Trials of Nation Making

This book offers the first interpretive synthesis of the history of Andean peasants and the challenges of nation making in the four republics of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia during the turbulent nineteenth century. Nowhere in Latin America were postcolonial transitions more vexed or violent than in the Andes, where communal indigenous roots grew deep and where the “Indian problem” seemed so daunting to liberalizing states.

Brooke Larson paints vivid portraits of Creole ruling elites, mestizo middle sectors, and native peasantries engaged in ongoing political and moral battles over the rightful place of the Indian majorities in these emerging, but still inchoate, nation-states. In this story, indigenous people emerge as crucial protagonists through their prosaic struggles for land, community, and “ethnic” identity, as well as in the upheavals of war, rebellion, and repression in rural society.

At the level of synthesis, this book raises broader issues about the interplay of liberalism, racism, and ethnicity in the formation of exclusionary “republics without citizens” over the nineteenth century.

Brooke Larson is Professor of History and the former director of the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Center at Stony Brook University. Her books include *Cochabamba, 1550–1900: Colonialism and Agrarian Transformation in Bolivia* (2nd ed., 1998), and the co-edited volume *Ethnicity, Markets and Migration: At the Crossroads of History and Anthropology* (1995).
Trials of Nation Making
Liberalism, Race, and Ethnicity in the Andes, 1810–1910

Brooke Larson
Stony Brook University
To my Stony Brook graduate students, 
for wonderful years of collegial friendship, 
inspiration, and dialogue.
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As with any interpretive synthesis, this book builds largely on the fine-grained archival work of many scholars. Footnotes are kept to a minimum, although the extended Bibliographic Essay offers an overview of the historical and anthropological literature that has shaped, or is currently shaping, our understanding of indigenous societies under modernizing Andean republics during the nineteenth century. However, this book is not intended as an historical survey in the conventional sense. In keeping with the original aims of the *Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*, it offers a “synthesis of current knowledge and approaches that is accessible to a wide range of scholars [and students], as well as to experts in the field.” Necessarily this book is somewhat idiosyncratic – reflecting my own scholarly background, concerns, and lapses, as well as the richly suggestive but still extremely fragmented “state of the field.” Even if set against the larger field of Latin American Studies, the subfield of Andean Studies remains relatively neglected, especially for the nineteenth century. But its rich interdisciplinary tradition in history and anthropology (and more recently in literary studies) has immeasurably enriched my own work in Andean Studies over many years. My approach in this book tends to privilege
Acknowledgments

two sorts of scholarly literature: a classic historical and anthropological literature on Andean peasant history, political economy, and state formation (produced mainly in the 1970s and 1980s) and the recent turn toward cultural forms of power, representation, and contestation that, in turn, influence “new political histories from below” currently flourishing among historians of postcolonial Latin America. Where possible, this study also weaves nineteenth-century sources and images into the book’s four case studies of Indians and nation making in the Andes.

My greatest debt lies with those Andean scholars whose scholarly work and political commitment have continued to inspire me since I first encountered Andean Studies in the early 1970s. It is their ongoing research, as well as my own, that forms the basis of this interpretive synthesis. Although the focus of my own research has shifted across time, my enduring fascination with Andean history and contemporary peasant politics has kept me anchored to this spectacular region long after I might ordinarily have gotten restless and moved on. My commitment to Andean Studies also springs from the enduring friendships and collegial support that have sustained me in this and other research projects. I continue to draw deep inspiration from my Bolivian colleagues, for whom the recovery of the past continues to guide their ongoing struggles for social justice in the present. And what would I do without the wonderful companionship of other Andean scholars in the United States and Europe who share these idiosyncratic inquiries and passions? (You know who you are!) I am also grateful to my original editors of the South American volumes of the *Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*, Frank Salomon and Stuart Schwartz, for giving me an opportunity to move in new intellectual directions, as well as for undertaking the monumental project in the first place. I also thank Stuart Schwartz, in particular, for his enthusiastic support of the idea of expanding the original essay into a book. That process was guided by Cambridge Social Science
Acknowledgments

eeditor, Frank Smith, and by the expert editorial work of Camilla Knapp and Sara Black. I also appreciate Brenda Elsey’s help with the book’s index. I thank them all.

Closer to home are the wonderful friends, colleagues, and graduate students with whom I have been so privileged to work in the History Department at Stony Brook over the past many years. There have been so many graduate students with whom I have worked inside and outside the classroom that I dare not try to name them all. But may they know how much they have nurtured and inspired me by their own research projects, critical commentary, honest questioning, and warm collegiality over many years. This study is the richer for my having studied Latin American history and anthropology with them.

Finally, as most scholars realize, it takes a village not only to raise a child but also to write a book. And no acknowledgment would be complete without loving recognition of the many friends, both near and far, who inhabit my everyday life and help yank me out of the cloistered isolation of scholarly writing. Above all, I am grateful to my extended and immediate family – to my loving parents and step-parents; my dear sisters, Kim and Jodie, and brothers-in-law, Mike and Johnny; my wonderful sons, Josh and Devon; and my life’s companion, Carter Bancroft. They continue to mean the world to me.
Map 1. The North Andes, Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador in 1830.

Note During the nineteenth century the official names of these countries varied and boundaries changed.
Acknowledgments

Map 2. The Central and South Andes. Peru and Bolivia after Independence.
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