

Chapter 16

AGUSTÍN AGUALONGO AND THE ROYALIST CAUSE IN THE WARS OF INDEPENDENCE

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Inhabitants of the faithful City of Pasto: You have seen and painfully experienced your people's devastation; you have suffered the strongest yoke of the greatest of all tyrannical intruders, Bolívar. It is time for us, faithful Pastusos, to unite our courageous hearts in the defense of Religion, the King, and our Fatherland, because if we stop defending our most sacred rights we will again fall into the hands of the enemies of the Church and Humanity. — Estanislao Merchancano and Agustín Agualongo, June 1823

Pasto is the southern gate, and if we don't have it, we will always be cut off, therefore we need that passage to be clear, without a single enemy in its way. . . . The worst of it is that . . . we have a force of more than 3,000 souls against us—souls made of unbending steel. Since the conquest, no other people has demonstrated more tenacity than they. . . . It's been proven we cannot win over [those wicked ones] and for that reason it is essential to destroy them to their very core. —Simón Bolívar to Colombian Vice President Santander, July 21, 1823

Spain and her empire became embroiled in the wars of the French Revolution by the 1790s, which culminated when the French armies of Napoléon Bonaparte invaded the Iberian Peninsula in 1807. The French occupiers forced the abdication of Spain's King Charles IV and coerced the heir to the throne, Ferdinand, into renouncing his rights to succeed his father on May 6, 1808. The French invaders then placed Joseph Bonaparte, the brother of Napoléon, on the Spanish throne. Many in Spain and the empire saw Joseph as a usurper, and a profound constitutional crisis emerged. A growing number of citizens in the Spanish Empire believed that without a legitimate monarch on the throne, sovereignty returned to the people. Consequently, local groups in Spain and the Indies began establishing a series of governing committees (juntas) in major cities throughout the empire. These juntas were opposed by representatives of the Spanish colonial bureaucracy, who believed that the existing royal governments should rule until the French left Spain. As a result, the political authority of most regional juntas in the Indies was limited, and forming stable alternative governments proved a daunting task. Over time, local Spanish authorities crushed many of these provisional governments in the Indies, while most of the others fell to the armies sent by Ferdinand VII to restore his absolute rule following his restoration to the throne in 1814.

The French invasion of the Iberian Peninsula set in motion a series of political

events that would ultimately culminate in the independence of the Viceroyalty of New Granada by 1821. The first autonomous junta in New Granada formed in Quito in 1809, but Spanish authorities in Bogotá and Lima sent troops that suppressed it just a few months later. Creole groups in Caracas created their own junta in 1810, followed by autonomy movements in Cartagena, Cali, Pamplona, Socorro, and most significantly Bogotá, which supplanted the government of Viceroy Antonio Amar y Borbón on July 20, 1810. In December 1810, the junta of Bogotá convoked a congress of representatives from every province in the viceroyalty, but only six delegates attended, and even they failed to agree on the form of a new government in northern South America. While the rebels squabbled, loyalist groups counterattacked in Popayán, Pasto, and Santa Marta, recruiting large numbers of indigenous people with promises of lower taxes and African slaves with assurances of freedom. These loyalist forces eventually carved out territory along the Caribbean coast, in Pasto and Popayán (in the Andean-Pacific region of New Granada), and in the Magdalena River Valley. By then, Ferdinand had returned to the throne and dispatched sizable numbers of Spanish troops to quell any unrest, and by 1816 most of the region had been pacified. The rebel forces under Simón Bolívar did not rally again until 1819, when dissatisfaction with Spanish repression had reawakened opposition to the colonial regime. Bolívar's victories at Boyacá (1819) and Carabobo (1821) and his lieutenant Antonio José de Sucre's defeat of the loyalists at Pichincha (1822) won the independence of New Granada, which became the core of the new republic of Gran Colombia.

One of the more controversial figures to emerge in the turbulent years of the independence era was a mestizo loyalist leader in the Pasto region, Agustín Agualongo. Colombian nationalist historians have traditionally portrayed Agualongo as a rude, uneducated Indian who represented a fanatical and remote region of the Colombian frontier. These historians present the Pastusos as an ignorant, misguided populace who opposed the progressive, liberal Bolivarian republic that formed after independence. Agualongo's successes in southern Colombia provided disturbing evidence to these nationalists about the strength of loyalist sentiment in the region, demonstrating that independence from Spain was hardly inevitable. Moreover, the Pasto region was no isolated backwater, but rather a strategic food-producing region, supplying the gold mines of the Pacific littoral. Pasto also occupied a pivotal geographic position, at the crossroads between the highlands surrounding the viceregal capital of Bogotá and the Audiencia of Quito to the south.

When word of the creation of the Quito junta in 1809 reached southern Colombia, Popayán's governor, Miguel Tacón, enlarged the loyalist forces by recruiting large numbers of Amerindians with promises of lower tribute payments; he also recruited slaves by offering freedom to any who fought against the rebel forces from Quito. Tacón's policies upset local miners and landowners, who feared the loss of laborers, and they also dismayed regional indigenous leaders resentful of their declining power over local ethnic groups, who left traditional towns and villages to fight in the royalist army. Among those who flocked to the loyalist banner

was a young mestizo painter, Agustín Agualongo, who proved his valor and military savvy in a number of the early battles against insurgent forces, first from Quito and later from other regions of Colombia. Agualongo became a prominent loyalist military and later political leader in southern Colombia, resisting insurgent armies and, after independence, the military forces of Gran Colombia, until he was finally captured and executed on July 10, 1824. Although Agualongo and the royalist forces ultimately suffered defeat, the tenacity of their struggle against the republican forces indicates the political agenda of subaltern groups, who fought for a more inclusive nation that would protect their lands and safeguard their political rights.

Over the past two centuries, Colombian nationalist historians and politicians have viewed the city and region of Pasto, located in the southwest Andean frontier with Ecuador, as disloyal and irrevocably set apart from the rest of the country. This stems in large part from Pasto's stubborn loyalty to the Spanish crown during the independence wars. Pasto's royalism helped make the war in the northern Andes one of the most bitter and long-lasting phases of the independence struggle, as the majority of Pasto's population engaged in a brave but ultimately futile struggle against the diverse insurgent armies that secured Colombia's independence between 1809 and 1824. Even after the Colombian Republic was proclaimed in Pasto, following the defeat of the Spanish army in Bomboná on April 7, 1822, local people still confronted the new republican authorities and posed a serious challenge to the nascent republic. Multiethnic guerrilla forces that had fought in earlier local royalist militias not only threatened the stability of Simón Bolívar's dream of an independent republic of New Granada, they also jeopardized his plans to defeat Spain in the heartland of Spain's South American empire, Peru and Upper Peru. As Bolívar marched southward, he needed to make sure that the rear of his army remained clear of enemies and under the control of his government. But people in Pasto seemed indomitable; their obstinate resistance became a major strategic concern for the Bolivarian army, and the region became a graveyard for all too many of his troops. A major leader in this stubborn struggle of the royalists against Bolívar and his army was the mestizo general Agustín Agualongo.

ROYALISM, AGUSTÍN AGUALONGO, AND THE INDEPENDENCE ERA

Royalism is a contested subject among historians seeking to understand and explain the meaning of the independence wars and the creation of Latin American nations.^[4] Colombian nationalist historians of the nineteenth century characterized Pasto's loyalty to Spain as a critical sign of the region's fanaticism and backwardness. In the nationalistic historical narrative of the period, these concepts became inscribed as an indisputable fact; yet the independence movement that emerged triumphant in South America after almost twenty years of bloody military conflicts had originally been characterized as an "insurgency," battling against a legitimate, sovereign Spain. Once the independence movement attained superior military strength, however, the

independence project and its republican ideals gained territorial and ideological legitimacy. It was then that these historians and republican politicians transformed the royalists into agitators (*facciosos*), insurgents, and rebels. The standard for loyalty was no longer the king but the nation and the republic of Colombia. Along with losing its legitimacy, royalism was also stripped of its historical importance because the dominant, nationalist metanarrative of the nation would not tolerate any alternative visions of the independence period, roundly condemning those who defended the Spanish colonial state.

As a result, Pasto's greatest independence hero, the royalist Agustín Agualongo, became an antihero in Colombian official independence histories, beginning in the nineteenth century. Yet is it possible to tell an alternative story of Agualongo without viewing him as a stereotypical villain, as nationalist historians have attempted to present him? Given the shortage of documents left by royalist insurgents such as Agualongo, any alternative interpretation of his life and times must depend on a careful reinterpretation of the same documentary evidence (most often created by his enemies) used by earlier scholars to undermine Agualongo and the royalist movement that he led until 1824. Although historians have generally presented a very negative portrayal of royalists in the independence era, there has been an ongoing debate about Agualongo's role in Colombian history over the past two hundred years between local historians writing in Pasto (who do not accept this negative portrait of Agualongo) and nationalist historians who created the narrative that vilifies all royalists. The first historian of the Colombian Republic, José Manuel Restrepo, established an authoritative narrative of the era that portrayed Agualongo and all people from Pasto (or Pastusos) as vile fanatics. Restrepo was a powerful political figure in his lifetime, having served as Bolívar's minister of the interior. Moreover, as an eyewitness of events of the independence era, his opinions had nearly unimpeachable credibility.

Restrepo's account condemned Agualongo as an "ignorant Indian," and his negative portrayal influenced many later historical representations of the royalist warlord, or *caudillo*. This portrayal implied that Agualongo's ethnicity and ignorance led him to fight for the king for nearly fifteen years, repeatedly turning his back on the liberating, progressive promise of the new republic.^[2] On the other hand, by describing and labeling him as Indian, Restrepo highlighted Agualongo's lack of judgment by relying on the widespread, racist belief that all Indians were rude, ignorant, and incapable of making rational political judgments. Although indigenous people clearly understood Hispanic law, participated actively in the colonial economy, and understood political events of the day, many Colombian elites clung to the belief that Indians were clearly inferior to people of Spanish descent. Therefore, by calling Agualongo—the symbol of southwestern royalism par excellence—an ignorant Indian, Restrepo explained away the caudillo's support for royalism as reflecting the Indian people's inherent poor judgment, excusing Agualongo for his obviously "delusional" opposition to the independence cause. In presenting this negative, racist portrayal, Restrepo set the tone for the complete dismissal of royalism as a legitimate political

and ideological position during the period.

But was Agualongo really an Indian? Based on documentation suggesting that Agualongo was not an Indian but rather a mestizo (of mixed white and Indian ancestry), historians in the twentieth century have challenged Restrepo's negative, racist portrayal of the royalist caudillo. Indeed, his birth certificate provides evidence that Agustín Agualongo Sisneros was born in the city of Pasto of mestizo parents.^[3] But in spite of that "fact," stories that echoed Restrepo's account prevailed and even multiplied in the twentieth century. The first manual of history used for educating high-school students in Colombia, for example, was published by Jesús María Henao and Gerardo Arrubla in 1910. In their influential work, Henao and Arrubla described Agualongo as an "astute and brave Indian" but labeled royalists as "fanatics."^[4] Other works used Agualongo's surname to brand him as a mere Indian, who had worked serving a wealthy family in Pasto. According to this account, the caudillo's name, "Agualongo," was formed from the repeated calls that his masters made to Agustín to bring them water (*agua* in Spanish). The word *longo* was (and still is) used to refer to Indians, so his last name would have been the result of the command "*Agua, longo!*" or "Indian, bring the water!" This very creative explanation presents the stereotypical image of Indians as servile.^[5] Indeed, that assumption underlies Restrepo's characterization of royalism; it was a movement of Indians, who were ultimately manipulated into blindly following royalist leaders at the expense of their "real" best interests.

Restrepo probably also called Agualongo an Indian because the indigenous people were the largest segment of the population in southwest New Granada, and the royalist army in Pasto and Popayán (the capital of the province) was largely composed of Indians. As a result, although historians have proved that Agualongo was a mestizo and not an Indian, his connection to the royalist cause in the area led people to associate him with the ethnic majority in the region. The Indian population was not, however, the only racial group that made up his army. The Afro-descendants from the town of Patía, north of Pasto, also supported the Spanish cause during the years 1822–1824. Indeed, when Agualongo led the royalist resistance to Bolívar, the *patianos* (men from Patía, a town of free blacks that evolved from a *palenque* or maroon community) formed a significant part of his army, making the royalist movement multiethnic. In fact, Agualongo's last battle, which he lost to Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, was in Barbacoas, an important gold-mining region in New Granada's south Pacific littoral, where enslaved blacks had mobilized in support of the king's cause between 1810 and 1820 during the independence struggles.

Agustín Agualongo's life (1780–1824) coincided with the late colonial period in New Granada and the entire span of Colombia's long, bitter independence wars. Agualongo lived through the last twenty years of the reformist policies of the Bourbon regime and internal crisis of the monarchy prompted by the Napoleonic invasion of Spain in 1807. When Ferdinand VII replaced his father as king of Spain in 1808, Pastusos such as Agualongo must have understood the political implications of the instability that had enveloped Spain. And in 1809 this sense of instability was

compounded when Napoléon Bonaparte forced the abdication of Ferdinand and placed his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne. In those unstable days the city of Pasto demonstrated its support for the Spanish crown and the colonial government as churches across the province celebrated masses to plead for King Ferdinand's well-being. In many areas, however, the conflict raised a serious constitutional crisis. With the king in French captivity, where did sovereignty rest, with the people of America or with the colonial bureaucracy centered in Bogotá? In Quito, local Creole elites answered this question by forming an autonomous junta, or council, that refused to accept Joseph Bonaparte as king, deposed the colonial regime in the city, and claimed to govern in the name of the Spanish monarch, Ferdinand. Quito's major neighboring cities did not approve of its junta, which was also strongly opposed by Viceroy of Peru Fernando de Abascal y Sousa, who sent armed forces from Lima to Cuenca, Guayaquil, and Popayán to stamp out the *Quiteño* government. Nonetheless, in the years when the Spanish king remained under house arrest in France, a series of regional juntas had emerged in the Indies that rejected French imperial aggression and sought to rule in the name of Ferdinand. This trend only accelerated after leadership of the Spanish resistance fell to a group of political liberals in Cádiz, who favored constitutional checks on the monarchy and a representative assembly for Spain and its empire. New Granada, Cartagena, Santa Fe, and Cali formed an alliance that led the first efforts at republican nation building. Agualongo took up arms in 1811 as a volunteer in the royalist militia organized in Popayán, however, to stop any planned invasions from the Creole-led juntas in Cali and Santa Fe. From that moment on, Agualongo was at the center of an unprecedented political and military process, as forces loyal to the Spanish king opposed the autonomous juntas and later the more radical movements for independence, which ultimately achieved its final victory in Colombia with the defeat of Agualongo in 1824.

The royalist movement led by Agualongo demonstrates the depth of the monarchical values held by so many Spanish Americans in the early nineteenth century. The largely untold story of this royalist cause demonstrates that independence was hardly inevitable, forcing historians to question the tendentious portrayal of Spanish colonialism so broadly disseminated by nationalist scholars in Colombia and Latin America. The multiethnic royalist alliances found in Pasto were not unique but had parallels in Coro, Cuenca, Piura, and Cuzco, proving that royalism was a powerful political force in the independence era. Moreover, royalism's multiethnic appeal suggests that the conflict at the heart of the age of revolution in Latin America had complex social and ideological undertones. The story of Agualongo's effort to defend Pasto's place within the Spanish monarchy also hints at the divided and often contradictory political visions within Spanish American national projects in the nineteenth century.

REGIONAL DIMENSIONS OF PASTO'S ROYALIST MOVEMENT

In an attempt to make sense of the unwavering royalism of its inhabitants during the

independence wars, Colombian nationalist historians portrayed the Andean city of Pasto as an isolated backwater. Isolation and backwardness were used to explain why the Pastusos rejected the revolutionary processes sweeping across New Granada and the wider Atlantic world at the turn of the nineteenth century. After all, to the south of Pasto in 1809 Quito formed one of the earliest juntas seeking autonomy to prevent the risk of a Napoleonic invasion of Spanish America. Cartagena on the Caribbean coast as well as the cities of Antioquia, Cali, Casanare, Mariquita, Neiva, Pamplona, and Santa Fe (the viceroyalty's capital) had all turned to experiments in local rule by 1810. Pasto, on the other hand, played a fundamental role in the repression of those efforts toward self-rule, instead defending the king's absolute authority to govern. Underlying the positions of both "patriots" and "royalists" were competing visions of the future. The centrifugal tendency that led many cities and towns to claim autonomy was followed by various attempts to dominate smaller or weaker neighbors, inaugurating a period of internal strife and near civil war that Colombian historians have called *La Patria Boba* or "Foolish Fatherland."

The tension that emerged in the southwest between Quito and Pasto resulted from Pasto's resistance against falling under the control of its longtime rival, the now revolutionary Quito. Pasto was hardly an economic backwater, and its royalism certainly did not constitute backwardness. Indeed, Quiteño elites wanted to control Pasto and its surrounding Indian towns precisely because Pasto occupied such a strategic place in the regional economy, supplying foodstuffs to the local gold mines of the Pacific littoral. This lowland gold-mining zone was humid and covered by thick foliage, making food cultivation almost impossible. In addition, Africans slave laborers worked exclusively on gold extraction, not on performing agricultural tasks. Therefore, food production in the Andean region around Pasto developed close commercial ties with the thriving gold economy in the Pacific mines, and indigenous people from the highlands performed a vital role in that productive chain, transporting goods between the two regions. These men, called *cargueros*, assured that products flowed continually between the Andean towns and the Pacific lowlands, a job that gave indigenous men the income needed to pay their tribute (Indian head tax) even in times of agrarian crisis.

Pasto also occupied a strategic political location, at the crossroads of two of the major administrative centers in New Granada, the *audiencia* (high court) in the viceregal capital of Santa Fe and the Audiencia of Quito. This position gave people in Pasto (as well as Popayán) greater political flexibility because they could appeal to either of the two centers to defend their interests, playing off one court against the other. The city of Pasto's position as a royalist stronghold throughout the monarchical crisis also allowed the city to gain political status over its rival, insurgent Quito, as a reward for its loyalty to the crown.^[6]

Although royalist Pasto faced formidable foes among the rebellious forces centered in Santa Fe, the city also counted on the support of a powerful royalist confederation, particularly in the southern viceregal capital of Lima. Royalism was not merely the result of isolation and backwardness in regional Pasto; rather, the city

formed part of a large alliance of towns and cities that remained loyal to the Spanish crown, centered in Lima. Moreover, royalism was hardly a static political movement in the years following the collapse of the Spanish monarchy but instead involved a multiplicity of political and social forces within the royalist regions, favoring numerous different political projects and ideological visions. Therefore, after stripping away the political rhetoric of Colombia's nationalist historians, it is possible to recognize the vitality of monarchical identities and institutions, as royalists forged cross-regional alliances based on a traditional loyalty to King Ferdinand and his right to rule as an absolute monarch. For a soldier like Agualongo, who took up arms in defense of religion and the king, Lima's firm grip on the Viceroyalty of Peru amid growing political turbulence in New Granada and Rio de la Plata seemed a good reason to believe that royalist forces throughout South America would help Pasto achieve victory over the insurgent traitors in New Granada.

AGUALONGO AND THE ROYALIST ARMY

Around the time of Agualongo's birth during the late eighteenth century, a primary goal of the Spanish Bourbon government was to enhance colonial defenses in response to threats by her enemies—primarily Great Britain and later France—against Spain's overseas empire. These military threats became ever more serious as the century progressed. The crown's defense project also gained momentum as rebelliousness increased among the colonial populations, particularly during the 1780s.^[7] The Bourbon military reforms aimed to strengthen fixed fortifications in strategic commercial centers and to recruit militias drawn from the colonial population. The military reforms reached New Granada in the 1770s, but in the southwest, a stubborn aristocracy opposed them, fearing that access to military privileges would provide social mobility for the lower classes and threaten traditional social hierarchies. In spite of this aristocratic opposition, however, colonial authorities still established militias, which played a major role in initial confrontations over the monarchical crisis beginning in 1808.

Following the creation of the Quito junta in 1809, the entire population of Pasto was alerted about the threat of invasion from the south. Popayán's governor, Miguel Tacón, moved fast to enlarge the local militias for the defense of the region, seeking to mobilize people from all classes willing to defend the province from the expected Quiteño attack. From that moment, Popayán's bishop, Salvador Jiménez de Enciso, also issued proclamations to be read during Mass and hung in the churches, reminding urban and rural people across the province about renewing their vows of loyalty to defend the crown. For urban dwellers in Pasto such as Agustín Agualongo and the people living in the rural areas (especially those south of the city, in closer proximity to Quito), this unprecedented situation raised many questions about their immediate future. In the minds of many, an invasion from "revolutionary" Quito became associated with the threat of a French invasion; many locals saw Quiteños as traitors who favored the hated enemies of the monarchy, the French. Governor

Tacón also sought help from Viceroy Abascal of Peru, a strong royalist, who was equally committed to crushing the growing rebellion in Quito. At the same time, Santa Fe's viceroy, Amar y Borbón, was too far away and too preoccupied with a potential revolt in his region to provide support for the southern provinces of New Granada. Popayán and Pasto had to rely on Abascal in dealing with any invasion from Quito.

These extraordinary circumstances led to a transformation in the relationship of the government with indigenous people and slaves. Governor Tacón had to increase his military forces urgently, so the governor quickly made overtures to the indigenous and enslaved populations in Popayán Province, seeking to mobilize them in support of the king. Tacón desperately needed to prevent the Quiteño insurgents from recruiting among slaves and in regional indigenous communities, which he believed would be easy targets of insurgent "seduction." In this critical moment, Tacón sought to establish a strong alliance with the Indian communities surrounding Pasto, and he negotiated lowering tribute payments to guarantee their support. In addition, the governor attracted the enslaved populations that lived in the Pacific lowlands to the royalist cause by promising them freedom if they remained loyal and served in the royal army. Although Tacón's decision was consistent with earlier imperial policies to arm people of indigenous or African descent for strategic reasons, it was a source of deep concern among Popayán's slave owners. Their discontent and distrust of the governor's actions fueled a growing confrontation between local elites and the governor. At the same time, however, the indigenous communities surrounding Pasto found Tacón's overtures compelling, inaugurating a new phase in the politics of the Indian communities, which became strongly royalist. Similarly, communities of enslaved Africans saw in royalism an opportunity to better their condition, and many eagerly proclaimed their fidelity to the king.

Although Quito's first junta was defeated by the forces of Popayán, Cuenca, and Guayaquil, Quiteños launched a second attempt in 1811 to organize an autonomous government. Once more Tacón instituted emergency measures in the province of Popayán, calling for volunteers to join his army from the indigenous, slave, and *casta* (mixed-race) populations. In response to the governor's call, Agustín Agualongo enrolled as a soldier in Pasto, appearing for the first time in the military records of these turbulent years.^[8] At the time he was a painter by profession, but aside from information about his occupation, Agualongo left no personal records, making it hard to know exactly why he enlisted in the army. Perhaps the unstable political situation in the provinces surrounding Pasto convinced him to join the king's army, or perhaps he feared a "foreign" invasion from Quito. Aside from the renewed threat of a Quiteño invasion, the viceregal government in Santa Fe had fallen to a revolutionary junta in 1810, and the vicerealty was in political disarray. Moreover, just north of Popayán, the city of Cali had taken the path of insurgency and joined Santa Fe in creating a federal government among the key cities in New Granada. Although insurgents occupied Popayán at times, Tacón continued his close alliance with Peru, and he transferred his royalist forces to Pasto. The governor also established an alliance with a free-black guerrilla force from Patía, which functioned independently but also in

the name of the king. Thus, after joining the army Agualongo fought side by side with peasants from Pasto, with freed slaves from the mines and haciendas of nearby Popayán, with the independent forces of the mulatto men from Patía, and with local Indians led to battle by their ethnic leaders or caciques. The royal militia that Agualongo joined, aided by the natural frontier around the Juanambú River, became famous as the most dangerous and invincible royalist army, which later blocked even the army of the great Simón Bolívar from taking the strategic southwestern region.

During the first decade of the independence wars, Agualongo's world was rapidly changing, giving him the opportunity to demonstrate his dogged loyalty to the crown against the insurgencies that had developed in so many provinces of Spanish South America. Agualongo's first major battle in 1811 was against the invaders from Quito, which the royalists won decisively. That same year he participated in a royalist victory over the republican invaders from Cali, which allowed the king's forces to regain control of the provincial capital, Popayán. As a result, Agualongo fought in two consecutive royalist military victories, gaining important military experience and confidence that the royalist cause would prevail. His exemplary performances in these battles also earned Agualongo an impeccable reputation as a warrior and a leader of men, which guaranteed his rapid promotion in the royalist army.

As a sergeant, Agualongo formed part of the Spanish army organized in 1813 by the royalist president of Quito, Toribio Montes, and led by Juan Sámano, a commander recently arrived from Spain. This was the army that fought against Antonio Nariño, a representative from the government of Cundinamarca (with its capital in Santa Fe) and a prominent figure among New Granada's enlightened elite. He had gained international fame for having translated and published *The Rights of Man* into Spanish in the 1790s. Nariño also headed the first unified republican government in New Granada, which ultimately failed in part because of the centrifugal forces of the provincial governments that formed it. Agualongo's participation in the confrontation against Nariño was apparently one of the early turning points in his military and political life. Not only did the young sergeant Agualongo prove his valor and military abilities, he probably learned about the fragility of the republican cause. Indeed, Agualongo perceived the royalist army's decisive victory as a sign that Nariño's republican project was doomed to failure.

Later Agualongo moved south, from Pasto to Ibarra and Cuenca, where he played a role in other significant victories in the defense of the royalist cause. With the defeat of Napoléon in Europe and the return of the popular King Ferdinand VII to the throne in 1814, royalist forces could claim a great moral victory, which inspired confidence and boosted their morale. The king launched a campaign of "reconquest" to quell insurgent factions in New Granada, sending ten thousand men to the region in 1815. During his time in Cuenca, Agualongo surely knew of the formation of a new independence coalition, led by the Venezuelan Simón Bolívar, but in those optimistic times after the return of Ferdinand to the throne, he could not have imagined that these insurgent forces would ever claim the final victory in Pasto and Peru.

INDIAN COMMUNITIES AND ROYALIST POLITICS

The city of Pasto was an important administrative center governing more than thirty surrounding Indian towns, and these indigenous communities had a significant impact on the regional political economy. Pasto and its Indian communities were the product of a long effort at settling the indigenous peoples into Spanish-style towns or *pueblos* in the Andes, initiated in the sixteenth century by the Viceroy of Peru, Francisco de Toledo (1569–1581). Although this plan of settlement largely failed with some indigenous people in the Amazon and in the Pacific littoral, especially north in the Chocó, Pasto indigenous communities represented the success of the Spanish imperial project. Indigenous communities in Pasto, descendants of three pre-Hispanic ethnic groups (Pasto, Quillacinga, and Abad), were settled into discrete communities ruled by local caciques. These ethnic authorities had the responsibility to collect tribute from the communities, which they paid to local Spanish magistrates. Indigenous communities were at the center of the political process during the independence wars, but native structures of authority were weakened because royalism offered all Indian commoners the opportunity for political mobilization, whether or not their caciques supported the crown.

Although between 1809 and 1822 Pasto almost continuously remained under royalist power, things had certainly changed. Government was now connected with Quito and Lima to the south, and over the years military figures became central to the structure of power. From Spain, a group of liberals favoring constitutional government led the resistance against the French invaders, and their decision to write a constitution for Spain and its territories overseas in 1812 promised sweeping political changes within the empire. The liberal constitution proclaimed in 1812 was sent to all the provinces in the Americas where royalists remained in power. Among its many provisions, the liberal constitution of 1812 gave full citizenship to Indians in the Americas. It also gave indigenous people voting rights and abolished tribute, transforming their status significantly. For local caciques in Pasto, however, these new reforms were most unwelcome because much of their power and communal authority was based on their legal prerogative to collect tribute. Ultimately, Indians' participation in the royalist army was also an element that disrupted customary structures of authority, and the decade saw increasing conflicts within the communities between commoners and their traditional ethnic leaders.

As a result of these disruptive political changes, numerous confrontations arose between the caciques and the commoners of the Indian towns in Pasto. Caciques feared that their power was waning, so they contested the official tax assessments of the government, which had reduced the amount of tribute that Indians should pay. In doing so, they were going against the interests of the Indian commoners, who demanded lower tribute quotas, which they saw as their just reward for serving in the military for the king. Around 1816 this conflict escalated as the Indian commoners found an ally in the *protector de naturales*, Juan Diaz Gallardo, who was the legal advocate appointed by the Spanish crown to defend Indians in court. The caciques,

however, decided to use all their power to win the battle against the Indian commoners, whom they saw as rebelling against their ethnic leaders' authority. The caciques took the case to the audiencia in Quito (now back in royalist hands), where they pleaded for Gallardo's removal. The changing political situation in Spain emboldened the caciques, who acted after the return of King Ferdinand VII to the throne. The king was determined to undo any liberal policies inscribed in the constitution of 1812 that had been instituted in his absence. Although Ferdinand continued to favor rewarding his loyal vassals, including the Indians, the audiencia saw Gallardo as a dangerous troublemaker because of his sympathies for liberal policies favoring the indigenous people. Hence, he was removed, and in his place the audiencia named the head of the local militias in Pasto, Ramón Medina.

Five years later, in 1822, Colonel Agualongo now headed the rebel government that took over Pasto, challenging the Bolivarian regime imposed after the battle of Bomboná, and he again appointed Ramón Medina as protector. Medina represented the interests of the Indian elite, which resented the transformations brought by the war and the liberal reforms stemming from the constitution of 1812. Most likely, however, Agualongo, Medina, and the caciques who supported them had a communitarian vision of "Indianness," which hoped to maintain the rights of indigenous people to own their communal land and to have a semiautonomous government. Indeed, after independence, Bolívar proclaimed the new legal framework for his republic, emphasizing private ownership of land and the end of Indian communal holdings. Thus deprived of the lands, the indigenous communities lost their basis for economic prosperity, and they faced a dark future. While some indigenous groups in Colombia embraced citizenship, perceiving opportunities in the liberal proposition to divide and sell their communal lands, the communities of Pasto remained committed to defending their rights to own land as a corporate community.

But the political conflicts over land ownership between the republican government sponsored by Bolívar and the Pastuso indigenous communities formed part of a long battle to defeat all royalist groups in Pasto. Bolívar remained intransigent in his desire to reduce Pasto to loyalty, and as president of Colombia, he had no patience for royalists in the southwest. Bolívar cared little about Indian claims to their traditional communal landholdings. Instead, he remained committed to extinguishing the Pastuso royalist peril. As a result, his response to the antirepublican revolts of 1822 and 1823 was to have Pasto burned and sacked. Either Pastusos were deported to fight the war in Peru, or many were simply killed without a trial. Despite the paucity of documentation about the royalist government that returned to power in Pasto after 1822, a few proclamations authored by Estanislao Merchancano (head of the civil government in Pasto) and Agualongo (military chief) called Bolívar a tyrant and denounced the government of Colombia as an intruder.^[9]

Although elites in Pasto accepted the terms of the capitulation that resulted from the defeat of the Spanish army in 1822, the majority of the local population supported Agualongo and Merchancano's project to go on fighting for the royalist cause. Despite the odds, they continued to harbor hopes for a royalist victory in Peru in order to

maintain the Pasto-Quito-Lima passageway under royalist control.^[10] Given the long history of royalism in the Andean-Pacific region, Agualongo's goal seems to have been to expand his control over the Pacific littoral, where slaves from the gold mines continued to be potential allies of the royalist cause. Even with help from the locals, however, Agualongo was caught and taken to Popayán, where the republican forces summarily shot him on July 13, 1824.

Agualongo's struggle represents the vitality of monarchic values during the independence era. He devoted two decades to defending the king's cause and the full restoration of monarchic rule in the Spanish Empire. The independence wars shaped his life profoundly; an important part of his identity became tied to the military effort against the traitors to religion and his king, and every success in battle, combined with the rewards of a hard-won glory, contributed to his unswerving belief in a victory in the defense of his fatherland's autonomy. Indeed, the royalist bulwark in Pasto resulted from the firm conviction of the common folk, slaves, free blacks, mestizos, and Indians that the monarchical government offered a better life for people of all social classes and ethnicities. The brutal means through which the republic imposed its rule in Pasto and its hinterland are a reminder of the social conflicts that plagued the early history of Colombia and the challenges of postcolonial nation building. Although the royalists were defeated and forcibly pacified, the tenacity of their struggle is testimony to their willingness to defend their alternative vision of the nation, a vision where race relations would be more fluid and equal than anything the Bolivarian republic later offered. One significant legacy of the royalist movement in the Colombian southwest is the persistence of Indian communities that defied the state's individualistic model of governance.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why was Agustín Agualongo a royalist?
2. How has Colombian historiography represented Agualongo's ethnic identity, and why is that important?
3. Why did Agualongo's movement attract indigenous people and mestizos as well as free and enslaved blacks?
4. What were the imperial and local dimensions of Pasto's royalism?
5. When did royalists lose the war in the Colombian southwest, and what does this tell us about Colombian national political history?

NOTES

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

As can be seen in the endnotes, most of the works about Agualongo currently available are in Spanish. Aside from the monographs by Sergio Elías Ortíz and Emiliano Díaz del Castillo, two recent important contributions to the study of Pastuso

royalism are Jairo Gutiérrez's *Los indios de Pasto contra la República* (Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, 2007) and Marcela Echeverri, "Popular Royalists, Empire, and Politics in Southwestern New Granada, 1809–1819," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 91, no. 2 (2011): 237–69.

For more on late colonial New Granada, see Anthony McFarlane's *Colombia before Independence: Economy, Society, and Politics under Bourbon Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and Allan Kuethe's *Military Reform and Society in New Granada, 1773–1808* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1978). On the Colombian independence wars, see Margarita Garrido's *Reclamos y Representaciones: Variaciones sobre la política en el Nuevo Reino de Granada, 1770–1815* (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1993) and Rebecca Earle's *Spain and the Independence of Colombia* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000). Also of interest is Steinar Saether's "Independence and the Redefinition of Indianness around Santa Marta, Colombia, 1750–1850," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 37 (2005): 55–80, which focuses on the Caribbean provinces of Santa Marta and Riohacha, the other region with widespread popular royalism in New Granada. An excellent comparative example of an indigenous monarchist rebellion in post-Bolivarian Peru is Cecilia Méndez's *The Plebeian Republic: The Huanta Rebellion and the Making of the Peruvian State, 1820–1850* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). See Peter Blanchard's *Under the Flags of Freedom: Slave Soldiers & the Wars of Independence in Spanish South America* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2008) for more on the participation of enslaved Afro-descendants in the independence wars across South America. And on popular politics in early republican Colombia, see James Sanders's *Contentious Republicans: Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

1. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 49.
2. José Manuel Restrepo, *Historia de la revolución de la República de Colombia en la América meridional*, vol. 5 (1827; Bogotá: Editorial Bedout, 1969), 89.
3. Sergio Elías Ortiz, *Agustín Agualongo y su Tiempo* (Bogotá: Editorial ABC, 1958), 14; Emiliano Díaz del Castillo, *El Caudillo. Semblanza de Agualongo* (Pasto: Tipografía y Fotograbado Javier, 1983), 5–6.
4. Jesús María Henao and Gerardo Arrubla, *Historia de Colombia para la enseñanza secundaria*, vol. 2 (1910; Bogotá: Librería Colombiana, 1920), 410.
5. Ortiz, *Agustín Agualongo*, 14; Alberto Miramón, *Hombres del tiempo heroico* (Bogotá: Empresa Nacional de Publicaciones, 1956), 92.
6. Ortiz, *Agustín Agualongo*, 99; "Representación del Cabildo de Pasto a Don Pablo Morillo" (Pasto, October 13, 1816), in Gustavo Guerrero, *Documentos históricos de los hechos ocurridos en Pasto en la guerra de independencia* (Pasto: Imprenta del Departamento, 1912), 136–42.
7. New Granada was particularly hard hit by the Comunero Rebellion in 1780; see John Leddy Phelan, *The People and the King: The Comunero Revolution in Colombia, 1781* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978).
8. Díaz del Castillo, *El Caudillo*, 6.
9. Cristóbal de Gangotena y Jijón, *Documentos referentes a la campana de Ibarra con la narración histórica de la campaña de Pasto* (Quito: Talleres tipográficos nacionales, 1923), 6.
10. Archivo General de la Nación (Colombia), Bogotá, *Secretaría de Guerra y Marina* 43, f. 681.