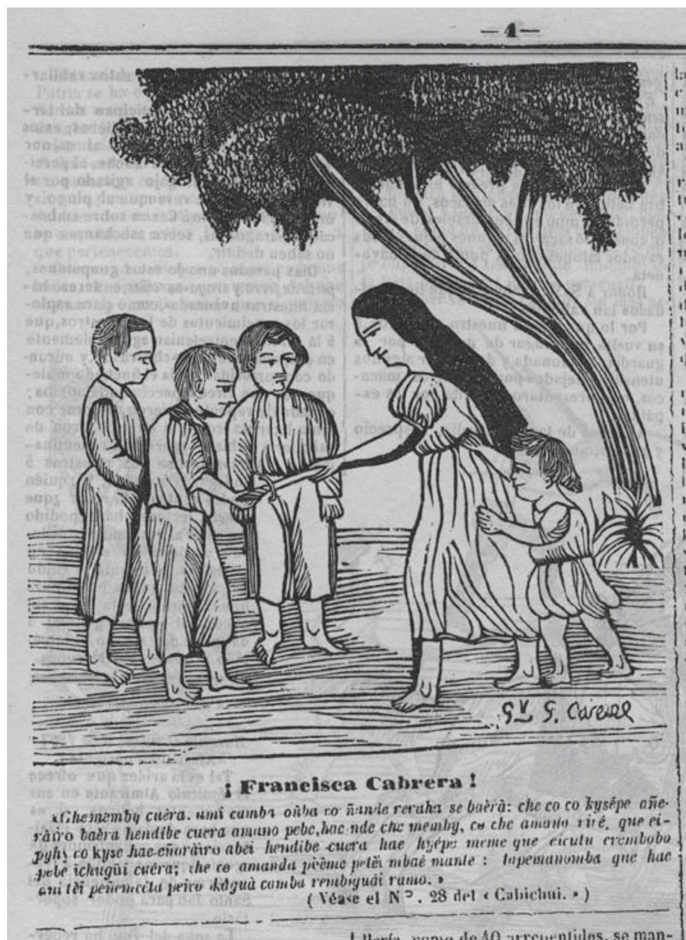


Figure 4.4: Francisca Cabrera instructing her children. Her Guaraní words are recorded below. *Cabichuí*, 10 October 1867, 4.

quent companions of nineteenth-century Latin American armies. The case of *Cabichuí* indicates that the social and cultural barriers of literacy separating the printed word from the illiterate soldiers that largely filled their ranks were hardly impermeable. In fact, wartime publishers actively crossed them. In so doing, they placed the printed word into a constant dialogue with the predominant oral culture of their companions. The spoken and printed word mutually influenced each other in what was often a propagandistic symphony of song and dance.

The case of *Cabichuí* also demonstrates that upon reaching out to the

oral culture of regular soldiers, battlefield presses in nineteenth-century Latin America also had to engage the vernaculars of indigenous origin. In these moments, notions of republic and nation gained some added currency within the logic of the languages themselves, though in Paraguay at least, it was a colonial legacy of caste, hierarchy, and deference that provided the flesh of their resonance. Insurgent and warring areas of Mexico, Bolivia, and Peru had their own mestizo interlocutors, versed in the languages of indigenous soldiers but also with connections to the lettered world of national politics.[41] Extensive questions remain, however, as to how such situations played out in these countries and their languages. The example of nineteenth-century Paraguay nonetheless suggests that the pressures of war and the interactions of print and tongue did encode the malleable ideas of republic and nation into the historical experiences of regular people.

NOTES

1. Juan Crisóstomo Centurión, *Memorias o reminiscencias sobre la Guerra del Paraguay*, vol. 2 (Asunción: El Lector, 1894), 120–23, 248–49. For another description of the "villages" at Paso Pucú and the female camp followers that tended them, see George Thompson, *The War in Paraguay* (London: E. and H. Laemmert, 1869), 155, 206.
2. Angel Rama, *The Lettered City*, ed. and trans. John Charles Chasteen (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).
3. For exploration of notaries' manipulations of the *lettered city* and its documentary truth during the colonial period, see Kathryn Burns, "Notaries, Truth, and Consequences," *American Historical Review* 110, no. 2 (April 2005): 350–79.
4. For examples of the ordainments and tribunals in Paso Pucú, see respectively cura Francisco Pablo Aguilera, Libro de Orden Sacro, 1865–1883, Archivo de la Curia del Arzobispado de Asunción; and Relación del soldado paraguayo José María Curugua, desertor y espía pasado por armas, Paso Pucú, 1867, Archivo Nacional de Asunción-Sección Civil y Judicial, vol. 1797, no. 4.
5. For an overview of the tactical situation at the time, see Chris Leuchars, *To the Bitter End: Paraguay and the War of the Triple Alliance* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 155–68; Charles Kolinski, *Independence or Death! The Story of the Paraguayan War* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1965), 137–42; Alfredo M. Seiferheld, "El *Cabichuí* en el contexto histórico de la Guerra Grande," introduction to *Cabichuí*, facsimile ed. (Asunción: Museo del Barro, 1984); and Thompson, *The War in Paraguay*, 196–243. For details on the cholera outbreak, see Centurión, *Memorias*, vol. 2, 255–57. For the origins of the conflict, see Thomas Whigham, *The Paraguayan War: Causes and Early Conduct* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).
6. See "Idiomas," *El centinela* (Asunción), 25 April 1867, 2. Three popular-satirical newspapers were created during this moment of national emergency. Two were published in Asunción: *El centinela* and *Cacique Lambaré*, the latter of which was written entirely in Guaraní. The third publication, *Cabichuí*, was

published and distributed along the battlefront in Paso Pucú. I focus on *Cabichuí* in this chapter due to its proximity to the trenches. For an overview of Paraguay's wartime "combatant press," see Víctor Simón Bovier, "El periodismo combatiente del Paraguay durante la Guerra de la Triple Alianza," *Historia paraguaya* 12 (1967–68): 47–87.

7. For these details, see Centurión, *Memorias*, vol. 1, 89–166; and Juan Pérez Acosta, *Carlos Antonio López: Obrero máximo* (Asunción: Editorial Guarania, 1948), 402, 523–40.
8. Natalicio Talavera, *La Guerra del Paraguay: Correspondencias publicadas en el semanario* (Asunción: Ediciones Nizza, 1958), 128.
9. Talavera is recognized today as one of Paraguay's great national poets. In fact, the anniversary of his death, 11 October, is officially commemorated as a national poetry day. For a hagiographic look at Talavera, see Juan E. O'Leary, *El libro de los héroes* (Asunción: La Mundial, 1922), 87–96. Carlos Centurión gives a brief biographical sketch of Talavera as well a list of his literary publications in *Historia de la cultura paraguaya*, vol. 1 (Asunción, 1961), 267–70.
10. Testimonio de Juan Crisóstomo Centurión, Buenos Aires, 6 January 1888, Archivo de Ministerio de Defensa del Paraguay, Colección de Juan B. Gill, n. 118, 52. The late Paraguayan historian Josefina Plá lists the names of nine folk art contributors to the newspaper. They were Inocenio Aquino, M. Perina, Franciso Ocampos, Gregorio Acosta, Gerónimo Caceres, J. Borges, Francisco Velasco, J. B. S., and Saturio Ríos. See her essay in *Cabichuí*, facsimile ed., "El Grabado: Instrumento de la Defensa."
11. Centurión, *Memorias*, vol. 2, 251–52.
12. "De la vanguardia," *Cabichuí*, 24 June 1867, 4; "Actualidad," *Cabichuí*, 19 August 1867, 4; "Al 'Centinela,' " *Cabichuí*, 20 June 1867, 4; "25 de diciembre," *Cabichuí*, 26 December 1867, 4; "Diálogo," *Cabichuí*, 1 July 1867, 4.
13. "De Chichi al 'Cabichuí,' " *Cabichuí*, 3 June 1867, 4. For another example of the newspaper "stinging" the kamba, see "Gratulación al 'Cabichui,' " *Cabichuí*, 16 May 1867, 4.
14. For the case of Paraguay, see Dionisio M. González Torres, *Folklore del Paraguay* (Asunción: Servilibro, 2003), 69–85. Again, *Cabichuí* provides excellent evidence for this phenomenon, whereby monkeys, dogs, turtles, and ass were used to depict the allies or their leaders. See Heríb Caballero Campos and Cayetano Ferreira Segovia, "El periodismo de guerra en el Paraguay (1864–1870)," *Nuevo mundo mundos nuevos* 6 (2006), *nuevomundo.revues.org/index1384.html*.
15. "A nuestros lectores," *Cabichuí*, 13 May 1867, 1.
16. The lithograph appeared in the 8 August 1867 issue of *Cabichuí* on page 3. The accompanying article was titled "La lectura del 'Cabichuí.' " Both John Hoyt Williams and Thomas Whigham point out that the wearing of shoes was an indicator of class in Paraguay. See Williams, *The Rise and Fall of the Paraguayan Republic* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 75; and Whigham, *Paraguayan War*, 183–84.
17. *Cabichuí*, 13 May 1867, 4.
18. Antonio Ruiz Montoya, *Tesoro de la lengua guaraní* (Madrid: Juan Sánchez, 1639). For examples of *tembiguai* and *kamba*, see *Cabichuí*, 19 August 1867; and "Pobres negros," *Cabichuí*, 5 December 1867.

19. Milda Rivarola, *Vagos, pobres y soldados: La domesticación estatal del trabajo en el Paraguay del siglo XIX* (Asunción: Centro Paraguayo de Estudios Sociológicos, 1994), 87–91. The financial notary records of the pre-war Paraguayan government document the limited traffic in slaves by the state. See, for example, Libro de cajas, May 1858, n. 63, Archivo Nacional de Asunción. It should be noted that the government of Carlos Antonio López in 1842 decreed the gradual abolition of slavery with the *Ley de Vientre*, which declared all children of slaves to be legally free after their twenty-third birthday. Of course, the state and private individuals continued to partake in a limited domestic slave trade up until the war. See Jerry Cooney, "La abolición de la esclavitud," in *El Paraguay bajo los López*, eds. Jerry Cooney and Thomas Whigham (Asunción: Centro Paraguayo de Estudios Sociológicos, 1994), 28–33; and Ana María Arguello, *El rol de los esclavos negros en el Paraguay* (Asunción: Centro Editorial Paraguayo S. R. L., 1999), 88–93.
20. Disputes over proposed marriages among family members were common in Paraguay, just as in nineteenth-century Argentina. These disenso cases often involved rankling over "inequality of lineage" between the marrying couple and thus the perceived corruption of "pure white" lineage. In fact, in Paraguay the state had to concede to all marriages involving such inequalities, a testament to the still-living legal legacy of the colonial caste system. The litigants' prolific use of racial labels in these disenso cases, as well as in criminal cases, suggests their prevalence on the street. That is, regular Paraguayans continued to make racial caste distinctions in their everyday interactions and were keenly aware of the perceived inferiority of blackness. See, for example, "Caso de Marcos Presentado contra el pretenso matrimonio de José Villalva y María Rosa Presentado," Archivo Nacional de Asunción-Sección Nueva Encuadernación, vol. 2188, nos. 2–6. Also see "Causa judicial contra el pardo libre Bernardino Frasquerí, 1863–65," Archivo Nacional de Asunción-Sección Nueva Encuadernación, vol. 1646. For the case of Argentina, see Jeffrey Shumway, *The Case of the Ugly Suitor and Other Histories of Love, Gender, and Nation, 1776–1870* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).
21. Barbara Ganson, *The Guaraní Under Spanish Rule in the Río de la Plata* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). Indigenous languages throughout the Spanish Empire became colonial institutions of the state and church. See James Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); and Matthew Restall, *The Maya World: Yucatec Culture and Society, 1550–1850* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997). For the case of Guaraní, see Bartomeu Meliá, *La lengua guaraní en el Paraguay colonial* (Asunción: CEPAG, 2003).
22. Aníbal Orué Pozzo emphasizes the mutually reinforcing influences of the spoken and written word in Guaraní in *Oralidad y escritura en Paraguay: Comunicación, antropología, e historia* (Asunción: Arandurã Editorial, 2002).
23. See Ruiz Montoya, *Tesoro*, 383–84. Ruiz Montoya gives the definition of *tetã* as "pueblo, ciudad."
24. "A los macacos convertidos en loros," *Cabichuí*, 23 May 1867, 4; and "Caxias y sus negros," *Cabichuí*, 2 January 1868, 4. For another explicit equation of the *retã* with Paraguay, see "Estratégia de Cachimbo," *Cabichuí*, 16 December 1867, 4.

25. "El 'Caba Aguará' al 'Cabichuí,' " *Cabichuí*, 12 September 1867, 4.
26. "3 de octubre," *Cabichuí*, 7 October 1867, 4; "25 de diciembre"; and "Caxias y la osamenta," *Cabichuí*, 13 January 1868, 4.
27. See Kolinski, *Independence or Death!*
28. See, for example, the first Guaraní song in the first issue of *Cabuchuí*, 13 May 1867, 4.
29. "Etopeya macacuna," *Cabichuí*, 9 December 1867, 4.
30. "Pobres negros," 4; "El 'Cabichuí,' " *Cabichuí*, 17 June 1867, 4; "3 de octubre" *Cabichuí*; and "Gratulación a 'Cabichuí," *Cabichuí*, 16 May 1867, 4.
31. "Impiedad y castigo a los negros," *Cabichuí*, 14 October 1867, 4; "A los macacos" and "Gloria y júbilo de 16 de octubre," *Cabichuí*, 10 November 1867, 4.
32. "El artículo negro," *Cabichuí*, 16 June 1867, 1.
33. "Situación de la triple alianza," *Cabichuí*, 9 September 1867, 3; "Venta de las repúblicas del Plata," *Cabichuí*, 3 June 1867, 2; and "La Guerra de la Triple Alianza contra el Paraguay," *Cabichuí*, 10 June 1867, 2. See Figure 4.3, which illustrates the republican rhetoric in the newspaper. Other poignant lithographs depicting republican themes appear in 15 July 1867, 2; 24 July 1867, 2–3; 16 December 1867, 2; and 5 August 1867, 2. For more on republican imagery and the nation, see Achugar's chapter in this volume.
34. "A los ex-argentinos," *Cabichuí*, 3 February 1868, 4; and "Para los pavos," *Cabichuí*, 6 February 1868, 4.
35. For a fascinating discussion of the cielito lyrical dance tradition in Argentina and Uruguay, see John Charles Chasteen, *National Rhythms, African Roots: The Deep History of Latin American Dance* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 146–51; and his article "Patriotic Footwork: Social Dance, Popular Culture and the Watershed of Independence in Buenos Aires," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 5, no. 1 (1996): 11–24. By mid-century, the dance tradition had gained popularity in Paraguay. The Spanish playwright Ildefonso Bermejo, who was contracted by the López government, wrote a theatrical production in 1858 in which the opening scene portrays the dancing and singing of a Paraguayan cielito. See Ildefonso Antonio Bermejo, *Un paraguayo leal: Drama en dos actos y en verso* (Asunción: Talleres Nacionales de H. Kraus, 1898). Chasteen emphasizes that the cielito lyrics were especially susceptible to patriotic, if somewhat vulgar, renderings by their authors. Talavera obviously persisted in this tradition.
36. Natalicio Talavera, "Canción presentada al 'Cabichuí' en su visita al Paso Burro," *Cabichuí*, 6 June 1867, 4.
37. See, for example, "Caxias y sus negros" and "25 de diciembre."
38. "Francisca Cabrera," *Cabichuí*, 12 August 1867, 4; and 10 October 1867, 4.
39. The full extent of Paraguay's loss of population continues to be a subject of heated debate, due to the scarcity of documentary evidence. Thomas Whigham and Barbara Potthast, "The Paraguayan Rosetta Stone: New Insights into the Demographics of the Paraguayan War, 1864–1870," *Latin American Research Review* 34, no. 1 (1999) is the most accurate estimation. Vera Blinn Reber contends the casualty numbers were much lower than suggested by Whigham and Potthast. See her "Comment on 'The Rosetta Stone,' " *LARR* 37, no. 3 (2002): 129–35; and Whigham and Potthast's consequent response, "Refining the Numbers: A Response to Reber and Kleinpenning," ibid., 143–48.

40. John Charles Chasteen, "Fighting Words: The Discourse of Insurgency in Latin American History," *Latin American Research Review* 28, no. 3 (1993): 83–111. For the embattled Argentine dictator Juan Manuel Rosas's use of the printing press and his regime's engagement with popular culture, see Ricardo Salvatore, *Wandering Paysanos: State Order and Subaltern Experience in Buenos Aires During the Rosas Era* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) and William G. Acree Jr., "Gaucho Gazetteers, Popular Literature, and Politics in the Río de la Plata," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* 26 (2007): 197–215. On the broader subject of print and politics in the Plata, see Acree, "From Reading to Reality: Print Culture, Collective Identity, and Nationalism in Uruguay and Argentina" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006).
41. Recent literature on nineteenth-century popular politics in Mexico and Peru has focused on such figures. See most notably Guy Thomson, *Patriotism, Politics and Popular Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Mexico: Juan Francisco Lucas* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1999); Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Charles Walker, *Smoldering Ashes: Cuzco and the Creation of Republican Peru, 1780–1840* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); and Cecilia G. Méndez, *The Plebian Republic: The Huanta Rebellion and the Making of the Peruvian State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).