

Hugo A. Maureira, Jr.
ham6@georgetown.edu
Georgetown University
www.georgetown.edu

**“Valiant Race, Tenacious Race, Heroic, Indomitable, and Implacable”: The
War of the Pacific (1879-1884) and the Role of Racial Ideas in the
Construction of Chilean Identity**

by

Hugo A. Maureira, Jr.
Hon. B.A. (Political Science & History, Toronto); M.A. (History, Queen’s);
LL.B. (Common Law, McGill); B.C.L. (*Droit Civil*, McGill);
PhD (I) Candidate (History, Georgetown)

ham6@georgetown.edu

ILASSA XXIV
Student Conference on Latin America
Thompson Conference Center
University of Texas at Austin
February 12-14, 2004

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction.....	3
	A. Race in the Historiography of Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Latin America.....	5
II.	The War of the Pacific.....	12
III.	Explaining Chile’s Miraculous Victory: Finding the Source of Chilean Exceptionalism.....	19
	A. The Myth of the Chilean Underdog: The Spark that Ignited the Debate Over Chilean Exceptionalism.....	19
	B. Using Racial “Science” to Explain Chilean Exceptionalism.....	20
	C. Denigrating the “Peruvian Race”.....	21
IV.	Exalting Chile’s Indigenous Heritage.....	24
	A. The Mythical Araucanian.....	24
V.	Chile’s Basque Heritage and the Hierarchy of European Races.....	28
VI.	Patriotism, National Unity, and Race.....	34
	A. Contrasting Peruvian and Chilean Civic Virtues.....	34
	B. Special Destiny: The Chilean Mission to Civilize.....	40
VII.	Conclusion.....	44

I. Introduction

On April 5, 1879, Chile declared war on Peru and Bolivia, initiating a five-year conflict that came to be known as the War of the Pacific. Chile emerged victorious from the war, annexing the Peruvian and Bolivian desert provinces of Tarapacá and Antofagasta as indemnity. As a result, Chile acquired 90 percent of the world's natural sodium nitrate, its territory was augmented by one third, and its national treasury quadrupled. The war propelled the country towards aggressive and sustained modernization. Demand for foodstuffs, agricultural products, textiles, and other commodities soared. The war also changed the nature of the Chilean labor force. Peasants who became war veterans had little inclination to return to a life of servility under their former *hacienda* masters. Many stayed in the newly acquired territories to make a life in mining, becoming the bedrock of Latin America's first organized labor movement. Chile's victory would have an enduring impact on the nation's psyche.

Chile's victory over Peru and Bolivia secured her dominion over the South American Pacific coast and confirmed her status as a regional power. Chilean self-confidence soared with the military's two-year occupation of Peru. Such an awesome display of military might was unprecedented in Latin America and on the American continent it was rivaled only by the United States' victory over Mexico during the Mexican-American War (1846-1848). Chile's victory gave it prestige at home and abroad. It also had an enduring impact on the way Chileans would perceive themselves, their history, and their neighbors.

Chileans regarded their victory as evidence that their society and its institutions were sound, even exemplary. Frederick Pike comments, "The rousing War of the Pacific victory, achieved against seemingly overwhelming odds, led to a feeling of near omnipotence, and fostered sentiments of smug satisfaction over the apparent perfection of national institutions."¹ Similarly, Fredrick Nunn, an author on Chilean military history, writes, "Could there, wondered Chileans, be a greater country in South America?"² Postwar Chilean society was stronger and more confident than ever.

Chileans were relatively unaffected by the stresses of war. No battles were fought on Chilean soil and the economy, while initially sluggish, improved greatly when Chile assumed control of Peruvian and Bolivian nitrate production.³

¹ Frederick Pike, *Chile and the United States, 1880-1962: The Emergence of Chile's Social Crisis and the Challenge to United States Diplomacy* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1963), 31.

² Frederick Nunn, *The Military in Chilean History: Essays on Civil-Military Relations, 1810-1973* (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1978), 46.

³ Chile's pre-war economic troubles were in large part due to the immaturity of its fiscal and monetary policies, its reliance on primary resources and a global depression from which it had a difficult time rebounding. William F. Sater, "Chile and the World Depression of the 1870s," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 11 (1979), 67.

Mining revenue allowed the government to comfortably finance the war.⁴ It also enabled Chilean society to function with minimal hardship.⁵ With the exception of a few battles, many Chileans continued to live normal daily lives, almost oblivious to the fact that they were in a state of war.⁶ The war did not adversely affect any of Chile's political institutions. Democratic, presidential, and congressional elections were held in accordance with the Constitution and without interruptions or irregularities. The war also demonstrated the military's professionalism, a rarity in a continent renowned for its *caudillo*-style politics.

In contrast, Peru emerged completely devastated from the war. Its physical infrastructure was in ruins, it was financially bankrupt, demoralized and socially fragmented. Once the pride of the nation, the Peruvian navy now lay in ruin. The collapse of government invited political factionalism that only added to the country's woes. In an effort to come to terms with this disaster, Peruvians searched for someone to blame. Some blamed incompetent leaders, while others complained that racial degeneration had physically and morally weakened the country. It was argued that Chinese immigrant workers, blacks, and Indians had inundated Peru, creating a class of citizens that was innately weak and morally depraved. Another group of Peruvians, whose influence eventually gained the most support, blamed social disunity for their country's defeat. The contrast between victor and vanquished could not have been greater.

Since the Battle of Iquique (the first major naval battle of the war), Chileans had made the case that they were underdogs, reluctantly pushed into war by Peru and Bolivia. With Chile's *Esmeralda*, a rickety wooden boat, squaring off against Peru's *Huascar*, a first class ironclad destroyer, the Battle of Iquique epitomized the disparate odds that Chileans believed they faced throughout the course of the war. Having popularized and exploited the underdog myth, Chileans, by the war's end, were convinced that their victory had been nothing short of a miracle. Chileans wanted an explanation that was as spectacular as the victory itself. Some credited God for their miraculous victory, claiming that it was His will that they should win; other Chileans turned to science, especially "scientific" ideas of race.

Influenced by Social Darwinism, Chileans argued that they won the war because they were racially superior to the Peruvians. In fact, they argued that all of Chile's virtues were inherent in the Chilean people. They saw themselves as distinct from Peruvians because at first glance they looked different. Chileans have more pronounced European features than the Peruvians, who have stronger

⁴ It has been argued that the Chilean war effort would have collapsed without mining revenue and the adoption of fiat money. The need for tight fiscal control provided the Chilean government with important lessons that in the future helped it develop fiscal responsibility, a mature tax and customs regime, and a sophisticated monetary policy. William F. Sater, "El financiamiento de la Guerra del Pacífico," *Nueva Historia: Revista de Historia de Chile* 3:12 (1984), 237.

⁵ William F. Sater, *Chile and the War of the Pacific* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1986), 220.

⁶ *Ibid.*

indigenous physical characteristics. They theorized that their ancestry was superior to that of the Peruvians. Many Chileans suggested that their Basque and Araucanian ancestry combined to create a *raza chilena*—a super race.

This study uses the War of the Pacific as a springboard to discuss Chilean attitudes towards race during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The discussion is situated within the context of Social Darwinism; an ideology premised on the existence of a racial hierarchy where certain European races were considered superior to all others. This study concludes that Chile's victory in the war and its other derivative successes stimulated the creation of the myth of Chilean racial exceptionalism.

A. Race in the Historiography of Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Latin America

Although most Latin Americans share a common Spanish and/or Amerindian ancestry, they see themselves as racially and ethnically diverse peoples. The racial diversity of Latin America that began with the arrival of the Spanish and Portuguese did not end there. For the next five hundred years, significant numbers of African, Chinese, Japanese, East Indian, Irish, Dutch, British, German and Italian immigrants arrived in Latin America. During the last half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, Latin Americans debated the merits of racial diversity. There were those who praised race mixture, believing that it was a source of strength. Mexican essayist José Vasconcelos, in *La raza cósmica* (1924), wrote: “We have all the races and all the aptitudes.”⁷ In the 1930s, Gilberto Freyre, an eminent Brazilian sociologist, optimistically described Brazilians as “a new race in the tropics.”⁸ According to this school of thought, racial and ethnic diversity gave nations a competitive advantage because each race and ethnic group possessed unique talents, strengths and experiences that could be pooled together for the benefit of the nation. But there were also those who cursed racial and ethnic diversity, believing that blacks, Asians and Aborigines were racially inferior and that they had nothing positive to contribute. These “backward races” supposedly represented the antithesis of progress and their presence was an embarrassment.

As Thomas Skidmore, Winthrop Wright, and other North American scholars of Latin America have observed, late nineteenth-century Latin American racial attitudes typically fell somewhere between these extremes.⁹ On the one hand, most elites and intellectuals disparaged their nations' mixed racial heritage, and accepted the idea that northern Europeans were racially predisposed to

⁷ José Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica in Latin America: Conflict and Creation*, E. Bradford Burns, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993), 129.

⁸ Gilberto Freyre, *The Master and the Slaves* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956).

⁹ Thomas Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (Durham and London: Duke Univ. Press, 1993), ch. 2; Winthrop R. Wright, *Cafe con Leche: Race, Class, and National Image in Venezuela* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1990).

triumph over inferior peoples. On the other hand, they largely rejected the idea that mixed races were inevitably inferior “mongrel” peoples. Instead, they embraced the ideal of “whitening” (*blanqueamiento*), and believed that they could progress as nations by attracting “superior” northern European immigrants, who would, over time, lift up the nation by contributing their superior blood to the nation’s racial mix.

The whitening ideology was well suited to Latin America because, by the nineteenth-century, the region had already enjoyed a centuries-long heritage of miscegenation and cultural fusion. Racial boundaries had long been permeable, racial definitions relative and unfixed. Throughout the colonial period, successful Indians had been able to transform themselves into *mestizos* simply by learning Spanish, adopting European dress, and moving to the city. Mulattos and successful blacks were equally capable of moving incrementally up the social ladder.

This evident contrast between the fluidity of race in Latin America and the comparative rigidity of color bars in North America has long fed the interest of U.S. scholars on Latin American race relations. Frank Tannenbaum, author of *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas*,¹⁰ emphasized the idea that Latin American slavery was more humane than slavery in the United States. According to Tannenbaum, North American slave laws offered little, if any, protection to slaves; these laws were promulgated by the colonists, who designed and manipulated them to suit their interests. In contrast, the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns, heavily affected by Church doctrine, imposed slave laws that were influenced by humanitarian principles developed over time.¹¹

Tannenbaum theorized that more humane Latin American master/slave relations laid the groundwork for the region’s seemingly smooth transition into a racially integrated society. Tannenbaum idealized Latin America, especially Brazil, as a centre of racial harmony where miscegenation was welcomed and even looked upon with pride.¹² Tannenbaum’s ideas were heavily influenced by those of Gilberto Freyre, who also saw miscegenation as the key to Brazil’s so-called “racial democracy”.¹³

Tannenbaum and Freyre’s rosy picture of race relations in Brazil (and to a greater or lesser extent the rest of Latin America) has had many critics. In his Pulitzer-Prize winning book, *Neither Black nor White*, Carl Degler vehemently rejects the idea that Brazilian slavery was any less brutal than its counterpart in the United States.¹⁴ What distinguished the two societies, according to Degler,

¹⁰ Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York: Vintage Books, 1946).

¹¹ *Ibid*, 48.

¹² *Ibid*, 121.

¹³ Freyre, *Masters and the Slaves*, 4.

¹⁴ Carl Degler, *Neither Black Nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1971).

was the status of the mixed blood, or mulatto. Defined in a multi-racial Brazil as neither black nor white, mulattos generally had greater social mobility than blacks, and enjoyed, over the long term, the ability to “whiten” themselves and their descendants both biologically (by choosing a lighter-skinned partner) and culturally (through education, economic success, and the adoption of “white” cultural norms). Degler dubbed this phenomenon the “mulatto escape hatch,” which he considered the key to understanding the differences between race relations in the United States and Brazil.¹⁵

The flexibility of racial definitions, the possibility of “whitening,” and above all the social, economic, and cultural criteria that contributed to the determination of one’s “race,” led scholars of Latin America to talk about the idea of “social race,” a concept that applied to indigenous peoples and *mestizos* just as much as it did to blacks and mulattos.¹⁶ Yet, while many scholars praised Latin America’s lack of strict color bars and a socio-racial hierarchy that provided greater opportunities for upward mobility, many others argued that Latin America’s racial ideas were in no way more enlightened or progressive than those of the bi-racial United States. Although whitening, or *blanqueamiento*, created mobility opportunities for successful *mestizos* and mulattos, its goal was not a tolerant multiracial society, but rather a society in which blackness and Indianness would eventually, over the generations, disappear.¹⁷ *Blanqueamiento*, therefore, refers to a whitening process that is biological and social. Through miscegenation and socialization, blackness is biologically and socially stripped away. The ultimate end is to completely sanitize society by shedding away any vestiges of blackness.

George Reid Andrews notes that something similar to the “mulatto escape hatch” existed in Argentina. Following independence in 1810, Andrews reports that Buenos Aires census-takers, in an effort to statistically confirm that whitening was occurring, increasingly began to label people *trigueño*, which literally means “wheat-colored.” His point is that Argentina, a country that was particularly successful in attracting European immigrants, was equally successful in marginalizing its remaining black population.¹⁸ Furthermore, as Andrews argues in *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo*, the whitening ideology made blacks and mulattos complicit in their own destruction as a race. Moving up the social ladder necessarily required them to distance themselves from their origins, their culture and their peers, and to adopt an attitude of superiority over people darker than themselves: in short, to commit what Andrews calls “psychological self-mutilation.”¹⁹

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 224.

¹⁶ Charles Wagley, “On the Concept of Social Race in the Americas,” in *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*, Jorge Domínguez, ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), 13-27.

¹⁷ George Reid Andrews, *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo, 1888-1988* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 134-36.

¹⁸ George Reid Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires, 1800-1900* (Madison, Wisconsin: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1980), 86.

¹⁹ Andrews, *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo*, 178.

Whether or not the whitening ideology constituted self-mutilation, it clearly touted the idea that white Europeans were superior while blacks and Indians were inferior. In order to progress as nations, Latin America had to import more of the former in order to compensate for the unfortunate existence of the latter. On this point, nineteenth-century Latin American elites were in remarkable agreement.

Writers of an optimistic bent believed that European immigration would ultimately lift Latin America out of backwardness and inferiority, improving the race while bringing enterprise and progressive ideas. Many of the most influential diagnoses, however, were more pessimistic, with some frustrated by the slow pace of whitening, others wondering whether racial improvement through miscegenation was even really possible. On this, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, an Argentine ex-president, diplomat, soldier, and one of Argentina's most prolific and influential writers, wrote *Conflictos y armonías de las razas en América* (published posthumously in 1883) in which he directly attributed Argentina's shortcomings to its racial heritage and the quality of its immigrants. With frustration Sarmiento stated,

Are we Europeans?—So many copper-colored faces would suggest otherwise!
 Are we Indians?—Disdainful smiles from our blonde ladies perhaps provide us with the only answer.
 Mixed?—No one wants to be so, and there are millions who as Americans and Argentines never wanted to be identified as such.²⁰

Argentine sociologist Lucas Ayarragaray expressed a similar disdain for Latin America's *mestizos*, claiming that they were “incapable of grasping synthetic concepts and advanced methods of reasoning.”²¹ Carl Solberg refers to a Chilean essayist who described Chilean *mestizos* as, “phlegmatic, sickly, morally weak, lacking in ambition, inconstant, dirty, and dishonorable.”²² And Juan Bautista Alberdi, an eminent Argentine scholar and contemporary of Sarmiento, echoed similar sentiments:

The South American republics are the product and living testimony of Europe's presence in America...All that is civilization on our soil is European. America itself is a European discovery...Those of us who call ourselves American are nothing more than Europeans born in America; our skull, blood, color—everything is from [Europe]...Who among us would not prefer a thousand times over to see his daughter marry an English shoemaker rather than an Araucanian prince? In America everything that is not European is barbaric: there is no division other than this one: Indian which is synonymous with savage, and European which means those of us born in America, who speak Spanish and

²⁰ Augusto Belin Sarmiento, *Obras de D.F. Sarmiento*, vol. 37, *Conflicto y armonías de las razas en América*, (Buenos Aires: Imprenta y Litografía Mariano Moreno, 1900), 27.

²¹ Carl E. Solberg, *Immigration and Nationalism, Argentina and Chile, 1890-1914* (Austin: Univ. of Texas, 1970), 19.

²² Felix del Campo N., “Pro inmigración,” *Boletín de la Sociedad de Fomento Fabril*, 1 May 1904, 187 cited in Solberg, *Immigration and Nationalism*, 21.

believe in Jesus Christ.²³

Francisco García Calderón, president of Peru during part of the War of the Pacific, adopted a similar position.²⁴ He blamed Latin America's arrested development on the motley mix of inferior and superior races: "The question of races is a very serious problem in American history: it explains the progress of certain peoples, the decline of certain others; it is the clue to the incurable disorder that tears America apart."²⁵

In *Conflicto y armonías*, Sarmiento expressed admiration for the pattern of immigration and integration that took place in North America. In Sarmiento's opinion, North America benefited immensely from receiving the right European races that, for the most part, did not mix with indigenous or black people. Sarmiento defended his position by citing a Biblical passage in which Moses ordered his followers, "do not make alliances with the Canaanites who live in the land, do not cohabit with them..."²⁶ According to Sarmiento, the Puritans of North America obeyed the law of Moses, but the Spaniards did not.²⁷ García Calderón expressed a similar opinion:

In the United States, all varieties of the European mix together: Scandinavians and Italians, Irish and Germans; but, in the Latin Republics, strange lines blend: American Indians, Negroes, Orientals, Europeans of all origins create, in very mixed households, the future race.²⁸

In the opinions of García Calderón, Sarmiento, and their followers, the European was a model of progress, and Latin America would have been better off had it been populated entirely by Europeans. Sarmiento even justified the Spanish extermination of indigenous peoples as a necessary "procedure of civilization." In his own words:

We must be just with the Spaniards; by exterminating a savage people whose territory they were going to occupy, they simply did what all civilized people do to savages, which the colony deliberately or not did with the indigenous peoples it absorbed, destroyed, exterminated. If this terrible procedure of civilization is barbaric and cruel to the eyes of justice and reason, it is, like war itself, like conquest, one of the ways Providence has armed diverse human races, and among these the most powerful and advanced, to replace those who, by their organic weakness or backwardness in civilization's path, cannot achieve the great destinies of man on earth.²⁹

²³ Juan Bautista Alberdi, *Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la república* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1966), 239-41 (original: 1852) cited in Nicolas Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1991), 140.

²⁴ Alberto Cabero, *Chile y los chilenos: conferencias dictadas en la extensión cultural de Antofagasta durante los años 1924 y 1925* (Santiago: Editorial Nascimento, 1926), 57.

²⁵ Francisco García Calderón, *Les démocraties latines de l'Amérique* (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1912), 227.

²⁶ Belin Sarmiento, *Conflicto y armonías*, 231.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 231.

²⁸ García Calderón, *Les démocraties latines de l'Amérique*, 327.

²⁹ *Obras completas de Domingo Faustino Sarmiento* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Luz del Día, 1948),

As a solution to Latin America's race and development problem, Sarmiento suggested drowning out Latin America's "degenerate" races with a flood of European immigrants. But Sarmiento and his followers were selective with respect to what type of European immigrants they wanted. They wanted Germanic, Anglo, eastern, and northern Europeans, who they believed were endowed with a superior work ethic. The infusion of these races in Latin America, it was hoped, would improve the bloodline and foster the development of an improved work ethic. Italian and Spanish immigrants were the least desired, because, in the words of one Chilean newspaper, they were "too much like us in habits, customs, education, ideas, and industries."³⁰ Sarmiento described Spaniards as "a ferocious people, ragged and hardened in ignorance and laziness,"³¹ and the Italians as "the lowest degree below zero to which human dignity can descend."³²

Conflicto y armonías exemplifies Latin America's frustration with its inability to measure up to an impossible standard of progress. Even flooding Latin America with European immigrants, as Sarmiento suggested, would not change this reality, or at best would do so too slowly. Sarmiento's school of thought did not stop Latin Americans from being proud of their national identities, but at a sub-conscious level it made them insecure about the value of their own cultural heritage, especially when compared with European traditions, customs, and values. In Europe, Social Darwinism reassured Europeans of their superiority; in Latin America it convinced the masses of their inferiority.

Chile, however, stood as an exception to this rule. The stream of successes that flowed from the War of the Pacific added a unique dimension to Chilean attitudes about their own racial heritage and their possibilities of success as a people and as a nation. Cognizant of the magnitude of their economic, military and political successes, and influenced by Social Darwinian theory, Chileans believed that there had to be a racial explanation for their successes and Peru's failures during the war.

North American scholars have written little on the idea of race in Chile and even less on late nineteenth-century racial attitudes. Only one piece stands out. In 1978, Father Jeffrey L. Klaiber, professor at the Catholic University of Peru, wrote a short article entitled, "Los "Cholos" y los "Rotos": Actitudes Raciales Durante la Guerra del Pacífico." His article illustrates Chilean attitudes of racial superiority following the war. Klaiber writes,

vol. 2, 217-18 cited in William H. Katra, "Rereading *Viajes*: Race, Identity, and National Destiny" in *Sarmiento: Author of a Nation*, Tulio Halperin Donghi *et al.*, eds. (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1994), 76.

³⁰ *El Mercurio*, 2 March 1896 cited in Solberg, *Immigration and Nationalism*, 19.

³¹ Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Viajes por Europa, Africa y Estados Unidos*, Julio Noé, ed. (Buenos Aires: La Cultura Argentina, 1922) cited in Shumway, *Invention of Argentina*, 158.

³² *Ibid.*

Even though racial prejudice existed before the war, Chile's victory served to confirm, strengthen and popularize the myth of Chilean racial superiority. On the other hand, the war produced the opposite consequence in Peru, in that it served to confirm and encourage the myth of the Peruvian Indian's inferiority.³³

The article's limitation is in its scope. Klaiber did not investigate how Chilean racial attitudes fit into the general discussion of race and Social Darwinism in late nineteenth-century Latin America, nor did he elaborate on the reasons for which Chileans thought they were racially distinct from the Peruvians. These are important issues because when they are unwrapped they reveal the true complexity of the Chilean race question. Chileans spent a lot of time trying to justify why they were racially distinct from other Latin Americans and why they were superior to the Peruvians. Their conclusions were astonishing because they turned Social Darwinism on its head. Chileans did not see themselves as racially imperfect. Instead of using Social Darwinism to lament their racial shortcomings, as the Argentine Sarmiento and the Peruvian García Calderón had done, Chileans employed the new nineteenth-century "science" of race to explain why they were racially superior to other Latin Americans. This positive use of Social Darwinism was unique in Latin America.

This paper picks up where Klaiber's article left off. In so doing it enriches the general literature on Latin American social history because it offers an alternative perspective to the Latin American race question. Previous works have shown how Latin Americans have tried to conform to an ideal that was above them. This work explains how Chileans bucked the trend. Instead of submitting to a self-deprecating interpretation of themselves and their history as was the general rule in Latin American, Chileans used Social Darwinism to prove what they perceived as their own greatness.

The War of the Pacific is used as a springboard to discuss Chilean attitudes towards race during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The study concludes that Chile's victory in the war and its other derivative successes stimulated the creation of a myth of Chilean racial exceptionalism. Section II provides the reader with a background to the conflict, highlighting several important events that contributed to the Chilean myth of racial superiority. Section III discusses how Chileans justified their racial exceptionalism according to contemporary Social Darwinian orthodoxy. Section IV and V examine how Chileans explained the basis of their racial superiority. Section IV discusses Chilean arguments for a superior indigenous ancestry and Section V looks at the arguments for a superior European ancestry. The relationship between patriotism, civic virtue, and race, as understood by Chileans, is discussed in section VI. Finally, section VII provides concluding remarks and suggestions for further research.

³³ Jeffrey L. Klaiber, "Los 'cholos' y los 'rotos': actitudes raciales durante la Guerra del Pacifico," *Histórica* [Peru] 2:1 (1978), 27-38.

II. The War of the Pacific

In the early 1860s, Chile and Bolivia began squabbling over land in the Atacama Desert. Prior to the 1840s, neither the Chileans nor the Bolivians had expressed much interest in this desolate area of mountains, cliffs, sand, and scorching heat. This all changed with the discovery of nitrate. The Atacama region eventually became the world's biggest producer of nitrate and by the late nineteenth-century, nitrate, used for fertilizer and in the manufacture of explosives, was a valuable commodity in overseas markets. A number of European investors had significant mining and railroad interests in the region. Their controversial role in the War of the Pacific has been well documented.³⁴

Chile and Bolivia never completely resolved their differences, but they concluded several treaties in which they agreed to share jurisdiction over Antofagasta and split revenues from mining taxes.³⁵ Many Chileans believed that this was an extremely generous agreement, since 90 percent of the area's inhabitants were Chilean and almost all capital investments came from Chilean mining and railway companies. In 1876, the spirit of cooperation began to deteriorate when Bolivian *caudillo* General Hilarión Daza unilaterally imposed a ten-cent tax on nitrate being exported by Antofagasta's largest mining consortium, the Chilean owned *Antofagasta Nitrate Company*.

The Chilean government alleged that the tax violated previous agreements with Bolivia and it instructed the *Antofagasta Nitrate Company* to withhold payment until an agreement could be negotiated with the Bolivian government. Negotiations were futile and in a gesture certain to provoke Chile, Daza widened his demands, insisting that the company also pay taxes retroactively for earlier years. Daza believed that Chile would not challenge his demands because, at the time, it was distracted by a border dispute with Argentina over land in the Patagonia region; many believed that this dispute would lead to war. Daza seriously miscalculated, though, because Argentina and Chile were able to negotiate a peaceful settlement. Chile could now turn its attention back to Bolivia without the fear of having to fight a war on two fronts. Chile reiterated its position and rejected further negotiations. In response, Bolivia confiscated Chilean

³⁴ Thomas F. O'Brien, "The Antofagasta Company: A Case of Peripheral Capitalism," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 60, no.1 (1980), 1; Charles William Centner, "Great Britain and Chilean Mining, 1830-1914," *The Economic History Review* 12 (1942), 76; Harold Blakemore, *British Nitrates and Chilean Politics, 1886-1896: Balmaceda and North* (London: Athlone Press, 1974); Michael Monteón, *Chile in the Nitrate Era: The Evolution of Economic Dependence, 1880-1930* (Madison, Wisconsin: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1982); Bruce W. Farcau, *The Ten Cents War: Chile, Peru and Bolivia in the War of the Pacific, 1879-1884* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2000), chp. 4.

³⁵ For further discussion on the Chilean position prior to the agreements see Miguel Luis Amunátegui, *La cuestión de límites entre Chile y Bolivia* (Santiago: Universidad de Santiago, Instituto de Investigaciones del Patrimonio Territorial de Chile, 1987) (original: Santiago: Imprenta Nacional, 1863).

property and put it up for auction. On the day of the auction, the Chilean government sent 300 troops to make a bid that the Bolivians could not refuse. The Bolivians were forced to surrender Antofagasta.

Adding to the tension, the Chilean government learned that in 1873 Peru and Bolivia had secretly agreed to a collective defense agreement.³⁶ Since the beginning of the crisis, Peru had been trying to negotiate a settlement between Chile and Bolivia, but Chile was suspicious of Peru's motives, believing that it was only trying to buy time to prepare itself for war. On April 2, 1879, Chilean President Anibal Pinto, with the authority of Congress, declared war on Peru and Bolivia.

Initially the odds appeared to be stacked against Chile. Bolivia and Peru commanded more human and material resources. Underscoring this perception, one contemporary academic wrote,

The press in the United States was also almost unanimous in predicting the sound defeat of Chile. Events were to prove how mistaken was this belief. Probably never in history has there been a more one-sided war. It was Chile that never suffered a serious setback and it was the allies, who, from the start, never had a chance of winning.³⁷

Although many Chileans were confident that they could defeat Peru and Bolivia, they played up the underdog image to rally nationalist sentiment. As will be explained in the next section, Chileans used this “David and Goliath” image to exaggerate their military triumphs and give an appearance of quasi-supernatural invincibility. This led many Chileans, and even non-Chileans, to link Chile's success with the “quality” of its racial ancestry.

During the early months of the war, Chileans quickly achieved complete naval supremacy. The two greatest assets in the Peruvian fleet were the heavily armed ironclad destroyers, *El Huascar* and *La Independencia*. The Chilean navy also had two newer ironclad destroyers, the *Almirante Cochrane* and the *Almirante Blanco Encalada*, both vastly superior to their Peruvian counterparts in terms of armor, weaponry, and horsepower. The Chilean navy was also manned by many seasoned officers, most of whom were of British extraction. This fuelled Chile's perception of itself as a uniquely “Europeanized” South American country. According to Clements Markham, a British correspondent in Peru during the war:

³⁶ A previous conflict with Peru and Bolivia likely added to Chile's distrust of Peru. In 1836, Peru and Bolivia had attempted to confederate into one country, led by Bolivian President Santa Cruz. Chile objected, fearing that the confederation would disrupt the regional balance of power and went to war with both countries. Aligning itself with dissident Peruvians, Chile emerged victorious and quashed the confederation in 1839.

³⁷ Herbert Millington, *American Diplomacy and the War of the Pacific* (New York: Octagon Books, 1975), 31.

The Chilean fleet had some officers who had served for a few years in the English navy. Several were of English extraction, and the number of English names that occur in the Chilean official war dispatches is surprising; such as Condell, Cox, Christie, Edwards, Leighton, Lynch, Macpherson, Pratt, Rogers, Simpson, Smith, Souper, Stephens, Thomson, Walker, Warner, Williams, Wilson and Wood.³⁸

On the ground there were 2,500 men enlisted in the Chilean Army and another 7,000 in the militia at the onset of the war; conscription during the war brought numbers up to 50,000. The backbone of Chile's ground forces was its cavalry, comprised of the most experienced soldiers. Three hundred years of violent and intermittent warfare against Chile's Amerindians – the Araucanians – made the present Chilean cavalry a lethal addition to the country's ground forces.³⁹ The Peruvian army was reputed to have had anywhere between 5,000 and 15,000 regular troops. In addition, the Bolivian army numbered 2,500 with a rumored 50,000 reservists. However, as Fredrick Nunn has noted, “the Andean reserves were unwilling Indian conscripts, untrained for effective, prolonged services in the field.”⁴⁰ In many cases Peruvian and Bolivian Indian conscripts could not even speak Spanish, complicating communication with their commanding officers. Peru and Bolivia had great trouble rallying their people in the face of Chilean military advances. This fed into the Chilean perception that their success came from a common sense of purpose that was the result of having a racially homogenous population, something, it was believed, the Peruvians lacked.

Effective naval support was critical during the war because of the huge distances between Chilean military bases and the theatre of war. Not surprisingly, the first stage of the conflict focused on obtaining naval supremacy. The Chilean navy initiated this task by blockading the Peruvian port of Iquique. But when Peru's two most powerful ironclad warships, the *Huascar* and the *Independencia*, arrived to break the blockade, Chile's best ships were away from port. All that remained were two older wooden vessels, the *Esmeralda* and the *Covadonga*. Chilean Captain Arturo Prat, commanding the *Esmeralda*, refused to surrender. When the *Huascar* attempted to ram the Chilean ship, Prat jumped onto the *Huascar*'s deck to engage the enemy at close range. A hail of gunfire greeted him and he was killed. Members of his crew imitated his valor in successive rams only to meet the same fate. The *Esmeralda* was sunk, but not before Ship Mate Enrique Riquelme symbolically shot one last cannon at the *Huascar*.

The Battle of Iquique was a major turning point early in the conflict for two reasons. First, the inspirational heroism of Arturo Prat united Chileans and

³⁸Clements Markham, *The War Between Peru and Chile, 1879-1882*. (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1882), 96.

³⁹ This is not to suggest that as an institution the Chilean Army dates back to colonial times as some would absurdly suggest. See section IV.A.

⁴⁰ Nunn, *Military in Chilean History*, 46.

ignited a spirit of fervent patriotism. A week following the battle, one newspaper declared, “Today, the Esmeralda is for the Chilean people an emblem of indomitable valor; the sacred altar of a bloody sacrifice...A nation that fights that way cannot be defeated.”⁴¹ Echoing the pride of future generations, Chilean President Arturo Alessandri Palma wrote, “The war was won in that moment, because although it is certain that the physical forces are strong, it is also certain that the spiritual forces, in most cases, are invincible.”⁴² The image of the *Esmeralda* fending off the *Huascar*, which Chileans dubbed the “Terror of the Sea,” reinforced the “David and Goliath” image that Chileans had of themselves.

Second, the battle of Iquique was crucial because the Chileans did succeed, miraculously, in disabling Peru’s second ironclad, the *Independencia*, which ran aground in shallow waters while pursuing the *Covadonga*. With the *Independencia* taken, the Chileans were in a better position to confront the *Huascar*, which they defeated on October 8, 1879 at Angamos, thereby guaranteeing Chilean naval supremacy for the rest of the war.

Following important Chilean victories at Pisagua, Dolores, and Arica, the decisive blow to Peru came on January 13 and 15, 1881, when 23,000 Chilean troops descended on Chorillos and San Juan de Miraflores, just 17 km from Lima. Facing 20,000 Peruvian troops and heavy artillery, over 5,000 Chileans and an equal number of Peruvians were killed or injured.⁴³ Despite the casualties, Lima was taken on January 17 ushering in a new phase of the war.

In early March 1881, General Baquedano, who led the Lima campaign, returned to Chile leaving behind an occupation army of 13,500 troops.⁴⁴ Rear Admiral Patricio Lynch was named the Supreme Political Administrator of Peru and empowered with the authority to enact legislation to bring peace and order to the country. Chile savored this moment. It had the power to control Peru’s destiny, an ironic twist of fate in the histories of the two countries. Historically, Peru had been the jewel of the Spanish Empire, while Chile was the subordinate, poor cousin, which is why Peruvians were particularly humiliated when Chileans nicknamed Lynch the last “Viceroy of Peru.”

On the diplomatic front, the Chilean invasion had attracted significant international attention. European superpowers, the United States, and other Latin American republics worried out loud about the economic and political fallout of the war. The war, after all, was a significant, even if now largely unnoticed, event in the nineteenth-century. The magnitude of the war in terms of human and material resources was awesome. The specter of European intervention to protect nitrate mining interests alarmed the Americans who sent waves of diplomatic

⁴¹Quoted from an unnamed newspaper dated Santiago 1 June 1879 cited in *Boletín de la Guerra del Pacífico 1879-1881*, vol. 1 (Santiago: Editorial Andrés Bello, 1979), 125.

⁴²Arturo Alessandri Palma, *Chile y su historia* vol. 2. (Santiago: Editorial Orbe, 1945), 42.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 79.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*

missions to Peru to defuse the situation. Many Latin American republics feared that Chilean expansionism could spread beyond Peru. These concerns may have been justified since it was well known that Chilean diplomats were offering land concessions from the Peruvian Amazon to Ecuador and Brazil in exchange for their support. In a well-known article, Colombian historian Adriano Paez wrote:

Chile dominates from the Straight [of Magellan] to Ecuador ... it will have coastline more extensive than that of Brazil on the Atlantic. And since neither Ecuador nor Colombia has a fleet, Chile will dominate from the Straight [of Magellan] to the Panamanian isthmus. It will be left with all of the riches of Peru, which have been transferred back to Chile by its military along with indemnification payments and with the nitrates of Tarapacá. It will dominate commerce in the Pacific with the largest naval fleet in the Americas, with the exception of the United States.⁴⁵

Venezuelan dictator Guzmán Blanco feared that Brazil and Chile could form an alliance that would require Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela to unite to form a counter alliance. Concern in Argentina that Chile was getting too powerful prompted that government to exert pressure on Chile to sign a definitive agreement to settle the Patagonia land question. In Europe, plans for military intervention by the Holy Alliance were thwarted by Germany's refusal to participate, on the grounds that such a venture would be too costly.

Lima remained occupied by heavily armed Chilean troops for almost three years while Peruvian and Chilean leaders wrestled over the terms of peace and Chilean troops chased Peruvian guerrillas deep into the northern highlands. The Peruvian resistance, led by General Andrés Avelino Cáceres, was mostly comprised of poorly-equipped, irregular indigenous soldiers. The Campaign of the Central Highlands was the longest and most brutal phase of the war. Chileans saw themselves as a civilizing army beset by Cáceres' savage horde, an opinion shared by at least a few members of the Peruvian elite. This perception was confirmed by the battle of Concepción, which took place on July 9 and 10, 1882. At Concepción, approximately two thousand Peruvian troops surrounded 77 wounded Chilean soldiers who had been separated from their main contingent. Refusing to surrender, the Chileans were massacred. Like Prat's courageous stand at Iquique, the Chacabuco regiment's stand at Concepción led to an outpouring of nationalism. The massacre confirmed every negative racial stereotype that Chileans had about Peruvians. In the five-volume epic, *Adios al Séptimo de Línea*, Jorge Inostrosa documents the events of the war in an entertaining work of historical fiction. In his description of the Battle of Concepción, Inostrosa described the Indian irregulars as hordes of savages who were even treated with suspicion by the white Peruvian officers who commanded them.⁴⁶ Contemplating

⁴⁵ Adriano Paez, *La Guerra del Pacífico y deberes de la América* (Colón, Panamá: Oficina del Canal, 1881), 9-10.

⁴⁶ Jorge Inostrosa, *Adios al Séptimo de Línea*, 13^o ed., vol. 5 (Santiago: Zig-Zag, 1974), 225-59 (originally published in 1955).

whether they should unleash the irregulars on the town, one Peruvian commander commented to his colleagues,

I predict that they will surrender when they see our numbers. But if they fire any gun shots, as I fear they might, this will be enough for the peasants and Indians to charge at everything including the houses of Concepción. And thus is the disaster that I wish to avoid; the slaughter of the people of Concepción. You know that when the Indians pounce, it is not easy to control them. They destroy everything in their path and hack up whoever gets in their way.⁴⁷

Following the battle, Chileans were more convinced than ever that Peru's indigenous people were savages who lacked civility, loyalty, compassion and restraint. This image of Peru convinced Chileans that they had a special destiny to civilize Peru. For many Chileans, Concepción was a reminder of what had happened in Iquique and it reinforced the Chilean underdog image. In Inostrosa's dramatic narrative, a Chilean soldier fending off the Peruvian offensive encourages his remaining comrades to fight to the death, yelling "Remember the *Esmeralda* and her crew!"⁴⁸

A year later, Chilean Colonel Alejandro Gorostiaga, with a force of 2,000 men, caught up with Cáceres at Huamachuco deep in Northern Peru. The Peruvians made considerable gains until their munitions began to run out, at which time the Chileans regained control and emerged victorious. Half of Cáceres' 1,700 soldiers died on July 9 and 10, 1883. The injured were summarily executed. Completely defeated, Cáceres fled to Ecuador and no longer posed a threat to Chile.

On October 20, 1883 hostilities between Chile and Peru formally came to an end with the signing of the Treaty of Ancón. The Chilean and Peruvian governments ratified the treaty in January and March 1884, respectively. The treaty gave Chile what it wanted, a monetary indemnification and unconditional and perpetual sovereignty over the nitrate-rich province of Tarapacá. The two Peruvian provinces of Tacna and Arica were to remain under Chilean control for ten years, at which time a plebiscite would decide their future status. This last provision opened a new saga in Chilean-Peruvian relations that to this day has not been fully resolved. For forty years both sides waged a propaganda war in anticipation of the plebiscite, which never took place. Instead, Chile, under immense international pressure, signed a treaty with Peru in 1929 whereby Peru regained sovereignty over Tacna while Arica remained within Chile.⁴⁹ Bolivia,

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 225.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 257.

⁴⁹ For further discussion on the Tacna-Arica controversy see Fabian Novak, *Las conversaciones entre Perú y Chile para la ejecución del tratado de 1929* (San Miguel: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Instituto de Estudios Internacionales, 2000); Félix Calderón, *El tratado de 1929: la otra historia* (Lima: Fondo Editorial Congreso del Perú, 2000); Gustavo Pons Muzzo, *Del tratado de Ancón a la convención de Lima: una historia de la política chilena desde la firma del tratado de Ancón a la actualidad* (Tacna: Universidad Nacional Jorge Basadre Grohmann, 1999); Graham Henry Stuart, *The Tacna-Arica Dispute* (Boston: Boston World Peace

still contesting Chile's claim over Antofagasta, signed an armistice on April 4, 1884, and both countries finally signed a peace treaty in 1904. Having lost Antofagasta unconditionally and perpetually, Bolivia became a completely landlocked state.⁵⁰

In the months and years following Chile's victory, Chilean accounts of the war mythologized the heroism and valor of the country's officers and soldiers. Prat's bravery in the Battle of Iquique and the heroic stand at Concepción came to symbolize the war as a whole, while militarily more pivotal moments took second stage. The Battle of Iquique and the heroic stand at Concepción came to play central roles in subsequent Chilean explanations of why Chile was victorious and Peru categorically defeated.

Foundation, 1927); Rafael Larco Herrera, *Tacna-Arica, the War of the Pacific. Pan-American Unity Rests on the Decision of the President of the United States. A Short Exposition of the Facts to Place this Subject Before the Public* (New York: 1924); Joe F. Wilson, *The United States, Chile and Peru in the Tacna and Arica Plebiscite* (Washington D.C.: Univ. Press of America, 1979); Ernesto Yepes, "Un plebiscito imposible" – *Tacna y Arica, 1925-1926* (Lima: Ediciones Analisis, 1999); Raúl Palacios Rodríguez, *La chilización de Tacna y Arica, 1883-1929* (Lima: Editorial Arica, 1974); *Documentary History of the Tacna-Arica Dispute*, W.J. Dennis, ed. (Iowa City: Univ. of Iowa, 1927).

⁵⁰ For further discussion on the annexation of Antofagasta and its impact on Bolivia see Abel Peña y Lillo Escobar, *Bolivia, prisionero geográfico de América: su reivindicación* (La Paz: Peña y Lillo Escobar, 1980); Cámara Nacional de Comercio (Bolivia), *El tratado de 1904* (La Paz: Publicaciones Culturales, Cámara de Comercio, 1979); Alberto Crespo Gutierrez, *Los tratados suscritos con Chile en 1895* (La Paz: Editorial Los Amigos del Libro, 1975) Adolfo Ballivian, *Bolivia's Right of an Access of Her Own to the Pacific* (London: Stanford, 1920); Oscar Pinochet de la Barra, *Puerto para Bolivia? Centenaria negociación* (Santiago: Editorial Salesiana, 1987).

III. Explaining Chile's Miraculous Victory: Finding the Source of Chilean Exceptionalism

In general, Chilean historians have exaggerated Peru's strength during the War of the Pacific. Peru has been portrayed as a well-equipped and hawkish adversary. Former President Arturo Alessandri, a schoolboy during the war, claimed that in comparison to Chile, "the military strength of Peru and Bolivia was much superior."⁵¹ The general Chilean perception was that of a triumphant underdog in an uneven match. Scholars continue to debate this point. William Sater agrees that Chileans "had ample reason to be afraid."⁵² According to him, Chile was too financially, militarily, and politically vulnerable to go to war. Fredrick Nunn, however, suggests that the supremacy of Peru and Bolivia's land forces has been greatly exaggerated, and that Chile enjoyed unquestionable naval supremacy, an important advantage in what was essentially a maritime conflict.⁵³ Adopting a middle position, Bruce Farcau claims that, "the two sides were much more evenly matched than the results might indicate."⁵⁴

While the Chileans may have been better prepared for war than the Peruvians, the fact remains that the majority of Chileans, throughout the war and even to this day, believed that they were the underdogs in a lopsided battle against the colossus of Peru. With the popularization of this myth, Chileans questioned how they were able to overcome such overwhelming odds. They proposed the idea of Chilean exceptionalism; that is, the idea that there was something about being Chilean that made victory possible.

A. The Myth of the Chilean Underdog: The Spark that Ignited the Debate Over Chilean Exceptionalism

The Battle of Iquique, in which two rickety wooden ships took on the best of the Peruvian navy, resonated deeply throughout Chile, and played a major role in raising Chilean morale. Within two days of the battle, newspapers were reporting the events in the most heroic terms, and the story took on mythic proportions. Arturo Prat's heroism, in what he surely knew was a suicidal stand, would eventually find its way into every Chilean schoolbook. Naval Cadet Vicente Zegers Recasens recalled Captain Prat's speech to the crew of the *Esmeralda*:

Men: This is an unequal battle, but be brave and keep your spirits high. Until now no Chilean ship has ever lowered its flag to surrender; I do not expect any less this time. I assure you that as long as I live this flag will fly on high, and if I am fallen my officers will carry on this duty.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Alessandri Palma, *Chile y su historia*, 34.

⁵² William Sater, "Chile During the First Months of the War of the Pacific," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 5 (1973), 133, 134.

⁵³ Nunn, *Military in Chilean History*, 67; Markham, *War Between Peru and Chili*, 93-101.

⁵⁴ Farcau, *The Ten Cents War*, 47.

⁵⁵ Testimony of Ship Mate, Vicente Zegers Recasens at Iquique (28 May 1879) in *Testimonios y*

The success of Carlos Condell, Captain of the *Covadonga*, against the far superior *Independencia*, was seen as nothing short of miraculous. One newspaper reported, "How is it that two boats made of wood, that by their size and strength could be considered ants beside elephants, were able to totally destroy one of those enemy destroyers is to put them to shame!"⁵⁶

Another described the *Esmeralda* and the *Covadonga* as "two relics of Chile" coming "face to face with the colossus of Peru."⁵⁷ Prat's sacrifice is the most obvious legacy of the battle, but Condell's contribution was equally important, and not simply because he sank Peru's prize destroyer. Condell's victory over the *Independencia* accomplished two things. First, it popularized the idea that Chile was the underdog in an uneven match. The contrast between the *Covadonga* and the *Independencia* could not have been more striking. The *Covadonga* was a wooden corvette with modest armaments. It was one of Chile's oldest and weakest ships. Conversely, the *Independencia* was five times bigger, made of steel, and equipped with impressive weaponry. Similar in design to the European dreadnought ships, the *Independencia* was the mightiest ship in the Peruvian fleet. During the Battle of Iquique, Chile was without question, the underdog.

Second, Condell's victory over the *Independencia* convinced Chileans that they were almost invincible, and more importantly that the source of their invincibility was some superior characteristic found lacking in the Peruvians. Chileans did not believe that luck was to be credited for their victory. They saw Condell's victory as evidence of Chilean superiority. This sense of uniqueness and invincibility carried Chileans through the remainder of the war. The media continually exaggerated the image of the victorious underdog by attributing Chile's military successes to the superiority or exceptionalism of its people.

B. Using Racial "Science" to Explain Chilean Exceptionalism

Chileans searched for scientific criteria by which to distinguish themselves from Peruvians and Bolivians, and the science they turned to was the new science of race, evolution, and natural selection. Chileans increasingly came to the conclusion that they were biologically predisposed to success, that they were not simply a people who had won a war, but rather that they were a "winning people."

Influenced by the works of Charles Darwin and especially Herbert Spencer, late nineteenth-century thinkers in Latin America, as in much of Europe

recuerdos de la Guerra del Pacífico, Oscar Pinochet de la Barra, ed. (Santiago: Editorial del Pacífico, 1978), 38.

⁵⁶ "Los heroes del 21 de Mayo," *Las Novedades* (Santiago), 26 May 1879.

⁵⁷ Mauricio Cristi, *Lectura patriótica. crónica de la última guerra* (Santiago: Imprenta de El Correo, 1888), 15.

and North America, began to apply biological concepts of evolution to the interpretation of societies. Believing that the progress and success of nations could be explained at least in part as a function of their peoples' inherited traits, many theorists began to describe the world in terms of "survival of the fittest." "Race" became something close to a master analytical category, a poorly-defined term that could encompass physical characteristics, climate, geography, and culture, and which supposedly explained why some nations progressed while others fell behind. In its crudest form, the Social Darwinian orthodoxy asserted that certain races were more evolved than others and therefore had better survival opportunities; European races topped the list. Europe's prosperity and development were simultaneously explained in evolutionary biological terms and taken as proof that Europeans were more "evolved" than, for example, Africans or Amerindians. But even within the European races, categorization into superior and inferior races occurred. "Teutonic" and "Aryan" races, for example, were commonly regarded as more developed than southern European and Latin races.

If for Europeans, racial ideas of social evolution served to affirm and explain their superiority, in most of Latin America these ideas could not help but foster self-doubt and insecurity. As supposed racial "inferiors," most Latin Americans wondered and debated whether or not they could overcome their biological disadvantages, improve their racial characteristics, and ultimately progress as nations.

Chileans, however, were uniquely able to invent an identity that drew directly on Spencerian ideas of social evolution and yet arrived at radically different conclusions. Unlike most of Latin America, where Social Darwinism emphasized the region's racial shortcomings, in Chile the ideas were used to do the exact opposite. During and after the War of the Pacific, Chileans used evolutionary ideas to "prove" their exceptionalism. By "used" I mean something more than the deliberate and conscious use of an idea. Social Darwinian ideas became so ingrained that they practically took on the legitimacy of universal scientific truths. And in Chile, these "truths" fostered a positive self-image and a sense of superiority over other Latin Americans.

C. Denigrating the "Peruvian Race"

Postwar Chileans believed that Peru was an inferior society because it had a larger and more visible indigenous population than that found in Chile. Chileans, and even white Peruvians, saw this as the source of Peru's weakness. With such a huge indigenous population, Peru supposedly had little chance of becoming a progressive nation. Commenting on the Peruvian Indian, Chilean historian Francisco Encina wrote that one third of Peru's population was made up of "Indians not yet incorporated into civilization."⁵⁸ The other two thirds, according to Encina, were "semi-civilized *mestizos* of questionable bellicose

⁵⁸ Francisco Encina, *Resumen de la historia de Chile* (Santiago: Zig-Zag, 1956), vol. 2, 1462.

qualities.”⁵⁹

Encina’s use of the word “qualities” (*cualidades*) rather than “abilities” (*habilidades*) is noteworthy. “Quality” refers to the character of a person; it suggests an intrinsic mode of being. By comparison, “ability” refers to a person’s skill or aptitude to do a certain thing; it typically denotes an expression of learned behavior. Although today we would normally think of fighting as an ability, in Encina’s opinion, bellicosity was a biological trait. His choice of words is a reflection of Social Darwinism’s commanding influence, even on language.

During the war, Chileans depicted Peruvian *mestizos* and Indians in the most negative light. They were often described as physically unattractive, stupid, lazy, simple-minded, primitive, barbarous, superstitious, unpatriotic, and untrustworthy. During peace negotiations with Bolivia in 1884, Chilean President Domingo Santa María wrote, “I do not know a person like the Bolivian! He is wily, stupid, stubborn and good for nothing!”⁶⁰

The Indian problem in Peru and Bolivia was further aggravated by the infusion of other perceived inferior races, especially Chinese and blacks. Chilean historian Alberto Cabero described Peru’s ethnic groups:

A common characteristic of mulattos, cholos, Indians and zambos is their lack of moral sense, of probity, when they are caught stealing they do not feel the least bit of shame. The cholo is haughty, disobedient, easily blinded by all that glitters, jealous and very vulnerable; he is more alcoholic, lazy and inclined to pillage than the Indian. The mulatto is impulsive, pretentious, fake, irritable, and voluble in his emotions and his way of thinking, what he does is to typically live off of peddled trinkets and become absorbed in meaningless projects.⁶¹

By Cabero’s assessment, three-quarters of Peru’s population was either anti-social or socially retarded. Even though Cabero later rejects the idea that national achievement is connected with race, his negative characterization of Peru’s racial mix strongly suggests that he believed otherwise.⁶²

Non-Chileans were also responsible for popularizing the myth of Chilean racial supremacy. French national André Bellessort argued that Chile’s greatness lay in its racial homogeneity and unity. Convinced that Peru’s racial mix was a source of weakness in the war, Bellessort wrote in an 1895 *El Mercurio* article,

The Chileans enjoy an immense advantage over their neighbors: their national unity that has allowed civic virtue to germinate from their souls. Look to the north; you will find Peru, a people who cover their misery with a harlequin’s cloak, made of multi-colored fragments. Beside the Spanish descendants who

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1420.

⁶⁰ Francisco Encina, *Historia de Chile: desde la prehistoria hasta 1919* (Santiago: Editorial Nascimento, 1951), vol. 18, 119.

⁶¹ Cabero, *Chile y los chilenos*, 57.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 110.

have exhausted themselves in unproductive revolutions, scurry and swarm the indolent Chinese, the brutish Negroes, Indians who live in their state of nature, ignorant of even the names of their lovers. During the War of the Pacific these Indians didn't even know which saint to entrust themselves to and splintered off in flocks to the rank and file of the Chilean army which they took for a new revolutionary party. In so far as the Bolivians are concerned, who don't even have an ocean port, since Cobija passed over power to the Chileans, what can they do: an agglomeration of European influences, surrounded by swarms of savages in a permanent state of war?⁶³

Even some Peruvian intellectuals, like Javier Prado and Clemente Palma, believed that Peru's failures were due to its huge indigenous population. Like Sarmiento they believed flooding Peru with European immigrants would fix the country's problems. The disdain for the Indian is particularly evident in Clemente Palma's works. For example, Palma wrote, "the Indian race is a degenerate branch of an ancient ethnic trunk from which all other inferior races derived."⁶⁴ Other Peruvian intellectuals even blamed the Indians for Peru's defeat. Alejandro Deustua wrote, "Peru owes its disgrace to the indigenous race."⁶⁵ These scholars argued that the Conquest proved just how weak and inferior Peru's indigenous people were. Ricardo Palma wrote,

Historical precedent tells us with sober eloquence that the Indian is organically a coward. It only took 172 Spanish adventurers to imprison Emperor Atahualpa, who had been escorted by fifty thousand men, and realize the conquest of an empire, whose inhabitants numbered in the millions.⁶⁶

As to draw a comparison, Clemente Palma later reflected on the War of the Pacific, asking: "is it possible that Lima, a population of 130,000 souls, would find itself under siege by a garrison of 3,000 Chilean men?"⁶⁷ The defeat of the Incas at the hands of the Spanish was evidence of their cowardliness and ethnic inferiority in the same way that modern day Peruvian Indians were vanquished by the Chileans.

⁶³ André Bellessort, "Los romanos de la America del sur," in *El carácter chileno: estudio preliminar y selección de ensayos*, 3^o ed., Hernán Godoy, ed., (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1991), 278.

⁶⁴ Clemente Palma, *El porvenir de las razas en el Perú* (Lima: Torres Aguirre, 1897), 15.

⁶⁵ Alejandro Deustua, *La cultura nacional*, 2^o ed. (Lima: Empresa Editorial El Callao, 1937) cited in Alberto Flores Galindo, *Buscando un inca: identidad y utopía en los andes*, 4^o ed. (Lima: Editorial Horizonte, 1994), 231.

⁶⁶ Letter from Ricardo Palma to Nicolás de Piérola, 8 February 1881 cited in *Cartas a Piérola sobre la ocupación chilena de Lima*, Carlos Milla Batres, ed. (Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1964), 20.

⁶⁷ Palma, *Porvenir de las razas*, 52.

IV. Exalting Chile's Indigenous Heritage

If the idea of Chilean racial supremacy was, in part, based on the belief that Peruvians were inferior because of their indigenous ancestry, how could Chileans reconcile the fact that they were also a *mestizo* people? The answer is rather complicated. Chileans developed a selective way of accepting their indigenous heritage. Many scholars and non-scholars have charged that Chileans suffer from a self-denial complex in which, out of shame, they refuse to admit to their indigenous heritage. This assertion, however, is based on a severe misunderstanding of the historic relationship between Chileans of European descent and the nation's most prominent aboriginal population, the Araucanians.

A. The Mythical Araucanian

The mythical Araucanian is a fierce warrior belonging to a group of people who could not be subdued for four hundred years. According to Sater, "Although Chile's Indians had been denigrated when they opposed the central government's pacification of the south, their ferocity suddenly became an important element in forging the nation's cultural self-identity."⁶⁸ During the war Chileans fell in love with this image because they wanted to be thought of as fierce warriors. More importantly, the mythical Araucanian was not a loser. He either won or died fighting.

Popular folklore has it that when the Spaniards sentenced the Araucanian warrior Caupolican to death by sitting on a stake, in an act of defiance he voluntarily sat himself to his death. In another show of resistance, native warrior Lautaro served as Pedro de Valdivia's horsekeeper for many years and after studying Spanish military tactics he fled to lead an indigenous resistance movement teaching other resistance fighters all he had learned. In yet another example, when the Spanish captured Araucanian resistance leader Galvarino they cut off his hands, after which, legend has it, he defiantly stuck out his neck to offer his head.

The Araucanians were also reputed for their vicious savagery in battle. Alonso González de Nájera was a Spanish soldier who fought the Araucanians. He wrote *Desengaño y reparo de la guerra del reino de Chile*, in which he chronicled his experience fighting the Araucanians. Nájera's accounts of Araucanian savagery were quite descriptive. In the following excerpt, for example he discussed how the Araucanians disposed of their prisoners: "The barbarians cut their prisoners' legs off while they were still alive...and used the shin-bones to make bugles and flutes. Before dying, prisoners were forced to blow out the

⁶⁸ William F. Sater, *Chile and the United States: Empires in Conflict* (Athens, Georgia: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1990), 79.

marrow of their own bones.”⁶⁹

Identifying with such an ancestry enabled Chileans to convert their military defeats into moral victories. The Araucanian image provided Chileans with a brilliant source of inspiration, since as long as they died fighting they could not be beaten. To illustrate this point, an editorial in *Los Tiempos* following the Battle of Iquique declared: “We can confirm it without boasting: Chile can be exterminated, but it cannot be defeated!”⁷⁰ Indeed, those battles that most glorified Chileans in history books are those in which Chileans were massacred but died fighting valiantly.

A sound victory against Peru and Bolivia certainly convinced many Chileans that they had biologically inherited certain Araucanian “martial qualities.” This Chileanization of the Araucanian is most blatantly portrayed in the following editorial written during the war. It takes a stanza from Alonso de Ercilla's epic poem *La Araucana*:

The prowess displayed by the Chilean armed forces has not surprised us... Since the primitive days of the Chilean nation the inspired Ercilla has said,

Chile fertile and eminent province
From the famous Antarctic region,
From remote respected nations
Of strength, principal and power;
The people that are born are so great
So proud, gallant and bellicose,
That no king has been able to rule
Nor has any foreign power be able to subjugate.⁷¹

Ercilla wrote *La Araucana* between 1565-86, arguably to convince the Spanish Crown to invest more resources and men in Chile. His poem describes his perception, or the perception he intended to give the Crown, of the Araucanians. However, after Chile gained independence the poem was accepted as an interpretation of the Chilean people. During the war it was used to describe Chilean uniqueness and provide a nationalist explanation for Chile's military triumphs.

The first Chilean editor of *La Araucana*, Abraham Koenig called the poem “the baptismal certificate of our nation.”⁷² In reality, however, *La Araucana* was the baptismal certificate of the mythical Araucanian. The Chileanization of the poem stripped the Araucanian of his humanity and converted him into an idea,

⁶⁹ Alonzo González de Nájera, *Desengaño y reparo de la guerra del reino de Chile* Stephen E. Lewis, trans. (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1971), 53 cited in Stephen E. Lewis. “Myth and the History of Chile's Araucanians,” *Radical History* 58 (Winter 1994), 116.

⁷⁰ “El combate lejendario,” *Los Tiempos*, 25 May 1879.

⁷¹ “Honras fúnebres por los chilenos muertos en las Batallas de Chorillos i Miraflores,” cited in *Boletín de la Guerra del Pacífico*, vol. 4, 1054.

⁷² Lewis, “Myth and the History of Chile's Araucanians,” 115.

a vision, a symbol, and even a logo for another people's use. The most admirable qualities, some real and others fabricated, were lifted from the real Araucanians and dropped onto the mythical and idealized Araucanians whom Chileans felt better calling their ancestors.

Going into battle, the Ercilla image of the “proud, gallant and bellicose” Araucanian is precisely how Chileans wanted to be perceived. They could not have identified with a more fitting image. The image of the fierce warrior inspired the Chilean foot soldier, convincing him, as he went into battle, that he was a born warrior. An article in *El Luis* claimed that during the Battle of Tacna, Chilean soldiers “looked to their past and they saw the majestic shadows of Colocolo, Galvarino, Caupolican, and Lautaro who told them: “Let the beautiful and glorious star of our Chile always shine down upon you.”⁷³ Another newspaper poetically wrote, “A mixture runs through the veins of the Chilean, the blood of the Spanish and the Araucanian. How then could he deny his innate valor before the sons of the Incas?”⁷⁴

Other Latin Americans, including the Peruvians, actively reinforced the mythical image of the Chilean as inheritor of the Araucanian fighting spirit. Describing the alleged savagery of Chilean soldiers in battle, Manuel González Prada, an eminent Peruvian scholar and soldier in the battle of Chorrillos, wrote: “Chile teaches us of their Araucanian ferocity.”⁷⁵ The image of the Araucanian warrior developed a culture of defiance, loyalty and sacrifice that was particularly appealing to the military during the war. It gave soldiers a code by which to live. In a famous wartime speech, Chilean journalist Máximo R. Lira said,

Until the last plank of our boats has sunk! Until we have launched the last cannon ball from our cannons! We will fight as long as we have strength of heart and inspiration in our soul. And after? After, die! But die with the expression of victory: “Chileans do not know how to surrender: Long live the fatherland!”⁷⁶

This legacy survives even today. The motto of the Chilean army is “always victorious, never defeated.” The mythical image of the fierce warrior remains part of the national identity: even the Chilean Army’s website traces the institution’s beginnings to pre-Columbian Araucanian warriors.

The Chilean military's enthusiasm to incorporate the image of the Araucanian warrior is vividly expressed in *Una raza militar* by General I. Tellez. However, the message in Tellez's work is somewhat unique because he also calls on Chileans to be proud of the Araucanians. Thus, Tellez acknowledges the real Araucanian instead of simply writing about a mythical person who engenders

⁷³ “Batalla de Tacna,” *El San Luis* (Santiago), 25 May 1885.

⁷⁴ *Boletín de la Guerra del Pacífico*, vol. 4, 1054

⁷⁵ Manuel González Prada, *Pajinas libres* (Lima: Ediciones Nuevo Mundo, 1964, 58 (original: Paris, 1894), 58.

⁷⁶ *La Situación*, 16 July 1881.

inspirational qualities. According to Tellez,

I have concluded that if there is a nation that can and should be proud of its aboriginal people, that nation is Chile. There is nothing more unfounded than that prejudice—shamefully very entrenched in our society—of feeling ashamed at the mere suspicion that running through our veins is at least one drop of Araucanian blood.⁷⁷

The image of the fierce Araucanian was also used to question the moral character of the Peruvians, by revisiting the humiliation of the fall of the Inca Empire to the Spanish. During the war a Chilean newspaper wrote:

The sons of Atahuallpa, lackeys of Pizarro
The indomitable Araucanian whom they tried to humiliate
The Hercules of bronze and the idol made of clay
In a balanced world could they weigh the same?⁷⁸

The poem attempts to glorify Chileans by highlighting the virtues of their Araucanian ancestors and discrediting the moral character of the Peruvians by portraying the Incas as a weak and servile people. It reminds readers that the “indomitable Araucanians” could not be humiliated by the Spanish as had been the “sons of Atahuallpa.” The poem concludes by rhetorically asking if there is even a point of comparison between these two races—one as strong as bronze and the other as fragile as clay. While the poem is really about the conflict between the Peruvians and the Chileans, it uses the historical experiences of the Incas and the Araucanians to discretely prophesize the likely victor.

Foreigners, and even the Peruvians, helped to perpetuate the myth of the Chilean as the indomitable Araucanian. Panamanian historian Adriano Paez commented: “How it shows that that nation [Chile] has in its veins Spanish blood and something of Araucanian blood! Valiant race, tenacious race, heroic, indomitable and implacable!”⁷⁹ When the war ended, the same Chilean military that had routinely identified itself with the mythical Araucanian was unleashed in southern Chile to “pacify” the real Araucanians.

⁷⁷ I. Tellez. *Una raza militar* (Santiago: Imprenta La Sud America, 1944), 229.

⁷⁸ Pascual Ahumada Moreno, *Recopilación de todos los documentos oficiales, correspondencias y demás publicaciones referentes a la guerra que ha dado luz la prensa de Chile, Peru y Bolivia* (Valparaíso: n/a, 1884), vol.3, 282.

⁷⁹ Paez, *Deberes de la América*, 3.

V. Chile's Basque Heritage and the Hierarchy of European Races

The war caused Chileans and Peruvians to reflect upon their relationship with their indigenous peoples. Chileans drew certain conclusions about the superiority of their indigenous ancestors that influenced how they perceived themselves. Amerindian heritage, however, was only one of two aspects under scrutiny in the debate concerning Chilean and Peruvian racial virtues. The quality of each nation's European heritage was the other aspect.

Social Darwinism held that European races were superior to Asiatic, African and indigenous races. But it also defended the proposition that a racial hierarchy existed within the European race. The Teutonic race, for example, was considered superior to the Slavic race, which in turn was considered superior to the Latin race. This meant that Germanic peoples stood at the top of the racial ladder while Italians and Iberians occupied the lower rungs.

During and following the War of the Pacific, Peru's indigenous and *mestizo* masses were not the only targets of Chilean racism; Chilean propagandists also disparaged Peru's white Spanish elite, drawing on "black legend" stereotypes of the arrogant, indolent, vain, lazy, wasteful, superstitious, backward Spaniard. Alberto Cabero described Peru as a "tropical country of capable diplomats and politicians, that still preserve their viceregal, colonial pride, its inhabitants are insincere, urban, pretentious and filled with ostentatiousness..."⁸⁰

Chileans saw themselves as enterprising, industrious and progressive. They were proud of the strong anti-clerical movement that influenced Chilean politics. Secularism was heralded as the hallmark of progressive societies. Chileans noted that Peruvians, by comparison, remained overly influenced by the Catholic Church, which they regarded as reactionary. Most of the Peruvian elite, Chileans argued, descended from old Castilian and Andalusian families whom it was believed had a biological predisposition towards laziness and pretentiousness. Zorobabal Rodriguez, pre-eminent editor of the conservative newspaper *El Independiente*, and a vocal Congressman who advocated the complete annexation of Peru, imagined Peruvians of Andalusian extraction to be weak, probably because of centuries of opulence.

Surprisingly, many Peruvians agreed with the Chilean assessment. In a speech delivered to the University of Arequipa, Peru, on April 20, 1881, for example, Dr. Belisario Llosa, Professor of Literature, referred to Peru as the "spoiled son of indolent Spain."⁸¹ Speeches and essays by liberal and radical Peruvian writers such as José Carlos Mariátegui and Manuel González Prada sharply criticized the legacy of Peru's Spanish ancestry, which they cited as a

⁸⁰ Cabero, *Chile y los chilenos*, 66.

⁸¹ Ahumada Moreno, *Recopilación*, vol. 4, 404.

cause for an allegedly underdeveloped work ethic. González Prada wrote:

Because of the atrophy of intelligence, the practical spirit of work, economy and political rights would disappear before the solicitation of fantastic ideals, before the temerity of valor, the tenacity of enterprise, the hallucination of fanaticism and the reverent homage to the King and his government. Such was the spirit of race that the conquistadors brought and that they left injected into the blood of the Creoles.⁸²

Offering his interpretation of Spanish values, Francisco García Calderón claimed:

The Spaniard reveals, in his life and in his attitude, all the inner and outer forms of individualism. The austerity, the arrogance that can be found in the pleated cape of the nobility, in the seigneurial gesture, the personal worth that transforms history into epic, the audacity, the love of adventure, and the isolation, are all forms of personal exultation.⁸³

García Calderón's description typified "the Spaniard" as an arrogant and self-exalting *hidalgo* with a love for adventure. "Nuestros padres" did not value work habits, economy or industry. They were privileged nobility. Consequently, "the Prodigal son of fortune has watched his spectacular wealth disappear and he stands poor in labor, poor in capital and poor in commerce."⁸⁴ Another influential Peruvian, Victor Andrés Belaúnde, wrote:

[T]he Spanish colonists came to take advantage of the parceling out of the *encomiendas* or public office, shunning manual labor, that was passed down to the aboriginal race. As Americans we have, therefore, a hereditary repulsion for everything that involves strenuous effort ... our nationality carries the seal of a national sin.⁸⁵

Chileans, also colonized by Spain and presumably imbued with identical Spanish blood and values, nevertheless escaped the stigma of Iberian backwardness and indolence by asserting that their ancestry was not primarily Castilian, but Basque. The Basques, hailing from northern Spain, received immunity because they were believed to be of non-Latin origin. This fact did not escape the attention of most Latin Americans who included Basques in their list of desirable immigrant ethnic groups. García Calderón wrote, "The Basques, hardy and strong, who emigrated from Spain to dominate America, do not come from *Latium*..."⁸⁶ Reflecting on Chile's Basque heritage, nineteenth-century Chilean historian Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna proudly noted that the Basques were of "Celtic" origin.⁸⁷ Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,

⁸² González Prada, *Pajinas libres*, 18.

⁸³ García Calderón, *Les démocraties latines de l'Amérique*, 16-17.

⁸⁴ González Prada, *Pajinas libres*, 24.

⁸⁵ Victor Andrés Belaúnde, *Peruanidad: elementos esenciales (primera parte)* (Lima: Ediciones Mercurio Peruano, 1943), 34.

⁸⁶ García Calderón, *Les démocraties latines de l'Amérique*, 261.

⁸⁷ Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, "La inmigración vizcaina" in Hernán Godoy. *El carácter chileno*:

virtually every Latin American country sought Basque immigrants because of their industrious and entrepreneurial reputation.⁸⁸ Commenting on the qualities of the Basques, Vicuña Mackenna wrote,

But if the Conquistadors—correctly so—were Estremadurians, the most valiant race in Spain, it is also a now confirmed truth that Chile's first colonists, that is to say, sedentary inhabitants and usufructuaries of Chile's land, its industry and commerce, were from Biscay, that is to say, the most hard working, tenacious and mercantile race in the Peninsula.⁸⁹

To further distinguish themselves from the Peruvians, Chileans exaggerated the significance of their Basque ancestry. They popularized the idea that earlier waves of Basque immigration had completely altered the Chilean bloodline such that all Chileans descended from a common Basque ancestry. Chileans believed that they had inherited all of the virtuous qualities reputedly possessed by the Basques.

As with all myths, the Chilean claim to Basque rather than Castilian ancestry had some foundation in truth. A large wave of Basque immigrants had arrived in Latin America during the eighteenth-century, with a disproportionately high percentage having made its way to Chile.⁹⁰ Basque immigrants made fortunes in shipping, banking and industry, and quickly assimilated into and replaced the Chilean aristocracy. Fernández-Pradel writes, “This modest, hard working, charming and strong race of simple habits, completely absorbed the old conquistadors forming a new aristocracy that continues to this day...”⁹¹ This social transformation was heralded as a positive step by most Chileans who saw the old aristocracy as reactionary and backward on the one hand, and the Basque aristocracy as progressive and industrious on the other. An equivalent social transformation failed to materialize in Peru, a fact that is cited as contributing to Chile's advancement and Peru's stagnation.

estudio preliminar y selección de ensayos 3° ed. (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1991), 147.

⁸⁸ Pedro Santos Martínez “La inmigración en Chile: el caso de los colonos vascos (1882-1883),” *Historia* [Chile] 22 (1987), 292; Segundo de Ispizúa, *Historia de los vascos en el descubrimiento, conquista y civilización de América* (Bilbao, Imprenta J.A. de Lerchundi, 1914-19), 6 vols.; Félix Ortiz y San Pelayo, *Los vascos en América* (Buenos Aires: J. Rodán, 1915); Tomás Otaegui, *Los vascos en Uruguay: fundación de Montevideo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Vasca Ekin, 1943); Jon Bilbao, *Vascos en Cuba* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Vasca Ekin, 1958); Julian Fano, *La inmigración vascongada* (Lima: n/a 1863).

⁸⁹ Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, “Los orígenes de las familias chilenas” cited in Pedro Xavier Fernández-Pradel, *Linajes vascos y montañeses en Chile* (Santiago: Talleres Gráficos San Rafael, 1930), n. 3, xi-xii.

⁹⁰ For further discussion on Chile's heritage see Maite Camus Argaluz, *La inmigración vasca en Chile, 1880-1990* (Santiago: Eusko Etxea Chile, 1991); Trinidad Zaldivar, *Los Vascos en Chile, 1680-1820* (Santiago: Editorial Los Andes, 1998); Ayala Flores, *Vascos presentes en Chile: 47 apellidos* (Santiago: Agur Txile Editores, 2000); Pedro Xavier Fernández-Pradel, *Linajes vascos y montañeses en Chile* (Santiago: Talleres Gráficos San Rafael, 1930); Pedro Santos Martínez, “La inmigración en Chile: el caso de los colonos vascos (1882-1883)” (1987) [Chile] 22 (1987), 287; Jorge de Allendesalazar Arrau, “Una relación de militares nobles del real ejército de Chile con apellidos vascos y navarros,” *Hidalguía* [Spain] 8, no.38, (1960), 77.

⁹¹ Fernández-Pradel, *Linajes vascos y montañeses en Chile*, xi.

There was a perception amongst late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Latin Americans that race, geography, and aptitude were closely related. It was believed that the need for survival in colder climates produced hard working and entrepreneurial people. In contrast, warmer climates produced lazier and more fragile people. Survival in warmer climates was believed to be less of a concern since the danger of freezing or starving to death seemed more remote.⁹² Latin American scholars believed that the Spanish preferred to colonize regions of Latin America that most resembled their home environment. Each region of Spain had a unique climate, geography and people with distinct temperaments. Chilean sociologist Alberto Cabero wrote,

The Andalusians preferred the tropics, the Basques and Galicians preferred temperate regions, the Castilians scattered all over the place; this tended to diversify racial characteristics, because the Basque are more tenacious than the Andalusians, the Galicians more industrious than the Castilians.⁹³

Cabero's conclusions illustrate the logic described above; that is, Basques were superior to all other Spaniards because they came from a northern region of Spain that has a mild climate. In immigrating to America, the Basque's natural inclination would have been to colonize the southern cone of America, which generally is a temperate region.

Chile had long encouraged Basque immigration. Even during the War of the Pacific the government actively pursued Basque immigrants. According to a report obtained from the Chilean ministry of external relations in 1881, the Chilean government favored Basque immigrants because of their industrious reputation and their excellent prospects for assimilation. The report suggested that similarities in Chilean and Basque geography increased the likelihood for successful Basque assimilation.⁹⁴

Francisco Encina reported that 884 Basques, Swiss, Germans and Piedmontese arrived in Chile between 1883 and 1884. According to Vicuña Mackenna, approximately eight hundred families arrived to Chile from Biscay between 1700 and 1810.⁹⁵ Collier and Sater report that during that same time period 24,000 new immigrants arrived to Chile and half of them came from Biscay and Navarre.⁹⁶ Famed Spanish philosopher, Miguel de Unamuno commented that two of the greatest Basque creations were the Society of Jesus and the Republic of Chile.⁹⁷ Errazuriz, Eyzaguirre, Ugarte, Tocornal, Zañartu,

⁹² Although I wonder how hospitable European adventurers found the Amazon, the jungles of Africa and the deserts of north Africa

⁹³ Cabero, *Chile y los chilenos*, 55; Vicuña Mackenna, "La inmigración vizcaína," 146.

⁹⁴ Pedro Santos Martínez, "La inmigración en Chile: el caso de los colonos vascos (1882-1883)," 289.

⁹⁵ Benjamin Vicuña Mackenna, "La inmigración vizcaína," 147.

⁹⁶ Simon Collier & William F. Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808-1994* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 18.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Larraín, Irarrazabal and Godoy are a few of the prominent family dynasties that emerged from the Basque invasion. Unlike similar waves of Spanish immigration to Peru, when the Basques arrived in Chile they fused with the existing Castilian aristocracy, forever changing the face of the Chilean ruling class. Commenting on this social transformation, Vicuña Mackenna wrote, “One sees the image of this New Biscay of the Pacific, successor and heir of the New Estremadura of the conquistadors.”⁹⁸

The traditional Castilian-Andalusian-Estremadurian aristocracy that presided over much of Spanish America was vilified as decadent and conservative. Their leadership was considered an impediment to progress, especially in Peru. Vicuña Mackenna wrote, “Those generations belonged to a drifting epoch, disorganized and ungrounded, that could not, for the most part, exercise effective influence in the Colony...”⁹⁹ The Basque migration to Chile represented the arrival of a new and progressive leadership. Vicuña Mackenna even suggested that Chile's democratic and institutionalist traditions stemmed from their Basque ancestry: “Biscay is a pure democratic republic, in which all people directly participate in government.”¹⁰⁰

Throughout Latin America and Spain, Basques were reputed for their enterprising and disciplined work ethic. Guillermo Feliú Cruz described the Creole of the new Basque-Castilian fusion as “frugal and tenacious” and possessing an “inexhaustible desire to work”¹⁰¹ Peruvian President Francisco García Calderón acknowledged Chile's unique Basque heritage in a chapter entitled *Le Chili: une république de type saxon*. García Calderón wrote: “There, where the descendants of the Basques dominate, as in Chile, the political organization is more stable, if less remarkable than elsewhere, and a will asserts itself: work and succeed.”¹⁰²

The image of the Basque was so appealing to Chileans that it formed part of Chile's national identity. The Basques were portrayed as more than a group of immigrants having heavily influenced Chilean society; they were mythologized as founding fathers of the Chilean race, almost as if the country had been reborn. Suddenly, every Chilean had Basque blood coursing through his veins and by definition identified himself, no matter how ridiculously, as having a common Germanic ancestry. For example, Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna wrote, “[T]he Chilean, and especially the Santiagan, continues as always to be Basque, because it is not possible to escape from the blood that gives him his essence, nor to escape the substance of his soul, even though it is evidently transmittable.”¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, *Obras completas de Vicuña Mackenna: historia de Santiago* (Universidad de Chile, 1938), 449.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 441.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Guillermo Feliú Cruz, *La abolición de la esclavitud en Chile* (Santiago: Ediciones de la Universidad de Chile, 1942), 272.

¹⁰² García Calderón, *Les démocraties latines de l'Amérique*, 329.

¹⁰³ Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, “La inmigración vizcaina,” 151.

In the early twentieth-century, Chilean writer Dr. Nicolás Palacios wrote *Raza chilena*. As it was the first book in Latin America exclusively devoted to the topic of miscegenation, it became a huge bestseller and one of the most talked-about books of its era.¹⁰⁴ A pseudo-scientific synthesis of ideas that, as we have already seen, emerged earlier during the war, *Raza chilena* was the most influential statement of Chile's unique racial heritage. According to Palacios, it was precisely this fusion of enterprising Basque and indomitable Araucanian blood that made the Chilean race unique and superior. Although Palacios was not without his critics, among them Alberto Cabero and Francisco Encina, who found the work more patriotic than scientific,¹⁰⁵ the lasting impact of Palacios' work is testimony to the power of racial ideas in shaping a Chileans sense of self as a nation and as a people. As discussed, these racial ideas were fundamentally shaped by Chile's experience in the War of the Pacific, and especially by the way Chileans compared and contrasted themselves against the defeated Peruvians.

¹⁰⁴ Nicolás Palacios, *Raza chilena: libro escrito por un chileno y para los chilenos*, 2° ed. (Santiago: Editorial Chilena, 1918), 2 vols.

¹⁰⁵ Francisco Encina, "Don Nicolás Palacios," *Revista chilena histórica y geográfica* 1 (1911), 307; Cabero, *Chile y los Chilenos*, 66.

VI. Patriotism, National Unity, and Race

Many Chilean intellectuals explained the country's success in war by developing a mythology of inherent racial superiority. These racial ideas formed part of a broader complex of qualities that allegedly distinguished Chileans from Peruvians and Bolivians. But, Chileans also emphasized their superior institutions, greater national unity, and higher development of civic virtues. These contrasts did not originate entirely in racial difference, but neither were they incompatible with racial difference. In fact, they provided yet additional evidence of Chile's unique character and special destiny to spread its "civilization" to the more "backward" peoples to the north.

A. Contrasting Peruvian and Chilean Civic Virtues

Chile has had a long and respected history of constitutionalism that has distinguished it from other Latin American countries. Diego Portales, an influential Chilean politician and architect of the 1833 Constitution, is credited for having charted this path. When the War of the Pacific broke out, Chileans boasted of having the oldest constitution in the Americas, second only to that of the United States. In a pre-war pamphlet prepared for potential North American immigrants, Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna wrote, "It is, consequently, the oldest constitution of America, after that of the United States, and it is [sic] must be acknowledged that its age is its principal title to respect."¹⁰⁶ Although the voting franchise was only open to a restricted class of citizens, as was the case in many other western liberal democracies, Chileans enjoyed regular and peaceful elections. Even during the war, presidential and congressional elections were held as scheduled.

In sharp contrast, since achieving independence, Peru and Bolivia had been in a chronic state of political upheaval and dogged by *caudillo*-style politics. During the war, Peruvian president Mariano Ignacio Prado abandoned the presidency when he left for Europe under the pretext he left on a mission to shore up support for Peru's cause. Following his presidency, and for the remainder of the war, Peru was a politically fractured country with no effective central leadership. The political turmoil in Peru aggravated the problem of national unity. Wilfredo Kapsoli writes,

In sum, with all of these considerations, with all of these events at the level of the dominant classes as well as at the level of the popular classes, we can say that it was not possible, there did not exist in society itself a base, to have national unity, much less a national consciousness that would permit a firm and

¹⁰⁶ Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, *A Sketch of Chili, Expressly Prepared for the Use of Emigrants, from the United States and Europe to that Country* trans. Daniel J. Hunter (New York : S. Hallet, 1866), 20

organic resistance against the Chilean aggression.¹⁰⁷

The marginalization of aboriginal peoples, Chinese immigrant laborers, and blacks, along with the strongman politics of the white oligarchy, prevented Peru from achieving any sense of national unity. Some leading whites blamed Peru's marginalized races for the nation's downfall, suggesting that defeat was inevitable with so many racial rejects. Others blamed those whites for their elitist views that seemed only to have aggravated Peru's unity crisis. By the end of the war, the general consensus amongst Peruvians was that their defeat was merely the symptom of a greater problem.

During the war, Chinese indentured servants, brought to Peru to build its railways,¹⁰⁸ rebelled against their hacienda masters and aided the Chilean army.¹⁰⁹ One study reports that in the ten years leading up to the war Chinese indentured servants participated in an alarming number of uprisings and assassinations of their masters.¹¹⁰ During the same period there were also an increased number of violent confrontations between blacks and indigenous peoples, and Chinese immigrants.¹¹¹ The arrival of the Chilean army was often a relief for white Peruvian *hacendados* who were terrorized by their former slaves.¹¹² There were a number of reported cases in which Peruvian soldiers acted in reprisal against Chinese workers.¹¹³ Clearly frustrated by the lack of solidarity in his homeland, General Miguel Iglesias made an impassioned plea for unity from the Hacienda de Montan on August 31st 1882:

I have always written that it was not Peru, the nation that was defeated, humiliated, butchered and mocked by the army of the insatiable Chile. Peru did not fight. The passions and the miseries and the crimes of one part of its degenerate sons provoked the war, impotence and the defeat. And it is precisely why the Peruvian nation needs to finally rise above the rubble of its clamorous past, to establish a redeeming school for its future...Ah! Warriors of the cabinet, patriots of the taverns, busy bodies of infernal intrigue! Cowards, a thousand times cowards, authors of the national catastrophe! Enough!

Peruvian historian Tommaso Caivano also attributed his country's defeat

¹⁰⁷ Wilfredo Kapsoli, "La crisis de la sociedad peruana en el contexto de la guerra," in *Reflexiones en torno a la guerra de 1879*, Jorge Basadre, *et al.*, eds. (Lima: Francisco Campodónico F., 1979), 338.

¹⁰⁸ In total, 92,130 "Asians" immigrated to Lima in the twenty-seven years prior to the start of the War of the Pacific. At that time, Lima had a population that was no larger than 100,000. During that same period 4,340 natives from Polynesia had also been brought to Peru to work as domestic servants. Wilma Derprich Gallo, "El Perú hace 100 años: trabajo y migraciones," *Revista Americana de Ciencias Sociales* [Mexico] (1985), 77.

¹⁰⁹ Tommaso Caivano, *Historia de la guerra de América entre Chile, Perú y Bolivia* (Lima: Lima S.A., 1979) at 345 (original: 1883).

¹¹⁰ See Wilfredo Kapsoli, "La crisis de la sociedad peruana," 335-36.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 344.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 345.

¹¹³ Caivano, *Historia de la guerra*, 346; Barros Arana, Diego, *Historia de la Guerra del Pacífico (1879-1880)* (Santiago: Librería Central de Servat, 1880), vol.1, 140-41.

to its own shortcomings. He wrote, “[I]t was not Chile that defeated Peru; Peru fell on its own to the feet of an enemy waiting for it to crumble.”¹¹⁴ Chileans were conscious of Peru’s national unity crisis and fed on it to overstate their own achievements. While touring hospitals in Lima following the Chilean invasion, French Admiral Du Thouars, clearly impressed by Chile’s military feats, asked occupation governor, Rear Admiral Patricio Lynch, how Chile’s victory was possible. In answering his question, Lynch asked two injured Peruvian soldiers, “And why did you take part in these battles?” One responded, “I, for don Nicolás” and the other, “for don Miguel.” He then asked a Chilean soldier the same question to which he responded, “For my fatherland, my general!” Turning to Petit Thouars, Lynch then said, “This is why we won. Some fight for their fatherland, while others fight for don so-and-so.”¹¹⁵

Bolivia shared many of Peru’s problems. It too lacked social and political cohesiveness, making it an object of ridicule in Chile. In a satirical play about Bolivian president Hilarión Daza, Juan Allende Rafael alludes to the disorder and lack of patriotism that contributed to Bolivia’s defeat. In the following dialogue General Daza is making war preparations with one of his generals when the singing of a Chilean *roto* passing by outside of the window interrupts them.

Daza: Let’s see
 How many troops can we count on?
 What is the size of our force? What?

Rompelanzas: Three thousand loyal captains
 Two thousand loyal commanders
 Seven hundred colonels,
 Nine hundred generals,
 And on top of that a grand column,
 Like a Prussian flank,
 Of twenty musical bands
 Of fanfare and a brass band.
 And all of those brave people,
 Of our illustrious fatherland,
 It is, as you already know, illustrious!
 Of heroic grade, eminent ...

Daza: But how many foot soldiers?

Rompelanzas: In difficult times,
 Including corporals and sergeants.
 About two hundred soldiers ...

Roto: “Let us sing to the glory of the martial triumph
 That the Chilean people
 Obtained in Yungay” [singing]

Daza: The Hymn of Yungay?

¹¹⁴ Caivano, *Historia de la guerra*, 348.

¹¹⁵ Gonazlo Bulnes, *Chile and Peru: The Causes of the War of 1879* (Santiago: Imprenta Universitaria, 1920), 72.

Well, that is a surprise.
 Commander Rompelanzas,
 Bring that Chilean to me!¹¹⁶

Aside from mocking Daza and the Bolivian army, this scene is an insightful look at how Chilean writers perceived Bolivian attitudes towards patriotism and national unity with respect to their own attitudes. It suggests that among Bolivian officers, personal vanity prevailed over love of country. It also suggests that Bolivians generally lacked a sense of common destiny. In his report, Rompelanzas details the number of officers and the magnificence of their Prussian band, but embarrassingly admits that the officers and the band outnumber the men that they purport to lead.

Compare this image with that of the Chilean *roto* singing one of his country's most patriotic songs, the Hymn of Yungay. The hymn commemorates the Chilean victory at Yungay, Peru on January 20, 1839. The Battle of Yungay was the last military campaign in Chile's earlier feud with Peru and Bolivia. At that battle, Chile decisively crushed the Peruvian-Bolivian Confederation. The image of the *roto* was born out of Chile's experience in this battle.

The *roto* is the quintessential Chilean patriot. As with the Araucanians, he too has a schizophrenic image in the national mythology. In real life he is a congenial, fierce, patriotic, working-class man, lacking in cultural refinement and sophistication. Taken literally, *roto* means "broken" in Spanish, but the word is also a colloquialism for someone who has poor manners. The *roto* is the backbone of the country and his greatness lies in his fervent love of country. On the other hand, he also represents an idealized vision of the Chilean patriot, perfectly embodying the noble civic virtues of patriotism, loyalty, bravery, honor and self-sacrifice. The *roto* symbolizes the idealized vision of Chileanism in much the same way that the image of Uncle Sam has come to embody certain American values.¹¹⁷ The idealized *roto* is immortalized in a famous monument in the Plaza of Yungay in Santiago. The monument is commonly referred to as *El Roto*, but officially it is called the "Defender of the Fatherland."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Juan Allende Rafael, *El Jeneral Daza: juguete comico en un acto i en verso* (Santiago: Imprenta i Librería Excelsior, 1917), 6

¹¹⁷ Alton Ketchum, "The Search for Uncle Sam," *History Today* 40 (April 1990), 20. As with the *roto*, Uncle Sam has a dual image in American history. It is believed that Uncle Sam was a real person named Sam Wilson who supplied meat products for the American army during the War of 1812. Popular depictions of Uncle Sam that first emerged in the 1830s bear no resemblance to the original Uncle Sam; that is, Uncle Sam the image took on a life of its own that was distinct from Uncle Sam the man.

¹¹⁸ For more on the *roto* see e.g.: Joaquín Edwards Bello, *El roto* (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1968); Luis Durand, *Presencia de Chile* (Santiago: Nascimento, 1942); Roberto Hernández Cornejo, *El roto chileno: bosquejo histórico de actualidad* (Valparaíso: Imprenta San Rafael, 1929); Victor Domingo Silva, *Palomilla brava* (Santiago: Nascimento, 1923); Senén Palacios, *Hogar chileno* 2° ed. (Santiago, Nascimento, 1927); Nicomedes Guzmán, *Los hombres oscuros* (Santiago: Zig-Zag, 1946); Nicomedes Guzmán, *La sangre y la esperanza* 4° ed. (Santiago: Editorial Nascimento, 1952); Jorge Matta Correa, "El roto chileno" *El Mercurio* (Santiago) 17 septiembre 1950.

There is a certain modesty in Chile's history and geography that makes the *roto* an appropriate symbol of Chilean identity. Historically, Chile has never been associated with grandeur. Compared to Peru, Chile was a humble colonial possession. When there was wealth to be made in Peru and Mexico many wondered why anyone would willingly go to Chile, where there were no riches and where daily survival entailed tilling land and fighting off Indian raids. The Araucanians were just as unimpressive as the land they occupied. They were unsophisticated, nomadic, ruthless warriors whose contribution to culture and civilization was modest at best. They were poor cousins to the Incas. Yet their determined spirit allowed them to live independently long after the Spanish had conquered the Incas. The father of Chilean independence, Bernardo O'Higgins, was the bastard son of a former Peruvian viceroy. Alluding to O'Higgins' humble origins, one wartime Peruvian newspaper charged that Chileans possessed a "bastard and insatiable ambition" that would forever tarnish the civilized world.¹¹⁹ Another editorial claimed that "foreign nations that do not know about the Chilean character might pass her for a civilized and noble country, but that is precisely the mask that is worn by that scoundrel nation."¹²⁰

National folklore suggests that the need for survival instilled Chileans with a mature work ethic early in their history. Chileans took pride in their industrious reputation for several reasons. First, they discovered early in their history that hard work truly does pay off. Second, as global attitudes towards work changed, work replaced idleness as a status symbol. A country's prestige was no longer determined by how much it could accomplish without breaking a sweat, but by how much it had to sweat in order to progress. Chileans welcomed this shift in attitude that gave their country a new sense of prestige. Proudly reporting Chile's contribution to mining exploration in the disputed northern region, Francisco Encina wrote, "Impelled by his enterprising spirit, the Chilean explored the desert, and discovered and organized the exploitation of its riches."¹²¹ He characterized nineteenth-century Chileans as adventurous, endowed with an "expansive spirit."¹²² In *Nuestra inferioridad economica*, a Chilean classic, Encina wrote, "Neither distances nor dangers stop or deter us. We see no enterprise as inaccessible. In every Chilean there is something of a stubborn, enterprising, and energetic character."¹²³ In *Resumen de la historia de Chile*, Encina described how enterprising Chileans exploited mines in the Peruvian and Bolivian deserts.¹²⁴ Similarly Ricardo Donoso wrote, "the Chilean has characteristically been eager to move around, he has a spirit of adventure, and seduction for danger and risky initiatives."¹²⁵ In the preface of González Prada's 1894 edition of

¹¹⁹ César Hernandez, editorial, *El Eco de Junín*, 10 September 1881.

¹²⁰ *El Eco de Junín*, 14 October 1881.

¹²¹ Encina, *Historia de Chile*, vol. 18, 1407.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Francisco Encina, *Nuestra inferioridad económica: sus causas, sus consecuencias*. (Santiago: Impresa Universitaria, 1912), 80

¹²⁴ Encina, *Resumen de la historia de Chile*, vol. 2, 1407.

¹²⁵ Ricardo Donoso, *Breve historia de Chile* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos

Pajinas libres, Alejandro Deustua wrote, “Chile, a pauper country and with an inhospitable soil – Andean mountain peaks or weather beaten rocks of the sea – they have had to display an immense energy to survive and to prosper from their pains.”¹²⁶ Lamenting over Chile's decline in the early twentieth-century Enrique MacIver nostalgically recalled Chile's past glories:

One of the most accentuated characteristics of the Chilean of the previous generation was his enterprising spirit. Alluding to it, one of our most distinguished orators said: Where did we go? We supplied the American Pacific coast and the south Pacific islands with our products, we looked for gold in California, silver in Bolivia, nitrate in Peru, cocoa in Ecuador, coffee in Central America, we founded banks in La Paz and Sucre, Mendoza and San Juan...¹²⁷

The Peruvian elite were criticized for their idleness and outdated feudal attitudes. Muñiz sadly admitted that “Idleness and anarchy have been the factors that since our independence, have eroded little by little the edifice of the Peruvian people’s fatherland, driving us to the deep abyss in which we found ourselves in 1883: there you have the sad inheritance of our past.”¹²⁸ González Prada suggested that among other reasons, Chile won the war because Peruvian corruption and financial mismanagement deprived the Peruvian military of the funding it needed to finance its efforts.¹²⁹ Alberto Cabero expressed the same opinion, quoting Simon Bolivar to emphasize his point. In a letter written in Jamaica in 1815, Bolivar had commented:

If any republic in the Americas will last a long time it will be the Chilean Republic. Never has the spirit of liberty been extinguished there, the vices of Europe and Asia arrived late, or never, to corrupt the customs of those people at the other end of the universe. Their territory is distant and will always be out of reach from the infectious contact of other men. They will not change their laws, customs, traditions, they will conserve the unity of their political and religious opinions. In one word, Chile can be free a country.¹³⁰

In a more modern analysis of the Peruvian leadership’s backwardness, Fredrick Pike comments on the social and political values that motivated Peruvian President Nicolás de Piérola:

There was much that was colonial and traditionally Latin Catholic in Piérola’s economic thought. Wealth to him depended on providential windfalls, not upon the slow and laborious accumulation of capital based on individual sacrifice, savings and re-investment. He spurned the “Protestant Ethic” with its insistence upon the exercise of natural virtue (frugality, sobriety, responsibility, uninterrupted hard toil, avoidance of conspicuous consumption) as the means of

Aires, 1963), 78.

¹²⁶ González Prada, *Pajinas libres*, xvi-xvii.

¹²⁷ Enrique Mac-Iver, *La crisis moral de Chile* cited in Francisco Encina, *Nuestra inferioridad económica*, 79.

¹²⁸ Carlos Maria Muñiz, *Historia del patriotismo, valor y heroismo de la nación peruana en la guerra con Chile* (Arequipa: Casa Editora, 1908), 5.

¹²⁹ González Prada, *Pajinas libres*, 61.

¹³⁰ Cabero, *Chile y los chilenos*, 62.

achieving wealth. Affluence to him seemed to depend more upon supernatural factors.¹³¹

Chileans also used their underprivileged/underdog image to inflate the extraordinariness of their accomplishments. Indeed, lowered expectations made every accomplishment look sensational. With Chile's modest origins and its industrious tradition it is easy to see how the humble image of the *roto* became a national icon.

Chileans went to the war with a feeling of moral superiority over their neighbors. They envisioned themselves as an industrious, progressive, democratic and enlightened society. Francisco Encina reminded his readers that "The military virtues that we are rightly proud of are manifestations of the same type of character that, once transformed into industrials aptitudes, have contributed to the greatness of England and Germany."¹³² Responsible leadership, racial homogeneity, and superiority made Chileans ideal messengers of progress.

B. Special Destiny: The Chilean Mission to Civilize

Since the Conquest, Peru and Mexico had been the jewels of the Spanish Empire in America. Their riches attracted adventurers, statesman, aristocrats and all the trappings of a civilized nation. All of this attention eventually earned Lima the title "City of Kings."¹³³ Peruvian radical Manuel González Prada gave a rich description of the power and wealth of Lima:

Lima was, as everyone knows, Spain's most opulent and powerful viceroyalty in South America. Those that depended on the Peruvian viceroyalty at some point in time were, New Granada, Venezuela, Quito, Chile, Bolivia and Buenos Aires. The oldest and most prestigious European dynasties have never governed a vast empire such as the one governed out of Lima by one simple Spanish viceroy.

...

Its streets are straight and wide; its buildings are of brick and stone. It has gardens, promenades, and fountains made of bronze in public plazas. It has printing presses, newspapers, three colleges, one university. One thousand coaches that travel along its roads on a daily basis. Numerous noble titles from Castile; one duke, forty-six marquis, thirty counts, one vice count, they display their coat of arms on the doors of their palaces.¹³⁴

It is difficult to imagine how anyone could have suggested that a country with such a regal history would have needed lessons in civilization from Chile, a country that got its first university in the 1850s. It was, however, Peru's luxurious history that became the object of criticism. In the eyes of Chileans, centuries of opulence had corrupted and turned Peru into a backwater of idleness, inefficiency, and pretentiousness. Chileans saw their country as a beacon of progress founded

¹³¹ Fredrick Pike, *The Modern History of Peru* (New York: Praeger, 1967), 122.

¹³² Encina, "Don Nicolás Palacios," 312.

¹³³ Aurelio Mío Quesada, *Lima: ciudad de los reyes* (Buenos Aires: Emece Editores S.A., 1946).

¹³⁴ González Prada, *Pajinas libres*, vii, x.

on new values and their racial supremacy. Peru's weakness came from being spoiled. The social fragmentation, political instability and chronic fiscal mismanagement of Peru were evidence that the Peruvian aristocracy was incapable of running a country. Zorobabel Rodriguez, an outspoken member of Congress and popular writer wrote, "Meantime, Chile offers the United States what Peru could never offer. A country of honesty, hard work, progress, solid institutions there is none better in America to return the benefits he receives."¹³⁵ An 1882 editorial in *La Patria* commented that "Peru was a savage dressed like a European. Civilization, culture, progress of the century are phrases found on their lips but not in their spirit."¹³⁶

Expressing his belief that Chile should lead Latin America by example, President Domingo Santa María wrote, "Chile will be the number one South American republic for its power, its wealth, for its illustriousness, for its material progress and moral strength."¹³⁷ Santa María continued describing Chile's commitment to the crusade of civilizing Peru as an unstoppable inevitability:

The war has taken on such huge proportions that we can no longer yank it back to control it. Today, we must resolutely accentuate Chile's dominion to Camarones, and from there we will bring our political organization and administrative system in such a way that those places in the future do not have any other character that is not Chilean. Bolivia will have to explode. Or die strangled and carved up, or they will have to come to us to beg that we assure them a large enough door to the street.¹³⁸

A newspaper editorial justified Chile's civilizing mission on the basis that Chile had an enlightened "philosophy" and a superior credit rating that was a measure of its responsibility.¹³⁹ Another editorial claimed that Chile's virtues as a civilized nation enabled it to win the war. According "... to those who ask: Why has Chile won and how is that Chile was able to win? We answer: Chile won the war against the northern alliance because, before anything else, it was a conqueror of peace, work and civilization."¹⁴⁰

Even before the war Chileans were quick to remind foreigners that they had secured Peru's independence on three separate occasions. During the wars of independence Chilean liberator, Bernardo O'Higgins, and Argentine liberator, José de San Martín, fought a drawn out campaign in Peru to eject Spain from one of its last strongholds. Following the war Chileans resented that Peruvians refused to share the cost of their liberation. When Bolivian President, Santa Cruz, tried to confederate Peru and Bolivia, Chile went to war with both countries under the

¹³⁵ *La Situación*, 16 July 1881.

¹³⁶ *La Patria*, 5 September 1882 cited in William Sater, *Chile and the United States: Empires in Conflict* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1990), 49.

¹³⁷ President Domingo Santa María, "Las dificultades de la Guerra del Pacífico (Santiago: Marzo 23 de 1880)," *Revista Chilena* (1917), 515.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Ahumada Moreno, *Recopilación*, vol. 3, 249.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 250.

pretext that it was aiding Peruvian dissidents in the liberation of Peru from Bolivian aggression. In 1866, Chile and several other Latin American countries went to war with Spain after that country tried to reoccupy the Peruvian Chincha Islands. Chile suffered tremendously when Spain bombarded Valparaíso. Chileans never forgot about these sacrifices and felt that Peruvians owed them a debt of gratitude. The War of the Pacific was the last straw and it convinced many Chileans that Peruvians were incapable of defending and governing themselves. Anxious to bring weary Chilean soldiers home, one newspaper complained about Chile's inability to conduct effective peace negotiations because of the leadership crisis in Peru. In this context Chileans believed that Peruvians were in dire need of a civics lesson. According to Sater,

The war gave Chileans an opportunity to embark on a "civilizing mission" to Peru ... since Lima prospered under Santiago's rule, many Chileans sincerely believed that the former viceroyalty's citizens preferred that the Moneda regulate their affair rather than endure the uncertainty of home rule.¹⁴¹

Some Chileans even felt that they were under a Divine obligation, similar to that of the conquistadors before them, to bring civilization to the darkness of Peru: "But without doubt the Providence in its inscrutable designs had planned that the Chilean valor would shine in all its glory to illuminate with its celestial lights the black and abysmal cowardice of the Peruvian heart."¹⁴² Another editorial wrote,

The time has arrived for Chile's expansion; we have clearly seen that it is the design of Providence that has protected our soldiers. But to keep enjoying its protection, it is necessary that we do not forget that victory has been the fruit of the natural justice of our cause and our love and from our love and faith in God, the fountain of grace, power and justice.¹⁴³

In the nineteenth-century, territorial expansion was widely viewed as an expression of a civilization's greatness. Chile developed enough confidence as a nation to mimic, albeit on a smaller scale, the exploits of European colonialism in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Just as the British affirmed their greatness by "shouldering the white man's burden" to "civilize" new lands, Chileans felt that it was their destiny to expand their civilization to new horizons. Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna expressed this view in an 1879 editorial from *El Nuevo Ferrocarril*:

And Chile, for its part, was obliged to fulfill its destiny, as the most secluded country in the American continent, having all the maritime liberties, commercial and port tax authority that are for its people the way to robust and great development.¹⁴⁴

Chile's image of itself as an imperial power was reinforced by writers

¹⁴¹ Sater, *Empires in Conflict*, 49.

¹⁴² "Jublio i Duelo," *El Mercurio*, 25 May 1879.

¹⁴³ *Boletín de la Guerra del Pacífico*, vol. 4, 1054.

¹⁴⁴ *El Nuevo Ferrocarril*, 28 July 1879.

from other countries, who also described it as an aspiring imperial power. Foreigners and Chileans alike often referred to Chileans as the Prussians, the Romans, or the English of South America. *La Situación*, a Chilean newspaper operating out of Lima during the occupation wrote,

The politics of the Chileans in the New World have been likened to that of Prussia in Europe. The comparison is justified. Their projects of conquests of the Pacific coast from Magellan to Panama, if they are realized, will soon be three fourths realized.¹⁴⁵

In *Los romanos de la America del Sur*, French national André Bellessort described Chileans as the Romans of South America: “But, without hanging on too stubbornly to a parallel, I feel tempted to consider the Chileans like the Romans of South America.”¹⁴⁶ He believed that there was a similarity between the tenacity of the Roman soldier and the discipline of the Chilean soldier. He also recalled how his colleague described Chile as an aspiring Prussia of South America. Even Peruvians compared Chile to other past and present powers. Manuel González Prada, for example, wrote,

Chile, with the instinct to imitate, common among juvenile nations, rows in the warrior spirit of Germany and in America hoists the banner of conquest. The German Empire seized with its eagle claws Alsace and Lorraine; Chile chose with its vulture nails Iquique and Tarapacá, and, to be one-up on Germany, it thinks to also choose Arica, Tacna and perhaps all of Peru.¹⁴⁷

Chile’s ambitions were also likely motivated by a yearning to “correct” history. Having always been second to Peru in importance, Chileans basked in the glory of their new image as conqueror. In this spirit, Rear Admiral Patricio Lynch, commander in chief of occupied Peru for two years, was nicknamed the “Last Viceroy of Peru.” Similarly, Chilean writer Máximo Lira also expressed satisfaction over Peru’s humiliation:

But here we have arrived in Lima, in the old residence of the Spanish viceroys, in the same place where it was decreed that the future of Chile as an independent nation would not matter. We are in Lima, the city covered with our flags and imposing laws on the vanquished ... we are the owner of their capital city and of their forts and ports, we are the arbiters of their destiny. What an immense glory for Chile!¹⁴⁸

If some Chileans, such as Lira, revealed an inferiority complex in the Chilean character, others glorified Chile’s humble beginnings stressing that as a nation its success could not have come from anything other than the virtues of hard work. Deriving success out of such humble beginnings was, and still is, a source of pride for many Chileans.

¹⁴⁵ *La Situación*, 16 July 1881.

¹⁴⁶ Bellessort, “Los romanos de la América del sur,” (original: *El Mercurio* 12 February 1897).

¹⁴⁷ González Prada, *Pajinas libres*, 60.

¹⁴⁸ Zoyla Aurora Caceres, *La campaña de la Breña: memoria del Mariscal del Perú Andrés A. Caceres*, (Lima: Imprenta Americana, 1921), 37.

VII. Conclusion

Chile emerged from the War of the Pacific as a new nation, self-confident and with an optimistic outlook for the future. Chileans experienced a victory the likes of which they had never before accomplished and that had no precedent in the Americas aside from the United States' victory over Mexico. The two-year occupation gave Chileans a firsthand look at life in another Latin American country. What they saw convinced them that they indeed had a superior society. War, decades of fiscal mismanagement, political instability, and national disunity had left Peru in ruins. Chileans saw Peru when it was at its worst and made sweeping generalizations about Peruvians on the basis of this encounter.

Chileans as well as Peruvians knew that victory had just as much to do with military ingenuity as with Peru's internal crisis. Yet, despite this appreciation for rational explanations to the war's events, Chileans and Peruvians treated the conflict as "a duel of races." From the beginning of the war, Chileans saw themselves as underdogs. Indeed, many outside of Latin America predicted Chile's sound defeat. This "David and Goliath" image, combined with what turned out to be Chile's unstoppable military success, led Chileans to see themselves as invincible.

Some suggested that Chile's success in the war was guaranteed by Divine protection. Others who were less superstitious attributed Chile's success to science, arguing that Chile's indigenous and European ancestry differed markedly from that of the Peruvians. Chileans descended from the brave and fierce Araucanians, while the Peruvians identified with their Inca ancestry. At least one eminent Peruvian writer portrayed the Incas as a vanquished and cowardly race that could not manage to defend itself against 172 Spanish conquistadors. In contrast, the Araucanians defended their sovereignty for four hundred years against the Incas, the Spanish and the Chileans. Chileans believed that they also heralded from a superior European ancestry. They traced their roots back to the Basques who had significantly influenced the makeup of the Chilean aristocracy. The Basques were considered superior to other Spanish ethnic groups because they had gothic rather than Latin roots. They were championed for having a superior work ethic, which explained Chile's successful economy. In reality, however, Chile's economic success was largely the result of its cornering of the global nitrate market following the annexation Antofagasta, Tarapacá, and Arica.

Although Chileans believed that their superiority stemmed from definite biological differences, they also asserted that their history and geography played an important role in attracting the right immigrants and breeding the right civic virtues. Resilience and industry were traits common to Chile's European and indigenous ancestry. The Peruvians, it was alleged, had been spoiled by centuries of wealth and power. Chileans believed that when Peru gained its independence it was so out of touch with reality that it was incapable of responsible self-

governance. This explained Peru's post-independence history of political and economic instability and why Chile believed that it had a special destiny to civilize Peru.

There are several topics upon which this paper has touched that merit further research. It would be worth investigating the relationship between official government policy towards the Araucanians at the close of the war and the use of their image in nationalist rhetoric during the war. One is likely to find glaring contradictions. From this study it is evident that the image of the Araucanian was exalted during the war, but if the Araucanian was exalted for his image he certainly was not accorded the same reverence in real life. Immediately following the war the Chilean military was once again mobilized in the south to "pacify" the indomitable Araucanians. It is quite likely that army regiments bearing the names of famous Araucanian warriors may have participated in crushing Araucanian sovereignty.

The image of the *roto* during the war would also be a fascinating topic for further research. The image of the *roto* is mostly tied to socio-economic criteria, but it also has a prominent racial dimension. Little has been written on the image of the *roto*'s participation during the war, yet he is central figure. The *roto* is the common foot soldier whose image as an unrefined but patriotic common man is romanticized to mythic proportions. Marxist writers Hernán Ramírez Necochea and Julio César Jobet would argue that the absence of any significant historical piece on the *roto*'s participation in the war is due to the Chilean upper class' monopolization of Chilean history.

Chile has a unique reputation within Latin America for exalting its historians. Throughout the country one finds countless monuments and street names dedicated to famous historians. All of these historians have come from the Chilean upper class as their distinctive surnames suggest. Most have written massive multi volume histories of Chile that are considered national treasures. Through their works they have influenced the way Chileans perceive themselves and their country. Relating this discussion back to the War of the Pacific, it has been suggested, for example, that the main reason the Battle of Concepción was so romanticized because most of the massacred soldiers had belonged to elite families. This is not to undermine their sacrifice, but rather to question why other military disasters and major victories have not received nearly the same glorification. Diego Barros Arana accurately summed up the role of the historian in Chilean society: "If history does not offer us model men, it is the duty of the historian to make them."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Diego Barros Arana, *Historia jeneral de Chile* (Santiago: R. Jover, 1884).