

Presentation

Monarchy, Empire, and Popular Politics in the Atlantic Age of Revolutions

Apresentação

Monarquia, Império e Política Popular
na Era das Revoluções Atlânticas

MARCELA ECHEVERRI¹ <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4124-3298>

¹Department of History

Yale University

McClellan Hall 1037 Chapel Street, New Haven, CT 06520-8324, USA

marcela.echeverri@yale.edu

It is well known that in different settings all across the Atlantic world the popular classes mobilized in defense of the monarchy during the so-called “age of revolutions”. Their presence was widespread and influential in the intense confrontations in Europe and the Americas when the foundations of European monarchs’ power were contested through war at home and abroad. Colloquially speaking, the royalists, both popular and elite, were the bad guys embodying the social and ideological obstacles in the universal history of revolution and modernity.

In the past two decades, historians in Latin America, Europe, and the United States have rediscovered this phenomenon and reexamined it through the lens of the new political history. More recently, scholars have begun to create communities around the theme of *popular royalism*, sometimes grounded on deep historiographical traditions and other times experimentally. By deep historiographic traditions I refer particularly to

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studies of counterrevolution and restoration in Europe that abound and form one of the pillars of the national histories in places like Spain or France. More experimental in approach was the conference that I co-organized with Clément Thibaud in 2016 at Yale University on the theme of *Popular Royalism in the Revolutionary Atlantic World*. It was indeed unprecedented (to my knowledge) that scholars focusing on the history of Africa, Europe, and the Americas came together to share and debate their work, which illustrated the range of political options and choices available to popular sectors in the revolutionary Atlantic, such as native and Afro-descendant peoples, peasants, and artisans. In this productive dialogue, we probed the ways in which concepts such as freedom and citizenship were central to popular engagement with monarchical institutions and politics during the nineteenth century.¹ The seven articles included in this dossier evolved from presentations in that conference, and they illustrate the varied approaches, as well as multiple cases, that enrich our current understanding of *popular royalism* in an Atlantic framework. The dossier, therefore, is a gateway into the emergent field of studies about popular royalism and a reflection of the theme's potential when explored in a comparative perspective.

1 The conference took place on October 28-29, 2016 at Yale University, funded by STARACO, Université de Nantes, Yale's MacMillan Center's Kempf Fund, and Yale's Department of History. I want to reiterate the timeliness of this dossier as a reflection of the state of a field, which is rapidly expanding. Evidence of this dynamism is another recent conference in which I participated in October of this year (2018) at the Universidad del País Vasco in Vitoria (Spain). This experience is worthy of a comment because it revealed to me the existence of a deep and cohesive community of scholars dedicated to the study of popular royalism in the European context. The presentations illustrated the significance that the history of royalism has had and still has for the national historiographical traditions of France, Spain, and Portugal. Those histories are grounded on experiences that begin with the French Revolution, expand into the Iberian Peninsula in 1808, and gain new meanings during the contentious rise of liberalism in the 1830s and 1840s. An undoubtedly significant theme from the European point of view can be transformed productively and unshackled from the nationalist framework, once it is put in comparative conversation with the histories of popular royalism in the Americas, like we see in this dossier.

Historically and historiographically speaking, of course, the subject of royalism is not new. As characters in national histories, and in the history of revolution more broadly, royalists from the elites have naturally been understood to represent conservative sectors whose interests aligned clearly with the regime under attack. It is moreover unquestionable that the royalist elites counted on the support of popular groups, who mobilized either formally in militias or as guerrillas that acted in support of and in the name of the king. Both in Europe and in the Americas, this popular mobilization has largely been explained as a product either of manipulation or as reflecting the extremely reactionary essence of the popular classes. In other words, popular royalism has been, until recently, thought to represent the quintessential expression of the lower classes' resistance to change (Hamnett, 1978; Landavazo, 2001; Lynch, 1986; 2006; Restrepo, 1827; Tilly, 1964).

As social history gained force in the twentieth century, historians tried to give body to an explanation of this historical phenomenon from the Marxist point of view, but always understanding it as a paradox (Bonilla; Spalding, 1981; Bonilla, 2005; Carrera Damas, 1972; Craton, 1982; Izard, 1979). This interpretation was grounded on the expectation that popular political action must be associated with its historical call to revolution. In that structural framework, popular social identities — defined by a position of marginality — would and should correspond to revolutionary, anticolonial or liberal political interests. In some cases, historians resolved this inconsistency by arguing that the royalist alliances expressed a false consciousness, the popular sectors' ignorance or, again, their inherent traditionalist world views. At the same time, either from the liberal or Marxist paradigms, historians of modernity produced condescending interpretations of popular royalists. Here, too, aside from seeing the popular sectors' loyalty to the monarchy as a problem that revealed their irrationality, they also explained it as the popular response to extremely manipulative strategies of the powerful classes who from a position of power had the goal of defending their privileges at the expense of the popular groups' interests (Dominguez, 1980; Hobsbawm, 1973; Torras, 1976).

This explains why in European historiography the relevance of the histories of popular royalism lies in their connection to studies about the origins of conservatism. That is, popular royalists are understood to have been subsumed in reactionary causes, mainly led by conservative elites, attached to backward principles, and consequently harmful to liberal and democratic causes (Beneyto, 2001; Bianchi; Dupuy, 2006; Canal, 2005; Comellas, 1953; Herrero, 1988; Lousada, 1987; Martin, 2001; Menéndez y Pelayo, 1965-1967; Ramón Solans; Rújula López, 2017; Rienzo, 2004; Rújula López, 1998; Solé i Sabaté, 1993; Suárez Verdeguer, 1955; 1956). It is also the cause of the production of inconsistent analyses of popular mobilization during the Spanish American independence war that associated what were formally royalist groups with anticolonial rebellions. This can be seen, for instance, in the works of René D. Arze and José L. Roca who, writing in the late 1980s, interpreted the indigenous groups who defended the monarchy in the Andean highlands as precursors of Bolivian national identity. Arze and Roca both sought and saw emancipation in the politics of the dominated classes, and understood emancipation in terms of revolutionary or nationalist politics (Arze, 1987; Roca, 1988). This association further suggests that when historians took the step of uncovering popular participation in the independence wars, they preferred to stress class antagonism between elites and the lower classes at the same time that they ignored the existence of vertical alliances that were essential to the rise of royalist factions in the nineteenth century.

In the past three decades, historians of the Atlantic world have revised nationalist histories and reframed the revolutionary age by expanding the geographic and chronological limits of the original Palmerian paradigm that was exclusively focused on the American and French Revolutions (Hobsbawm, 1962; Klooster, 2009; Palmer, 1965). The field has grown and evolved in many directions, one of them being the reappraisal of the popular sectors' participation in the revolutions and their relationship to the rise of republicanism both in Europe and in the Americas. If the narrative dominant for most of the twentieth century

had excluded the popular classes from the histories of revolution, or independence in the American cases, research now raises questions about elite-centered depictions of revolution, independence, and state formation. Moreover, by linking the broader changes resulting from Atlantic revolutionary processes to the Haitian Revolution, scholars of Latin America especially demonstrated that popular republicanism was an option that reflected the revolutionary commitment of the popular sectors (Alda, 2002; Blanchard, 2008; Di Meglio, 2006; Guardino, 1996; Guarisco, 2003; Helg, 2004; Lasso, 2007; Soux, 2010; Thibaud, 2003; Townsend, 1998; Tutino, 1989; Walker, 1999).

But the question of popular support for the monarchy remained either unexplored or confined to long-lasting schematic and frankly simplistic interpretations (Earle, 2000; Craton, 1982; Van Young, 1989, 2001). In the past three decades scholars have challenged the emphasis on the intrinsic irrationality of the popular royalists. Focusing on innovative interpretations of the experience of popular monarchism, and offering a counterpoint to that portrayal of the popular royalist sectors in the Age of Revolutions, further implies questioning the revolutionary teleology (Echeverri, 2016; Gutiérrez, 2007; Méndez, 2005; Saether, 2005; Sartorius, 2013).

In work on the British Atlantic and the American Revolution, scholars both recovered the loyalist presence and outlined the vibrant intersection of empire and politics in the revolutionary age (Blackstock; O’Gorman, 2014; Calloway, 1995; Chopra, 2011; Frey, 1991; Jasanoff, 2008; 2010; 2011; McConville, 2006; Nash, 2006; Nelson, 2014; Norton, 1972; O’Shaughnessy, 2013; Pybus, 2006; Schama, 2006). The Haitian Revolution has become the focus of much research, because it is a case that joins France and its Caribbean colony of Saint Domingue in a single Atlantic revolution, also bringing to the forefront issues of slavery and race that were central to the more broadly defined revolutionary dynamics (Childs, 2006; Dubois, 2004; Ferrer, 2012; Fischer, 2004). It is clear, however, that the Haitian Revolution exemplifies the impossibility to think of revolution as a linear process. Some authors have unearthed the importance of royalist allegiances and the political interests that

underlay them. Namely, people of African descent in the Caribbean received concessions in exchange for their loyalty and in many cases identified with monarchical corporate social structures that recognized their collective interests (Landers, 2010; Ogle, 2009; Thornton, 1993). Likewise, the radical scholarship emerging from Spain, France, and Latin America in the field of the Iberian Revolutions challenges nationalist histories, while constitutionalism has come to the forefront of studies about monarchy and empire, breaking with their definition as antagonistic to revolution, liberalism, and modernity (Adelman, 2010; Bellingeri, 2000; Berruezo, 1986; Breña, 2006; Chust, 1999; Dym, 2005; Echeverri, 2011; 2015; 2016; Guerra, 2000; Lorente; Portillo, 2011; Morelli, 1997; Paquette, 2013; 2015; Portillo, 2006; Rodríguez, 1999; 2006).²

This dossier provides further evidence of the transformation in the study of popular royalism in the last decade, through seven studies of cases covering Europe, the British Atlantic, Brazil, and Spanish America. As studies about these regions, they constitute important counterpoints and additions to works on popular republicanism that have mostly focused on the Caribbean. The historians in the field whose work is showcased here access the theme through different aspects — or gateways — and offer varied interpretations. Yet, the distinct scenarios, beyond the regional, conceptual, and thematic differences, clearly yield fundamental elements for comparisons. First, they reveal that while popular royalism consistently represented a widespread option for political action, it was also diverse and particular, tied to specific legal, military, and political contexts. Second, taken together, the articles suggest that the cross-fertilization between the social, cultural, and political history of the Age of Revolutions has allowed historians of popular politics to recognize that, as a political subjectivity, the support for monarchy is complex and should be analyzed carefully in connection to specific historical contexts to account for both its depth and conjunctural characteristics.

2 Andrea Lisly's chapter in this dossier illustrates this complex understanding of Atlantic monarchies and liberalism.

Third, the articles presented here also question the understanding that by defending monarchical regimes the popular royalists were marginal to larger dynamics and processes of revolution, modernization, and state formation in Europe, Africa, North America, and South America. Instead, framing their actions in the context of the deep transformations of the Atlantic political landscape, this dossier illustrates how the field is breaking away from both the teleology of revolution and the assumption about the obsolescence of monarchical discourses and institutions during the revolutionary age (Echeverri, 2011; 2016; Kraay, 2001; Paquette, 2013; Straka, 2000; Schultz, 2001).

In the first study in the dossier that focuses on the earliest period, Sergio Serulnikov treats the political uses of the figure of the monarch within the political mobilization of Indians in the Andes before independence (from the late eighteenth century to 1809). For Serulnikov, the conceptual and historiographic prisons that tie royalism to backwardness can be questioned by thinking critically about the assumptions behind them. In the article, he outlines the most common understandings of popular royalism in social theory to reflexively and directly open up a new way to approach the political relations between Indians and the crown in South America. Rather than studying this question from a materialist perspective that would fall back on the structural understanding that social positions should produce specific political interests, his emphasis in political symbols and deeper political dynamics suggests that the king was an “empty signifier”. Rather than seeing monarchism as a reflection of indigenous peasants’ naiveté, Serulnikov contends that their practices — reconstructing those practices in their contextual development within the public sphere — are more significant than formal declarations of loyalty. His article shows how the deep history of Indians’ engagement with the law (which was tied to issues of justice and rights) politicized social relations in the Andean colonial context.

The fascinating case of royalism when the popular subjects were mobile across the Atlantic appears in Ruma Chopra’s article in the dossier, where she traces the origin of loyalty among Jamaican maroons and its changes in different geographic contexts throughout the late eighteenth

century. Chopra's study looks at the British Atlantic and how the search for legal freedom was linked to the political strategies of people who had escaped slavery in Jamaica. The Trelawney Town Maroons who lived in the northern part of the island had made alliances with the British crown, gaining autonomy in exchange for their loyalty to and military defense of the colonial power and its economic institutions. Chopra develops this well-known case further by following these Maroons from Jamaica to Nova Scotia and then to Sierra Leone. Treating the diasporic nature of this story, Chopra is in line with earlier works on the British empire that studied the Atlantic effects of the American Revolution and of loyalists within it (Jasanoff, 2008; 2010; 2011; Pybus, 2006). Once the maroon community traveled outside of Jamaica, she contrasts the interests and decision-making of the maroons to that of the black loyalists who had defended the crown in that revolution. As a pre-existent community within the empire, the maroons used loyalty to the king as an "elastic" political tool to defend their privileges in different political settings. Yet this story also involves a transformation in the language that the maroons used to claim their interests. When their position as imperial subjects shifted, they continued to define their identity in relation to their loyalty. It was not that the maroons' goals changed in their transition from Jamaica to Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone. It was the change in context that made available new political and institutional frameworks, which gave new meaning to their struggles for autonomy and inclusion. Chopra's analytical emphasis in the article is on how the maroons instrumentalized their long history of recognition by the crown and their service to it.

Along the Caribbean coast of New Granada are two representative regions — Santa Marta and Venezuela — where indigenous people, slaves, and free people of African descent were determined defenders of the Spanish crown during the independence wars in South America between 1809 and 1823. Both are rich cases for understanding popular royalism that Steinar Saether and Tomás Straka, respectively, treat in this dossier. Saether focuses on a town in Santa Marta where the crown rewarded an Indian native authority, the cacique Antonio Nuñez, for his

defense of the contested territories under monarchical control through heroic military actions. Saether interrogates both sides of this engagement. First, he explores the framework of creation of systems of rewards, showing that it was embedded in a deeper European military tradition. Second, he investigates the interpretation that the cacique Nuñez himself — and his followers — had of the decorations. Like Serulnikov, Saether further suggests that it is not possible to draw conclusions of a heartfelt monarchism underlying the political and military action among indigenous royalists. Placing the decorations in a larger context of the confrontation between republican and royalist forces, he calls this system of rewards “a war of symbols”. Saether shows the extent to which decorations sought not just to reward loyalty but also to secure future loyalty and guarantee obedience. His interpretation from the Indians’ perspective is that for them this was primarily a strategic alliance. Moreover, he says that, for “Nuñez and his Indian followers ... support for monarchical rule implied ... greater autonomy ... than they had enjoyed previously and certainly more than they could hope for should the republicans be victorious”.

Though focused on different cases and sources, Straka and Saether both remark on how little evidence is available to get an exact sense of what royalism meant to Indians or people of African descent in South America. Indeed, Saether states that it is not possible to know how Nuñez “actually conceived the title”. Straka contends with the methodological problem of finding clear references to the understanding that the royalist groups had of crucial concepts they evidently engaged, such as crown, equality or liberty. Like in Santa Marta, in Venezuela, Straka’s case study, the popular actors reacted against the experimental organization among Creole elites rejecting Spanish rule. Yet Straka’s approach to the subject of popular royalism is different. First, instead of discussing the Atlantic context for loyalty and rewards, he situates his study in the local context. He points to the massive phenomenon of popular royalism in Venezuela, a place that exemplifies the sustained significance of popular support for the monarchy during the wars of independence in Spanish America. Second, Straka, like Chopra, also deals with the fascinating

issue of how the popular classes' allegiances changed over time. What Straka shows is that an important question for historians of popular royalism in the Venezuelan case is the continuity between royalism and liberalism after independence (Zahler, 2013). Another of Straka's contributions is his observation on how it is worrying to have so little understanding of popular royalism in Venezuela, given a lack of works on the subject, despite its undeniable historical importance.³ And his interpretation resonates with what Serulnikov and Saether suggest, that the popular royalists had a different understanding of the monarchy and of their loyalty than the institutional one. Moreover, highlighting the intersection between the struggle for independence and race—an issue that characteristically cuts across politics in the Americas—he finds that the goals behind the antirepublican rebellions in Venezuela actually reveal a connection between democracy and royalism.⁴

Simon Sarlin offers a complete analytical framework to study and compare different royalist mobilizations in Europe during the period of monarchical restorations. His work focuses on cases of voluntary recruitment in France, Spain, Portugal, the Papal States, and Naples between 1815 and 1848. His study pivots our comparative lens toward new themes, methodologies, and geographical contexts. To begin, by taking us into the European space, he illustrates the existence of a solid tradition in the studies of popular monarchism, revolution, and state building, especially in Spain. Sarlin sets out to untangle the mechanisms for mobilization that were processual elements linked to the massive popular support for monarchies. To lay out the processes that characterize each case, he establishes four categories of analysis that are grounded on his sociological perspective: process of creation, models of reference, connection of sociological makeup to commitment, and effect

3 An exception is CARRERA DAMAS, 1972.

4 Straka does not refer to the history of liberalism in the Spanish empire and Venezuela either during the monarchical crisis (the Cádiz constitution) nor during the *Trienio Liberal* (1820-1823), yet he looks forward to the period of republican formation and asks why the popular sectors that were royalist during the independence war turned to liberalism as an ideology that represented their interests.

on political stability. The regimes that the popular sectors defended in these cases are historically understood to be conservative. The question then is how to disassociate that generalizing category according to the multiplicity of cases and dynamics. In contrasting his study with the others that treat cases in the Caribbean and the Spanish and Portuguese Americas, moreover, it becomes clear what is at stake when thinking comparatively about popular royalism. The relationship between monarchy and society — both the elite and popular sectors — is not the same in the European than the American contexts. In one way, the nature of the imperial regimes refracts on the issue of loyalty with distinct implications. In the latter, of course, revolution is tied to anticolonialism, and so is royalism. In another way, as Lisly, Kraay, and Straka point out in their articles, the racial and class distinctions structure royalist alliances and interests differently.

The comparative perspective embedded in Sarlin's study for the European context is also present in Andrea Lisly's article, in which she expands the analytical frame to the Portuguese Atlantic. Lisly brings together the cases of Portugal and Brazil in her work to illustrate the multiple meanings of royalism for the popular classes in those two settings where, even if within a tightly connected Portuguese Atlantic, monarchy represented different things in the late 1820s and early 1830s. In one side of the Atlantic — Brazil — it was a constitutional monarchy and in the other — Portugal — it was an absolutist monarchy. By showing that there was a fundamental difference (generally misunderstood or erased in the primary sources and historiography) between the defense of Pedro I in Brazil as a liberal and the royalism associated with the figure of Miguel in Portugal, Lisly embraces popular royalism in all its complexity. As is obvious, too, on the Brazilian side the question was even more complex in that it implied the option of defending the links to the monarch in Portugal, Miguel, as an alternative to the liberal monarchy espoused by Pedro I. Lisly frames her analysis, moreover, on a careful parallel with previous studies of "Miguelismo," whose class approach had emphasized the economic factors associated with popular support for the Portuguese king. These studies, she argues, further

implied that behind such participation were processes of forced recruitment. Integrating the racial dimension to the story, Lisly demonstrates that the so-called popular classes were composed of varied people such as slaves, mestizos, poor people, etc., whose support for the monarchy was first and foremost a defense of their autonomy and freedom.

Adding to the discussion about the important element of multiple perspectives on monarchism from contrasting cultural viewpoints, Hendrik Kraay's article analyzes three episodes in which people of African descent manifested monarchical identification in Brazil, between 1832 and 1889. In Kraay's reading, the three cases illustrate how popular understandings of monarchy were radical and not conservative as they have been, in all three cases, generally portrayed. Kraay studies popular Afro-Brazilian definitions of the imperial regime, and his analysis represents an important regional counterpoint to the cases studied by Saether, Serulnikov, and Chopra. That is, it is significant that in Brazil Kraay does not find the institutional bases that explain indigenous royalism in the Andes or maroon royalism in the British Atlantic. Yet the evidence suggests that royalism did constitute an option for Afro-Brazilians to express their political demands. Interestingly, too, Kraay takes a different approach to Serulnikov when he says that "popular understandings of the Brazilian monarchy ... go beyond pragmatism". He shows, moreover, that rather than being subsumed under the interests of royalist elites, in Brazil popular sectors "of various colors" mobilized autonomously. Kraay's study adds another fascinating element to this dossier: the popular imaginary about monarchy that aside from being expressed in civic rituals had connections with the elections of black queens and kings in the Afro-Brazilian brotherhoods. These practices and the social relations that they embodied and recreated were also linked to Kongolese Catholicism (Kiddy, 2002; Thornton, 1993). Importantly, too, in Kraay's study we see a subject that is equally relevant to the other cases presented by all authors — especially Sarlin — the tension between the autonomous mobilization of the popular groups and the elites' fear that they could expand into more potent manifestations of popular power that could be uncontrollable and threatening. In other words, Kraay's case study

emphasizes the extent to which, aside from being an implicit or explicit goal of popular royalists, autonomy was at stake and, with empowerment, in many cases it turned into an achievement.

A synthetic view of the work of the authors in this dossier yields at least four conclusions about the current state of the debate. First, the studies continue to provide irrefutable evidence about the significance of popular politics, and popular royalism specifically, in the Atlantic world during the Age of Revolutions. But they more importantly show that it is not sufficient to insert the royalists into the narrative of revolution or independence; that is only the first step. In fact, as already mentioned, there is generally a clear space and representation of royalists in the traditional narratives that frame them as either abnormal, pre-political, or real obstacles to modernization. Addressing the “problem” of popular royalism requires an approach that seeks its explanation as a historical theme and, treated in this way, it is a lens that transforms the history of revolution and of the Atlantic world. Second, the starting point of all the articles in the dossier is that the association between adherence to the monarchy and counterrevolution — understood as inherently conservative — needs to be questioned. As a response, these scholars illustrate why it is also relevant to reconstruct the popular royalists’ understandings of monarchy alongside the study of their specific interests. At the same time, they highlight the strategic nature of monarchical popular politics, especially as it responded to visible conflict among elites. In other words, they analyze popular royalism in relation to opportunities and rewards. Third, in every case, the authors see radical impulses and consequences — rather than naïve and backward reasoning.

Fourth, and finally, from these different cases and approaches we can see that a theme so varied is a particularly creative vantage point from which to reflect not only on the specificity of popular loyalty to the monarchy but on broader themes such as popular politics, revolution and counterrevolution, vertical alliances, religion, colonialism, and Atlantic history. The richest contribution of this dossier is precisely to put these articles alongside one another and, by doing so, illustrating why

under the category of royalism lie a multiplicity of historical phenomena. Indeed, at the same time that popular royalism needs to be defined beyond Manichean categories such as traditional/modern or liberal/conservative, it also should be explored in its social multiplicity. The social actors that are encompassed in the term *popular* are anything but homogeneous. The particularities that separate them mainly in relation to the different locations, Africa, America, and Europe, are one dimension of such diversity. The other one associated with it — particularly in colonial settings — is race, which also cuts across the defining features of particular interests that lay behind popular royalism. The dossier is pushing the limits of the field by exploring those complexities and displaying the analysis of royalism in multiple layers: conceptual, geographic, social, and political. A change in perspective that is welcome and which is sure to produce many more rich studies and insights.

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