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Western Michigan University

The Age of the Caudillos

Power Structures, Masculinity, and Neglect in the Argentine National Period

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Senior Honors Thesis in History

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"With Juan Facundo Quiroga came the ultimate triumph of the provinces over the cities, and with the spirit, government, and civilization of the cities dominated came the final formation of the central, unitarist, despotic government of Juan Manuel Rosas, who sticks the *gaucho's* knife into cultured Buenos Aires and destroys the work of centuries: civilization, law, and liberty."[1] Such were the sentiments of Domingo F. Sarmiento when, in 1845, he published *Facundo: Civilizacion y Barbarie* – his account and critique of the regimes of Facundo Quiroga and Rosas. Sarmiento's account of the time were plagued by his ideological trappings. In choosing his words to describe the two opposing worldviews prevalent in the struggle for power in Argentina, he revealed his leanings. Civilization and barbarism left no doubt as to how he viewed *Caudillismo*[2] and its struggle with the "civilized" Buenos Aires. Nevertheless, his accounts provide an interesting view into the world of the *caudillo*.[3] The *caudillos* employed authoritarian power structures – namely clientelism based upon kinship, land, and military authority – to rule over their respective provinces and, in the case of Rosas, of Argentina as a whole. In the eyes of Sarmiento, these *caudillos* spelled the end of civilization in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and beyond. *Caudillismo* reinforced the traditional economy and social hierarchies that prevented Argentina from meeting the expectations set for it by optimistic liberals such as Sarmiento, who had hoped for Argentina to depart from the traditional models promoted by *Caudillismo* and join what they saw as the modernity of Western European models.

[1] Domingo F. Sarmiento, *Facundo: Civilizacion y Barbarie*, ed. Raimundo Lazo (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1969 (1845)), 34.
[2] Socio-political system with a *caudillo* at its center.
[3] Term most commonly applied to militarist leaders in Latin America.

Origins of the *Caudillo* and its Place in the Context of Nineteenth-Century Latin America

Following the revolution, we had to look around us, searching for what could fill the void that the inquisition, the defeated absolute power, had left behind – D.F. Sarmiento[4]

In the context of nineteenth-century Latin America, the *caudillo* had come to represent a very specific presence in the political landscape. The term originated during the *Reconquista* in Spain, associated with such rulers as Pelagius – founder of the Kingdom of Asturias in 718 CE – who is credited with beginning the liberation of the Iberian Peninsula from its Moorish rulers. Simply, it derives from the diminutive Latin *capitellum* meaning "head."

In Spanish America it continued to be used and evolved in meaning. Prior to the revolutions against Spain in the early nineteenth century, Spanish colonial policy promoted the existence of militia forces to supplement the smaller contingents of professional soldiers in the colonies. This allowed the colonies to more easily protect themselves not only from external forces but also internal ones. The practice of allowing regional landowners in Argentina, known colloquially as *estancieros*,[5] to maintain militias for provincial security continued into the era of the early Argentine state.[6]

During the post-independence period in Spanish America, as in Spain before it, the *caudillo* began as the military leader, a person who led militias during the turbulent revolutionary period and formation of nascent states. Where the *caudillo* of nineteenth-century Latin America differed from the *caudillo* in Spain, was in the power structured around the former as a means of control. *Caudillos* employed extensive patron-client networks to consolidate power around them and to ensure their dominance in their region, or in the case of *caudillos* like Rosas, as head of a state.

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[4] Domingo F. Sarmiento, *Recuerdos de Provincia* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sopena, 1966 (1850)), 92.
[5] Landed elites, owners of large estates called *estancias*.
[6] John Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish America 1800-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 132-133.

While similar power structures had existed in medieval Europe, where the term was first coined, the *caudillo* of old was not defined by them.

The story of the Latin American *caudillo* began with the dawn of statehood. The colonial apparatus of the Spanish-controlled viceroyalties had been designed to keep power in the hands of the crown authority and its representatives in the New World. In the lead up to independence, the Spanish crown sought to reinforce its already tight-fisted approach to ruling the colonies. The Bourbon Reforms sought to keep the colonies in line and removed what limited power their inhabitants had gained. Chief among these policies was the removal of *criollos,*[7] those of direct Spanish descent born in the Americas, from important local bureaucratic positions. In their place *peninsulares,*[8] those colonists born in Spain, were appointed. In 1807, just a few years before sustained rebellion against Spanish rule in the colonies – Argentina fighting for its independence between 1810 and 1818 – only twelve of the ninety-nine judges of the colonial *audencias*[9] were *criollo*.[10] The colonial administration was helmed by bureaucracy, without the personalism important to patronage. Governance was relatively well institutionalized, albeit in the form of a largely disliked colonial system.[11]

Not only did this exacerbate tensions between the colonial elites and their Iberian counterparts, but it also enforced the inferior positioning of the *criollos* in the power structures of colonial Latin America. However, the Bourbon Reforms also included the establishment of a far more organized military than had ever previously existed in the colonies. Initially, the leadership roles of this reformed military were filled by *peninsulares,* deployed straight from Spain. Over

[7] Social class in the Spanish colonial caste system, people of direct Spanish descent born in the colonies.
[8] Principal social class in the Spanish colonial caste system, Spanish-born people residing in the colonies
[9] High courts of justice in the Spanish colonial system.
[10] E. Bradford Burns and Julie A. Charlip, *Latin America: An Interpretive History* (New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., 2007),
[11] John Lynch, *Latin America between Colony and Nation* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 164.

time, however, this particular institution was not as insular as the bureaucracy that controlled the political and economic life of the colonies. The colonial militias proved to be a source of power and prestige for the *criollos* that had recently found themselves pushed out of other institutions of power.[12] Climbing the ranks of the colonial militias would prove important both in the fight for independence from Spain and in the path to power that many *caudillos* would take, even after the start of the Wars of Independence.

War had been the chief priority of the new states that carved their destinies out of Latin America. Where the state lacked political institutions to enforce its will, military power developed in the fight against Spain to fill this need. The military existed as the most easily employed force at a time when the state lacked the financial resources and ability to project authority to the periphery. The *caudillo* of Latin America was a byproduct of the war for independence. As the colonial apparatus was disrupted and its institutions were destroyed, social groups were open to compete with one another for power.[13] The *caudillos* of the *estancias* were poised particularly well in this competition, with access to land, wealth, and their *peonaje*.[14] As such, the political and military clout of the *caudillo* militia leaders like Rosas greatly expanded.[15]

Perhaps even more important than the role of the military in relation to the center, which was established as trend with these developments, was the great importance that military power began to play in the management of local authority and governance. It is here that the roles of the regular military and regional militias, and their heads, met. The cosmopolitan and provincial

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[12] José Carlos Chiaramonte, *Ciudades, Provincias, Estados: Orígenes de la Nación Argentina (1800-1846)* (Buenos Aires: Compañía Editora Espasa Calpe, 1997), 94-95.
[13] Lynch, *Latin America between Colony and Nation*, 165.
[14] A group of laborers, in the context of this paper such a group that is tied to an estate and the patron residing over it.
[15] Tulio Halperin-Donghi, *The Aftermath of Revolution in Latin America,* trans. Josephine de Bunsen (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973), 4.

interests of the regular army and provincial militias, respectively, existed together and relatively conflict free, for the time being.

After the war for independence, the new formal and informal institutions created by the military's involvement in the affairs of the state persisted. What made Argentina unique, in contrast to many of the other states in the region, was that it built up its military in line with the growth of paramilitary power in the provinces. However, this did not save Argentina from the same phenomena experienced elsewhere in Spanish America. Instead, Argentina's large military produced even greater problems. After the war for independence, the state reformed the military to reduce its size and the financial obligations associated with maintaining such a large force. By pensioning a large portion of its officers, Argentina avoided financial strain at a time when monetary resources were extremely tight. Unfortunately for the state, this also created a group of well-trained ex-soldiers who would not stand for the economic troubles and political indecision and Unitarian policies ahead.[16]

In the development of parallel military and political authority, each with centralist, cosmopolitan and federalist, provincial counterparts, the foundations of Sarmiento's view on the struggle between the provinces and cities can be seen. During the Argentine war for independence, the battles were mostly fought on the frontier. Buenos Aires was largely spared from the warfare. Thus, Argentina's *caudillos* were created on the frontier while the civilian politicians in Buenos Aires forged ahead in their attempts to create an Argentine state. Rivadavia and other Unitarian political figures embraced the rhetoric of liberal policies, seeking to selectively expand the rights of marginalized peoples. In addition, such policies focused on creating institutionalized power as a means of governance rather than personalistic or militaristic power structures.

[16] *Ibid*., 15.

In Argentina, Sarmiento saw "two distinct civilizations occupying the same ground."[17] The culture that Sarmiento saw in the cities, namely Buenos Aires, was defined by the "adherence" of the new political establishment to liberal and republican ideals, appealing to novel models of governance and political movements born in Western Europe and the United States. Such ideals resonated with Sarmiento and the statesmen in Buenos Aires who preceded him. To them, these ideals represented the notion of progress and the achievements of centuries of civilization. In contrast, the *caudillo* represented what Sarmiento saw as antiquated constructions of power. He described the civilization of the provinces as "nascent, without understanding of that which is above it" and asserted that it repeats "those ingenious and popular movements of the Middle Ages."[18] The authoritarianism of the *caudillos* threatened the progress of civilization and the freedoms that were afforded by Sarmiento's vision by imposing upon higher civilization the chaos of the lower order. The term "barbarism," as employed in *Facundo*, did not imply lack of civilization. In fact, Sarmiento believed that the link between barbarism and tradition gave it some sense of meaning and link to a lower order of civilization.[19] Essentially, *Caudillismo* was connected to a past culture, rooted in what Sarmiento believed were antiquated understandings of society and power. Ultimately, to Sarmiento, history was progress, and this progress had been interrupted by the barbarism of the *caudillos*.

[17] Domingo F. Sarmiento, *Facundo: Civilizacion y Barbarie* (Madrid: Editorial Nacional, 1974 (1845)), 105.
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] Julio Ramos, *Divergent Modernities: Cultures and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Latin America,* trans. John D. Blanco (London: Duke University Press, 2001), 15.

Power and Conflict in the Early Argentine State

La República Argentina es una e indivisible. - in *Facundo*

Unfortunately for the early Unitarian leaders of Buenos Aires, post-war Argentina was not a peaceful place. The end of conflict with Spain did not translate to peace and stability for the state. Struggles between the centralist forces in Buenos Aires and the federalist forces of the provinces created a large degree of tension. From their newfound positions of power in regional militias, the *caudillos* could assert their authority and make their move on the centers of power.

As mentioned in *Facundo*, in Argentina two worldviews developed alongside one another: those of "civilization" and "barbarism." It is important, however, to understand these terms both in historical context and in relation to Sarmiento's ideology. While his choice of words may not be entirely appropriate for discussion on the ideological struggle found in Argentina at the time, the meaning of his words provides powerful insight. His use of "barbarism" to describe the more traditional organizations of society found in the Argentine provinces and "civilization" to describe what he believed to be the enlightened and progressive arrangements of those dwelling in the cities highlight his ideological worldview. Essentially, what Sarmiento described was the conflict between those provincial interests that favored the maintenance of regional authority and those cosmopolitan interests that favored the establishment of centralized authority in their favor.

These two ideological paths more concretely manifested themselves in two separate political ideologies that, at times, were related to one another but nonetheless competed. Conflict centered on what form of governance Argentina would pursue, a loose organization of federated provinces or a centralized state dominated by Buenos Aires.[20] Unitarians sought a centralist

[20] David Bushnell and Neill MaCaulay, *The Emergence of Latin America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 119.

solution. The civil and political *porteño*[21] leaders – with their close commercial, political, and ideological ties to Europe and the United States – sought a system of government that would consolidate authority in their hands.[22] They possessed a disproportionate share of the wealth and knowledge of the new state and hoped to use their position to turn Argentina into a state based upon their idealization of progress. As the *portenõs* resided in a port town dependent upon international trade, progress meant the stabilization of the state to facilitate trade in the service of elite interests.

Meanwhile, Federalism in Argentina drew much of its strength from the resentment by provincial peoples of the domineering attitude of the *porteños*. In addition, the independent tendencies and interests of the *caudillos* paired well with federalism. Federalists wished to keep power devolved, recognizing the fragmented nature of provincial interests. Even Buenos Aires province was divided between the interests of the city proper and the *estancieros* of the countryside. However, these *estancieros* still retained ties to the city and shared many of its economic interests.[23] In Argentina, both Federalism and Unitarianism were set upon the same course, with the same goal; consolidation of power and the establishment of sovereign entities from the former Spanish colony. However, the means to achieve such ends were not agreed upon by representatives of the two systems, and thus they were locked in conflict.

Statesmen such as Bernardino Rivadavia, the first president of the Argentine state, sought to place executive government squarely within the confines of law and political institutions that they believed would lead to the stability and sustainability of their respective states. These early

[21] Residents of the city of Buenos Aires.
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] *Ibid.,* 119-120.

civilian leaders of Argentina believed in government defined by the power of legislation and institutional power, not in the patronage embraced by the *caudillos*.[24]

On 1 February 1820, early conflict between the center and periphery in Argentina climaxed. In Argentina, the city of Buenos Aires and the central authority residing there represented the "center." On the other hand, interests of the rural elites and provinces represented the periphery. Having lost much of its authority and control over the northern provinces, the government of Buenos Aires was besieged by *caudillos* from Entre Rios and Santa Fe provinces. Francisco Ramírez and Estanislao López defeated the forces of Buenos Aires, occupied the city and set about destroying all vestiges of the centralist authority they had just routed. The invading *caudillos* destroyed the national directorate and congressional buildings. The province of Buenos Aires was plunged into chaos for the Unitarians and their supporters.[25]

Stumbling away from defeat, the Unitarian government looked for help to the south. Many of the *estancieros* of southern Buenos Aires province answered the call to come to the aid of the city, bringing with them their militias. Leading these *estancieros* was Juan Manuel de Rosas. Rosas spent September of 1820 preparing the *gaucho*[26] peons of his *estanciero* allies. Having formed them into a militia of 500 men, he marched them to join the armies of Buenos Aires and its allies. Rosas responded to the calls made by Buenos Aires "with increasing insistence."[27] Rosas used his position as superior among his fellow *estancieros* and military forces to defeat or outmaneuver his rival *caudillos*, Ramírez and López. Having restored the calm to Buenos Aires, Rosas deployed

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[24] Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish America*, 84.
[25] Tulio Halperin-Donghi, *The Contemporary History of Latin America,* trans. John Charles Chasteen (London: Duke University Press, 1993), 107.
[26] A social class found in the Argentine countryside. The equivalent of the North American cowboy, used as the primary labor source for the *estancias*.
[27] "Manifesto de Rosas," 10 October 1820, in Juan Pradere and Fermín Chávez, *Juan Manuel de Rosas* (Buenos Aires, 1970), 1:26-28.

his *colorados*[28] in the streets of the capital. However, this new found peace did not spell the end of the troubles for the Unitarian government on whose behalf Rosas had intervened.

Although he had come to the rescue of the Unitarian national government and defended the administration of Martín Rodríguez, Rosas was no friend of the city of Buenos Aires. According to Colonel Aráoz de La Madrid, a leading officer in the national military, the urban elites paid dearly for the intervention of the "bloodthirsty *gaucho* Rosas." According to de la Madrid, Rosas used excessive force in managing Buenos Aires. Displaying his shared sympathies with the civilian statesmen, de la Madrid recalled that Rosas "took pleasure in oppressing the enlightened classes with the men of the countryside."[29]

During this period, Rosas evolved from *estanciero* to *caudillo*. As reward for his service to Buenos Aires, Rosas acquired greater landholdings – expanding his peonage and therefore the forces from which he could draw to maintain his *colorados* militia. All of this was essential to the construction of the *caudillo*. In addition to more land and military power, Rosas earned a place in the political landscape of Argentina. His position, both politically and militarily, allowed Rosas to begin the construction of his patron-client network. Having pushed the provincial *caudillos* from Buenos Aires in the defense of the Unitarian government, Rosas engaged in peace talks with López, the leader of Santa Fe province. However, Rosas' negotiations came without approval from Buenos Aires. Using funds from the Rodríguez government, Rosas paid for the maintenance of López' militia – buying a valuable ally in the provinces for the future.[30]

With the end of conflict between the provinces and the center orchestrated by Rosas and with the aid of other Unitarian leaders – those interested in vesting supreme governmental

[28] The name of the militia organized by Juan Manuel de Rosas.
[29] Gregorio Aráoz de La Madrid, *Memorias del general Gregorio Aráoz de La Madrid* (Buenos Aires, 1968), 1:197.
[30] Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish* America, 86.

authority to the center – the threat of conflict diminished. In a letter to John, First Viscount Ponsonby, the British Envoy and Minister Plenipotentiary to Argentina, the Argentine minister of finance, Manuel García, declared that there was no longer a possibility that the "rebel *caudillos*" could dismember the center, as they had just done only a few years before. García argued that these *caudillos* did "not possess the talents or means to affect such a plan" and that "the purely personal authority of these chieftains is rapidly becoming a thing of the past."[31] It seemed that from that moment forth, although *Caudillismo* was not finished in the provinces, the individual regional *caudillos* themselves affected the center less and less. From then on, the personalities of the provincial *caudillos* were inferior to their chief in Buenos Aires, and their interests played a secondary role to those of Rosas. For the immediate future, the power of governance of Buenos Aires remained in the hands of the civilian and Unitarian government of Rividavia, appointed to the presidency on 7 February 1826.[32]

While civilian governance was maintained in Buenos Aires province, the remaining provinces acted on their own – fighting among themselves for power. However, the provinces were united, while only briefly, behind the Unitarian government of Rivadavia when conflict broke out between Brazil and the inhabitants of the *Banda Oriental*, modern-day Uruguay. To the Argentines, the *Banda Oriental* was a part of their cultural brotherhood and a rightful part of the *Rio de la Plata*[33] region. Argentina rallied its forces and went to the aid of the patriot forces of the *Banda Oriental*. War with Brazil precipitated the end of the Rivadavia government and the beginning of the reign of the *caudillos* in Argentina.

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[31] García to Ponsonby, 5 December 1826, cited in Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish* America, 86.
[32] Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish America*, 87.
[33] Name of the region surrounding the mouth of the Rio de la Plata between Buenos Aires province and Uruguay, extending northward toward Bolivia, Paraguay, and Brazil.

The maintenance of the military, with the formerly pensioned officers returned to service, proved to be a massive drain on the treasury of the Argentine state. The elites of Buenos Aires grew dissatisfied with both the financial situation and alliance with the provinces led by Rivadavia. This dissatisfaction multiplied when Rivadavia placed the province of Buenos Aires itself under direct control of the national government, thus curtailing the power of the region's elites. At the same time, Rivadavia's allies in the interior were becoming increasingly unhappy with the center. The imposition of religious freedom in the country through an agreement with Great Britain made by Rivadavia was an especially contentious issue. Though Argentina had managed to turn the tide against Brazil, Emperor Dom Pedro II refused to back down, thus allowing the war to drag on and leading to stalemate. As a result of the complicated nature of the war with Brazil, Great Britain mediated peace between all sides and negotiated Uruguayan independence and imposed its will on Argentina, forcing religious freedom upon the staunchly Catholic state.[34]

Revolts in the provinces ended the ambitions of Rivadavia, who was forced to step down. The struggle now resided on one side with his political successors in the Unitarian movement and on the other with the Federalists who continued the push for greater regional autonomy. The Unitarians acted swiftly, killing the Federalist governor of Buenos Aires – Manuel Dorrego.[35] Dorrego's execution triggered the galvanization of the Federalist landowners against the Unitarians – led by their very own *caudillo*, José María Paz – behind the leadership of various strongmen. Chief among these were Rosas and Facundo Quiroga, both competing for the title of leader of the Federalist movement while simultaneously competing against Paz.

Rosas derived substantial power from his dominance in Buenos Aires province and the political and military arrangements that he had established in his time leading the province. While

[34] Tulio Halperin-Donghi, *The Contemporary History of Latin America,* trans. John Charles Chasteen, 109.
[35] *Ibid*.

Rosas held the superior position to Facundo Quiroga in terms of military power and prestige, it was not until Facundo suffered two humiliating defeats at the hands of Paz and his superior Unitarian forces that he showed deference to Rosas and joined his camp. Shortly after, Rosas sent Estanislao López – the original enemy of the Unitarian movement that Rosas had coopted into his client network – to confront Paz.

The Federalist army, led into battle by López, convincingly defeated Paz's forces, bringing an end to the struggle between Rosas and the Unitarian provinces. Argentina was united under the Federalist banner of the *caudillo* Rosas.

The Argentine *Caudillos*: Facundo Quiroga and Rosas

The name of Facundo filled the absence of laws;
freedom and the spirit of the city had ceased to exist – in *Facundo*

Where had the two most formidable Federalist *caudillos* of the nascent Argentine national period come from? The traditional trajectory of *caudillos* involved a privileged birth, often into the class of the *estanciero* families. For Rosas, this was very much the case. Facundo Quiroga's origin story was more humble.

Facundo Quiroga was born in La Rioja province – where he would rise to prominence and power and rule as *caudillo*. Facundo Quiroga came from a family of impoverished ranchers, lacking the benefits of higher birth that would give him an edge like his future contemporaries. Despite his family's economic position, he was fortunate enough to receive the opportunity of an education. Sent to San Juan in the nearby province of the same name, Facundo Quiroga did not settle well into school life and made his escape. Facundo Quiroga's tale began as he wandered the deserts between San Juan and his home province. There, so the legend goes, he encountered a cougar, engaged with it in mortal combat and slayed it. For the remainder of his life, Facundo Quiroga would carry the nickname *el tigre de los llanos* ("the tiger of the plains").[36]

This was Facundo Quiroga's first claim to his future authority and military power. His purported skill at such a young age, in dispatching a fierce predator of the Argentine desert, boosted his reputation and in particular his masculine image. Masculinity was an important aspect in the construction of the *caudillo*. While the validity of such a tale is questionable at best, that it was taken for truth by the people who would serve under Facundo Quiroga and his peers was all that was necessary. Such purported heroics formed the bedrock of a cult of personality and masculinity

[36] Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish America*, 39-40.

around Facundo Quiroga. Such constructions were incredibly valuable tools in the arsenal of the *caudillo* in the building and projecting power.

Following the May Revolution against Spain in 1810, Facundo Quiroga travelled to the nearby province of San Luis to join the patriot army of José de San Martín. Unfortunately for Facundo Quiroga, the very same ill temper that he had exhibited as a schoolboy manifested itself again in his early attempt at military service. As a result, he was imprisoned by his own side and spent most of the war behind bars, only to be released and sent home to La Rioja. Once home, Facundo settled into life as a businessman.

It was not until the collapse of centralist authority in Buenos Aires in 1820 that Facundo Quiroga's ambitions reasserted themselves, and he sought to gain military power. Facundo Quiroga entered the provincial army and quickly rose through its ranks, accumulating authority and prestige. Employing his newfound status, Facundo gained control of the government and aligned himself with the anti-centralist forces opposed to the government of Rivadavia. [37]

At the very same time, Rosas had aligned himself to protect the Rivadavia government. While born into a wealthy landed *criollo* family and given an education befitting his family's status, Rosas took up a limited role in military service at the age of 13 in the fight against the British invasion of the *Rio de la Plata* in 1806. Afterwards, Rosas returned to Buenos Aires province and accrued fame for his skill as a *gaucho*, working on his *estancia*. Rosas expanded his wealth by increasing his land holdings and investing heavily in cattle ranching and slaughter houses.[38]

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[37] *Ibid*.

[38] Brian Loveman and Thomas M. Davies, Jr., ed. *The Politics of Antipolitics: The Military in Latin America* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 29.

Facundo Quiroga represented the social advances made by people outside of the socio-economic elite during the post-independence period. Socio-economic and political mobility had expanded with the end of the colonial order but still remained limited. The story of a poor rancher's son climbing the social hierarchy to find himself as *caudillo* of a province was still very much the exception. Of the eighteen *caudillos* who ruled the various provinces of Argentina from 1810 to 1870, only three did not belong to a great landed or wealthy family.[39] Rosas, on the other hand, exemplified the typical rise to power of the *caudillos* – born to a wealthy family and utilizing that happenstance to his advantage, growing and consolidating his authority. Regardless of birth, however, each of the *caudillos* shared a common path: military service. Prestige was most abundant in a successful military career. However, military capabilities, gained in service to the state, were far more employable in the consolidation of authority for the *caudillos.*

[39] Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish* America, 89.

Caudillos and Land Reform

> Expansion was extensive rather than intensive, for it was land, not capital, which was abundant, and there was as yet no technical innovation, no attempt to improve stock or modernize production. The number of cattle and size of estates were all that counted.
> – Leslie Bethell[40]

With respect to general economic policy, the Federalist movement was split into two regional camps. The provincial *caudillos* argued for the decentralization of all authority, including the economic power held in Buenos Aires. Meanwhile, *porteño* Federalists in Buenos Aires understood autonomy very differently. To them, it meant retaining the lucrative income made by the port on import and export tariffs.[41] Rosas embraced *porteño* economic policy, which sought to expand the power of the capital through economic policy rather than expanding economic opportunity for the masses, something that provincial *caudillos* often neglected as well.

Rosas concerned himself most with the expansion and securing of landholdings in Argentina, especially in Buenos Aires province. Even before assuming power, Rosas and his followers intervened in government land reform. Starting in 1822, the government of Martín Rodríguez, seeking to implement policies in the hopes of mimicking European development models and paying off substantial national debt, organized a system of emphyteusis. This initiative was spearheaded by Rivadavia who, at the time, was a member of the governing administration, for government lands in provincial Buenos Aires. A holdover from the colonial period, emphyteusis was based upon Roman law. Under this system, government lands were organized for the purpose of being rented to the citizenry. While land was rented out for a period, ownership remained in the hands of the state. The vast reserves of land at the government's disposal, now

[40] Leslie Bethell, *Argentina since Independence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 3.
[41] Nicolas Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 48.

integrated into the emphyteusis system, represented a potential boost in productivity and economic output for the early Argentine economy.

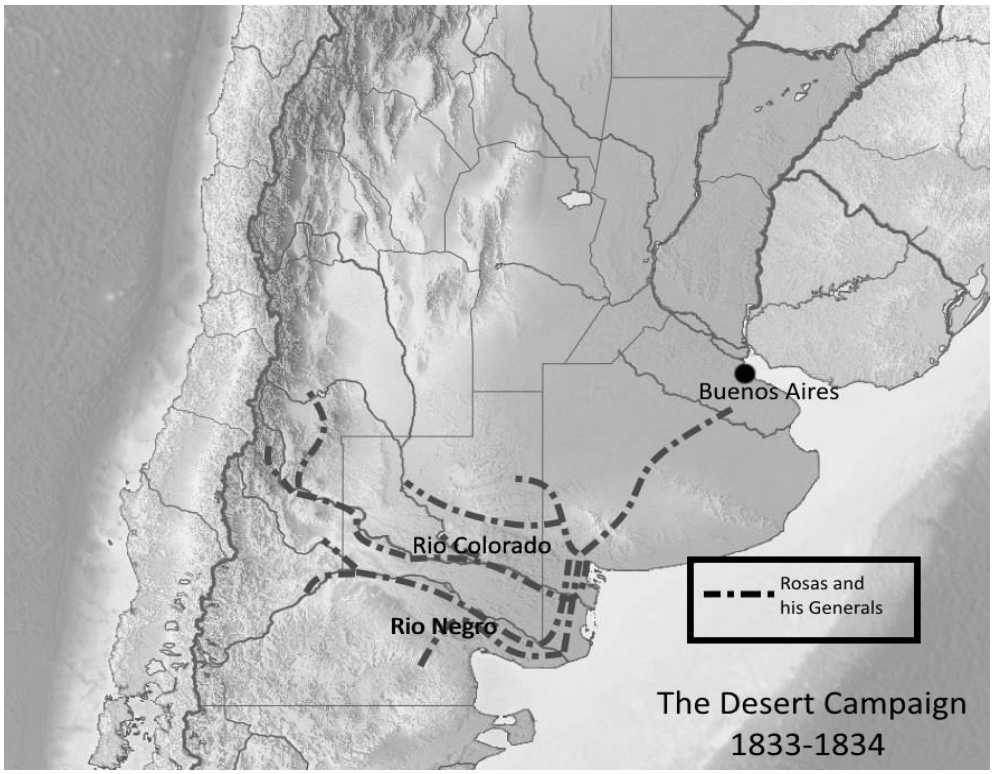
In renting out previously closed lands to the citizenry, the government hoped to empower some of the lower classes and raise revenues, all the while retaining ownership of the land itself by limiting the rental period to twenty years.[42] The system was far more susceptible to the will of the landed elites than was foreseen by those reformers who implemented it. The rates for renting the land were incredibly low. Thus, those already established and wealthy landowners were able to acquire the most land. All an interested party had to do to claim its plot of land was to simply measure it. Once the rights to the land were granted, the lessee was then allowed to sell his rights and subdivide the land as he saw fit.

By 1828, over 6.5 million acres had been granted through the emphyteusis system. However, this vast amount of land was placed into the hands of a mere 112 individuals, ten of whom received substantial plots of more than 130,000 acres each. By the 1830s, the amount of land issued to individuals by the state exceeded 21 million acres and was in the possession of 500 individuals, most of whom were members of the urban elites and allies of Rosas.[43] Thanks to the efforts of the landed elite in consolidating land through the system of emphyteusis, an incredible amount of land was kept in the hands of only a few, privileged individuals.

Despite such an enormous opening of government lands, the desires of the landed elite were not satiated. When Rosas assumed the role of governor of Buenos Aires and ended the rule of the Unitarian civilian government, in 1829, he made it a priority to expand settlement. In 1833, under the name of suppressing aggression against Argentine settlement by the indigenous peoples of the region, Rosas launched the Desert Campaign into the southern frontier, reaching as far as

[42] Bethell, *Argentina Since Independence*, 2.
[43] John Lynch, *The Spanish American Revolutions, 1808-1826* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1986), 82.

the Rio Negro. As a result of the Desert Campaign, the land area of the province of Buenos Aires expanded by several thousands of square miles.[44] Buenos Aires now controlled the mouths of the two largest rivers of the expanded frontier, the Rio Negro and the Rio Colorado.



[45]

More importantly, Rosas now had new lands under his control with which to reward his loyal followers. The provincial government, directed by Rosas, began transferring vast sums of the newly acquired land into the hands of Rosas' band of loyal compatriots – especially those military officers who had aided him in the campaign.

In the eyes of its Unitarian architects, the system of emphyteusis, created only in the previous decade, had proven a failure. It facilitated the exploitation and consolidation of land in

[44] Bethell, *Argentina Since Independence*, 3.
[45] Map is derived from image found on Wikimedia Commons entitled "Mapa de la campaña al desierto por Rosas 1833" found at http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mapa_de_la_Campa%C3%B1a_al_Desierto_por_Rosas_1833.png%20a

the hands of wealthy *estancieros*, the chief allies of Rosas. In return, the state profited little. Rent on the land in the emphyteusis system was far too low to provide the state the money that it desperately needed. The expenses incurred during the war against Spain and subsequent struggles, made by the state to consolidate and fend off challenges from its rivals within the region, saddled the early Argentine state with onerous debts.

The addition of vast tracts of land to the Argentine state and Rosas' pro-*estanciero* political ideology triggered a reevaluation of the legal structures governing landholdings. Without valuable returns from the rents collected from this land, Rosas decided to do away with this system. Instead of maintaining ultimate state ownership of the land, he sold it directly to private landowners.[46] Not coincidentally, the wealthy were the primary benefactors of this new system, and the names of those who purchased some of the largest plots of land were the very same who had done so under emphyteusis. Rosas' wealthiest allies continued their dominance of the land in Buenos Aires, ensuring the superior position of his power structure. Again, the numbers are revealing. The process of selling off government lands began in 1836. By 1840, another 21 million acres was sold off to 293 individuals.[47] Nearly the equivalent amount of land rented out during emphyteusis had been sold to almost half as many landowners. In Rosas' tenure land had become even more heavily concentrated than before.

Not all of Rosas' allies were already established in the landed elite. Some of his most powerful clients were those officers and members of the soldiery who had supported him during his military campaigns and in power. In order to reward these supporters, Rosas established *boletos de premios en tierras*, land certificates, as reward for military service. While Rosas placed the lands of the emphyteusis system into the hands of his well-connected allies, he issued some

[46] Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish* America, 90-91.
[47] Bethell, *Argentina Since Independence*, 4.

8,500 land grants to his military allies.[48] The issuance of such grants had a practical purpose, for the Argentine state did not possess the means to issue proper salaries or pensions for its military. However, the political element of such a system was the central factor at play. With an economy that focused heavily on cattle ranching, land was one of the most valuable assets one could possess in Argentina, and it was abundantly available following the Desert Campaign and end of emphyteusis. Land was Rosas' tool. Having the greatest access to it gave him the initiative over other *caudillos* and allowed him to both expand and secure his client network. The patronage of Rosas knew no rival.

All of this did not serve to improve the economic prospects of the average Argentinian. The socio-economic structures of Argentina were only made more rigid than before by the land grants and sales orchestrated by Rosas. William MacCann, an English observer traveling through Argentina, commented that "there is as yet no middle class; the owners of the land feeding immense flocks and herds form one class, their herdsmen and shepherds another."[49]

The land certificates that were issued out by Rosas for military service did not serve as a means for the socio-economic advancement of many of the soldiery. Instead of holding on to their newly acquired tracts of land for future potential economic gains, soldiers sold off more than 90% of their new properties to landed elites.[50] Most of those awarded land through the grants could not afford to develop them into substantial enough plots to make them economically lucrative. Developing an *estancia* was a capital-heavy project not suited for those who lacked the financial resources necessary to do so. As such, many soldiers and citizens who were granted land sold it to already established landowners. In other cases, displaying the nature of the patron-client networks

[48] Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish* America, 91.
[49] William MacCann, *Two Thousand Miles' Ride through the Argentine Provinces* (London, 1853), 1:158.
[50] Andrés M. Carretero, *La Propiedad de la Tierra en la Época de Rosas* (Buenos Aires, 1972), 30.

established during the period of *caudillo* rule in Argentina, the *estancieros* simply received the certificates of the soldiers under their patronage as tribute.[51]

The implications of the pro-*estancia* policies are astounding. From 1830 to 1852, the land area that was newly incorporated into Argentina as a result of the Desert Campaign represented a 42% increase in available lands. In addition, relations with those indigenous peoples that had aided Rosas improved marginally and tensions between settlers and indigenous populations eased as Argentine settlement dominated the region. The growth of new *estancias*, however, was lower at 28%. This meant that, while there were more *estancias* in general, the average size had increased. The number of proprietors, meanwhile, had only increased by 17% through the period.[52]

Rosas' closest political advisor, and the greatest landowner in Buenos Aires, Nicolás Anchorena, had accumulated astonishing 2,334,146 acres across his *estancias*. General Angel Pacheco, one of Rosas' chief military leaders, had nearly 600,000 acres to his name. Minister of Foreign Affairs Felipe Arana and the economic adviser Juan Terrero held some 320,000 acres each.[53] In addition to their favored position in the acquisition of territory, these allies of Rosas were granted "a distinction and privilege" in the form of exemption from state levies on their *peonaje* and cattle.[54]

Expansion of land and the greater concentration of property, especially in the hands of his allies, was a key trait of Rosas' regime. Rosas placed himself at the center of an impressive client network based on the supreme power and wealth found in the *estancias* held by his followers and the *peonaje* that belonged to them. Rosas' patronage linked deputies, government officials,

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[51] Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish* America, 91.
[52] Carretero, *La Propiedad de la Tierra en la Época de Rosas*, 30.
[53] *Ibid*., 38-39.
[54] Rosas to Terrero, Southhampton, 21 Nov. 1863, in Adolfo Saldías ed., *Papeles de Rosas* (Buenos Aires: La Plata, 1904-1907), 2:353-354.

military personnel, and peons all together in varying degrees of relationship to the center of power that he commanded.

Caudillos, Society, and Economy

> Society has disappeared completely, only the feudal family remains, isolated, concentrated, and having no unified society. – in *Facundo*

The *estancias* had come to dominate social and economic life in the provinces. The supreme authority held by the *caudillos* and other *estancieros* in such spaces gave them an incredible influence in reshaping life in Argentina. However, there existed no encompassing fundamental changes to the social hierarchy, nor of the individual classes which belonged to it. During the time of the *caudillos*, colonial social structures were adapted in order to create revenue for the developing state. The results were not unique to the time or place. The social classes resembled their counterparts in the colonial system, save one especially important group.

The *gauchos,* a staple of early Argentine culture, underwent the greatest amount of change during this time. This social class, comprised primarily of *mestizos* – those of mixed Spanish and indigenous ancestry – was highly traditional and semi-nomadic. The *gaucho* was a skilled horseman very familiar with tending to cattle, although not tied to any ranch in particular. Instead, *gauchos* roamed the *pampas*, working or joining military expeditions when they saw fit.

In the ever-changing economy now dominated by the *estancias*, however, the independence of the *gauchos* came under threat. In the hopes of increasing their *peonaje* and thus expanding the grand patron-client network, *estancieros* set about taming the *gaucho. Estanciero* interests in the national government established laws curtailing the nomadic tendency of *gauchos,* requiring them to carry identity cards and certificates of employment or face forced military

conscription or hard labor.[55] Such punishments persuaded some of the unruly *gauchos* to accept existence as a peon on an *estancia*. They were kept there by labor practices designed to limit their mobility and freedoms, including the payment of low wages and indebtedness in the forms of credit owed to the *estancia* store and the patron.[56]

Unsurprisingly, Rosas partook in the economic subjugation of his *peonaje*. Instructions for the management of his *estancias* given to their respective overseers prohibited peons from raising their own livestock or hunting wild game.[57] *Estancieros* enacted this policy because the products that could be gained from such activities could be sold at market, giving the peon a degree of independence from the *estancia* and, more importantly, from the patron himself.

The results of the *caudillo*-backed expansion of the *estancia* system affected the native inhabitants of Argentina. The immediate post-revolutionary period had been a rhetorically positive experience for the indigenous peoples of Argentina. They were declared to be equal to the *criollos* before the law and included in military service. On 12 March 1813, the General Assembly of the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata ratified and expanded the decree of 1811 which had called for the end of Indian serfdom through the *encomienda*[58] system. All of these liberties, and more, afforded to the indigenous population were enshrined in the 1819 constitution – extending to them the full civil liberties and equality under the law.[59] However, the poor conditions among indigenous communities in Argentina and their standing in society did not improve. The rhetoric and actions taken in favor of the revolution's indigenous policy had focused upon granting

[55] Lynch, *The Spanish American Revolutions*, 83.
[56] *Ibid.*
[57] Juan Manuel Rosas, *Instrucciones a los mayordomos de estancias*, cited in Tulio Halperin-Donghi, "La Expansión Ganadera en la Campaña de Buenos Aires (1810-1852)," *Desarrollo Económico* 3, no. ½ (April – September 1963): 94.
[58] Colonial labor system that tied indigenous peoples to estates. Native people were expected to provide their labor. In exchange, the landowner was responsible for their well-being and tasked with converting his subjects and educating them on Christianity.
[59] Lynch, *The Spanish American Revolutions*, 84.

freedoms but not ensuring the welfare of the indigenous community. Indigenous communities remained on the periphery of Argentine society and were excluded from the brotherhood of the nation.

Matters were made worse for the indigenous community by Rosas' Desert Campaign. The largest, purest concentrations of Argentina's indigenous population existed in the sub-Andean provinces and remote areas of the west. It was in these regions that Rosas focused his military campaign. Defeated and dispersed at the hands of Rosas, Argentina's native population was forced out of their traditional lifestyle, with some joining the national economy as peons for the *estancias* that were then expanding into their former homelands. Meanwhile, many more were pushed away from their traditional homelands, far beyond the reaches of contemporary Argentine settlement.[60]

Positive rhetoric of the liberalizing revolutionary regime accompanied the slave policies during the revolution. So that their ports "should not be contaminated by a trade as shameful as it is reprehensible," the governing triumvirate issued a pair of decrees, 9 April and 14 May 1812, prohibiting the slave trade – but not the institution – within the United Provinces. However, a lucrative illegal slave trade thrived along the border with Brazil. The nature of the border, long and largely unregulated, made the area ideal for smuggling slaves into Argentina from Brazil, where slavery remained wholly legal. Through the Anglo-Argentine Treaty of 1825, Argentina and Brazil agreed to work together in suppressing the trade. While both states worked together to curb the illegal slave trade across their shared frontier, it did not cease entirely. The remote border region made even a concerted effort to stop slavers very difficult.[61]

While the institution of slavery survived, there were steps taken by the revolutionary government to curtail it. Employing the same liberal and humanitarian rhetoric espoused in other

[60] *Ibid.*
[61] *Ibid.,* 85.

realms of governance, the triumvirate took steps to limit slavery. In 1813, the revolutionary government issued a series of decrees to achieve this. The first, dated 2 February, established the *libertad de vientres* (freedom by birth), which applied to all slaves born on or after 31 January of that year. A similar decree was issued, two days later, declaring all those slaves entering the United Provinces from that date to be free.

A third decree, dated 6 March, provided for the education and integration of former slaves into society. In reality, however, this decree limited the freedom of former slaves rather than paving the way for expanded freedom. All those children born free to slaves were to remain in the master's household until the age of twenty. For their first fifteen years of service, no compensation was to be paid to them. During their final five years, a meager one peso per month was their reward for service. To the revolutionary government these laws were enlightened and progressive. Considering contemporary laws regarding limitations on slavery, such a belief was not entirely inappropriate. Still, discontent among slaves and free-born blacks was palpable, a manifestation of the reality of the reforms. In response, the *Gazeta de Buenos Aires* wrote that they "should not complain if some continue to still live in oppressed conditions" because as the Spaniards had "once made you slaves they have deprived you perhaps forever of being free."[62] It seems that those already endowed with their freedom by birth did not believe it to be achievable through decree alone, they held the position that freedom came of birth and not by law of man.

Slavery in Argentina was not as intensive as in some other areas of Latin America, where the plantation system had expanded rapidly. Instead the typical slave in the Rio de la Plata was either a domestic servant for an *estanciero* or other wealthy individual, or a worker in the cattle industry that Argentina had come to embrace. In this latter regard, the master – much like a master

[62] *Gazeta de Buenos Aires*, 1 June 1816, No. 58.

of the typical plantation system – expected a return on his investment in the slave. Many of these landed elites who held slaves and wished to hold on to them for the time being were also figures in the Federalist movement. Many of the *estancieros* who supported Rosas held slaves. Perhaps of even more importance, even those who were not great landowners did as well. Rosas' urban allies owned many slaves, servants to run their homes in the city. This helps to explain, despite anti-slavery rhetoric and limited actions taken against the institution, why slavery persisted in Argentina. Elite interests prevented definitive resolution of the issue of slavery in Argentina.

In 1822, the population of Buenos Aires was 55,416. Of that, 13,685, or 24.7%, were black or mulatto. Around 60% of all blacks and 30% of mulattos were slaves. Compare these figures to a decade prior, at the end of colonial rule when actions taken against slavery began: 29.3% of the population, some 11,837 people, in Buenos Aires were black or mulatto and roughly 77% of blacks were enslaved.[63] While the percentage of the enslaved population decreased, the actual number of slaves remained essentially unchanged in the city of Buenos Aires.

The elites of Argentina seemed content to allow slavery to continue, acting only to reduce the scale at which it existed. Through this approach, slavery would never terminate abruptly in Argentina. Elites preferred to keep slavery alive as long as possible to benefit their position. The prevailing sentiment seemed to be that Argentina must wait for slavery to wither and die on the vine when elite interests no longer benefited heavily from the institution. Rosas' rule confirmed this sentiment. No further significant changes to the status of slavery were introduced. Not until Rosas was forced to flee Argentina in exile was slavery legally abolished. In 1851, Rosas' ally Justo José de Urquiza grew discontent with Rosas' rule. Rosas refused to end his dominance in Argentina in favor of policies more akin to those touted by the Unitarians that he had expelled

[63] Marta B. Goldberg, "La Población Negra y mulata de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 1810-1840," *Desarrollo Económico* 16, no. 61 (1976), 75-99.

from Argentina. Chiefly, pressure was mounting on his regime to adopt a constitution that would adopt institutions to safeguard the political process and end hegemonic rule. France and Great Britain had initiated a blockade of Argentina to force Rosas to end his opposition to the reform. Urquiza, partially motivated by potential increased economic autonomy to be gained for his province in the event of Rosas' downfall, allied himself with Brazil to oust Rosas in 1852.[64] A significant wave of anti-*rosismo* followed and allowed for the constitution of 1853 to be drafted. It expressly prohibited slavery in the whole of Argentina.[65]

In terms of social reform, across the board, Rosas' *Caudillismo* maintained much of the rhetoric of the Unitarian political movement but abandoned any attempt at meaningful reform. Instead, in terms slavery, the *status quo* was maintained for the purpose of preserving elite interests, in particular those of Rosas' *estanciero* allies. Meanwhile, *gaucho* culture had been fundamentally changed to favor the *estancieros*. Indigenous peoples were eliminated, displaced to the peripheries of the Argentine state, and had their land confiscated and placed into the hands of the *estancieros*.

The impact of the *Caudillismo* on the social and economic landscape of Argentina was undeniably important in shaping the development of the Argentine state. The dominance of the landed elite was solidified under the rule of Rosas as their control of new lands was facilitated through the power structures employed by the *caudillos*. *Gaucho* subculture was undermined and those who had once enjoyed the freedom of individualism were subsumed into the *estancia*. The interests of the landed elite and their close relationship to Rosas ensured that slavery remained intact and that indigenous populations were expelled from valuable lands.

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[64] Bushnell and MaCaulay, *The Emergence of Latin America in the Nineteenth Century*, 135.
[65] José Luis Masini, "La Esclavitud negra en la Républica Argentina: Época Independiente," *Revista de la Junta de Estudios Históricos de Mendoza* 3, no. 1 (1961), 157-158.

Caudillos and Patron-Client Networks

I served them with notorious favoritism in everything the asked for and needed.
The lands they have, they received through me. – Juan Manuel de Rosas[66]

For the *caudillos*, the establishment of elaborate patron-client networks was paramount for both achieving and maintaining power in a system of competing personalities, jockeying for the best possible position that they could achieve. Rosas was second to none in utilizing clientelism to achieve his aims.

Land was of supreme value for those hoping to establish a superior position within the system. Not only did land provide an economic base from which to fund military exploits and build personal wealth, but it also gave the landowning patrons access to a personal reserve of men in the form of the peons who worked for them. However, one's rank among landowners did not translate directly to one's positon within the patron-client network. Rosas himself occupied tenth place out of the seventeen largest landowners – those owning more than 300,000 acres – with some 400,000 acres.[67] But his *peonaje*, allied *caudillos* and *estancieros*, and militia were better armed and under far firmer control than those of any rival *caudillo*.[68]

Nepotism also favored Rosas. His large and wealthy family placed him in a superior position to utilize such connections. The Anchorena family, the single largest landholders in Argentina with an impressive collection of *estancias* exceeding 2,300,000 acres and some 1,000,000 acres in Buenos Aires province alone, were Rosas' cousins and loyal members of his network during his tenure.[69] Felipe Arana – Minister of Foreign Affairs – was distantly related and Lucio Mansilla, military leader and governor of the Chaco province, was his brother-in-law.

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[66] Rosas to Terrero in *Papeles de Rosas*, 2:253-254.
[67] Andrés M. Carretero, "Contribución al Conocimiento de la Propiedad Rural en la Provincia de Buenos Aires para 1830," *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina,* 2, no. 13 (1970), 273-292.
[68] Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish* America, 90.
[69] Carretero, "Propiedad Rural," 273-292.

Rosas' brothers Gervasio and Prudencio also played key roles as valuable landowners.[70] Family provided the foundation for Rosas to form a strong base on which to build, but the blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb, and Rosas needed to create a network that reached beyond his familial ties.

Rosas' reputation as a military leader and skilled *gaucho* during his youth attracted many to his camp. The patron imposed his authority not simply through his wealth but also his reputation. He enjoyed the reputation of being as resourceful a *gaucho* as his peons.[71] This was not only to gain the respect of his peons but also to prove his masculine qualities, showing that he was not simply a member of some out-of-touch landed class but a *gaucho* at his core. *Gaucho* subculture developed indifferent to both civil law and church authority. *Gauchos* partook in masculine activities such as fighting, gambling, and horseback riding. Such physical activities were part of a pageantry of masculinity. Skilled bodily activity was a prime indicator of masculinity and inhabited a sphere of behavior that was seen as exclusively masculine.[72] *Gauchos* placed value on these activities and *caudillos* were well regarded for their participation in them. Building a masculine image at the center of a cult of personality enabled Rosas to more easily build his client network. This, combined with his superior allies and control over the land grants given out during the early years of the Argentine state, placed him at the top. Masculinity is most often derived from the use of the male body. Traditionally, masculinity was thought to be an inherent trait to males and based upon the natural disposition of their sex. In such an understanding of masculinity, those activities that are considered rough to the body are considered masculine – as females were

[70] Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish* America, 92.
[71] *Ibid*., 93.
[72] R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender and Society,* 19, no. 6 (Dec. 2005), 834.

considered too fragile to participate in them. As such, physical activities such as horseback riding or fighting were considered masculine.[73]

The patron benefited greatly from the labor, loyalty, and service provided by his *peonaje*, but the system was not one-way. The peon received, in exchange for surrendering many of his freedoms, the security of the patron and a life provided for him. Patrons worked to keep their peons safe from marauders, recruiting sergeants, and the militias of rival *caudillos*. In addition, the patron developed local resources to benefit both patron and client alike. Not all peons joined willingly, however. As a reminder, labor and vagrancy laws established in the interest of the landed elite were designed to drive potential peons into the *estancias* – in particular vagabond *gauchos*. The *gauchos* surrendered their freedoms as part of a social contract with the patron, becoming the property of the patron and his *estancia*. Such a lifestyle was alien to the *gauchos.* However, to them the estate represented sanctuary from the dangers of the countryside. Just as it was a safe haven, it was also a prison to the wandering spirit of the *gaucho*.[74]

At the height of Rosas' power, Argentina was essentially the physical domain of Rosas' patron-client network, a loose arrangement of *estancias* that was unified by the patronage of Rosas the supreme proprietor. Arrangements formed between clients and their patrons sought the protection of even greater individuals. This network lead to Rosas at its center, residing in his own *caudillo* state of Buenos Aires. Rosas occupied the heights of power and patronage in Argentina and imposed his will upon the state through reward and punishment.

[73] R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1995), 45.
[74] *Ibid.*, 94.

Masculinity and the *Caudillo*

> In the Argentine Provinces one needs neither riches nor talent and education, nor other antecedents but valor and audacity… to move and take control of the destinies of the country. Many have begun… apprenticing themselves in rebellions that they have led with more or less success, but always with audacity and with daring.[75]

At first glance the socio-cultural phenomenon of *machismo*[76] in Latin America may seem unique to the region. However, there are similarities to be drawn between *machismo* and other patriarchal models of masculinity that were cotemporaneous with it. Each shared common basic principles: a strong sense of masculinity and dominance over the feminine were at the heart of these systems. Nevertheless, masculinity in Latin America, as around the western world, was a very important cultural phenomenon. In terms of *Caudillismo* in Argentina, masculinity served an important role. The *caudillo* utilized the importance of masculinity to influence those around him. Each constructed his own cult of personality to gain the respect, admiration, and loyalty of his subjects.

In Latin American, as commonly believed elsewhere during the nineteenth century, men and women were considered different from each other, both physically and psychologically. These differences were determined to be inherent to the biology of the two sexes.[77] Each sex inhabited its own sphere. While these masculine and feminine spheres of activity may have shared roles between them, there were distinct images associated with each. Women were represented by the heart and emotions, and their natural role was as homemaker and mother. On the other hand, men were portrayed as the bearers of physical strength, rationality, and authority.[78] Authority was built

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[75] "Causa criminal seguida de oficio contra los reos presents Don Manuel Vicente Bustos [y otros]," 1865, cited in Ariel de la Fuente, *Children of Facundo: Caudillo and Gaucho Insurgency during the Argentine State-Formation Process (La Rioja 1853-1870)* (London: Duke University Press, 2000), 84.

[76] Hispanic concept of masculinity, associated with masculine pride with high value placed on such qualities related to it.

[77] Marit Melhuus and Kristi Anne Stølen, eds., *Machos, Mistresses, Madonnas: Contesting the Power of Latin American Gender Imagery* (New York: Verso, 1996), 167.

[78] *Ibid.*

into the role of men in society. Such characteristics are not unique to one culture's conception of gender and roles. The cultures of the Western world, in particular, share these basic tenants.

According to Breines, Connell, and Edie's conceptualization of the sex-role theory of gender, boys develop their masculine traits and worldviews through socialization. They learn early on from their interactions in family life and from social cues and interactions later in life. In order to feel as though they belong, they will attempt to emulate the social stereotypes of manliness that they are expected to embrace. Gender involves large-scale socio-cultural elements shaping the identity of those people affected by them.[79] In early nineteenth-century Argentina, two important socio-cultural factors that shaped the image of masculinity, the *gaucho* subculture and military tradition.

Masculinity in Latin America focused on honor and chivalric principles – in line with the way in which power was accumulated by *caudillos* through patron-client networks. Both clientelism and masculinity in Latin America shared traits with feudal social and cultural phenomena. While obsession with honor and chivalry is found ubiquitously in all forms of western masculinity, there are regional differences in what the various forms of masculinity place the greatest emphasis on. In contrast to Latin American models, southern United States masculinity focused much more heavily on the rhetoric of paternalism in regards to slave ownership and in the interaction with lesser landowners than in the *estancias*.[80] While Europe maintained a masculinity rooted in military tradition, similar to that seen in Latin America, the prestige and power gained through it was not utilized in the same manner. Through military service *caudillos* gained the same

[79] Ingeborg Breines, Robert Connell, and Ingrid Eide, eds., *Male Roles, Masculinities, and Violence* (Paris: UNESCO Publishers, 2000), 23.

[80] For further information on paternalism in the Antebellum American South see: Sally G. McMillen, Elizabeth Hayes Turner, Paul D. Escott, and David R. Goldfield, ed., *Major Problems in the History of the American South* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012) and James Henry Hammond, *James Henry Hammond Praises King Cotton*, ed. Sally G. McMillen (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012 (1858)).

basic qualities as their European counterparts. However, they utilized their newfound prestige and authority to build elaborate power networks as a means of controlling the process of state formation. Military service was an incredibly important phenomenon not only for a *caudillo* to gather power but also to build a masculine image through victory and prowess on the battlefield.

The military was not the only avenue to create such a masculine image. As mentioned before, the prowess that Rosas displayed in his early adulthood as a skilled *gaucho* on his family's *estancia* gave him clout among his *peonaje* – augmenting his already advantageous social status and familial ties with prestige and a well-developed masculine image. The same was true for Facundo Quiroga. The epithet of *el tigre de los llanos* stuck with him throughout his career. Despite a lackluster early military career, Facundo Quiroga quickly sprang into action when the moment presented itself and used his position in local business to lead the way in his province's fight against the Unitarian movement.

The *gaucho* was the primary cultural symbol of masculinity for Argentina. He represented the archetypal male. Roaming the *pampas*,[81] free of any commitment or attachments to society, he employed his masculine traits every day to survive. Ironically, while the *caudillos* sought to emulate the *gauchos* and their masculine image to gain their favor, they also sought to end their subculture. The *gaucho* was purged of his independence on the *estancia*, leaving the *gaucho* subculture vulnerable. In the end, while the *gaucho* ceased to exist as a significant entity in Argentine culture, his image, a trope, was coopted and reconstructed in romantic literatures touting epic masculine figures.[82]

[81] Region of fertile plains in Northeastern Argentina and Uruguay.
[82] William E. French and Katherine Elaine Bliss, eds., *Gender, Sexuality, and Power in Latin America since Independence* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 215-217.

While the social ranking of the *caudillos* mattered greatly in determining their success, it did not determine all. Masculinity also played a role in the making of *caudillos*. It both complimented the authority of those who had preceded their roles as *caudillos* as members of the landed elite and gave opportunity to those of lower standing to carve out a place for themselves. Those who were member of the landed elite by *jus sanguinis*, or even those who had managed to climb the ranks to join them, were far more likely to be *caudillos*. They were also more likely to be in greater positions of power within the network of clients beneath greater patrons.

However, occupation of a position within the landed elite was not requisite to achieving the status of *caudillo*. Through personal valor and skill an infinitesimal few of the most disadvantaged men managed to rise through the ranks and claim their positions as regional *caudillos*. Three *caudillos* in particular – Indalecio Nieto, Carmen Guevara, and Aurelio Zalazar – began their careers as peons, working on the *estancias*. Even more surprising, two of the men were illiterate.[83] Despite their disadvantages they managed, through display of prowess as *gaucho* peons, to garner and mobilize prestige, and the support that came with it, to seize opportunities of power. This was far from the average experience of the typical peon. Participation in military exploits was the surest way to establish a masculine image and prove oneself as a capable leader. However, the militias where peons served were rigidly incorporated into the *estancias*. The *estanciero* was commander, the overseer was officer, and the peon occupied the role of the soldier.[84] In this way the rigidity of social structures were enforced under the rule of the *caudillos*, limiting opportunities for social and economic advancement.

The key to the clientelism employed by the *caudillo* political organization was the patron. Rosas occupied the heights of clientelism in Argentina during his tenure. His role as the supreme

[83] de la Fuente, *Children of Facundo*, 83.
[84] Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish* America, 202.

patron exhibited elements of paternalism. This was not in regard to care for the *gaucho* peons under the command of Rosas' lesser *caudillos* of the *estancias*, but instead in his relations with said *estancieros*. There was an element of paternalism, however, in the relation of the *estanciero* and his *peonaje*. As mentioned before, the patron would provide for his *peonaje*, but this relationship was not of mutual interest or benefit. The *estancieros* and *caudillos* both masqueraded as a benevolent patrons, serving their subordinates and claiming to serve in their best interests.[85]

Loyalty of an *estanciero* was rewarded by Rosas. In exchange for submitting themselves before the superior figure of Rosas, the *estancieros* and their peons received land titles and positions in government, feeding Rosas' image as a generous leader to his subjects. An even more crucial aspect than the role of rewards was how they were acquired prior to disbursement.

As discussed earlier, the Desert Campaign was used by Rosas as a means to unlock vast tracts of land. However, it served a double purpose. By leading the overall campaign himself Rosas boosted his military credentials and his masculine image amongst those who followed him – *estanciero* and *gaucho* peon alike. Here can be seen the close link between military prowess and the masculine image of the ruler. Military exploits were the chief means of building up such an image and proved especially worthwhile as wars opened new lands and filled the coffers of *caudillos* as they participated in the looting of conquered peoples and land.

Patriarchal rule emerged during the transition from colony to state. Leaders of the early Argentine state assumed the role of benevolent father, demanding the obedience and respect of the very provincial residents they labeled as barbaric in culture. The family was recognized by many political figures as a means to hold the state together. The great families and their patriarchs would

[85] Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux, eds., *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America* (London: Duke University Press, 2000), 7.

bind the state together with their authority and power. Politicians sought to enhance the powers of these patriarchs in nearly all activity within the Argentine state.[86]

The patron-client networks and patriarchal rule employed by the *caudillos* and the early political leaders of the Argentine state share much with the "hierarchy and hegemony" model of masculinity. In this system, various masculinities exist with one that dominates over the others. In the case of Argentina, this would be *machismo* and the emulation of the *gaucho* masculine image. There is a strong relation between the various masculinities as they are structured in a hierarchy, with the dominant masculinity at the center.[87] This arrangement is certainly analogous to the relation of Rosas and his subjects. The implications of these arrangements are that large numbers of men within the society have divided, tense, or adversarial attitudes toward the hegemonic masculinity figure. On the other end of the hierarchy's spectrum, those occupying the heights have little motivation to enact change as they wish to maintain their power.[88]

The masculine image associated with a *caudillo* was an essential aspect of rule. This image gave the *caudillo* authority amongst the *gaucho* peons, who valued such traits. The patron commanded the loyalty and respect of his *peonaje*, as well as from the lesser *caudillos.* Therefore, the expansion of a *caudillo's* power network and his position amongst the regional *caudillos* relied heavily upon the masculine image that he constructed around himself.

[86] *Ibid*., 15.
[87] Breines, Connell, and Eide, eds., *Male Roles, Masculinities, and Violence*, 24.
[88] *Ibid*.

With the domination of Buenos Aires and provincial Argentina under Rosas for a period of 23 years, *caudillismo* profoundly impacted the trajectory and policies of the early Argentine state. Under the direction of Rosas, land was increasingly concentrated in the hands of the elite *estancieros*. These elites found a faithful ally in Rosas. He aided in the taming of the *gauchos,* tying them to the *estancia* and punishing them for their nomadic culture. New lands were opened through aggressive expansion and indigenous peoples were killed or displaced to the peripheries of Argentine settlement. In order to serve the *estancieros* and the *porteño* elites, reforms to the institution of slavery were halted. Even with the end of Rosas' rule in 1852, regional *caudillos* continued to exert influence in their respective spaces and continued to shape the development of Argentina's various provinces. The effects of Rosas and these lesser *caudillos* on the economic and social characteristics of Argentina during the early formation of the state were profound. They established the foundations of development and set the trajectory of many social and economic trends – including the ever greater concentration of wealth in the hands of the *estancieros* and metropolitan elites and the redefinition of the cultural landscape of Argentina.

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