

Arrogance and squalor? *Lima's Elite*

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Peru has always attracted the curiosity of foreigners. And it could not be otherwise, given its remoteness from the Old World and the news that it was the cradle of exotic and refined civilizations that flourished autonomously, with no apparent contact with those Europeans had known. The fame of the riches that filled Europe after Peru's discovery and conquest in the sixteenth century had certainly awakened an even greater curiosity. The booty of Inca Atahualpa, the intricate pre-Hispanic state system, the splendor of its constructions, and the rich gold and silver mines that began to be exploited soon after the arrival of the Spaniards contributed towards building the reputation of a country of inexhaustible wealth. That is when the expression "*vale un Peru*" (namely, "it is worth a Peru") was coined to refer to something extremely valuable or costly. However, the magnetism that it exerted on foreign scholars was attributed not only to its precious metals or the curiosities of its history, but also to the variety of its flora and fauna, to its diverse climates and starkly contrasting geography, and to the native populations of numerous latitudes – almost an absolute novelty for the few travelers who began to arrive in the country from the sixteenth until the nineteenth century. In sum, it was a fascinating subject of study for the most diversified interests and disciplines. And as Charles Minguet points out, some had perhaps an excessive expectation as to what they were to find in many aspects of our reality.¹

There were travelers who combined their ethnographic, zoological, botanical, climatologic, mineralogical and orographic interests with secret missions to obtain information on the existing political, social and economic order. This was the case of some of the eighteenth-century French and Spanish expeditionaries such as Frézier, Le Bachelier, La Condamine and – along

1. See Minguet, Charles. *Alejandro de Humboldt. Cartas americanas*. Caracas, Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1980.

with the last mentioned – the Spaniards Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa. This was also very likely the case of some of the travelers who arrived at the beginning of the nineteenth century not only from France, but also from England, the United States, Germany, and even Russia.²

A True Explorer

The scientific interest of Baron Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) was clearly genuine. Few visitors had his intelligence and exceptional education. His overwhelming curiosity was also uncommon. As a product of the rationalism of the Age of Enlightenment, he had created a deep impression on the great Goethe, who said in a letter to his friend Eckermann, cited by Teodoro Hampe, “his knowledge and living wisdom are unequalled.” However, his knowledge was fundamentally of a scientific nature, derived from the observation of natural phenomena, and the rigorous analysis and interpretation of the experience accumulated by him and by the great scholars of Western Civilization who preceded him.³

Humboldt’s journey to Spanish America, as well as the publication of these observations in several detailed works and the compilation of the majority of his treatises in 30 volumes entitled (in French) *Voyage aux régions équinoxiales du Nouveau Continent fait en 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803 et 1804, par Alexander de Humboldt et Aimé Bonpland* are a consequence of that same curiosity. This rigorous work established his reputation as one of the great European scientists of his time. Oddly enough, the journey that as we know lasted from 1799 to 1804 was begun in the frigate Pizarro, a name that should have perhaps motivated a more prolonged stay and further studies than the circumstances (or Humboldt’s own immediate purposes) allowed him to make in the lands discovered by the famed Spanish conquistador.⁴

Humboldt obtained the necessary permission from the indolent King Charles (Carlos) IV, who undoubtedly was more concerned with the events that were throwing Europe into confusion since the French Revolution than with the eagerness of this young German researcher, who had been preceded

2. For the voyagers who traveled to Peru from the XVI through the XX centuries see Núñez, Estuardo. *Viajes y viajeros extranjeros por el Perú*. Lima, P.L. Villanueva, 1989.

3. Cited by Hampe Martínez, Teodoro in “Humboldt y sus contactos latinoamericanos durante el proceso de la Independencia”. Presentation in the Congress “Humboldt y la América Ilustrada”. Lima, Instituto Riva Agüero-Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, November of 2002. Hampe Martínez is also the author of “El virreinato del Perú en los ojos de Humboldt (1802): Una visión crítica de la realidad social,” in *Iberoamerikanisches Archiv. Zeitschrift für Sozialwissenschaft und Geschichte*, vol. 26, Nº 1-2. Berlin, 2000, pp. 191-208.

4. Humboldt, Alexander von. *Voyage aux régions équinoxiales du Nouveau Continent fait en 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803 et 1804, par Alexander de Humboldt et Aimé Bonpland*. 6 parts, 30 volumes. Paris, 1807-1839.

by many others in his projected voyage to the Spanish King's domains. He was going to be accompanied by his friend Aimé Bonpland, a French physician and botanist, who would frequently act as the draftsman of the expedition. Although his basic concern was zoology, geology, climatology, astronomy and botany, both researchers could not but be impressed by the ethnological and social reality of the marginalized and oppressed groups, and also by the growing tension felt everywhere. This was true with respect to both the European and the mixed or indigenous population due to the impositions of the colonial system, which apparently had become more rigid as a consequence of Bourbon reformism.⁵

It is not my intent here to discuss the experiences of these scientists as they traveled through Havana, Caracas, Santa Fe, Popayán, Quito or Mexico, with the exception of references made by Humboldt himself to compare them with the social, economic and political reality of Peru, and often to the latter's disadvantage. One thing is certain: he scarcely dedicated four months to this country and somewhat more than two to Lima, the capital of the viceroyalty. Just considering the time he later spent in Mexico, the comparison is unfavorable to Peru. Here, Humboldt and Bonpland only traveled along part of the coast, that is, from the north to the center, and also only through a portion of the highlands – in the north – barely touching the banks of the Marañón river and the mountain borderland. They did not travel along the central highlands, or the southern coast, or through the Andean south (including Arequipa, Cuzco and Puno). What most influenced Humboldt's perception of the divorce between the capital and the interior of Peru was not only the geographical location of Lima on the other side of the Andes, facing the Pacific, or the way of life of its inhabitants, but, I would venture to affirm, the restrictive and relatively limited time he spent in Peru.⁶

It is an undisputed fact that the location of the other capitals visited by Humboldt and Bonpland, in relation to the size of their respective countries, allowed them to be in greater contact with their entire territories. In the case of Mexico, the capital of New Spain occupied a central position in that viceroyalty, as had the old Tenochtitlán, the center of Aztec power at the arrival of the Spaniards. Not having visited Cuzco and other regions of the interior of Peru, Humboldt therefore could only have a biased and incomplete vision

5. *Ibid.* For Spanish Bourbon Reformism see Fisher, John R. *Government and Society in Colonial Peru. The Intendant System 1784-1814*. London, Athlone Press, 1970; Fisher, John R., Allan J. Kuethe and Anthony McFarlane. *Reform and Insurrection in Bourbon New Granada and Peru*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1990; and O'Phelan Godoy, Scarlett *Un siglo de rebeliones anticoloniales: Perú y Bolivia 1700-1783*. Cuzco, Centro de Estudios Rurales Andinos "Bartolomé de las Casas", 1988 (among the best reputed treatises on the subject).

6. Núñez, Estuardo y Georg Petersen. *Alexander von Humboldt en el Perú. Diario de viaje y otros escritos*. Lima, Fondo Editorial del Banco Central de Reserva del Perú, 2002.

of the Peruvian geography and other physical realities, and of the character of its inhabitants and the relation of Lima's population (which I shall call the "Limeneans") with the viceroyalty in general.⁷

Humboldt's Informers in the 'City of the Kings'

Let us now see what types of inhabitants of Lima did Humboldt meet that contributed directly to his perception of the Peruvian capital's reality. Provided with the recommendations given to him by the Viceroy of Nueva Granada, don Pedro Mendinueta, and by the Governor of Jaén de Bracamoros, the cultivated don Ignacio Checa y Barba (to whom Humboldt had written a letter on January 18, 1803, containing some of his most acute and acid expressions about Lima), the German researcher, and Bonpland as well as the Quito aristocrat Carlos Montúfar who was accompanying them, were able to meet some of the most important figures of Lima, the City of the Kings.⁸

High government officials

Most prominent among them was, without a doubt, the Viceroy Gabriel de Avilés y del Fierro, a peninsular-born Spaniard (as was the norm for all the viceroys of Peru). He was the second son of the first Marquis of Avilés, and like his father, had pursued a military career. Soon after arriving in Peru early in 1780, as a cavalry colonel, to help organize the disciplined militias of the Viceroyalty, he participated in the expedition to repress the Túpac Amaru movement in the Cuzco region and the Altiplano. Upon his promotion to brigadier, he was appointed general sub-inspector of the vice-regal troops and governor of the city and prison of Callao. Later when promoted to field marshal, and having inherited the title of Marquis, he was made Captain General of the Kingdom of Chile, and also President of the Royal Academy of Santiago (taking the place of Ambrosio O'Higgins, Marquis of Osorno that had come to Peru as Viceroy in 1796). In 1799, he became Viceroy of Río de la Plata (or Buenos Aires) until his appointment as Viceroy of Peru at the death of O'Higgins. He arrived at the Peruvian capital on November 6, 1801.⁹

Avilés had, in fact, become the most important authority of the country only eight months before the arrival of Humboldt in Peru. Despite having married the Peruvian-born doña Mercedes del Risco y Ciudad, widow in first

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., especially pp. 198-200 (for Humboldt's letter to the Viceroy of Nueva Granada, don Pedro de Mendinueta, on November 7 of 1802) and pp. 214-215 (for Humboldt's letter to don Ignacio Checa y Barba, Governor of Jaén de Bracamoros, on January 18 of 1803). Most of Humboldt's acquaintances in Lima are mentioned by Miro-Quesada Sosa, Aurelio. "Amistades de Humboldt en Lima" in *Veinte temas peruanos*, pp. 251-268. Lima, P.L. Villanueva, 1993.

9. Milla Batres, Carlos (ed.). *Diccionario Histórico y Biográfico del Perú. Siglos XV-XX*. Vol. I (A-B), pp. 321-322. Lima, Editorial Milla Batres, 1986.

marriage of the Marquis of Santa Rosa, his was the view of a peninsular Spanish officer. Due to his position and the participation he had had in the repression of the great Andean rebellion of the 1780s he had little tolerance towards the aspirations and idiosyncrasies of the inhabitants under his rule. If Humboldt heard anything from the Viceroy about the nature of Peruvians in their mixed composition, it must not have been a favorable observation – although, I must admit, this is a speculative remark that I relate directly to the investiture of Avilés and the harshness he showed throughout all his tenure.¹⁰

The next character in rank that Humboldt and Bonpland met while in Peru was don Manuel Antonio de Arredondo y Pelegrín, Marquis of San Juan Nepomuceno and Knight of the Order of Charles III. Of Spanish origin like Avilés – from Asturias in this case – he also participated in the repression of the southern Andean uprising, and took charge of the process against Túpac Amaru's relatives. Arredondo was made Regent of the Royal Audiencia of Lima (highest court of justice) since 1786, and was designated honorary Minister of the Council of Indies in 1794. He became President of the Audiencia and provisional Commander of the Viceroyalty from March to November 1801, in the period in between the death of O'Higgins and the arrival of Avilés, who was to become Viceroy. As well as the latter, Arredondo took no notice of the formal prohibitions, marrying a Peruvian-born lady. In his case, it was a recurrence, as he had earlier married doña Juana Josefa de Herce y Dulce, a lady from Ayacucho, widow of the second Marquis of Torre Hermosa, who had made her will in Cañete in 1779. He inherited from her large landed estates (among them, the haciendas of Cuiva, Montalbán and Ocucaje, South of Lima) that eventually came into the possession of a nephew, as he had no children. In 1804, he applied for an authorization to marry another Peruvian-born lady, doña Juana de Micheo y Jiménez de Lobatón (daughter of a Basque immigrant that had been a Knight of Santiago, she was related to the most distinguished local aristocracy and was the widow of the Regent of the Audiencia of Chile, don José de Rezabal y Ugarte), who died late that year before Arredondo had been granted the marriage license.¹¹

Other noblemen

Humboldt met and was in contact with some other titled persons in Lima. The first was his host, the Baron Timoteo (some called him *Thaddeus*) de Nordenflycht, who was almost a fellow countryman, and perhaps his best source of information in town, and who also had his own scientific interests. According to some, he was born in Latvia, and to others, in Sweden. He studied in Freiburg and arrived in Peru in 1790 to install a chemical laboratory in

10. Ibid.

11. Lohmann Villena, Guillermo. *Los Ministros de la Audiencia de Lima (1700-1821)*. Sevilla, 1974, pp. 6-8.

Lima, and contribute with his knowledge to reinvigorate the mining activity of the viceroyalty. Notwithstanding his little success in this field, he was a very respected man in the country (“an educated and exceptional character,” according to Humboldt himself).¹² He married doña Josefa Cortés y Azúa, born in Chile and sister of the naval officer don Eugenio Cortés y Azúa, heir of the Marquisate of La Cañada Hermosa de San Bartolomé. Apparently, Nordenflycht died in Madrid, in 1815, having left succession in Peru.¹³

Another nobleman with whom Humboldt was in contact was the Marquis of Medina, don Joaquín Valcarce, a peninsular-born Spaniard who had served in the Chilean army and in the Arauco frontier before coming to Peru in times of the Viceroy Amat. After becoming major sergeant of the disciplined regiment of dragons of Lima, he marched on Cuzco in 1780 with Avilés to fight against Túpac Amaru at the command of 2,310 men who formed the columns that encircled the rebellious Indian chief in Tungasuca and Sangarara. He was promoted to brigadier of the army in 1794, when he was given the title of Marquis of Medina. His last promotion was to the position of governor and president of the Audiencia of Chile, which he did not assume due to the prevailing climate of separatist unrest in the Chilean territory after 1810. He married a Peruvian-born lady, doña Josefa Remírez de Laredo y Encalada, a sister of the Count of San Javier and Casa Laredo, but had no descendants.¹⁴

Aside from the aforementioned European holders of nobility titles, there is no question that through them, and in an apparently more indirect manner, the German researcher met the Marquis of Montemira, don Pedro José de Zárate y Navia Bolaños, also Count of Valle Oselle and Knight of the Order of Santiago. He was one of the Peruvian-born nobles that enjoyed great prestige because of his ascendancy, and the position and functions he held under the Spanish system (he was Colonel of the regiment under which Valcarce served during the repression of the Túpac Amaru movement), and because of his marriage to doña Carmen Manrique de Lara y Carrillo de Albornoz, a daughter of the Marquises of Lara. However, Montemira’s was by no means one of Lima’s most important fortunes.¹⁵

12. See Milla Batres, Carlos (ed.). *Diccionario Histórico Biográfico del Perú. Siglos XV-XX*. Vol. VI (M-O), pp. 304-305. Lima, Editorial Milla Batres, 1986.

13. Rizo-Patron Boylan, Paul. *Linaje, dote y poder. La nobleza de Lima de 1700 a 1850*. Lima, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2000. The family connection with the Marquises de la Cañada Hermosa de San Bartolomé is mentioned in table 16 and in p. 255.

14. Miro-Quesada Sosa, Aurelio, op. cit., pp. 260-261. Valcarce’s biography can be found in Mendiburu, Manuel de. *Diccionario Histórico Biográfico del Perú*. Vol. 11, Lima, I.E. Palacios, 1931; pp. 150-151.

15. Montemira and his family are included in Rosas Siles, Alberto. “La nobleza titulada del Virreinato del Perú”, in *Revista del Instituto Peruano de Investigaciones Genealógicas*. Vol. 21. Lima, 1995, pp. 171-173.

Apparently, Humboldt also met the famous don José Baquijano y Carrillo de Córdoba, Count of Vistaflorida, a Limenean who had just arrived from Spain and had been entrusted with the criminal jurisdiction of the Audiencia of Lima on July 1, 1802. Although at a time he had been one of the wealthiest men of the viceroyalty, both he and the Marquis of Montealegre de Aulestia (don José Mariano Sánchez Boquete y Román de Aulestia) were known for having dilapidated their respective fortunes in their passion for gambling. Humboldt might have met Sánchez Boquete through his brother in law, the peninsular José de la Riva Agüero y Basso della Rovere, administrator of the tobacco revenues, and got from him and Baquijano the unfavorable impression caused by their gambling vice.¹⁶

Another compulsive gambler was presumably the Biscayan *Caballero* don Gabino Gaínza, a Knight of the Order of San Juan, and also a frequent acquaintance of the German scholar. It seems he married in Guayaquil doña Gregoria Rocafuerte (a sister of Vicente Rocafuerte, who later became President of Ecuador). Gaínza was progressively promoted in the military ranks until Abascal entrusted him with a mission to Chile, for which "he did not have the necessary intelligence."¹⁷ His proclivity to be extremely conciliating enraged the Viceroy, who had him brought back to Lima under arrest to face trial. Upon being released by a benevolent court in 1816, he returned to Spain and was finally appointed senior Political Chief in Guatemala in 1820. The German scientist makes mention of the Administrator of the Mining Court, the Spaniard don Isidro de Abarca y Gutiérrez Cossio, who at the end of the eighteenth century was the Count (consort) of San Isidro (husband of his Limenean relative doña Rosa Gutiérrez Cossio y Fernández de Celis). However, Abarca made his will in 1791, so we do not know for sure whether he was still alive in 1802 and was the same administrator that Humboldt met that year.¹⁸

Intellectuals and men of distinction

Among the people indirectly related to nobility titles whom Humboldt seems to have met was Manuel del Villar Martínez. He was a Madrid-born Knight of Charles III, who married doña Joaquina de Salazar y Gabiño, sister of the Countess of Monteblanco and Montemar.¹⁹ Another acquaintance was José

16. Puente Brunke, José de la. *José Baquijano y Carrillo*. Colección Forjadores del Perú. Vol.12. Lima, Editorial Brasa, 1995. Humboldt's acquaintance with de la Riva is mentioned by Núñez in Núñez, Estuardo and Georg Petersen, *op.cit.*, p. 251.

17. For Gabino Gaínza's biography see Mendiburu, Manuel, *op. cit.*, Vol. 5, pp. 316-321.

18. The Counts of San Isidro are treated by Rosas Siles, Alberto, *op. cit.*, pp. 451-456.

19. Swayne Y Mendoza, Guillermo. *Mis Antepasados*. Lima, Tipografía Peruana S.A., 1951, p. 539-540 (for the marriage of Manuel del Villar to doña Joaquina de Salazar y Gabiño, third daughter of the first Count of Monteblanco, and younger sister of the second Countess, who was the consort of the sixth Count of Montemar).

Gregorio Paredes (1778-1839) considered “one of Peru’s men of literature who deserve to be remembered for their integrity and moderation.” Born in Lima, he was the son of don Gregorio Andrés de Paredes y Geldres de Molleda, who in turn was brother and son of two of the Marquises of Salinas. José Gregorio Paredes was also a mathematician and physician, and later, a sympathizer with the cause of Independence. During the Republic he assumed responsibilities of great importance until his death after the fall of the Peruvian-Bolivian Confederation.²⁰ Another gentleman with aristocratic connections was the functionary in charge of weighing silver at the Lima Mint, don Santiago de Urquiza, who Aurelio Miró Quesada identifies as the “Urquiza” mentioned by Humboldt. He was a mathematician and university examiner alongside José Gregorio Paredes. Don Santiago – also according to the same source – would have been a son of the Judge don Gaspar de Urquiza Ibañez, cousin of the Marquises of Corpa.²¹

Hipólito Unanue (1755-1833) was the most prominent among the intellectuals of Lima that Humboldt visited and consulted. Of middle class origin, Unanue was born in Arica, and was a graduate in medicine at the University of San Marcos. He was the tutor of the son of Agustín de Landaburu, builder and manager of Lima’s bull ring, and eventually inherited the properties of his ward. In 1792, Unanue succeeded in founding the anatomic amphitheater, and later, at his request, the royal school of medicine of San Fernando was created in 1808. He contributed to the organization of the *Sociedad de Amantes del País* (a patriotic circle founded in 1790), which participated in the publishing and temporary success of the *Mercurio Peruano*.²² Another of Humboldt’s acquaintances was Juan José de Aguirre, a Limenean who between 1786 and 1806 was the general physician of Peru, later succeeded by Unanue. Others were the Peruvian-born José Manuel Dávila (it is not clear from the study of Miró-Quesada whether he refers to the Limenean physician José Manuel Dávalos, or to the also Limenean physician José María Dávila) and Miguel Tafur, an examining judge of the Medical School from 1801 to 1804 and later General Physician of the army and congressman before his death in 1825. Also among that group of intellectuals was the Spaniard Juan Tafalla, a botanist of the King who had arrived in Lima to found the botanic garden of the city.²³

20. Mendiburu, Manuel, op. cit., Vol. 8, p. 342, who includes the remark on Paredes’ “integrity and moderation”.

21. Miró-Quesada Sosa, Aurelio, op. cit., pp. 262-265. For the Judge Gaspar de Urquiza, see Lohmann Villena, Guillermo, op. cit. p. 137. For the Marquises de Corpa and their connections, see Rizo-Patrón Boylan, Paul, op. cit., pp. 155-261.

22. Miró-Quesada Sosa, Aurelio, op. cit., pp. 261-262. The *Sociedad de Amantes del País* has been studied by Walker, Charles. “The Patriotic Society,” in *The Americas*, 55:2, October 1998, pp. 287-290.

Naval and other officers

Humboldt met several naval officers in Lima and Callao. In the first place, Tomás de Ugarte y Liaño, a Spaniard who arrived as brigadier of the Royal Navy (1799) to design the ports of the South Sea, from Chiloé to the north coast of the Province of Veraguas. He was in charge of the creation of the war and navy audit, the majority of department orders, secretariats, board of naval stations, etc., throughout all that extension of the coast. In 1802, he was the first commander of the naval station of Callao, and in 1803, he became chief of the Spanish naval fleet. He returned to Spain the following year. Ugarte was accompanied in his functions by the Spaniards José Ignacio de Colmenares and Antonio Cuartara, who also came into contact with Humboldt, as well as the naval lieutenant José de Moraleda, who had arrived with those Spanish naval officers from Cadiz in 1801. Moraleda was later appointed Director of the Nautical School, participating some time later in the correction of the maps of several Peruvian highland provinces (Huamalés, Tarma, Jauja, Canta, Huarochirí and Chancay). Other acquaintances made by Humboldt include Pedro Dionisio de Gálvez, a senior accountant of the Audit Office, and businessmen such as Matías Larreta, "an able and educated" member of the *Sociedad de Amantes del País*, both of whom were Spaniards.²⁴

Some of the clergymen seen by Humboldt

The German explorer came into almost immediate contact with several members of religious orders, because of their intellectual renown and local influence. The most important was the priest of the order of the Jerónimos, don Diego Cisneros, who before coming to Peru around 1778 had been confessor to doña María Luisa de Parma, then Princess of Asturias (later Queen consort to King Charles IV of Spain). He built a house on Estanco Viejo Street, later called *Padre Jerónimo*. According to Mendiburu he had a bookshop on Pozuelo Street. He was advisor to the Viceroy Teodoro de Croix and used his influence to have Toribio Rodríguez de Mendoza appointed Rector of the San Carlos School. As honorary member of the *Sociedad de Amantes del País*, he was associated with the above-mentioned José Baquijano and Hipólito Unánue, as well as with José María Egaña, the Public Prosecutor José de Arriz y Uceda, and others, all of whom Humboldt most likely met. Cisneros died in 1812, when Abascal was Viceroy of Peru.²⁵ Other clergymen that the German expeditionary visited were father Francisco Romero, a Spanish

23. All of these names are given by Miró-Quesada Sosa, Aurelio. *op. cit.*, p. 261. Most of their biographies can be found in Mendiburu, Manuel de, *op. cit.*: for Aguirre, see Vol. 1, p. 184; for Tafur, Vol. 10, p. 276; and for Tafalla, also Vol. 10, p. 276.

24. Núñez, Estuardo y Georg Petersen, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-243. Moraleda has deserved a biographical entry in Mendiburu, Manuel de, *op. cit.*, Vol. 8, p. 6, as well as Larreta, in Vol. 6, p. 409.

priest of the order of the Agonizers, who held the prime mathematics chair during those years, and was also a distinguished cosmographer; and father Narciso Girbal y Barceló, a Gerona-born priest of the Santa Rosa de Ocopa *Propaganda Fide* School, and parish priest of Cumbaza. He was known for his outstanding missionary zeal and his journeys through the Marañón and Ucayali rivers, where he came into contact with several ethnic groups in the jungle. He returned to Spain, where he died in 1827.²⁶

Lack of concern in the fate of fellowmen? Absence of fortunes?

With the possible omission of a few others, the above mentioned were the persons who opened possibilities for Humboldt and Bonpland in the local society, but at the same time they may have instilled their own prejudices in them. Without counting the consorts and in-law relations, the above-mentioned individuals include 18 Europeans and 8 or 9 Peruvian-born persons. It is evident that such Europeans would have felt closer to London than to the interior of the country – in Humboldt's own words, “Lima is more separate from Peru than from London.”²⁷ It is also understandable that given the geographic location of the City of the Kings, many local intellectuals had the same feeling, considering that the sources of knowledge were mostly in books coming from Europe rather than from such rugged and forbidding territory as that of Peru. If Humboldt and his companions had traveled along the center and south of the country, especially Cuzco, they might have had an entirely different impression.

With respect to the state of the local fortunes, which in the German scientist's view were depressed as compared with those in Cuba, Venezuela, and especially Mexico (“only in Mexico can we speak of millionaires”), it is true – as is maintained by many – that the viceroyalty of Peru was no longer enjoying its former prosperity, when most of the precious metal sent to Europe came from its territories, and when it had a monopoly control over the Spanish South America. The administrative space had been cut down, first in 1739, creating the viceroyalty of Nueva Granada, and then in 1776, creating the viceroyalty of Río de la Plata. New ports started to compete with the importance of Callao and Lima. Nevertheless, it is also true, that the mer-

25. For Cisneros, see Mendiburu, Manuel de, op. cit., Vol. 4, pp. 159-166. José Fernando de Abascal y Sousa was Viceroy of Peru from 1806 to 1816.

26. These names are given by Núñez in Núñez, Estuardo and Georg Petersen, op. cit., pp. 250-252. Mendiburu also offers biographical notes on Romero (Vol. 9, p. 476) and Girbal (Vol.6, pp. 49-53).

27. This lapidating expression, written by Humboldt in a letter to don Ignacio Checa, the Governor of Jaén de Bracamoros, can be found in Núñez, Estuardo and Georg Petersen, op. cit., p. 215.

chants of Lima had been able to adapt themselves to the new circumstances, and overcome such drawbacks, as Marcel Haitin, Alberto Flores-Galindo and Cristina Mazzeo indicate.²⁸ Today we have evidence of some millionaire fortunes in Peru at the end of the eighteenth century up to 1820 decade. The Marquises de Corpa of the de la Puente family and their heirs, the Sancho-Dávilas, the Carrillo de Albornoz, and possibly the Lavalles were owners of considerable assets and credits. The merchants Abadía and Arizmendi were also reputed millionaires,²⁹ while Felipe Urbano de Colmenares, Marquis of Zelada de la Fuente, the Tagle and the Ortiz de Foronda families, and some others, had properties worth several hundred thousand (if not over a million) pesos.³⁰

In an article in which I try to offer an image somewhat different from the presumed poverty of the Peruvians at the end of the vice-regal period, my attention is directed to the extensive entail system that affected Peruvian landed estates and large farms, especially the ones in the surroundings of Lima, which has blurred the appraisal of many fortunes. This is not only an expression of lack of commercial or financial dynamism, but also of deep-rooted customs of aristocratic origin, just as it may be said today without any doubt that many more holders of nobility titles and of noble knighthood orders existed in Peru than in other parts of the Spanish empire (except for peninsular Spain itself). The stagnation or immobility of many fortunes does not mean that they did not exist. I must admit, however, that the lack of liquidity resulting from the well-rooted entail system might have contributed to making fortunes less apparent than in other places. In this sense, Humboldt may have been right.³¹

Final balance

The impression I get from the circle of acquaintances that Humboldt had in Lima – aside from officers of the stature of Avilés or Arredondo (both peninsular-born Spaniards) or aristocrats, such as Valcarce (the Marquis de Med-

28. See Haitin, Marcel. *Late Colonial Lima. Economy and Society in an Era of Reforms and Revolution*. Berkeley, University of California, 1983; Flores Galindo, Alberto. *Aristocracia y Plebe. Lima, 1760-1830*. Lima, Mosca Azul, 1984; and Mazzeo, Cristina Ana. *El comercio libre en el Perú. Las estrategias de un comerciante criollo: don José Antonio de Lavalle y Cortés, 1777-1815*. Lima, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1994.

29. The Marquises de Corpa and the Sancho-Dávilas are included in Rizo-Patron Boylan, Paul, op. cit., pp. 155-261, while the Carrillo de Albornoz family is in pp. 76-78. The Lavalles, as well as the merchants Abadía and Arizmendi, are mentioned as millionaires by Anna, Timothy E. *The Fall of the Royal Government in Peru*. Lincoln, Nebraska, University of Nebraska, 1979; p. 10.

30. For the Colmenares, Tagle and Ortiz de Foronda Rizo-Patron Boylan, Paul. "La aristocracia al final de una era. Precisiones conceptuales y estimaciones patrimoniales", in *Histórica*, Vol. XXII, # 2, 1998, pp. 289-308.

31. *Ibid.*

ina) and the Peruvian-born Zárate (Marquis de Montemira) and Baquijano (Count of Vistaflorida) – is that the German scientist did not have sufficient contacts with most of the major nobles or merchants of the city. Paredes and Urquiza, outstanding intellectuals, belonged to secondary and impoverished branches of noble lineages. Perhaps, they voiced their resentment to Humboldt, in regards to the succession laws and customs that had relegated their respective branches. The German scientist may have assumed that their cases reflected a more general reality, supposition that may have contributed to his affirmation about family disputes.

In his accounts about Lima, we only find mention of three or four titles out of nearly 60 that existed in the viceroyalty at the end of the Spanish domain.³² When Humboldt visited Peru between August and December 1802, many of the titled nobles could have been at their landed estates in the valleys around Lima (e.g. the Sancho-Dávilas, in Carabayllo; or the Carrillo de Albornoz, in Chíncha) or in the interior of the country. Otherwise, they were simply living “indoors” – as many high-class Limeneans still do today, in the sense of only admitting into their circle whom they deem best. Only then do they allow foreigners to perceive a refined and sometimes lavish reality, not visible to those just passing by (or stopping for a short time) in a city so full of contrasts like Lima.

In the same way, it is possible that the sentiment referred by Humboldt as “cold patriotism” could not be expressed otherwise, if – as has been seen- the main persons he met were technically “foreigners” (Europeans or peninsular Spaniards). On the other hand, even the members of the *Sociedad de Amantes del País*, such as Unanue or José de Arriz, and young patriots, like José Gregorio Paredes, could not demonstrate any form of patriotism that might be “scented” as separatist or revolutionary at the very core of the vice-regal power and under the authoritarian rule of Viceroy de Avilés, who not long before had been a fierce repressor of the Túpac Amaru movement. The mere fact of being members of circles like the *Sociedad de Amantes del País* speaks for their “patriotism,” reason why Humboldt’s statements denying such a possibility seem prejudicial and contradictory.³³

No matter how brilliant the observations of the German scientist in the field of natural phenomena, it seems evident that, despite the elements of truth they contained, his impressions on the human and social field were incomplete and tainted with subjectivity. On one hand, we have to consider a natural disenchantment regarding the legendary versions of Peru’s riches and

32. For nobility titles in Peru, see Rosas Siles, Alberto, op. cit.; Atienza, Julio de. *Títulos nobiliarios hispanoamericanos*; Madrid, Aguilar, 1947; and Rizo-Patron Boylan, Paul. *Linaje, dote y poder...*

33. Núñez, Estuardo and Georg Petersen, op. cit., p. 215, for Humboldt’s expression on the seemingly lack of patriotism of Peruvians. For the *Sociedad de Amantes del País* (or Patriotic Society, as the author calls it), see Walker, Charles, op. cit.

splendor, so widespread in Europe. Reality was unable to compete with such fables. The same can be said of other travelers who visited Lima a few years later, such as the Russian Admiral Vasilii Golovnin, the French Comte Camille de Roquefeuil, among others, even though some continued praising Lima's grandeur.³⁴ On the other hand, there is the biased influence of his European contacts in Lima. Additionally, Humboldt must have been negatively affected by the fogginess of Peru's central coast and its uncertain climate through most of the year. His short stay in the capital, which did not allow him to meet other noblemen and merchants of fortune or to understand the extensive entail system, no doubt contributed towards his disdainful assessment of Lima. Finally, the absence of some romantic enthusiasm, which he did enjoy elsewhere in the Americas, might have conditioned his perceptions. According to Fanny Calderón de la Barca, after meeting in Mexico the young María Ignacia Rodríguez y Osorio Barba (1778-1851), called *la Güera* (the blond one), Humboldt fell under the fascination of this Latin American version of Madame de Staël, as "neither mines nor mountains, geography nor geology, petrified shells nor *alpenkalkstein*, had occupied him to the exclusion of a slight stratum of flirtation." Madame Calderón de la Barca concludes that *en face* such a beauty as *la Güera*'s "it is comforting to realize that even the great Humboldt nods [is seduced]."³⁵ Unfortunately, in Peru he did not have the time nor luck with equivalent sirens.

34. Abridged accounts of these and other voyagers can be seen in Núñez, Estuardo. *Viajes y viajeros...*

35. Calderon de la Barca, Madame (Fanny) (Introduction by Sir Nicolas Cheetham). *Life in México*. London, Century, 1987, p. 88.

