

**‘The State of Geography’: Printing Geographic Memories and State Formation in
Colombia, 1808-1830”**

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Paper submission to Social Histories of Space in Latin America
The Council on Latin American and Iberian Studies
Yale Center for International and Area Studies
October 22-23, 2005**

1.1 The State of Geography

“*La Geografía...es...tan necesaria al estado como lo puede ser a un propietario el conocimiento perfecto de sus heredades.*” From Francisco José de Caldas, “*Semanario del Nuevo Reino de Granada*” Number 1, January 3, 1808.

Francisco José de Caldas (1771-1816) published the *Semanario del Nuevo Reyno de Granada* from 1808-1811. The *Semanario* was one of the first scientific journals in colonial New Granada and the first New Granada journal dedicated to geographic sciences. The above citation, originally written by Nicolás de Arriquibar, a Basque intellectual of the 18th century, opened the *Semanario*'s first issue. Roughly translated, the quote reads: *The state needs geography like the landowner needs perfect knowledge of his estate.* Caldas resolutely justified the *Semanario*'s focus on geographic sciences to his readers with this opening. The Spanish Crown was an undeniable member of the audience Caldas addressed. His first entry recognized the power of the Crown in New Granada by arguing that the Crown needed to deploy a geographic expedition in the interest of bringing prosperity and honor to New Granada and to the Monarch.¹

The Crown was not however, the only intended reader for the journal. One of the primary goals of the *Semanario* was to generate and disseminate geographic knowledge among “lettered men” in New Granada. Caldas invited individuals from these elite circles to contribute essays.² Caldas also included translations of foreign authors, the most famous of which was Alexander Von Humboldt (1769-1850). In short, The *Semanario*

¹ Francisco José de Caldas, *Obras completas de Francisco José de Caldas publicadas por la Universidad Nacional como Homenaje con motivo del sesquicentenario de su muerte* (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional 1966) p. 209.

² Those who published in the *Semanario* included José Manuel Restrepo (1781-1861), Jorge Tadeo Lozano (1771-1816), José María Salazar (1785-1828), Joaquín Camacho (1766-1816), José María Cabal (1770-1816), Sinforoso Mutis (1773-1822) and Nicolás Tanco (1774-1865) among others. See Mauricio Nieto, “‘El influjo del clima sobre los seres organizados’ y la retórica ilustrada en el *Semanario del Nuevo Reyno de Granada*” work in progress.

was intended for literate, wealthy, landholding, upper-class men who sought scientific knowledge and through that knowledge, political control over the territory of colonial New Granada.

Scientific interest was not the only bond *Semanario* men shared. Most of the contributors were upper class males of European heritage born in New Granada. Caldas himself defines the identity of these individuals as *criollo* in the *Semanario*.³ His first article divides all of the inhabitants of the Americas into *salvajes* and *civilizados*, or, savages and the civilized.⁴ He differentiates the members of the civilized population into three races: Natives, Europeans, and Africans. “I understand Europeans to mean not only those men born in this part of the world, but also their children, who, conserving their purity of origin, have never mixed with the other castes. These people are known in America as *criollos* and they make up the nobility of the New Continent.”⁵ According to Caldas’ categorization scheme, all of the contributors to the *Semanario* were civilized, European, and mostly from the *criollo* nobility.

Benedict Anderson argues in his seminal work, *Imagined Communities*, that creoles or *criollos*, played a central role in the development of nationalism in the emerging American republics through their common exclusion from power and their use of the printing press.⁶ Although Anderson recognized the existence and importance of creoles as a social group in Central and Spanish America, he considered that they did not

³ Ibid.; Caldas, *op. cit.* p. 188.

⁴ According to Caldas, savages “are unsettled, with no other arts than hunting and fishing, with no laws other than their own, who remain independent through their barbarity, and who have no other virtue than not having some of the vices of civilized societies.” From Caldas, *Op Cit.* p. 188.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ See “Creole Pioneers” in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983).

comprise a significant intelligentsia as compared to North America.⁷ Historian Victor Uribe's excellent social history of lawyers and their participation in the Colombian independence movements to some extent refutes this view when he reminds us that indeed there was a small but vibrant intellectual elite community in New Granada made up primarily of *criollo* lawyers and their families.⁸ The intellectual activities of *criollo* men went beyond a focus on the letter of the law, however. Many relationships in these social networks, which ultimately were political networks, were cemented through scientific activity in late colonial New Granada polite society.

Criollo interest in a European approach to geography and natural sciences was sparked by José Celestino Mutis's Botanical Expedition and Alexander von Humboldt and Aimee Bonpland's scientific expedition to New Granada. Growing scientific and intellectual exchange took place mostly in Bogotá, the Viceroyalty's capital, where *tertulias* were regularly held during the end of the 18th century and into the 19th century.⁹ Many participants of these *tertulias* published scientific and literary essays not only in Caldas's *Semanario* but also in other publications such as the *Papel periódico de Santafé de Bogotá*, and more political weeklies like *La Bagatela*. While these journals and newspapers restricted public intellectual printed discourse to male participants, the *tertulias* allowed for some elite *criolla* female participation precisely because they were held in private homes. Some of the more well-known *tertulias* from this period include "El Buen Gusto," hosted by Manuela Sanz de Santamaría and Prieto de Manrique,

⁷ Ibid, pg. 48.

⁸ Victor Uribe, *Honorable Lives: Lawyers, Family, Society and Politics in Colombia 1780-1850. A social history of the legal community of late colonial and early republican Colombia* (Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000).

⁹ *Tertulias* were informal reunions in private homes that facilitated the discussion of intellectual, cultural, scientific, and political ideas. For how *tertulias* fomented the diffusion of scientific thought in Ibero America, see Diana Elvira Soto Arango, *Recepción y difusión de la producción científica, filosófica y política Ilustrada en España, Portugal y América colonial* (Aranjuez, Espana: Doce Calles, 2003).

“Eutropélica,” hosted by Manuel Socorro de Rodríguez at the Biblioteca Pública Real, and “El Arcano de la Filantropía” and “Casino Literario” both hosted by Antonio Nariño in his private, and substantially large library.¹⁰

The mores and activities surrounding New Granada scientific sociability created layer upon layer of unwritten rules with respect to who was worthy of trust, who could be honored by having their work printed and read, and who was credited with scientific discoveries.¹¹ As noted above, the printed scientific journals of the early nineteenth century tended to exclude women from participation in public printed discourse, though their membership in elite polite society could not be totally denied by *criollo* men. And women were not the only social group whose intellectual capacities and knowledge were ignored and/or excluded both by the activities and discriminating discourses of 19th century scientific societies in New Granada.¹² *Criollos* and Europeans systematically excluded indigenous participation in the generation of territorial knowledge through scientific discourse.¹³

Indigenous Andean populations possessed vast amounts of knowledge concerning territory, resources and local medicines as a result of their inherited and personal

¹⁰ Participants in these tertulias included: Jorge Tadeo Lozano, Pedro Fermín de Vargas, Camilo Torres, Francisco José de Caldas, Simon Bolívar, Sinforoso Mutis, Jose Maria Cabal, Francisco Antonio Zea, and others.

¹¹ For the effects of sociability and trust on the generation of scientific knowledge see: Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

¹² See Nancy Duncan ed. *Body Space: destabilizing geographies of gender and sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1996) and Nina Baym, *American women of letters and the nineteenth-century sciences: styles of affiliation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

¹³ For European and indigenous knowledge in the sciences, see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); David Turnbull, *Masons, Tricksters, and Cartographers: Comparative Studies in the Sociology of Scientific and Indigenous Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2003).

knowledge of the places they inhabited.¹⁴ New Granada *criollos* like Caldas had learned of the kinds of natural resources available in New Granada through generations of interactions between indigenous populations and Europeans. Despite these larger cultural interactions and transfers of local knowledge, official scientific knowledge and geographic conventions were generated exclusively within small social circles that did not credit the territorial knowledge of people outside of these cliques. This exclusion was not innocent. Erasing indigenous knowledge justified, in part, European efforts to assert authority over native populations and their territories.

One way in which indigenous knowledge was explicitly discriminated against and devalued was through print. Print by its very nature was exclusionary not only because a small percentage of the population was literate in the printed European languages, but also because even fewer people had access to the printing presses that allowed the spread of particular views. Respected scientists like Caldas used the printing press to disseminate his scientific findings and knowledge, findings that continually asserted indigenous savagery and barbarity.¹⁵

For instance, in 1809 the *Semanario* announced a scientific essay writing competition on climate and production in New Granada. Caldas' award-winning "Memoria" essay considered that it was necessary to "use our faculties, correspond with the beneficial intentions of nature, and leave the embarrassing apathy of savage nations in order to rise up to the same level of civilized, agricultural, industrious and happy

¹⁴ For studies on colonial indigenous healing practices: Martha Few, *Women Who Live Evil Lives: Gender, Religion and the Politics of Power in Colonial Guatemala, 1650-1750* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2002); Jorge Cañizares Esguerra, "New World, New Stars: Patriotic Astrology and the Invention of Indian and Creole Bodies in Colonial Spanish America, 1600-1650" *The American Historical Review*, 104 (1) Feb. 1999, 33-68; Joseph W. Bastien, *Healers of the Andes: Kallawaya Herbalists and their Medicinal Plants* (Utah: University Press of Utah, 1987).

¹⁵ See above, fnt 4.

countries.”¹⁶ Anxious about whether or not New Granada was a civilized nation, Caldas argued that hard work and scientific study would work in harmony with ‘the Creator’s’ nature to overcome its savagery, a savagery that was linked to *criollo* understandings of New Granada’s original inhabitants.

Caldas continued his essay by announcing that he would “fijar” or fix what New Granada should produce for the world market. His ‘fixing’ of these recommendations was linked to his ‘fixing’ the geographic position of the astronomical observatory in Bogotá.¹⁷ The authority he gained by knowing how to use geographic sciences to accurately position new Granada in the world gave him the authority to suggest also what New Granada should produce for that world. “When I throw my eyes over all the provinces that make up the viceroyalty and when I register the natural productions of all of its climates, I am presented with many products worthy of preference.”¹⁸ This opening literary technique creates an authorial persona with a direct, unmediated vision of all of New Granada’s territory, resources, and production. We can trust Caldas’ knowledge because he has seen it with his own eyes. Caldas’ literary style also effectively erases the indigenous knowledge that made tobacco, cacao, quinine, cinnamon, cotton, cochineal, emeralds, and amethysts, among other resources known and usable by Europeans and *criollos* like Caldas.

¹⁶ Alfredo D. Bateman *Francisco José de Caldas, el hombre y el sabio, su vida-su obra* (Bogotá: Biblioteca Banco Popular, 1978).

¹⁷ Caldas calculated the astronomical observatory to be at 4° 36’ 6” N Latitude and 4h 32’ 14” West of the Royal observatory of the island of León. The difference between the León Observatory and Greenwich, according to Caldas was 6°11’52”.5. Caldas’ calculations placed the longitude of the Bogotá observatory at 74°15’22”.5 from Greenwich. Current measurements place the observatorio at Lat: 4°35’56”.7 N, Long: 74° 04’51’.3 W. See Bateman, *Op. Cit.* p.212. For role of fixed points in the 19th century, see Raymond Craib, *Cartographic Mexico: A History of State Fixations and Fugitive Landscapes* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004); D. Graham Burnett, *Masters of All they Surveyed: Exploration, Geography and a British El Dorado* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000).

¹⁸ Francisco José de Caldas, *Op. Cit.*

Caldas was respected by his contemporaries because of his knowledge of geographic techniques and his connections to a greater *criollo* - European scientific community. Though emotionally distraught over Humboldt's refusal to invite him on a scientific expedition through South America, Caldas nevertheless carried on correspondence with Humboldt and with other geographers and scientists.¹⁹ José Manuel Restrepo, called Colombia's first historian by President Manuel Marroquín at the turn of the century, drew up several maps and plans of Antioquia in New Granada and consulted their accuracy with Caldas.²⁰ Caldas in 1808 wrote to Restrepo congratulating him on his astronomical and geodetic measurements. He commented to Restrepo that he had shown these maps to José Celestino Mutis, leader of the Botanical Expedition in New Granada. Caldas's letter to Restrepo shows the ways in which cartographic conventions were agreed upon and who was in the position to dictate what these conventions would be.²¹

Caldas wrote to Restrepo that he should draw a new map with the same astronomical and geodetic material. This new map needed to take into account the following suggestions: "Large rivers like the Cauca should be represented by four parallel lines; smaller rivers with three; then two for streams, and one for brooks. The limits of

¹⁹ For the unrequited love between Caldas' and Humboldt see Nieto (work in progress); Caldas – Restrepo correspondence printed in Bateman, *Op Cit.* p. 213. See also: Richard Godbeer, '*The Overflowing of Friendship*': *Love Between Men in Early America*, forthcoming.

²⁰ See: "Mapa de la provincia de Antioquia, en la República de Colombia, por José Manuel Restrepo, año de 1819. Copie d'une carte que Mr. Mollien à porté de son voyage en Colombie, communiqué par Mr. de Humboldt en mars de 1824". Escala: 1:550,000 ca. 70 x 51 cm. Meridiano de Bogotá. AGN, Mapoteca 6, No. 53; Mapa de la provincia de Antioquia de la República de Colombia y de sus minerales formado con arreglo a observaciones astronómicas, rumbos y operaciones geodésicas por el doctor José Manuel Restrepo, secretario de Estado, en el año de 1822. Amplificado y publicado por Carlos Hauswolff, vecino de Antioquia", London, 1824;"Ensayo sobre la geografía, producciones, industria y población de la provincia de Antioquia en el Nuevo Reino de Granada, por el Dr. D. José Manuel Restrepo, abogado de la Real Audiencia de Santafé de Bogotá". En Semanario de la Nueva Granada, Paris, 1849, Vol. 1, pp.194-226.

²¹ For how map symbols work see: Denis Wood, *The Power of Maps* (London: Guilford Press, 1992).

the provinces like this: -.-.-. and road ways like this: The places fixed by astronomical observations for latitude should be indicated by a little star.”²² Besides critiquing Restrepo’s use of map symbols, Caldas also suggested what the information he needed to include on the map. “You do not have longitude points,” he observed. “You do not explain the physical aspects of the country; it is necessary to signal with symbols the salt, iron and marble mines...The difficult places of transit on the Cauca that you describe in your beautiful letter to me must be carefully indicated on the map.” Caldas has one simple, but important solution: “Increase the scale and all will be remedied.”²³

Private correspondence among a small circle of European and *criollo* elites, social gatherings in private homes where scientific and geographic ideas were discussed, and printed essays and treatises in European languages all worked to generate the conventions that described, delimited and claimed New Granada’s territory in specific ways. The social activities where these conventions were generated excluded members of the New Granada population with legitimate territorial claims, most notably indigenous populations, but also the ethnically mixed lower classes that worked plots of land.

Caldas may have been the only person to have submitted an essay for review to the *Semanario*’s essay contest, but he was by no means the only *criollo* or European to engage in the erasure of indigenous knowledge and contributions. Caldas formed part of a much larger social and cultural network that spanned temporal and geographic

²² Bateman, *Op Cit.* p. 213.

²³ Ibid. See also: "Mapa de la provincia de Antioquia, en la República de Colombia, por José Manuel Restrepo, año de 1819. Copie d'une carte que Mr. Mollien à porté de son voyage en Colombie, communiqué par Mr. de Humboldt en mars de 1824". Escala: 1:550,000 ca. 70 x 51 cm. Meridiano de Bogotá. AGN, Mapoteca 6, No. 53.

boundaries. From Columbus' ship log to Alexander Von Humboldt's geographic histories, Caldas belonged to a cultural tradition that systematically drew strict distinctions between rational and irrational, civilized and savage. The members of this network were mostly literate men who left behind letters and diaries, published articles in journals in European derived languages, and drew maps with European scientific conventions. The majority of these materials were stored in archives, reprinted in subsequent newspapers, journals and books, and read and re-read by generations of interested audiences. These are the men who are remembered in national histories.

Joanne Rappaport's *The Politics of Memory* on Paez historical interpretation in the Colombian Andes reminds us how the historical profession in Colombia has furthered specific political goals. "Anxious to define an identity for the new Colombian nation, as well as to acquire empirical support for Colombia's place in the nineteenth-century march of 'progress,' history became an important vocation and academies of history complete with archives were established at the local, regional and national levels."²⁴ Rappaport highlights how Paez historical memory worked through mnemonic devices like local geography and stories about ancestors in ways that explained and justified claims to territory and to inheritance rights. The Andean Paez was not the only ethnic group that linked geography to historical memory for political and territorial ends.

Geographic sciences were at the center of the *Criollo* nineteenth-century historical enterprise because they helped naturalize their ideas about the national territory's extension. Colombian politicians and historians placed an inordinate emphasis on the

²⁴ Joanne Rappaport, *The Politics of Memory: Native historical interpretation in the Colombian Andes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). See also Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* a translation of *Les Mots et les choses* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

enlightened and scientific origins of the independence movements. Colombian politicians from the 19th century on repeatedly referred and deferred to the memory of Caldas in their calls for an accurate national map, a chorographic survey of the country, and improved engineering and surveying education. Caldas became a mythical figure - the founding father of Colombian geography, science, and engineering.

1.2 Re-stating Caldas, re-stating national geographic claims

*“GEOGRAFIA de la Antigua N.G. que hoy forma una considerable parte de la república de Colombia.”*²⁵

The above citation was the title to the selections from Caldas’ *Semanario* that were re-printed in 1822 by the *Gaceta de Colombia*, the first official national newspaper to be issued by what historians now call Gran Colombia.²⁶ The *Gaceta*, no doubt the longest running periodical in Colombia, chronicled the dramatic territorial and regime changes that occurred in the Northwestern region of South America during the nineteenth century.²⁷ The *Gaceta* was owned and operated by the national Colombian state and represented the interests of the government officials in power. Members of congress and those associated with the executive power of the nation decided what to include in the *Gaceta*.

The *Gaceta*’s writers claimed that one clear indicator of Colombia’s status as a civilized, independent nation was its possession of printing presses. “Once Colombia proclaimed the rights which it sustained with such glory when confronting its adverse

²⁵ Editor’s introduction to “Geografía” in *Gaceta de Colombia*, April 14, 1822 (Bogotá: Imprenta de Nicomedes Lora).

²⁶ República de Colombia is the current official name of Colombia and was also the name of a country that referred to a larger land mass and different political organization that ran from 1821-1830.

²⁷ The *Gaceta de Colombia* ran from 1821- 1831. The title was changed to *Gaceta de la Nueva Granada* (1831-1848), *Gaceta Oficial*, (1848-1861) *Registro Oficial* (1861-1863) and finally to its current name, *Diario Oficial* (1864-present).

fortune, its papers have multiplied and through them the lights of enlightenment are disseminated and the system consolidated.”²⁸ The *Gaceta* was not the only paper in Colombia, nor did it wish to suppress the presence of other national papers. On the contrary, the *Gaceta* proudly touted the increasing presence of newspapers in the different regions of the country. “The abundance of printing presses and newspapers is the barometer by which a country’s progress towards enlightenment is made known.”²⁹

These efforts to prove Colombia’s civilization through a recounting of the number of presses in the nation drowned out the fact *Gaceta* was not printed by a brand new national printing press. The Colombian official newspaper was printed on a press which also had been used by the Spanish royal government to publish colonial official business.³⁰ Nicomedes Lora was the printer that owned the press that generated the *Gaceta*. Printers like Lora could more easily distribute the paper as official state business because these men were already familiar with the process. They had the infrastructure for distribution set up through the post office lines of the colonial period.

Perhaps there is some historical irony intertwined in the fact that the printing press used for the *Gaceta* was the same press that printed the “Boletín del Ejército Expedicionario,” the news bulletin issued by the Spanish army charged with reconquering the rebel colonies of New Granada and Venezuela. From 1811-1814 the colonial state used Nicomedes Lora’s press to publish their own official news as the

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ “Papeles Públicos” in *Gaceta de Colombia*, No 24, trimestre 2, March 31, 1822.

³⁰ Nicomedes Lora was one of a handful of printers in colonial New Granada. Much work still needs to be done on print culture history in Colombia. Tarciso Higuera B., *La Imprenta en Colombia, 1737-1970* (Bogotá: Instituto Nacional de Provisiones “INALPRO”, 1970) Higuera drew up a partial list of typographers from the late 18th and early 19th centuries in New Granada. They included: Bruno Espinosa de los Monteros, Diego Espinosa de los Monteros, Francisco Javier Garcia de Miranda, José Maria Rios, Juan Rodríguez Molano, Felip Fernandez, Nicomedes Lora, José Manuel Galagarza, J.A. Cualla. These nine individuals all apprenticed under Antonio Espinosa de los Monteros.

Spanish officials advanced against the insurgents. Pablo Morillo, commander of the Spanish Crown's Ejército Expedicionario, ended his *Boletines* with reports about the insurgents that army had captured, those it executed, and those whose remains had been impaled and displayed after execution.³¹ Francisco José de Caldas had been one of the men executed by the Spanish Ejército Expedicionario. Re-printing Caldas' *Semanario* in the *Gaceta* on Lora's press worked to commemorate the geographer's work and martyrdom, emphasize the Spanish Crown's barbarity, legitimate Colombia's independence from that barbarity, and assert Colombia's place among an international and civilized community of nations. After all, Caldas himself had stated that "The measure of a pueblo's enlightenment, commerce, agriculture, and prosperity is the level at which its geographic knowledge finds itself. Its stupidity and barbarity are proportionately equal to its ignorance on this point."³²

The editors of the *Gaceta* introduced their re-printing of the *Semanario* by stating that "At these times, when Colombia has opened her relations with all the other countries of the earth, it is convenient that she be known by them, not only for her triumphs, for her laws and her politics, but also for her position, riches, and natural advantages."³³ The editors invited all those who loved Colombia and wished to see it prosper (namely, those who could and did read the *Gaceta*) to submit geographic, statistical, or any other information that could make some part of the Republic's territory known.³⁴ Such an invitation was one of many strategies used by early Gran Colombian government leaders

³¹ Exmo. Sor D Pablo Morillo, General en Gefe del Ejército Expedicionario, "Cuartel General de Santafe 18 de Julio de 1816" in *Ejército Expedicionario Boletín* no. 33 (Santafe: Imprenta del gobierno, por Nicomedes Lora, 1816).

³² Francisco José de Caldas "Estado de la Geografía" in *Semanario de la Nueva Granada* No. 1 January 3, 1808.

³³ "Geografía. De la Antigua N.G. que hoy forma una considerable parte de la república de Colombia" in *Gaceta de Colombia*, March 31, 1822. Trimestre 2, No. 24.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

in an effort to confirm an already existing national territory. All that had to be done was gather geographic information about it. In order to organize the geographic information that the state already had up until that point, the Colombian government issued a decree meant to form an archive of geographic maps, hydrographic charts, observations and any other important information for the formation of the general map of Colombia.³⁵

The *Gaceta* justified its re-printing of Caldas' New Granada geography not just because it sought international recognition, but also because this territory officially formed a significant part of Colombia according to national laws. New Granada's place in Colombia had been legally established by "*Ley Fundamental de la Unión de los Pueblos de Colombia*."³⁶ According to the *Ley*, the territory of Colombia "will be that which comprehends the former Captaincy General of Venezuela and the Viceroyalty of the New Kingdom of Granada whose extension reaches 115,000 square leagues and whose precise limits will be fixed under better circumstances."³⁷ The framers of the *Ley Fundamental* were vague about delimiting the territorial bounds of the new republic, but did not state the reasons for this imprecision.

Pedro Acevedo y Tejada's 1825 elementary school geography primer did enter into a detailed explanation for this lack of specificity. His "Noticia sobre la Geografía Política de Colombia" explained that the constitutional congress of 1821 was right to postpone Colombia's precise limits. "Colombia has ... an immense border that passes

³⁵ "Decreto sobre formación de un depósito de cartas jeográficas, hidrográficas, observaciones y demás noticias importantes para la formación de la carta jeneral de Colombia" (Bogotá, 29 de noviembre de 1823). En *Gaceta de Colombia*, Bogotá, No. 112, December 7, 1823, p.1.

³⁶ Congreso General, "Ley Fundamental de la Unión de los Pueblos de Colombia" in *Gaceta de Colombia* No 1, September 6, 1821. "Pueblo" has several meanings in Spanish that are difficult to translate into English. They include: nation, country, the people, and a population.

³⁷ "Ley fundamental de la República de Colombia" published in the *Gaceta de Colombia* and in Miguel Antonio Pombo and Jose Joaquin Guerra, *Constituciones de Colombia* (Bogotá: Biblioteca Popular de Cultura Colombiana, 1959) V. 3, p. 36.

through unknown territories where neighboring powers also lose their limits. No interested party could make a demarcation without clashing with justice or with the pretensions of another interested party, or without sacrificing its own interests.”³⁸ General Francisco de Paula Santander, Colombia’s vice president, included Acevedo y Tejada’s elementary geography primer in the public education plan he submitted to Congress in 1826. Acevedo y Tejada based his text on the laws of Colombia, and he explicitly stated that the content of the primer was inspired on the geographic thought and writings of Caldas.³⁹

The *Gaceta* editors, much like Acevedo and Tejada, clearly believed that while Colombia waited to fix its precise limits, general public knowledge about geographic information was indispensable for Colombia. Probably it was this concern that led them, only seven months after inaugurating the official weekly newspaper, to begin re-publishing the excerpts from the *Semanario de la Nueva Granada*. Re-printing Caldas’ territorial descriptions in official newspapers and elementary primers re-asserted official political control over the territory had Caldas described. These claims were made for a Colombia that was no longer under Spanish rule, and one that, despite these efforts, was not going to maintain its territorial composition beyond 1830.

1.3 Geographic knowledge of the Colombian state

Nevertheless, before, and perhaps in an attempt to brace against dissolution, the *Gaceta*, and, by extension, the early Colombian regime was primarily concerned with the

³⁸ Pedro Acevedo Tejada, *Noticia sobre la Geografía Política de Colombia* (Imprenta Española de M. Calero, 1825)

³⁹ José Agustín Blanco Barros, “La Ciencia Geográfica en la historia de Colombia” in *Antecedentes Históricos del Trabajo Geográfico*, www.sogeocol.com.co (Sept 30, 2005).

business building an independent state. This overarching concern involved several concrete problems, including: the establishment of authority of a national government based in Bogotá, taking stock of the totality of the national territory, determining internal territorial divisions, calculating the population density of the different provinces with an eye towards controlling local elections, taking inventory of available and marketable natural resources, establishing a mechanism for the possession and sale of state lands, and figuring out what to do with uncivilized Indians and indigenous *resguardos*. For most of the early nineteenth century, government officials considered that science and especially geography were the most effective and civilized ways to promote progress towards solving these problems. Nation-building was a scientific, ‘civilized’ enterprise promoted through print.

Jose Manuel Restrepo’s 1824 address to Congress was perhaps one of the more eloquent speeches to address these concerns. Restrepo, as Secretary of the Interior, reminded the legislators why scientific education and geographic sciences were indispensable for Colombia. This former student of Caldas observed that that the reason why Colombia was so behind in enlightenment thought was because of “the barbarous determination with which Ruiz de Castilla, Boves y Morales, Morillo, Enrile y Sámano assassinated the most enlightened men we had in Quito, Venezuela and New Granada...Another generation of enlightened men must replace them as soon as possible, and the legislative body should not spare resources or sacrifices in this endeavor.”⁴⁰

Restrepo argued for an educational revolution parallel to the political revolution they had just undergone. Colombia needed men who were knowledgeable in all of the branches of

⁴⁰ Ibid.

science, government, and administration for the country to prosper and this could only happen through education.⁴¹ As we saw above, geographic education through elementary primers was one way the newly independent government tried to accomplish these goals.

The Colombian government proved too poor to implement significant education reform measures in the 1820s. Restrepo was aware of the economic difficulties of the Colombian state and offered solutions to Congress. He considered that part of the problem was related to the inadequate ways in which the state administered the one most significant source of potential wealth: its public lands. “The vast territory of Colombia, with its variety of climates, has an inexhaustible fund of public lands which represent wealth for the government and prosperity for the people.”⁴² Restrepo congratulated Congress for passing laws to regulate the sale and survey of public lands. Still, Restrepo considered these laws had several problems. First, the price per *fanegada*, or unit of saleable public land was too high. Private property holders were required to register the lands they claimed with the state before the end of four years or they would risk losing possession of it. Finally, the laws regulating public lands called for a general surveying office in Bogotá with corresponding branches in the local governments of the provinces. These stipulations made public land laws unpopular and the national executive refused to enforce them until they were reformed.⁴³

Restrepo explained that a unified national price for public lands did not make sense because the mountainous topography of Colombia necessarily varied the amount of

⁴¹ For Colombia’s push to form a technical elite, see: Frank Safford, *The ideal of the practical: Colombia’s search for a Technical Elite* (Austin: Austin University Press, 1976) and Pamela Murray, *Dreams of development: Colombia’s National School of Mines and its Engineers, 1887-1970* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997).

⁴² Restrepo “Exposición” pg. 11.

⁴³ Ibid.

work a surveyor did in order to measure specific plots. Furthermore, surveyors were hard to come by and expensive in 1824. Restrepo also recommended to Congress that it lower the cost of registering public lands as well as the cost of surveying lands for private holders. Even if none of these reforms were adopted, Restrepo made one last plea in the name of private landholders: they had to be allowed six years to register their landed properties instead of only four.

Restrepo made it clear to Congress that he did not want surveying efforts to cease. He observed, “It is evident that the office of general surveys in the capital of Bogotá must subsist and must be organized to perfection as well as the local offices in the provinces so that the government’s public lands can be surveyed and registered.”⁴⁴ Restrepo predicted that once surveyed, cities would develop in areas “where only beasts live now.” Public lands had to be surveyed and registered so they could be sold to immigrants that would colonize and civilize them. Restrepo’s recommendation was echoed by government leaders throughout the early nineteenth century in Colombia. These subsequent leaders, much like Restrepo, considered that the fund of public lands was “*inagotable*,” or inexhaustible, and that they would be attractive to European settlers. All that had to be done was measure and register these lands. Again, something easier said than done. The logistics of surveying lands in the 1820s were complicated by the fact that such an endeavor required adequate training and regulating of *agrimensores*, or surveyors. In the 1820s very few people had been trained in this trade.

1.4 The Citizen is grounded in the State

⁴⁴ Ibid., pg. 12.

The Colombian constitution based electoral logistics on two major factors: the internal political division of the country and population census. Acevedo y Tejada in his efforts to educate future citizens taught his readers that the constitution of Colombia divided its territory “into departments, these into provinces, and the provinces into cantons and the cantons into parishes.”⁴⁵ Acevedo y Tejada quoted directly from the June 23, 1824 territorial division law in order to explain that the country was legally divided into 12 departments. The same law Acevedo y Tejada quoted from also endowed the executive power with the right to “provisionally fix the limits of the cantons created by this law.”⁴⁶ Despite these provisions, Congress still considered that the executive power needed to “commission the maps and acquire the news and knowledge necessary for the congress to decide definitively on the limits of the departments, provinces and cantons.”⁴⁷ The executive power’s ability to enforce this law was as limited as his ability to enforce the survey of public lands law. Again, *agrimensores* were needed to draw up the maps that would reflect accurate political divisions. Furthermore, engaging in changes to the political divisions of the country had immediate and concrete effects on the lifeblood of the new republic, elections.

The Gaceta de Colombia, always looking to prepare the nation for its inclusion among an international community of civilized countries had published the results of the census it took in 1822. The Gaceta’s explained that its calculations were based on the reports that each deputy of each province had presented to Congress. This census was done prior to the 1824 territorial division law and so contemplated a population for

⁴⁵ Pedro Acevedo y Tejada, Op.Cit. pg 27-28.

⁴⁶ Art 17 of “Interior Congreso: El senado y cámara de representantes de la república de Colombia reunidos en congreso...Dado en Bogotá a 23 de junio de 1824” Gaceta de Colombia, July 4, 1824, No 142. (Bogotá: Imprenta de la Nación)

⁴⁷ Ibid.

twenty-three provinces and seven departments. The reason the census was taken was of course not just to present its population to a community of nations. The Colombian government needed to figure out the population of Colombia in order to carry out the logistics of government, namely, how many senators and representatives from what areas needed to be elected to Congress.⁴⁸

Restrepo considered that the way in which the census information had been gathered in 1822 was inadequate. He accused the deputies of carrying out approximate guesswork, a fact that was inevitable considering that war and the desolation caused by warfare made population counts uncertain. “We need a census in 1825 so that in the elections of 1826 the representatives can be elected rigorously according to the bases fixed in our constitution. Congress must fix the rules for the census and it seems it would be enough for the census to be repeated every ten years as other nations do it.”⁴⁹

Restrepo observed that indeed, the 1822 census did not count indigenous populations that had not been “reduced” to civilization. He cited the estimated population of these people to be around 200,000 people. He suggested to congress that more missionaries were necessary so that the segment of the indigenous population that had a “propensity to be civilized” could be reduced to *poblados* and eventually be counted.⁵⁰

The proposed reforms Restrepo had presented to Congress, Caldas’ re-printed geographic depictions, the *Ley Fundamental*, the territorial division law, and the census had one thing in common: they were all printed by the national press. These items were not the only news that the National press considered fit to print. The *Gaceta* also printed

⁴⁸ “República de Colombia” in *Gaceta de Colombia*, Febrero 10, 1822 issue no 17.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Restrepo, *Op.Cit.* pg 16.

letters to its readers asking them to write in with their suggestions, proposals and thoughts on the inner workings of government.

As Hilda Sabato reminds us, throughout early nineteenth-century Latin America, public opinion – as the expression of the unitary will of the people – became a crucial aspect for the formation of the modern representative system and in the processes of nation building.⁵¹ Sabato argues that Latin American enlightenment elites believed public opinion as expressed through the press and through suffrage were the only two alternatives to the old, Spanish forms of legitimating rule: violence and tradition. This emerging concept of citizenship also required one more element for it to be functional in Colombia. A citizen had to be counted in order to be represented. The counting of citizens was linked to the ways the country was divided politically. A citizen had to belong to a particular parish, which had to be in a specific canton that in turn was encompassed by a province that was in one of the departments that formed the nation-state of Colombia. In short, Colombia's republican form of government depended on the concept of a citizen who occupied a space in the national territory. For this representative form of government to work, the Colombian government needed to know how to best divide its territory so that the logistics of elections could function and the institutions of government could reach its citizens. The new representative government installed after independence necessarily called for a new political conception of space.

How to best conceive of that space was determined in part by the kind of geographic knowledge that Caldas had inspired in his *Semanario*. As we saw above, in order to have as many people understand and follow this ethnically European form of

⁵¹ For enlightenment thought and the construction of the citizen as concept in Latin America see Hilda Sabato "On Political Citizenship in nineteenth Century Latin America," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 106, No.4.

geographic knowledge, national state makers re-printed selections from the *Semanario* in the *Gaceta*. The *Gaceta*, as a printed forum, was one site where public opinion could most readily be expressed and solicited, albeit only from those members of the population who were literate in European languages. The *Gaceta* did not only seek reader participation and comment by asking for submissions of geographic information. It also sought direct intervention from its reading public in matters of state.

For instance in November 1823, the *Gaceta* appealed to the *Pueblos de Colombia* to “lend ideas, promote beneficial institutions, convenient establishments, and contribute to the grand work of your prosperity.”⁵² Congress was going to discuss several political projects in the legislature in order to give them force of law. The *Gaceta* stated that the representatives needed the opinions of the experienced citizens of Colombia. “Nothing would have been as consoling to the representatives of your rights as the opportune cooperation of your talents, your observations and your criticism. Wise advice from experience transmitted through print was the torch that they waited for earnestly in order to walk on the right path.”⁵³ The *Gaceta* reassured its readers that it was still not too late. The legislature was going to meet and discuss several projects, thirty-three of which the *Gaceta* included for public perusal and opinion. The *Gaceta*, through these kinds of articles, tried to promote the enlightened ideal of a republican government. The ideal republican government was supposed to be open to public participation in political processes through public opinion.

A comparison of the thirty-three projects of the 1823 *Gaceta* printed with the 1824 report Restrepo made to Congress helps us better understand what the priorities of

⁵² *Gaceta de Colombia* Nov 9 1823 no. 103.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

each branch of government were at this time. Congress placed a greater emphasis on the relationship between the Church and the State than the executive branch. The Executive power, on the other hand was more concerned about public lands, building roads, education, and reducing indigenous tribes to civilization. Of the twenty or so points Restrepo brought to the attention of Congress, and of the thirty-three points the *Gaceta* brought to the attention of the reading public, only four points were considered by both: reforming the law manumitting slaves, reforming the internal territorial divisions, reforming the census, and how to efficiently administer justice.⁵⁴

The *Gaceta* was explicit that its printing of these 33 points was intrinsic to the creation and furthering of a representative government that takes public opinion in to account. Restrepo also seemed aware of the impact his printed words had not only in Congress, but on the reading public. He closed his speech exclaiming, “May the observations of the executive power serve in some way the unique and sublime goal of representative government!” The fact that both branches of government grappled with the problems of an unclear territorial division and fuzzy census data reveals the common interest they shared in grounding citizens in the state.

Print played an important role in developing a citizenship that was aware of the internal workings of government. These citizens, of course, had to be literate. Considering that only a small percentage of the men who were considered legally citizens were literate in the first place, the role of the press in generating an informed and engaged citizenry was nevertheless severely limited. These limits were extended even further by censorship and printed battles that went on in and between newspapers. Censorship of the printing press was not an unheard of practice in early republican Colombia. One

⁵⁴ Restrepo, Op.Cit. and “Interior” Op. Cit. in *Gaceta*.

example of how the regime in power restricted public opinion was through its criticism of the fliers that questioned or threatened the authority of the national government.

'El Noticioso' generated uproar among Colombian government officials because it brought to light some of the disagreements between members of Congress and the executive power especially concerning the union of the Colombian republic. In defense of the union, the *Gaceta* proclaimed, "We need to repeat once more that the law of the free press is not, nor can it be, a safe haven for the airing of pernicious passions that introduce an unjust lack of confidence between the nation and the powers of government or that generate lasting false and alarming propositions."⁵⁵ The *Gaceta* attempted public opinion damage control. It addressed each point *El Noticioso* made and systematically construed each point as unfavorable for the good of the union and/or completely untrue. For instance, *el Noticioso's* claim that Gran Colombia was "oppressing the nation and depriving it of the fruit of its sacrifices"⁵⁶ was criticized by the *Gaceta* through the words of the Vice President, Francisco de Paula Santander in his inaugural address to the nation: "the good harmony that should reign between the executive and legislative powers...is present so that the happiness of Colombia can be achieved and that the precious treasure of its independence and liberty can remain intact."⁵⁷

With the memory of the Spanish reconquista not far behind them, leaders at the national level believed that the mere idea of a Colombian fragmentation as suggested by *El Noticioso* threatened the stability of their newly gained independence. The *Gaceta* closed its criticisms of *El Noticioso's* excesses by re-stating its authority for doing so. "We are authorized to make these declarations because we take care in maintaining the

⁵⁵ *Gaceta de Colombia* october 27, 1823 no. 106.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

good name of the representatives of the people, the consolidation of the republic, and to the justice that the nation's officials deserve as they seek to fulfill their obligations and ascertain the good for their constituents.”⁵⁸

The *Gaceta's* piece on *El Noticioso* was one example of the kind of national-level anxieties about the suspicions and resentments that worked against the Gran Colombian union. The weak Bogotá-centered regime generated enough resentment among the pueblos of Colombia, that by 1830, the *Gaceta's* printed efforts to brace against dissolution proved useless.

1.4 New Granada remembers Caldas

The 1830 dissolution of Colombia into Venezuela, Nueva Granada, and Ecuador also resulted in some important changes to the geographic print culture of the Colombian nation. Two of the most obvious changes were that Acevedo y Tejada's geography primer was rendered obsolete and the *Gaceta de Colombia*, though still printed on the nation's press, became the *Gaceta de la Nueva Granada*. The dissolution of Colombia did not dampen the geographic aspirations of the political leaders and military men that remained in each new country. Venezuela, perhaps in its anxious attempts to assert territorial integrity apart from New Granada, commissioned a mapping expedition of the new national territory. The leader of this expedition was Italian engineer, Agustín Codazzi.

Scientific men that inhabited New Granada, the territory over which Caldas had thrown his eyes, were generating the circumstances that would allow New Grandada to finally draw its international and internal limits. Close to one hundred maps, elementary

⁵⁸ Ibid.

geographies, geographic reports and travel narratives were printed in New Granada from 1830-1850.⁵⁹ Joaquin Acosta, military general, was one of the most prolific geographers during the decade of 1840. He also was one of the most important individuals in New Granada's effort to keep Caldas' work and memory alive. In 1849 Acosta reprinted the *Semanario* in Paris, a fact that allowed for even greater dissemination of Caldas' work into the present day. Even though the New Granada government had a printing press, the numbers of copies that could be generated by that press could never match the amount of printed documents that could be produced in Paris.⁶⁰

Generations of subsequent politicians, historians, libraries, schools and private citizens based part of the Colombian national foundation myth on the martyrdom of Francisco José de Caldas. Sixty years after independence, in an effort to generate national sentiment, chauvinist histories became a popular genre what was then called Estados Unidos de Colombia. An example of this literature is Constancio Franco V's *Rasgos biográficos de los próceres i mártires importantes de la Independencia*.⁶¹ Franco's biographical sketch of Caldas was supposedly based on primary documents and it

⁵⁹ Efraín Sánchez, Gobierno y Geografía: Agustín Codazzi y la Comisión Corográfica de la Nueva Granada, Apéndices Bibliográficos (Bogotá: Biblioteca Luis Angel Arango, http://64.233.187.104/search?q=cache:H6JUaanJXCKJ:www.banrep.gov.co/blaavirtual/letra-c/codazzi/geograf.htm+Caldas+Nueva+Granada+1830&hl=en&lr=lang_en|lang_fr|lang_de|lang_es, Sept 30, 2005)

⁶⁰ Marco Palacios and Frank Safford also argue that there was a certain amount of status for New Granada intellectuals who printed materials in Paris. See Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)

⁶¹ Constancio Franco V, *Rasgos biográficos de los próceres i mártires importantes de la Independencia*. (Bogotá: Villegas Editores, 2004). Franco's list of founding fathers includes: Simon Bolivar, Antonio Nariño, Francisco de Paula Santander, Francisco José de Caldas, Camilo Torres, José Maria Córdoba, Francisco Antonio Zea, Rafael Cuervo, José Maria Castillo Rada, Antonio Ricaurte, José Maria Cabal, Diego Padilla, Policarpa Salavarrieta, Antonio Morales Galavis, Manuel Piar, Francisco J. Yáñez, Antonio José de Sucre. Many of these individuals belonged to the *tertulias* of the turn of the century and/or published articles in literary and/or scientific journals.

included the last moments that led up to Caldas' execution.⁶² Despite his claims to historical accuracy, the scene Franco sets, the physical expressions he describes and the dramatic dialogue exchanged between the executioner and Caldas are decidedly novelesque. It was because of Franco's biography that Caldas earned the nickname, "El Sabio Caldas."⁶³

According to Franco, after Caldas was captured by Morillo, he was brought to Bogotá where,

"no one believed that Spanish barbarity would go so far as to deprive the scientific world of one of the most luminous geniuses the letters could have counted on. El Sabio was left subject to the malevolent Enrile, who in turn handed Caldas over to a tribunal made up of brutal men without guilt... This tribunal condemned the apostle to suffer capital punishment! Upon receiving notice of the sentence, this just man, radiant of light and of science, smiled sweetly and exclaimed with presence of mind, 'All right.' A few moments later, he addressed Enrile and asked him to suspend the execution for a few days in order to correct some astronomical calculations. That fierce tyrant responded to the pleas of the martyr with the following words: 'Spain does not need sabios, the sentence will be executed without delay.'"⁶⁴

Franco concludes Caldas' biography which he had entitled "Francisco José de Caldas (Sabio)" by describing the intellectual and moral virtues of Caldas and how all of América mourned his death. "Over the tomb of that illustrious martyr was erected the Republic that launched the name of the victim to the regions of immortality."⁶⁵

The Gaceta de Colombia was therefore one of the first forums that invoked Caldas' memory, and it did so as part of a larger effort to legitimate the territorial expanse and national foundations of the Colombian state that had been won from the Spanish Crown. Obviously, the Gaceta would not be the last to do so. Franco's

⁶² "En posesion de un gran acopio de documentos, impresos e inéditos, emprendí mi tarea, desconfiando de mis fuerzas intelectuales en atención a la magnitud del asunto, pero impulsado por la conviccion de que, al relatar, aun cuando fué a grandes rasgos, la vida militar i política de los mas preclaros de nuestros patricios, prestaba un servicio a la historia. From "Dos Palabras" in *Ibid*.

⁶³ Sabio means wise, or wise man.

⁶⁴ Constancio Franco V, *Rasgos biográficos de los próceres i mártires importantes de la Independencia*. (Bogotá: Villegas Editores, 2004).

⁶⁵ *Ibid*.

biography of Caldas was later met by commemorative acts of the Geographic Society of Colombia. This society honored the memory of Caldas and Mutis, who, according to the society's foundational decree of 1903, were "the men who first and with most success developed geographic studies in the country."⁶⁶ The Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi, currently the official mapping institute of Colombia, was created in 1935 and according to its general director, Alvaro Gonzalez Fletcher, the purpose of this institute was to "make a reality the scientific and patriotic thought of the sabio Francisco José de Caldas, whose words are etched in stone at the entrance of [the Instituto's] main building."⁶⁷ The most recent example of how Colombian national institutions remember Caldas is the Biblioteca Luis Angel Arango's (BLAA) publication of Franco's biography of Caldas, along with several others, in its virtual library.⁶⁸ Printings, re-printings, the founding of scientific societies and traditions, monuments, and now web-postings serve to remind us of the geographic work and martyrdom of *criollo* scientific men like Caldas.⁶⁹

The different people who at different times commemorated Caldas had one thing in common: ties to the national administration of their time. By honoring Caldas as the first geographer and martyr for the nation, they also gave historical weight to Colombia's geography. This weight carried with it the valorization of conceptions of space that were rooted in the values and beliefs of an upper class *criollo* ethnic group.

⁶⁶ "Decreto de fundación de la Sociedad Geográfica" (No. 809 de 1903 and No. 906 de 1903) in *Boletín de la Sociedad Geográfica de Colombia* (BSGC). Vol. VIII, No 2, 1951-52, pp. 191-192.

⁶⁷ Alvaro Gonzalez Fletcher, "Presentación" in *Instituto Geográfico 'Agustín Codazzi', 1935-1985: Origen Desarrollo y Realizaciones* (Bogotá: Litografía "IGAC", no date).

⁶⁸ See Biblioteca Luis Angel Arango website: <http://www.lablaa.org>.

⁶⁹ For the creation of scientific traditions in Colombia, see: Diana Obregón Torres, *Sociedades Científicas en Colombia: La invención de una tradición, 1859-1936* (Bogotá: Colección Bibliográfica Banco de la República, 1992).