

# **An empirical study of Hispanic American national anthems**

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## **Abstract:**

This article examines the lyrics and transformation of Hispanic American national anthems. As national symbol, these anthems embody the collective memory of political elites and the mainstream values of respective countries and to some degree, the whole Spanish America. From the evolution of anthem one can infer the change of power structure and negotiation on the national identity between the elites and the population. In general terms, the discourse of Hispanic American national anthems is more and more inclusive.

## **Theoretical framework:**

National anthem is one of the most important symbols of a country, authorized by the state. As a symbol, national anthem encapsulates certain information and every time when performed or sung it is released, re-constituted and impress people. This “information” usually consists in national self-image (or self-representation), identity, national history and values etc. The point is that a power structure is hidden behind the national symbol. National anthems are, in most cases, established, recognized and guaranteed and transmitted by the state power (legislation). Though every sector of the society has its own history (collective memory), self-image and identity, the political elites monopolize the discourse in the national anthem. They expect, in this way, to instill their favorite values and discourses into the minds of the population through school education and public ceremonies. By imposing their “history” on others, the legitimacy of their status quo would be maintained. Nevertheless, the transmission of the anthems, though guaranteed by the state power, is also the result of negotiation between the political elites and the population (Here the “population” refers to those who have the access to the mainstream discourse). In this sense, the protagonists involved in the power structure of a national anthem include: political elites, population who have access to the mainstream discourse and the marginalized and silenced groups. The evolution of the Hispanic American national anthems supports this idea.

National anthem is, to some degree, the product of European nationalism. It may be helpful to view this phenomenon from an old-fashioned diffusionist perspective. There would be many sorts of nationalism

and nationalist expression, but the European expression of “anthem”, which can be retraced to the Ancient Greek tradition of praising the deities, was adopted by the entire world. The reason for this may lie in the amazing expressiveness of the national anthem when performed in public and sung by the mass; also, it is consistent with the view that the nation-state is sacred and serves as an altar to praise that “sacredness”. Moreover, as the modern international political system emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, every state saw it obliged to have a “national anthem” for the diplomatic occasions (For example, the Costa Rican national anthem was created when the government needed an anthem to welcome British diplomats).

It is interesting to analyze the role the national anthem plays in public life of a country. Apart from a diplomatic consideration, it is an outstanding expression of the state’s power and patriotism. When singing the anthem one may feel a sense of belonging (his/her identity). Thus national anthem, as an “instrument”, is welcome by both elites and the population. For example, children usually do not have the concept of “country” (see Gustav Jahoda’s article: *The development of children’s ideas about country and nationality, Part II: national symbols and themes*), but at school they are taught to sing the anthem with total sincerity and zeal, and they “learn” patriotism. Children are socialized since more political elements are added into their mind and life; meanwhile the collective memory of a nation is passed from generation to generation. In many countries in the theater the audience is required to stand up to sing the national anthem before the performance begins. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the mass media became prosperous, national anthems are more expressive and powerful than ever: it can be played more widely and frequently thanks to the coverage of television and radio; it is more expressive as often accompanied by elaborated television images in which history and beautiful landscape of a country are presented.

In our era national anthems seem stable with fixed lyrics and music. However, they are never static as they may appear; to the opposite, they are dynamic due to the power structure it involves. It would be a battlefield in which interest groups fight for expression or “discourse”. In Russia, the issue of anthem divides acutely the public opinion when in 2001 President Putin attempted to adopt a new anthem using the music of “the Unbreakable Unity”, which was the anthem of Former Soviet Union. The supporters feel that it represents the past in which the Russians were more powerful in the world stage and it bolsters the national pride; the opponents point out that it is disrespectful to the victims of Stalin’s great purge and a betrayal to the democratization of the country. The dispute became so intense that the

opponents refuse to stand up when the newly-adopted anthem is played<sup>1</sup>. “National anthem crisis” is always the product of the failure of “negotiation of identity” within the country. In Taiwan, advocates of “Taiwan Independence” dislike the anthem used since the epoch when the Nationalist Party governed the whole China, which, undoubtedly, suggest the relationship with “China”. In the US, when some artists created a Spanish version of national anthem a heated dispute aroused, which indicated the still-existing predicament of the identity of Latinos in American society. Also, in many countries, national anthems are officially translated into languages of various ethnic groups as a gesture of “political inclusiveness”.

An empirical analysis of Hispanic American national anthems would be interesting: (1) unlike other regions, Hispanic American countries share the heritage of Iberian culture, a common colonial era and a independent war that swept the whole continent. Their anthems, sharing many similarities, embody a regional collective memory. (2) Hispanic national anthems represent par excellent how elites monopolize the discourse of national history. Latin American history, to some degree, is a history of tensions between the elites and the excluded population. (3) The transformation of the lyrics of these anthems reflects the socio-political changes and the negotiation of the “national identity” that took place in the region. (4) National anthems are involved in recent “hot topics” such as multiculturalism, as it is an example of the interaction between the state and the diversified civil society.

Though not possessed by all of them, three main themes are included in most of the Hispanic American national anthems: history, nature and value. In this sense, a “Hispanic American archetype” can be summarized.

#### **Hispanic American National anthems as collective memory:**

An empirical study of Hispanic American national anthems shows an obvious similarity as the result of the similar history, culture and social structure these countries share during three centuries of the Iberian colonial rule. It can be inferred from this background that the lyrics of these anthems transmit, to some degree, a collective memory of the *whole region*.

Nevertheless, the first challenge of this adventure is that, despite of the similarity of the text, their dates of creation vary greatly. Among those countries who obtained the independence at the same period such as Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Bolivia and so forth, only the Argentine and Venezuelan anthems

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<sup>1</sup> J. Martin Daughtry: *Russia's New Anthem and the Negotiation of National Identity*, Ethnomusicology, Vol. 47, No. 1 (Winter, 2003), pp. 42-67

created in the independence war are preserved as national anthem till today (and the Argentine was largely abridged). For the rest of the region, either a formal national anthem was absent till the last years of 19<sup>th</sup> Century (like Guatemala), or the original anthems were abandoned (like Chile). Therefore, it is necessary to position and clarify this “similarity”. This collective memory cannot be oversimplified as the historical autobiography written by the fighters for independence in the 1810s and 1820s, but a collective memory that was passing on during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, negotiated between the political elites and the population. In this dynamics, some topics of the original lyrics may be lost and some others may be added in. Therefore, lyrics of the current anthems are the heritage of that memory, approved and guaranteed by official will and accepted by the mainstream discourse of the society. However, it should also be noted that the changes of lyrics is not that absolute. The basic theme of the memory is conserved. The object of study in this part includes the complete version of current Hispanic American national anthems. For example, the original (complete) version of Mexican anthem has 10 stanzas, and now only the first, fifth, sixth and tenth stanzas are sung. Except the Nicaraguan and Costa Rican anthems, others do mention, more or less, the history of the country. The Honduran anthem is an excellent example, a chronology that tells the historical development of the country. Some anthems offer a very panoramic chronology of the independent war and the founding of the republics, like in the case of Argentina, Peru, and Dominican Republic, Colombia, Ecuador and so forth.

It is possible to organize here an official version of history, which is the collective memory of the national political elites, through the Hispanic American national anthems. A pervasive view of history of Spanish America is the “rupture of history” (the brutal military conquest of European powers in 16<sup>th</sup> century and the independence movement that swept the whole region in 19<sup>th</sup> century are two ruptures). This is not to deny the continuity of a history in which social structure was largely maintained after the birth of independent countries. The point is that the creoles in the recently-founded countries now turn to be the new protagonists of “history”, and they needed to rewrite the history of the country. The Spanish Monarchist discourse was abandoned and a new one replaced it. This would be one reason why the genre of “history” is popular in the Hispanic American national anthems: the creoles found it necessary to pass on their collective memory as a spiritual heritage.

In general terms, the creoles version of history is organized centered around the conquest, the colonial oppression and independent war. The conquest here is somehow romanticized and sounds an epic. The pre-Columbian era was depicted as an inert time and it was the arrival of Columbus that awaked the vitality to the rich nature resources of the region. Then the colonial rule follows, depicted as tyranny,

oppression and inequality. Fights against this rule failed until the independence war changed the fate of patria. The motive of this war is often attributed to the spirit against the tyranny, and the war itself is bloody but heroic which makes many anthems sound martial.

The first turning point of Latin American history is the arrival of the European conquerors. It is described as a romantic encounter between an inert land (without referring to Indians) and the Europeans. As this is about one of the remote origins of the country, the anthems refuse to give up the dignity vis-à-vis the European powers. This dignity, however, is not embodied in the inhabitants in the land, but the rich natural resource. The Honduran anthem narrates:

“India virgen y hermosa dormías/ de tus mares al canto sonoro/ cuando echada en tus cuencas de oro/ el audaz navegante te halló/ y al mirar tu belleza extasiado/ al influjo ideal de tu encanto/ la orla azul de tu espléndido manto/ con su beso de amor consagró.

De un país donde el sol se levanta/ más allá del atlante azulado/ aquel hombre te había soñado/ y en tu busca a la mar se lanzó/ Cuando erguiste la pálida frente/ en la viva ansiedad de tu anhelo/ bajo el dombo gentil de tu cielo/ ya flotaba un extraño pendón.”

The conquest is largely viewed as a romanticized story: an ambitious man pursues a treasure and a cause. The Americas are then identified as “la tierra de Colón” (the Panamanian anthem ends with “el mundo feraz de Colón”). This is the identity of the creoles, which monopolizes the Latin American society and has not been greatly altered until recently when in the 500 anniversaries many began to protest the discourse of “discovering” the “new continent”. From this discourse the absence of the indigenous groups can be noted.

Then it is followed by the history of colonial era, which is, in most cases, summarized as the “oppression by the tyranny” and “failed resistance”. The Bolivian anthem sings “servil condición”; the Honduran: “Por tres siglos tus hijos oyeron el mandato imperioso del amo; por tres siglos tu inútil reclamo en la atmósfera azul se perdió”; the Guatemalan: “de tus viejas y duras cadenas”; the Peruvian: “largo tiempo el peruano oprimido la ominosa cadena arrastró/ condenado a una cruel servidumbre, largo tiempo el silencio gimió”; the Uruguayan: “Dominado la Iberia dos mundos/ ostentaba su altivo poder/ y a sus plantas cautivo yacía/ el Oriente sin nombre ni ser”; the Ecuadorian: “(el) yugo que te impuso la ibérica audacia/ de la injusta y horrenda desgracia/ que pesaba fatal sobre ti”; the Mexican: “Antes, patria, que inermes tus hijos/ bajo el yugo su cuello dobleguen”; and the Paraguayan: “A los pueblos de América/

infausto tres centurias un cetro oprimió". The colonial history is depicted as a monolithic darkness, which tells the necessity and legitimacy of the independent movement and the following republics. Here also one can see a dichotomy between Spanish rulers and the rest of the population of the colony.

Unlike other decolonization movements in the world, the Latin American one is not to expel the "foreign intruders", such as the case of Vietnam or most African countries. The three centuries of colonial rule left the region a more complicated social structure: the descendants of the European colonizers, namely creoles and mestizos, played the role of leaders or locomotives of the independent movement. Their appeal of power and benefits were largely materialized. The national anthems reflect is their political status by enumerating elites' political trajectory. As the victors they were recorded in history while indigenous people, though also fighting against the colonial rule, were still marginalized and their voice would not be heard. Those attempts of solving simultaneously the colonial rule and social problems failed, such as the case of Dolores in Mexico and Artigas in Uruguay because of the resistance from the diversified upper-class conservative elites.

Creoles were against inequality but it was the inequality between the Spaniards and themselves. The Colombian anthem mentions: "¡Independencia! grita el mundo americano/ se baña en sangre de héroes la tierra de Colón/ pero este gran principio: 'El rey no es soberano'/ resuena, y los que sufren bendicen su pasión." Here the "el rey no es soberano" tells us the origin of the movement: the creoles do not accept the rule of Iberian Monarchy. Also, the Ecuadorian anthem sings: "Indignados tus hijos del yugo/ que te impuso la ibérica audacia/ de la injusta y horrenda desgracia/ que pesaba fatal sobre ti/ santa voz a los cielos alzaron/ voz de noble y sin par juramento/ de vengarte del monstruo sangriento/ de romper ese yugo servil." And the Honduran: "Oh ¡mi patria! te alzaste/ de tu sueño servil y profundo/ tú también enseñastes al mundo/ destrozado el infame eslabón."

Culturally the creoles were also Europeans in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and they agree that their fight can be attributed to the imported ideas. The Honduran anthem dedicates a entire stanza to the French Revolution: "Era Francia, la libre, la heroica/ que en su sueño de siglos dormida/ despertaba iracunda a la vida/ al reclamo viril de Dantón/ era Francia que enviaba a la muerte/ la cabeza del rey consagrado/ y que alzaba, soberbia a su lado/ el altar de la Diosa razón." And then "Tú también ¡Oh mi patria! te alzaste/ de tu sueño servil y profundo..." The independent movement is interested as the extension of what happened in the "Old Continent". That is to say, when the mass in Europe overturned the tyranny, the creoles did the same in Latin America.

In some anthems, the indigenous fight against the invaders is also seen as a source of resisting spirit. Such as “Se conmueven del Inca las tumbas/ y en sus huesos revive el ardor/ lo que va renovando a sus hijos/ de la Patria el antiguo esplendor” (Argentina); “De Atahualpa la tumba se abrió... Y en su enseña más vivo relumbra/ de los Incas el Dios inmortal” (Uruguay) and “A su esfuerzo sellaron los grillos/ y los surcos que en sí reparó/ le atizaron el odio y venganza /que heredara de su Inca y Señor” (Peru). The indigenous resistance which was asphyxiated centuries ago (the above two cases both use the word “tumba”) turned to be another spiritual support for the creoles. This gave them a proud and dignity vis-à-vis the European powers, and is another representation of “patriotism”.

Most Hispanic American national anthems demonstrate the bloody and terrifying scenes of the war<sup>2</sup>, such as the case of Mexico, Colombia and Argentina. In this way, the sense of heroism (“gloria”, “honor”, “laurel”) arouses, which highlights the merits of the participants of the independent movement. Patriotism and the zeal of defending the political independence of the young republics would be treasured as the heritage of this movement. Together with the memory of Iberian oppression during the colonial era, the war justifies the legitimacy of the new republics.

Bloody memory:

“Del Orinoco el cauce se colma de despojos/ de sangre y llanto un río se mira allí correr... A orillas del Caribe hambriento un pueblo lucha/ horrores prefiriendo a péfida salud/ ¡Oh, sí! De Cartagena la abnegación es mucha/ y escombros de la muerte despreja su virtud.” (Colombia)

“¡Guerra, guerra! Los patrios pendones/ en las olas de sangre empapad.” (Mexico)

“¿No los véis sobre México y Quito arrojarse con saña tenaz y cuál lloran, bañados en sangre, Potosí, Cochabamba y La Paz? ¿No los véis sobre el triste Caracas luto y llantos y muerte esparcir? ¿No los véis devorando cual fieras todo pueblo que logran rendir?” (Argentina)

Heroism and victory:

“El valiente argentino a las armas/ corre ardiendo con brío y valor/ el clarín de la guerra, cual trueno, en los campos del Sud resonó... La victoria al guerrero argentino/ con sus alas brillante cubrió...” (Argentina)

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<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the Guatemalan anthem sings: “y lograron sin choque sangriento colocarte en un trono de amor”, which reflects its special trajectory of independence.

“El que ayer doblegábase esclavo / hoy ya libre y triunfante se ve;” (Chile)

“La trompa victoriosa en Ayacucho truena; y en cada triunfo crece su formidable son.” (Colombia)

“...y del valle a la altísima sierra/ se escuchaba el fragor de la lid; tras la lid la victoria volaba/ libertad tras el triunfo venía...” (Ecuador)

“En sangrientos combates los viste/ por tu amor palpitando sus senos/ arrostrar la metralla serenos/ y la muerte o la gloria buscar... Vuelva altivo a los patrios hogares/ el guerrero a contar su victoria/ ostentando las palmas de gloria/ que supiera en la lid conquistar.” (Mexico)

“Nuestros padres, lidiando grandiosos/ ilustraron su gloria marcial/ y trozada la augusta diadema/ enalzaron el gorro triunfal.” (Paraguay)

### **The country’s great “naturaleza”:**

Almost every Hispanic national anthem contains the glorification of the country’s nature. For example, the Chilean anthem sings: “Puro, Chile, es tu cielo azulado/ puras brisas te cruzan también/ y tu campo de flores bordado/ es la copia feliz del Edén/ Majestuosa es la blanca montaña/ que te dio por baluarte el Señor/ Y ese mar que tranquilo te baña/ te promete futuro esplendor”. The Guatemalan: “Recostada en el Ande soberbio/ de dos mares al ruido sonoro/ bajo el ala de grana y de oro/ te adormeces del bello quetzal/ Ave indiana que vive en tu escudo/ paladión que protege tu suelo/ jojalá que remonte su vuelo/ más que el cóndor y el águila real!” To praise the “New World”’s rich nature and marvelous landscape was a very important tradition of Latin American literature even before the war of independence, which suggests patriotism (for instance, Andrés Bello’s *Silva a la agricultura de la zona tórrida*). For the incipient republics, this glorification suggests that the land of the country is selected and protected by the god, which bolsters the pride, patriotism and dignity (the Panamanian anthem: “Ves rugir a tus pies ambos mares/ que dan rumbo a tu noble mission”). It also drives the one’s attention to labor and peace, as the god endows the natural richness is for men to work on.

### **Values in the anthems:**

Most Spanish American national anthems were created after the war of independence, through certamens, as mentioned before (with exception of Cuba). Thus authors of lyrics had the opportunity to dedicate the poem to describing their ideal “patria”. In this idealist description, values, or, national spirit consists in an essential element, from which one can imply Latin America’s mainstream worldview.



(1) The Spanish American national anthems suggest that the creoles' Western and Catholic tradition. Many anthems praise Jesus Christ, such as Colombian anthem (la humanidad entera que entre cadenzas gime/ comprende las palabras del que murió en la cruz), the Ecuadorian (Dios miró y aceptó el holocausto y esa sangre fue germen fecundo), the United Provinces of Central America (ya podemos con voz reverente pronunciar dios, unión, libertad) and the Venezuelan (y desde el empíreo el supreme autor un sublime aliento al pueblo infundió). Also, "Salve" is one of the most frequent words in these anthems. These republics should make every effort to be inserted into the admirable "civilized world" in order to be another Europe; meanwhile the indigenous civilization is limited to be decoration. The Argentine anthem claims "y los libres del mundo responden ¡al gran pueblo argentino salud!"; the Paraguayan anthem also says "Con aplauso la Europa y el Mundo la saludan, y aclaman también". European images such as "Edén" are used frequently (for example, the Chilean anthem: "Es la copia feliz del Edén"). The Paraguayan anthem comes to the legend of Ancient Roma: "Nueva Roma, la Patria ostentará dos caudillos de nombre y valer, que rivales —cual Rómulo y Remo— dividieron gobierno y poder. Largos años —cual Febo entre nubes— viose oculta la perla del Sud. Hoy un héroe grandioso aparece realzando su gloria y virtud".

(2) Political elites of the new Spanish American republics brought about the following ethics vis-à-vis the damage caused by the bloody war of Independence: diligent work; law and order; internal unity. To construct the country turned to be primary task for elites and the population, after the martial era; the successive civil war or political turmoil further stimulated the population's desire for peace. The Colombian anthem sings: "Mas no es completa gloria vencer en la batalla/ que al brazo que combate lo anima la verdad. / La independencia sola al gran clamor no acalla/ si el sol alumbra a todos, justicia es libertad." The Costa Rican anthem: "Bajo el límpido azul de tu cielo ¡Vivan siempre el trabajo y la paz!" The Uruguayan: "De las leyes el Numen juremos/ Igualdad, patriotismo y unión/ Inmolando en sus aras divinas/ Ciegos odios, y negra ambición." The Mexican: "Ya no más de tus hijos la sangre/ se derrame en contienda de hermanos/ sólo encuentra el acero en tus manos/ quien tu nombre sagrado insultó." The Nicaraguan: "¡que el trabajo es tu digno laurel y el honor es tu enseña triunfal!"

(3) Honor, glory; eulogy to the heroes who fought for independence; patriotism; to defend the patria and a sense of crisis; Anti-Spanish sentiment. The new republics were constantly threatened by the European invasion and intervention (the military interference took place in Mexico, Peru and other places). This sense of crisis left the Hispanic American anthems a very profound imprint, combined with the heroism the war of independence left as heritage. Citizens are called to defend the patria's honor

with life (“o a vencer o a morir por tu honor” as sung in the anthem of Central America). See the following:

“Nuestros pechos serán tu baluarte/ con tu nombre sabremos vencer/ o tu noble, glorioso estandarte/ nos verá combatiendo caer.” (Chile)

“Cuando alguno pretenda tu gloria manchar/ verás a tu pueblo valiente y viril/ la tosca herramienta en arma trocar.” (Costa Rica)

“Mas si osare un extraño enemigo/ profanar con su planta tu suelo/ piensa ¡oh Patria querida! que el cielo/ un soldado en cada hijo te dió.” (Mexico)

“Si mañana tu suelo sagrado/ lo amenaza invasión extranjera/ libre al viento tu hermosa bandera/ a vencer o a morir llamará.” (Guatemala)

(4) Latin America as a whole: the dates of creation of the current Hispanic national anthems vary greatly. Those created in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century may focus more on the independence war and its bloody but glorious scenes. This is the case of the Mexican, Venezuelan, Argentine (and so forth) anthems. Among these anthems, a very intense anti-Spanish sentiment is pervasive. Spain was described as the greedy and bloody demon that threatened constantly the young republics, as discussed before. Also, these anthems contain a Latin-America-as-a whole perspective, which is rarely seen in the anthems composed in late 19<sup>th</sup> century or early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Venezuelan anthem calls upon “La América toda existe en nación. Y si el despotismo levanta su voz, seguid el ejemplo que Caracas dio.” The Argentine anthem, as mentioned before, draws a panorama of the wound caused by Spanish in the whole continent. The Colombian anthem sings: “Bolívar cruza el Ande que riega dos océanos; espadas cual centellas fulguran en Junín. Centauros indomables descienden a los Llanos, y empieza a presentirse de la epopeya el fin” and the Peruvian: “Con su influjo los pueblos despiertan y cual rayo corrió la opinión; desde el istmo a las tierras del fuego desde el fuego a la helada región”. The ideal of regional unification in the independence movement, as bolstered by Bolivar, was eventually abandoned as official or mainstream ideology. The anthems created in late 19<sup>th</sup> century focus more on the country itself and on values like “trabajo”, “progreso” and “paz”. The current Costa Rican anthem was accepted because it expressed the pride to be “costarricense”.

### **Transformation of the national anthems**

The Hispanic American national anthems, in most cases, were created through certamens. The central government authorized a special committee responsible for celebrating the certamen and the winner's work would be adopted, performed in public (often in a very important commemorating event) and recognized by the state and the public. Eventually the legislative would intervene more to regulate the interpretation and etiquette of the anthems.

The "transformation" of national anthems has the three levels. The first is through the "interpretation" of the anthems. The second is through the modification (like the Guatemalan anthem) or abridging (like the Argentine, Chilean, Mexican, Ecuadorian, Colombian anthems) of the anthems. The third is that the national anthem is completely abandoned and replaced by the new one. This happens to most Spanish American national anthems.

The first level is the minimal embodiment of social changes in a national anthem. Their explanation or interpretation is often authorized by the state, reflected in books like *El himno nacional mexicano: su origen, historia y significado* (Fernández Editores, s.a, 1961, Ciudad de México), *Verdadera historia del himno nacional mexicano* (Jesús C. Romero, Consejo consultivo de la rotoda de los hombres ilustres, 1987, Ciudad de México), *Historia del himno nacional de Guatemala y sus autores* (María Albertina Gálvez, Centro Editorial "José de Pineda Ibarra," Ministerio de Educación Pública, 1964), *Análisis del Himno Nacional de Guatemala* (Manuel Alvarado Coronado, Editorial "José de Pineda Ibarra", 1980), *Interpretación y explicación del himno nacional* (Gualberto Cantarero Palacios, Editorial del Ministerio de Educación Pública, 1983) and so on. In the title page of these books often appears an authorization statement by the government, which symbolizes the official approval and support of the way in which these anthems are explained. The following paragraphs are quoted from *Análisis del Himno Nacional de Guatemala*:

"La invasión de cultura de nuestro país es más notoria en el nivel cultural: la degeneración de tradiciones y costumbres, el idioma, las lenguas vernáculas, los valores económicos, sociales, artísticos, religiosos, hábitos y muchas cosas que pertenecieron a nuestros antepasados... Los últimos años tenían que invadirnos los hippies para trastocar el uso de nuestros bellos trajes vernáculos." (This is the interpretation for "si mañana tu suelo sagrado lo amenaza invasión extranjera")

"Donde sin miramiento alguno, pintarrajean las paredes y rompen los vidrios de las aulas como una manifestación de protesta en contra del pedacito de tierra que nos vio nacer o en contra del sagrado templo que nos proporciona el saber... ¿utilizaran ese dinero que mal gastan, en dar de comer al

hambriento?” (for “Y ay de aquel que con mano perjura...”: this is the author’s comments on the 1978 student movement)

Also, the author analyses the verse “ojalá que remonte su vuelo, más que el cóndor y el águila real” by claiming that it refers to “pájaro de acero” or aeroplanes.

Since the changes to the anthem will result in a huge cost, efforts of according the “interpretation” of the anthem with the context of the time is the easiest and most common option.

The second option is to modify or abridge the original version of the anthem. For example, the Guatemalan anthem was refined in 1934. Verses like “ya tus aras no ensagrienta feroz el verdugo” was replaced by “que tus aras no profane jamás el verdugo”. The polished lyric appears less bloody but the main spirit of the anthem maintains the same. However, in other cases the literal modification suggests the transformation of the social ethos. The most typical one in this option is the abridging of the original lyrics, especially when it comes to the hatred against Spaniards. For the incipient Hispanic American countries, Spain did not only mean a horrible memory due to the three-hundred-year-colonial rule, but also a real threat. It refused to recognize the new American republics and intended in various occasions to restore colonial rules (such as its invasion to Mexico). Nonetheless, several decades passed and when the relations between Spain and Latin America were normalized, this bloody collective memory turned to be redundant and embarrassing. Moreover, in countries like Argentina, due to the large influx of Spanish immigrants, it became very improper to continue this attack. The following is the decree of General Roca, who then was the Argentine president, in March 1900:

"Sin producir alteraciones en el texto del Himno Nacional, hay en él estrofas que responden perfectamente al concepto que universalmente tienen las naciones respecto de sus himnos en tiempo de paz y que armonizan con la tranquilidad y la dignidad de millares de españoles que comparten nuestra existencia, las que pueden y deben preferirse para ser cantadas en las festividades oficiales, por cuanto respetan las tradiciones y la ley sin ofensa de nadie, el presidente de la República, en acuerdo de ministros decreta:

Artículo 1°. En las fiestas oficiales o públicas, así como en los colegios y escuelas del Estado, sólo se cantarán la primera y la última cuarteta y el coro de la Canción Nacional sancionada por la Asamblea General el 11 de mayo de 1813."<sup>3</sup>

The cut of anthem also happens when certain stanza is dedicated to problematic figures. The original version of Mexican anthem "Mexicanos al grito de guerra" has 10 stanzas, and the fourth stanza is dedicated to General Santa Anna ("Del guerrero inmortal de Zempoala te defiende la espada terrible") while the seventh, to Iturbide ("de Iturbidela sacra bandera, mexicanos, valientes saguid"). They were abandoned when the two figures were no longer seen as the national idles. In *El himno nacional mexicano: su origen, historia y significado* published in 1961, these two stanzas are not discussed at all. Another case is the Chilean anthem, in which the third stanza begins with: "Vuestros nombres, valientes soldados/ que habéis sido de Chile el sostén." Though during long time this stanza had not been sung, Pinochet restored it as it eulogizes the army. President Patricio Aylwin recovered the liberal tradition of only singing the chorus and fifth stanza; however, many Pinochet's supports still sing the third stanza to show loyalty to military dictatorship<sup>4</sup>.

Many Spanish American countries had tried more one anthem before the current one is fixed (such as Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru). The literary quality (such as the harmony between lyrics and music) is one of the reasons for "looking for a new anthem". Mexico, for example, had various anthems before "Mexicanos al grito de Guerra". In 1848, the famous Jew-Austrian pianist Henri Herz arrived in Mexico City and recommend that the country should have a national anthem. He composed the music while a junta was established to choose the best lyric. However, to his disappointment, the new anthem was not accepted "a causa de que ignorando completamente el autor el idioma castellano, no supo acomodar su música a los versos que le dieron y estropeo lastimosamente la prosodia"<sup>5</sup>; also this one is "más extenso de lo que requiere un canto popular que debe ser sencillo y fácil". The same happened to the third version of Costa Rican anthem (1888) written by the Spanish pedagogy Juan Fernandez Ferraz, whose beautiful composition reveals an ascendancy over the population and does not accord with the music. Also, Torrescano's attempt for a Mexican anthem in 1821 ("A las armas, valientes indianos")

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<sup>3</sup> Gabriel Monserrat: *El poema del himno nacional argentino* (Librería del Colegio, 1932, Buenos Aires), p.524

<sup>4</sup> *Varios ministros de Bachelet acuden a un homenaje al ideólogo de Pinochet* (El Mundo International, 09-11-2008) <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2008/11/09/internacional/1226254625.html>

<sup>5</sup> Jesús C. Romero: *Verdadera historia del himno nacional mexicano* (Consejo consultivo de la rotonda de los hombres libres, Ciudad de México, 1987), p.27

failed because “no tenía elevación poética ni la amplitud de visión nacional necesarias para perpetuarse en el alma mexicana”<sup>6</sup>.

The most radical change, or, replacing the old anthem with a new one, often takes place in the incipient period of new republics, especially when the political condition in the country is unstable. The declining of certain collective memory, the personal ambition of being remembered by history and the political chaos are common factors that lead to the substitution of national anthems. The current Nicaraguan anthem was written in 1918 when the American military intervention and civil armed conflicts ended, and the new anthem was received for its emphasis on “trabajo” and “paz”. “Personal ambition” refers to the case of Mexico, according to Jesús Romero, “El sonadísimo fracaso de Herz... alentó a los aduladores de cada general que ocupaba la presidencia de la república, para dedicarle un himno nacional, con la esperanza de que el suyo cobrara arraigo nacional, como si cada uno de esos generales, por grande que fuera, pudiese personificar a la patria”<sup>7</sup>. Even the “Mexicanos al grito de guerra” was disliked during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Santa Anna felt very disappointed since the anthem did not reach his expectation of “personificar a la patria”; while the liberals claimed that “Guerrero de Zempoala” refers to Santa Anna who was supported by the conservatives. In this case one can see how political elites fight for the discourse; and how this fugacious effort is forgotten by the public.

In general, from the Hispanic American anthems’ case, one can see the motive for changing the anthems include: the negotiation of the national identity (for example, Mexicans do not want to be “people of Santa Anna”; or the Argentines no longer want to live for fighting against Spaniards), the fight for discourse of the powerful, and the transformation of the mainstream values/discourse in the society (from Latin American unity to “modernization”). As discussed before, these anthems on the one hand were claimed to represent the whole population; on the other hand, those marginalized, silenced and oppressed groups, such as indigenous, are not so involved into a “national life”. The anthems created by creoles, or, political elites are fairly distanced to them, as it does not tell their “collective memory”. They may not recognize that Latin America is the land of Columbus. Generally speaking, the discourse in the Hispanic American national anthems became more inclusive. The first evidence is the abridging of Anti-Spanish content. The current version of the anthems focuses more on the “passion and pride for the country”, instead of propagating the glory of certain groups. The effort of “being more inclusive” still

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<sup>6</sup> El *himno nacional mexicano: su origen, historia y significado* (Fernández editores, s.a. 1961, Ciudad de México), p.5

<sup>7</sup> Jesús C. Romero: *Verdadera historia del himno nacional mexicano* (Consejo consultivo de la rotonda de los hombres libres, Ciudad de México, 1987), p.31

continues, but not necessarily by touching the lyrics. Translation to the indigenous languages has become a popular mean with such objective. Anthems such as the Argentine, Mexican, Paraguayan and Ecuadorian etc. have their versions of indigenous languages. On one hand, this demonstrates at least a gesture of respect the “minorities” and including these groups into the public life; on the other hand, it is contradictory since the content and the “history” does not belong to these groups. They are still singing “others’ history”.

### **Conclusion:**

Hispanic American anthems share many similarities, due to the common history of being colonized for three centuries by Spanish Monarchy. Therefore, they present a common collective memory of the whole region: from the “discovery’ of the ‘New Continent’”, to the Spanish oppression and to the heroic war of independence. The Creoles took power after the war, became the protagonists of the country, and rewrite the history of “patria”. Common topics of these new anthems include the national history, the great landscape of the country and the values as heritage of the fight for independence (God, honor, glory, patriotism and unity etc.). However, like other national anthems in the world, the Spanish American ones are also products of complicated power structure in which the political elites monopolize the discourse and intend to instill their collective memory into the minds of the whole population. For example, the war of independence is interpreted as fight against Monarchy, and the national ideal is to be a Europeanized “civilized” country. The power structure behind the anthems leads to their transformation. Most Hispanic American national anthems experience three types of the transformation: from re-interpretation, modification (abridging), to the replacement. In this dynamics, the national identity is negotiated by the political elites and the population who has access to the national discourse, and the general trend is that national anthems are more inclusive. Social changes also can be observed from this transformation: anti-Spanish sentiment disappears; bloody memory of the war declines; work, peace and progress become the new core values. Recently many Hispanic American anthems are translated to indigenous languages, as an effort to include these marginalized groups to the mainstream, “national discourse”. However, this is paradoxical as the collective memory contained in these anthems is not theirs.

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