

THE FLAG HERITAGE FOUNDATION MONOGRAPH AND TRANSLATION SERIES  
PUBLICATION NO. 5

# FLAGS AND EMBLEMS OF COLOMBIA

by Pedro Julio Dousdebés



Translated by Michael F. Hammer



DANVERS, MASSACHUSETTS  
2016

# PLATE I

## FLAGS OF COLOMBIAN DEPARTMENTS



CHART BY BLAS DELGADO (2001)  
Revised and updated by Rob Raeside

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**THE FLAG HERITAGE FOUNDATION  
MONOGRAPH AND TRANSLATION SERIES**

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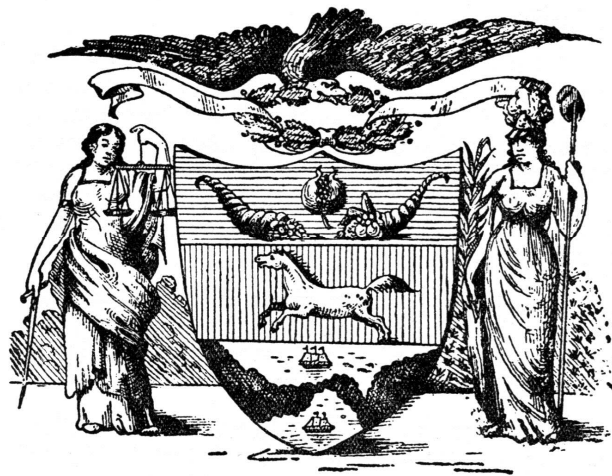
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Arms proposed for Colombia by Alejandro Vélez in 1833, but not adopted.

TARIFA REDUCIDA  
EN EL SERVICIO POSTAL  
INTERIOR  
REGISTRO No. 72

REPUBLICA DE COLOMBIA  
Bogotá, agosto de 1937

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Cover of *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades*, Volume 24, No. 274 (Bogotá, 1937) where Dousdebés' "Las Insignias de Colombia" was originally published. Image courtesy of the Whitney Smith Flag Research Center Collection at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

## **PREFACE**

**by David F. Phillips**

This work, the fifth publication in our Translation and Monograph Series, was originally written in Spanish by Brigadier General Pedro Julio Dousdebés Escallón (1883-1954). Dousdebés, a career army officer, published the work in the August 1937 issue of the *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* [Bulletin of History and Antiquities], the journal of the Academia Colombiana de Historia [Colombian Academy of History] in Bogotá. The Academy had been publishing the *Boletín* since 1902 and it is still publishing it today. As can be seen from Dousdebés' footnotes, the *Boletín* often published material on the historical flags and emblems of Colombia, and his work was an attempted synthesis of what was known at the time.

We selected it for translation because of its moderate length, comprehensive nature, vivid style, attractive color plates, and extensive quotations from primary sources, and because a copy was available in the Whitney Smith Flag Research Center Collection at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin. The Flag Heritage Foundation is grateful to the distinguished vexillologist Dr. Whitney Smith (1940-2016) for preserving this item, and to the Briscoe Center for making it available to us.

In particular we wish to thank Dr. Don Carleton, Director of the Briscoe Center, Margaret Schlankey, Head of Reference Services, Aryn Glazier, Photography Services Coordinator, and especially archivist Kate Wilson, who had special responsibility for the Whitney Smith Collection. Without their willing and expert help this translation could not have been realized. We are also grateful to the eminent vexillologist Gustavo Tracchia, who helped us decide on a text to translate. His commentary on Dousdebés' work appears on page 66.

Special thanks to Dr. Michael F. Hammer, Associate Professor of Spanish at San Francisco State University, whose skillful translation of Dousdebés' paper forms the core of this book, and to Dr. Kent Dickson, Associate Professor of Latin American Literature at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, for reviewing my historical introduction (any errors that remain are mine, not his). And special thanks also to the noted vexillologist Jaume Ollé Casals, whose expert illustrations appear with his kind permission on Plates V and VI. It should be emphasized that this is a translation and not an original work of scholarship, and no attempt has been made to update or correct Dousdebés' research beyond comments in the footnotes. All his color illustrations are reproduced on Plates II-IV. Images in the text are not from Dousdebés, and are identified in the Sources of the Illustrations beginning on page 69.<sup>1</sup>

Footnotes signed ED. were contributed by the Editor, those signed TR. were contributed by the Translator. Those without any signature, and plain citations at the beginning of signed footnotes, are by Dousdebés. His citations were usually incomplete, and they have been filled in as far as possible using modern bibliographic tools, especially Worldcat. Enhancement of citations has not been separately noted. Thanks to Jonathan Wheeler, reference librarian at the University of New Mexico Libraries' Center for Southwest Research, Dr. Kimberly G. Smith,

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<sup>1</sup> Many of the documents Dousdebés quotes, and other relevant ones, may be found in fuller form in Enrique Ortega Ricaurte, *Heráldica Nacional: Estudio Documental* [Heraldry of the Nation: A Documentary Study] (Bogotá, 1954).

Distinguished Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Arkansas, Tomás Rodríguez, Treasurer of the Sociedad Española de Vexilología [Spanish Vexillological Society], and Lt. Col. Dr. Željko Heimer, Armed Forces of Croatia, for help with particularly difficult references. Thanks to Brother William Short, OFM, for identifying a passage from Virgil. Thanks to Don Norris for the image of the coin on page 48, to Tom A. Tomonis of Banknotes.com for the image of the condor banknote on page 65, and to Jenn Bertani of WNET, New York, for help with Map IV. Fervent thanks as always to the San Francisco Public Library.

When translating or discussing blazon (the technical description of a coat of arms) I identify left and right from the standpoint of the viewer, and have abandoned the traditional but confusing convention that adopts the viewpoint of someone standing behind the shield or device and holding it. The historical sources spell Santa Fé [de Bogotá] both with and without the accent; for uniformity I have consistently I have left the accent out (likewise for Perú). Dousdebés inserts ellipses into his text in a very eccentric way, and I have regularized them without special comment.

Thanks to these scholars for their invaluable works: Jesús María Henao and Gerardo Arrubla, authors, and J. Fred Rippy, translator, for *History of Colombia*, (Chapel Hill NC, 1938); Mariano Velásquez de la Cadena for *New Pronouncing Dictionary of the Spanish and English Languages* (Chicago, 1948); Enrique Ortega Ricaurte for *Heráldica Nacional: Estudio Documental* (Bogotá, 1954); A. Curtis Wilgus for *Historical Atlas of Latin American History and Culture* (New York, 1969); Vicente de Cadenas y Vicent for *Diccionario Heráldico*, (Madrid, 4th ed. 1989); and Robert H. Davis for *Historical Dictionary of Colombia* (Metuchen NJ, 2d ed. 1993).

Particular thanks to two scholars for their encyclopedic works published on the Internet: Jaume Ollé Casals for his *Historic Flags*, whose index page appears at <http://tinyurl.com/olle-hist> (for more on him see page 68), and Dr. Hubert de Vries for *National Arms and Emblems Past and Present*, whose index page appears at <http://tinyurl.com/deVries-arms>. See the box on page 71 for more on these works. Thanks also to Rob Raeside for revising the chart on Plate I.

And thanks to the many other on-line resources without which large parts of the work supporting this book would not have been possible, including but not limited to Worldcat, Wikipedia and Spanish Wikipedia, Google Search and Google Images (English and Spanish), Google Translate, and Flags of the World ([www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags](http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags)). Thanks also to TinyURL, which allowed me to substitute manageable Internet addresses for unmanageable ones, and to the Harvard Law School Library for Perma.cc, which created the permanent links I used to archive Internet references.

Thanks especially to Debbie Waltmire of Specialty Graphics, our patient and resourceful printer, who made this book a reality. Thanks also to Will James, Alex Best and Kathy Forer for their help with the technical tasks of production. Extra thanks to Noah Phillips for rendering and formatting the four maps, and to Charles Whitmire for help with the color art. Special thanks to the Trustees of the Flag Heritage Foundation for making possible both this work and the series of which it is a part. And finally, thanks to Arianna L. Phillips for her support and understanding.

David F. Phillips,  
Series Editor  
December 2016

## **HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION**

**by David F. Phillips**

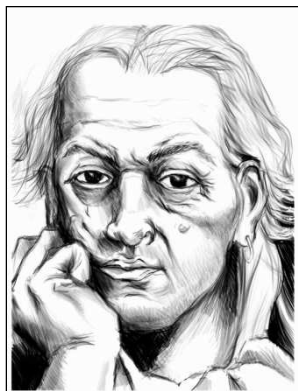
In 1494 Spain and Portugal decided to divide between themselves the territories just beginning to be discovered by European explorers in America, Africa and Asia. Building on earlier treaties and papal decrees, they agreed in the Treaty of Tordesillas that all the newly discovered territories in the New World (except part of what became Brazil) would be Spanish, while new lands in Africa, Asia, and the East Indies (except the later-discovered Philippine Islands) would be Portuguese. So at the start of the colonial period Spain was in theoretical possession of most of the Western Hemisphere.

At the beginning of this period there was little for Spain to govern beyond some landfalls and struggling settlements on Caribbean islands. But the sensational conquests of Hernán Cortés, who overthrew the Aztec Empire in Mexico, and somewhat less dramatic conquests elsewhere on the American mainland, greatly extended the area under Spanish administration. After some early experiments in colonial government, the Viceroyalty of New Spain was created in 1535 as an overarching governing structure for the new territories. It included Mexico and Central America, with parts of North America, the Caribbean islands, and some of the northern Caribbean shore of South America.

The colonial viceroyalty program was enlarged in 1540, when the Viceroyalty of Peru was created for South America to absorb the conquest of the Inca Empire by Francisco Pizarro. In 1717 a new Viceroyalty of New Granada was established between New Spain and Peru; its territory included what are now the modern republics of Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela. Panamá was added in 1739, and Venezuela was made into a subordinate Captaincy-General in 1777. Without detailing the frequent and sometimes bewildering fluctuations of Spanish colonial boundaries, it is sufficient for our purposes to state that by the time of independence, modern Colombia, Ecuador and Panamá were united in the Spanish Viceroyalty of New Granada, with neighboring Venezuela also included but administered separately. See Map I, page 13.

But time was running out for the Spanish Empire. The ideas of the Enlightenment, placing reason and liberty rather than tradition and hierarchy at the core of legitimacy, were beginning to threaten the intellectual and political foundations of monarchy and colonialism. The theory of social contract advanced by philosophers like John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, which derived authority from the consent of the governed, left colonial empires like those of England, Spain and Portugal very tenuously justified. The Dutch and the Swiss had already secured their independence from dynastic overlords. The American Revolution demonstrated to the world that even colonial subjects could rebel successfully and establish an independent nation based on Enlightenment principles. The French Revolution, beginning in 1789, undermined the legitimacy of the royalist order forever. The Haitian Revolution (independence proclaimed in 1803) offered two lessons: that given enough determination and the right conditions, even a small, poor colony could resist and defeat a mighty empire, and that a distant metropolis could not be relied on to protect a European population from indigenous revolt.

The educated classes in Spanish America were very familiar with these events and currents of thought. The key works of the emerging political theory were secretly circulating in the colonies despite Inquisition censorship. In Colombia, for example, as early as 1794 Antonio Nariño (1765-1824), later an important *independentista* military and political leader, obtained a copy of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* promulgated by the French revolutionary government, translated it into Spanish, published it on a private press and distributed it widely through underground channels.<sup>1</sup> The Empire was beginning to totter, but a revolutionary event was needed before it could fall.



MIRANDA

One man in particular recognized the pre-revolutionary situation in the Spanish Empire and tried hard to give it the necessary push. He was Francisco de Miranda (1750-1816), known in Latin American history as *The Precursor*.<sup>2</sup> Miranda, born in Caracas, began his career as a Spanish military officer, but traveled to the United States just as its government was being established in 1783, and then continued to Europe where he roamed for more than 20 years, meeting people, doing freelance diplomacy, avoiding Spanish capture, issuing elaborate plans for a post-colonial America (the word *Colombia* was his invention) and trying to gain political support (especially from Britain).<sup>3</sup> He didn't get any significant support, and an attempt in 1806 to conquer Venezuela with three ships and a small

---

<sup>1</sup> He was caught, arrested, and exiled, for circulating the *Rights of Man* and for possessing a huge library of forbidden books, but escaped and continued his revolutionary work. For an analysis of Nariño's library, see Thomas Blossom, "The Library of a Revolutionary Leader," Proceedings of the Arkansas Academy of Science 11:44-59 (Fayetteville, 1958), available at <http://tinyurl.com/gm4zmct>, archived at <https://perma.cc/2j77-6m3y>.

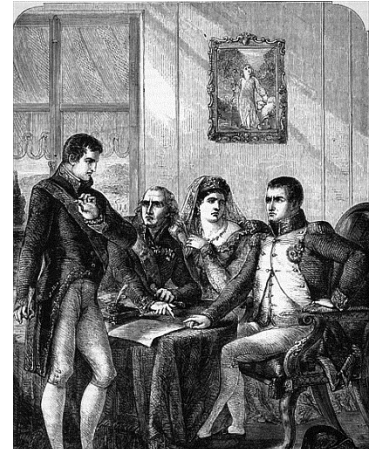
<sup>2</sup> He was the Precursor because he prepared the way for the Liberator, Simón Bolívar, who succeeded where Miranda had failed. This sobriquet for him echoes that given to John the Baptist, who came before Jesus to prepare *his* way. "He that cometh after me," said John, "is mightier than I." Matthew 3:11.

The portrait of Miranda is a study by an unknown artist, found on a particularly impenetrable Venezuelan government website that accepts no inquiries. But it is based on one of the most famous paintings in South America, "Miranda en la Carraca" (1896), by Arturo Michelena (1863-1898). Miranda was being held by the Spanish in the Arsenal of la Carraca near Cádiz when he died in 1816, at the age of 66. This painting, in the National Gallery of Art in Caracas, is a national icon in Venezuela, and Miranda's features as shown by Michelena are as well known there as those of the Statue of Liberty are to people in the United States. This touching and accomplished painting can be seen on Wikipedia at <http://tinyurl.com/opqzhdX>, archived at <https://perma.cc/sh8t-5gqx>.

<sup>3</sup> Miranda served in high military command during the French Revolution, and is the only American whose name is inscribed among the revolutionary heroes on the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

cadre of rough North American volunteers was quickly and decisively defeated.<sup>4</sup> He tried again later that year with the help of a small British squadron (Britain was then at war with Spain), but the time was not yet right.<sup>5</sup>

The time was suddenly made right. In 1808, after an uprising against him, King Charles IV of Spain abdicated in favor of his son, who became King Ferdinand VII. Charles had supported Napoleon in his war against Portugal (traditionally allied with Britain), but Napoleon was not confident of similar support from Ferdinand. He summoned Charles and Ferdinand to Bayonne, in France, where he compelled them both to abdicate the Spanish crown to him (see right). He then detained both former Spanish kings as prisoners in France and named his brother Joseph King of Spain.



THE ABDICATIONS OF BAYONNE

Resistance in Spain began almost at once and developed into the Peninsular War, which continued until 1814. Provisional governing councils, called *juntas*, constituted themselves in Spanish provinces, and eventually coalesced into a provisional national regency. Similar juntas were constituted in Spanish America. The theory behind these juntas, traceable back to medieval Spanish law, was not at first independence, but a temporary retroversion of authority to the people in the absence of the king, who (being a prisoner of the French) could not exercise his sovereignty.<sup>6</sup>

Although the vacuum left by Napoleon's hijacking of the Spanish throne provided the spark for the independence movement, it was not the sole or even the main cause of it. As in the United States, economic issues arising from colonial dependency were at least as important as Enlightenment ideas. These included royal monopolies, restrictions on trade to benefit the metropolis, growing concentration of political control in Spain despite colonial economic development, and steadily increasing taxation as Bourbon "reforms" aimed to make the empire profitable. In addition, the Spanish colonies suffered from a highly developed caste system (*casta*) that not only discriminated by race and color, but markedly favored people born in Spain

<sup>4</sup> It was on this expedition, on March 12, 1806, that he first raised the yellow-blue-red tricolor that later became the flag of Colombia, and of Venezuela and Ecuador too. See text, and note 88, on pages 36-37 below.

<sup>5</sup> Miranda returned to Venezuela in 1810 and led the fight to establish its First Republic. But in 1812, militarily defeated, he signed an armistice with the Spanish. Bolívar, who had been Miranda's subordinate in the Venezuelan campaign, arrested him for "treason" and turned him over to the Spanish, who kept him imprisoned for the rest of his life.

<sup>6</sup> The ultimate source of this doctrine can be traced to the medieval Spanish law code called *Las Siete Partidas* [the Seven Parts], compiled in the 13th century under the authority of King Alfonso X (the Wise) of Castile. An English translation of this massive work was published in five volumes by the University of Pennsylvania Press (Philadelphia, 2000) as *Las Siete Partidas*, translated by Samuel Parsons Scott, edited by Robert I. Burns.

(*peninsulares*) over the native-born whites (*criollos*) who formed the principal educated and commercial class. In 1781 a home-grown rebellion in New Granada, called the Revolt of the *Comuneros*, came near to succeeding before collapsing in disorganization.

In January 1810, after severe military reverses, the Supreme Central Junta in Spain, which had been created as an instrument of resistance to Napoleon, dissolved itself and was succeeded by a Regency Council. When news of this event arrived in South America, the Regency Council found little popular support or legitimacy. Local juntas were established, beginning with Cartagena in May; the establishment of the junta in Bogotá on July 20 is now commemorated as Colombian Independence Day. The Bogotá junta deposed, arrested, and deported the viceroy, and reorganized its province as an “independent” State of Cundinamarca, with Ferdinand VII as its king if only he would come there and reign over it in person.

Juntas were established elsewhere in the Spanish colonial empire, but nowhere more prolifically than in New Granada, where as many as thirty cities had their own juntas. Naturally there were rivalries among them, and they were understandably unwilling to subordinate their new-found local power to wider authority. This led to provinces such as Cartagena, Cauca, Antioquia, Socorro, and Cundinamarca (site of Bogotá) declaring themselves independent (or at least autonomous) states, and resisting consolidation, sometimes forcibly.<sup>7</sup> Map II on page 13 shows the provinces in this period. The time between the inauguration of the juntas in 1810 and the reconquest by Spain in 1816 was so marked by internal strife, sometimes nearly to the point of anarchy, as to be called in Colombian history *La Patria Boba* [Foolish Fatherland]. The fierce and self-defeating divisions of this period led to the failure of the first independence movement; similar tensions between centralizing and decentralizing factions contributed to the chronic civil wars that dominated Colombian history through most of the 19th century.

Cundinamarca called a convention in 1811 to establish the United Provinces of New Granada. Five provinces acceded, but Cundinamarca itself ended up rejecting the union. The Union was proclaimed in 1811 but succeeded only partially at first in uniting the provinces and juntas.<sup>8</sup> The success the United Provinces later had as a political entity was due largely to Simón Bolívar (1783-1830), the principal figure of South American independence, widely if perhaps inaccurately regarded as the founder of five countries (Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia).

Bolívar left South America after an unsuccessful attempt to establish a republic in Venezuela (1810-12), but returned (to Cartagena in the northwest of New Granada) at about the time in 1812 when the United Provinces federation was being formed. In a document called the Cartagena Manifesto, he attributed the failure of the Venezuelan republic to conflict among decentralized provinces. When he was given military leadership in the new federation, he tried to avoid a similar result by fighting to compel the adherence of recalcitrant provinces. After a successful campaign in New Granada he convinced the government of the United Provinces to

---

<sup>7</sup> Some of their flags figure in the following work. See Plate II, No. 2 for the flag of Cartagena and Plate II, No. 3 and Plate V, Nos. 13-14, for flags of Cundinamarca.

<sup>8</sup> The United Provinces used the flag of Cartagena.



allow him to cross into Venezuela (the so-called Admirable Campaign that ended victoriously in Caracas).

But once again events in Europe determined what happened in America. In 1814 Napoleon was defeated in Spain and Ferdinand VII was restored to the throne. Soon Spain was able to send a powerful military force under Colonel Pablo Morillo (1775-1837) to re-establish control. Morillo was successful, and by 1816 the independence of New Granada was at an end.

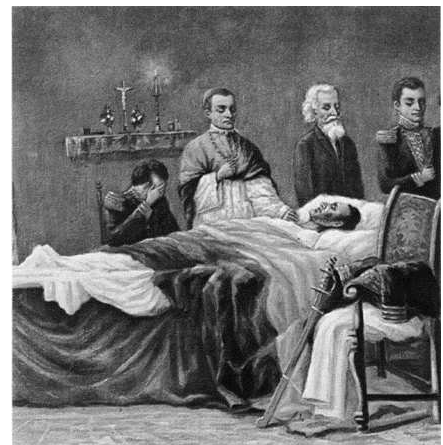


BOLÍVAR

But Bolívar was not finished. From his Caribbean exile Bolívar attacked the Spanish in Venezuela, and by 1819 controlled enough of it for the Congress of Angostura to declare a third Venezuelan Republic. From Venezuela he launched a dramatic campaign to recapture New Granada. Starting from the Apure River in the valley of the Orinoco, Bolívar made his way in the rainy season through to the *llanos* (plains) of Casanare in New Granada, over icy mountain passes as high as 13,000 feet, and down toward Bogotá. He succeeded in large part because his campaign was so daring and difficult that the Spanish did not expect it. The New Granada campaign ended in victory at the Battle of Boyacá on August 17, 1819.

After the conquest of New Granada Bolívar returned to Venezuela, where the Venezuelan Congress proclaimed a Republic of Colombia, under Bolívar's presidency, to include Venezuela, Cundinamarca (as New Granada, including Panamá, was renamed), and later Quito (modern Ecuador). See Map III on page 14. Afterwards this republic came to be known as *Gran Colombia* [Greater Colombia], to distinguish it from the Republic of Colombia inaugurated in 1886.

Bolívar died in 1830, and Gran Colombia did not long survive him.<sup>9</sup> Venezuela, New Granada, and Quito soon became separate nations, and parts of the federation were ceded to other countries (Brazil, Peru, and even a small slice to British Guiana). Panamá became independent under United States influence in 1903. Map IV on page 14 shows the disintegration of Gran Colombia. Colombian history resumed the dreary and debilitating practice of rebellions, *coups d'état*, and civil wars characteristic of the *Patria Boba* period. Apart from personal ambition, the principal issue in these bloody and largely fruitless episodes was the struggle between centralizing and federal (that is, state-based) factions. I mention them here mainly because Dousdebés places such emphasis on them,

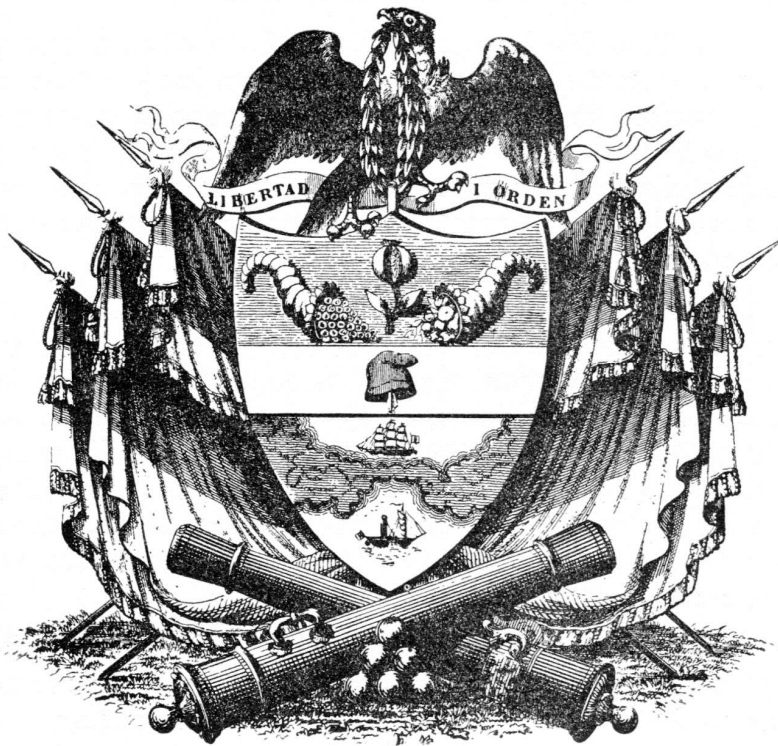


DEATH OF BOLÍVAR

<sup>9</sup> In the painting at right, by E. Yépez, Bolívar is shown with his famous yellow-blue-red banner covering him like a blanket.

reciting for almost every flag the battles and skirmishes in which it was (or may have been) carried.

In 1861 the decentralizing faction gained the upper hand and established what it called the United States of Colombia, symbolized on its flag by a constellation of eight (or sometimes nine) stars.<sup>10</sup> It was succeeded in 1886 by the modern Republic of Colombia; the troublesome states were definitively replaced by departments on the French model.<sup>11</sup> With some minor exceptions, Colombia's flags and emblems have remained more or less constant since then.



Arms of New Granada in 1854  
The cannons are the artist's elaboration.

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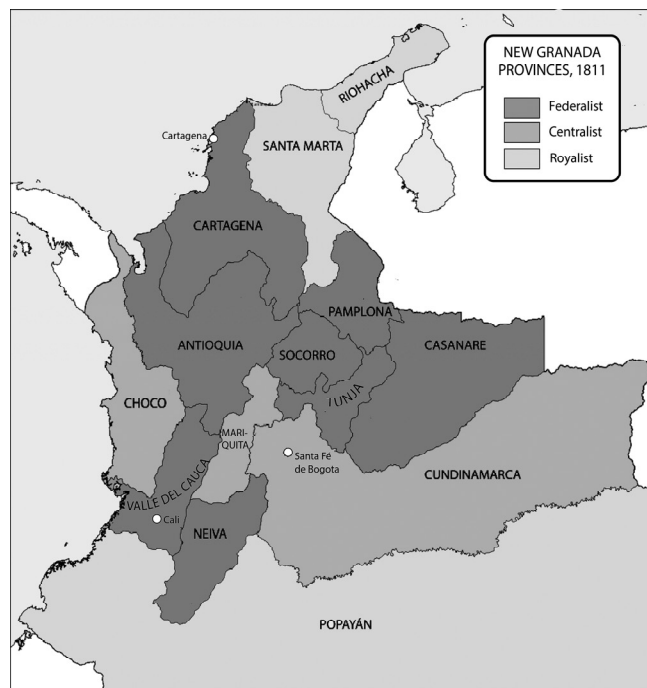
<sup>10</sup> The constellation appears in the flags on Plate VI, Nos. 24 and 25. A closer view of the constellation can be seen on the front cover of this book.

<sup>11</sup> The French departments were established at the time of the Revolution to replace the former feudal provinces, and to redirect civic identity toward a national center rather than regional ones.

## MAPS



**Map I: Spanish Colonial Empire in South America, 1800**



**Map II: Provinces of New Granada, 1811**



**Map III: Gran Colombia, 1830**



**Map IV: Dissolution of Gran Colombia, 1831-1907**

# FLAGS AND EMBLEMS OF COLOMBIA<sup>1</sup>

## A CRITICAL STUDY OF THEIR HISTORY AND EVOLUTION FROM THE CONQUEST TO THE PRESENT DAY

Our beloved country, from its discovery and conquest until the present day, has had a variety of names.<sup>2</sup>

- Lands of the Chibchas, the Guanes, the Caribs, the Pijaos, etc., until 1536.
- Dominion of the Conquistadors, from 1536 to 1549.
- Royal *Audiencia* of Santa Fe, from 1549 to 1564.<sup>3</sup>
- Presidency of the New Kingdom of Granada, from 1564 to 1718.
- Viceroyalty of New Granada, from 1718 to 1723.
- Once again, Presidency of the New Kingdom, from 1723 to 1739.
- Definitively, Viceroyalty of the New Kingdom [*Nuevo Reino*] of Granada, from 1739 to 1810, and even for a few years afterward (1816 to 1819).
- State of the New Kingdom, from 1810 to 1811.
- State of Cundinamarca, from 1811 to 1812.
- United Provinces of the New Kingdom of Granada, from 1812 to 1813.
- State of Cundinamarca, from that date to 1814.
- United Provinces of New Granada, from 1814 to 1816.
- Republic of Colombia, from 1819 to 1831.<sup>4</sup>
- Republic of New Granada, from 1832 to 1858.
- Granadine Confederation, from 1858 to 1861.
- United States of Colombia, from 1861 to 1885.

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<sup>1</sup> The original title was *Las Insignias de Colombia*, but the literal translation *Insignia of Colombia* is awkward in English, and does not communicate the range of meanings of the Spanish phrase. ED.

<sup>2</sup> Jesús María Henao & Gerardo Arrubla, *Historia de Colombia para la enseñanza secundaria* [History of Colombia for Secondary Education] (Bogotá, 3d ed. 1930). The Spanish original of this edition is available on Google Books at <http://tinyurl.com/jhrqvoj>. An English translation by J. Fred Rippy was published by the University of North Carolina Press in 1938, and has since been reprinted in various editions. ED.

<sup>3</sup> An *Audiencia* (originally a court) was a form of colonial administration in the Spanish American colonies. The *Audiencia* of Santa Fe was part of the Viceroyalty of Peru. ED.

<sup>4</sup> This was the state later called *Gran Colombia* [Greater Colombia], to distinguish it from the Republic of 1886. In this period New Granada as a constituent part of Gran Colombia was called Cundinamarca. ED.

- Republic of Colombia, from 1886 to the present [1937].<sup>5</sup>

This quick historical overview was necessary for our purposes, because most of the time a change of name meant a change in emblems and flags.

At first glance we might be called fickle and lacking in seriousness in the matter of names, as well as that of arms and flags. But if we reflect on the fact that the four hundred years of our country's existence are barely an insignificant childhood compared to the many centuries of existence of other nations more changeable than ours, we will come to the conclusion that we still have decades at our disposal in which to indulge in fickleness and childishness.

## SPANISH DOMINION

### 1540 to 1810

Just over fifty years after Columbus presented Castile with a new world, and barely ten years after Marshal Quesada installed communal government in his recently founded Santa Fe,<sup>6</sup> his beloved city and the other cities and towns of the New Kingdom of Granada were granted the favor related in the following document.<sup>7</sup>

Don Carlos and Doña Juana, *etc.* Inasmuch as Pedro de Colmenares and Alonso Tellez, inhabitant and *regidor*<sup>8</sup> of the city of Santa Fe in the Province of the New Kingdom of Granada, have related to us, in the name of this province, that its inhabitants have served us well in the pacification of the said kingdom, and in pacifying it have subjugated it and placed it beneath our yoke and Royal Dominion, and have petitioned us in its name that we take notice of the above-mentioned and command that a coat of arms be designated for the said province, such as other provinces of these kingdoms have had; therefore We, respecting the above-mentioned and the loyalty and faithfulness with which the Spanish inhabitants of this province have served us, saw fit, and hereby grant and command, that from now on this province of the New Kingdom of Granada and the cities and towns within it shall have and hold as their arms a shield, in the middle of which will be a black eagle, displayed, crowned in gold, each talon holding a red pomegranate, on a field of

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<sup>5</sup> Although the original text was published in 1937, *República de Colombia* is still (2016) the formal style of the state. ED.

<sup>6</sup> Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada (1509?-1579) was a conquistador and early explorer of Colombia. ED.

<sup>7</sup> Elías de Páramo, "Heráldica Nacional," *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* 4:17-25 (No. 37) (Bogotá, 1907), 20.

<sup>8</sup> A *regidor* was a local council official. ED.

gold, and for the border, pomegranate branches of gold, on a blue field, depending on how it is painted and represented, *etc.*<sup>9</sup>

Given in Valladolid, December 3, 1548<sup>10</sup>

MAXIMILIAN – THE PRINCESS<sup>11</sup>



Figure 1. Arms of New Kingdom of Granada. Compare Plate I, No. 1.

This coat of arms, which still today distinguishes our capital city [Bogotá], formed the seal that marked every official paper and government act. We do not know if it was used during the colonial regime as an emblem on flags and pennants, although we do think it very possible.

Attempting to describe the flags that might have been carried by royal troops during the colonial and viceregal periods would be an endless task. It is enough for our purposes to say that each of the regiments, battalions and squadrons, the

<sup>9</sup> The word translated here as *displayed* is *rapante*, an archaic form of *rampante*, meaning *rampant*. But *rampant* actually describes only animals such as lions, shown in profile, standing erect, with front paws raised. *Displayed* is the English word for a heraldic eagle in its traditional posture: body facing front, with wings, legs and tail extended, but the head facing to its right (the viewer's left). In Spanish blazon an eagle is assumed to be in this position unless otherwise specified.

The Spanish blazon also adds the word *entera*, a curious choice because it is the feminine form of a word that means, for a male animal, that its sexual parts are included in the design rather than modestly omitted. This makes no sense for an eagle of either sex. *Entera* could also mean *entire*, that is, filling the whole field, but the eagle does not fill the whole field, just the main portion of it, and for this a word of blazon is not needed.

The English blazon (that is, the technical heraldic description) for this shield would be *Or, an eagle sable, crowned proper, holding in each talon a pomegranate slipped gules; on a bordure azure, pomegranates slipped of the field. Slipped means with the stem or branch attached.* The pomegranates (*granadas* in Spanish) are a pun or *canting charge* on the place-name Granada. They are red on a yellow field, but yellow on a blue border, because heraldic custom (based on visibility concerns) forbade placing red on blue. Compare the arms on Plate II, No. 1. For a closer look at a heraldic pomegranate, see the ornamental tailpiece on page 72. ED.

<sup>10</sup> The date, before the Gregorian calendar reform, is Old Style. The Gregorian calendar was adopted in Spain and her dependencies in 1582. ED.

<sup>11</sup> Maximilian, Archduke of Austria (1527-1576) and his wife Archduchess Maria, Princess of Spain (1528-1603) were acting at the time as regents of Spain during the reign of Maria's father King Charles I (Emperor Charles V). It was in his name, as *Don Carlos*, along with his nominal co-ruler Queen Joanna (see note 18 below), that the decree was given. In 1564, some years after the abdication of Charles V and the separation of Austria and the imperial office from Spain, Maximilian became Holy Roman Emperor (as Maximilian II). ED.

free companies, the honor guard and halberdiers of the Viceroy, the *Audiencia* and even the courts had its own flag and coat of arms. The flags were white, yellow or purple, square or rectangular, and of varying sizes, displaying in the center or at the edges all or part of the many coats of arms borne by the royal house or the Spanish nobility. The design depended on the name of the regiment, or body of troops, or unit or fraction thereof, that had come from the Peninsula [Spain] to the different towns of the Viceroyalty, or wherever the flag was destined to go.<sup>12</sup>

Among these flags, the most significant was the *guión*, or royal standard (*estandarte real*), a flag of one square meter, usually of white silk on one side and red on the other.<sup>13</sup> In the center, the coat of arms of Castile and León was embroidered on both sides, surrounded by royal symbols and emblems.<sup>14</sup>

It may be that from 1728 onwards the Viceroyalty used white flags with the royal coat of arms in the center and a red device at the top; from time immemorial these were called regimental *coronelas*.<sup>15</sup> From 1785 the Spanish troops used a flag with two [horizontal] red stripes over a yellow background, which lasted until the current Republic.<sup>16</sup> It is quite possible that some of these flags were carried by the pacifying expedition in 1815, even though none with these colors are found among the many that our Museum preserves as trophies of the great war.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The was standard practice in the Spanish empire, and indeed remains so in Spain. ED.

<sup>13</sup> The original has *gules*, a heraldic term for *red*. TR.

<sup>14</sup> These arms were quartered: in the upper left and lower right a gold castle on red (for Castile); in the other two quarters a red (or purple) lion on white (for León). Both of these are canting charges. Sometimes the pomegranate of Granada was carried in a small compartment at the base between the bottom two quarters. See Figure 2 on the next page. Spanish military flags before 1785 usually carried a much more complicated marshalling of the Spanish or Imperial coat of arms. ED.

<sup>15</sup> The *bandera coronela* was the colonel's colour, corresponding to the Queen's colour in the British system. The other regimental flags were called *banderas capitanas*, or captain's colours. ED.

<sup>16</sup> The Spanish military flag adopted in 1785 was three horizontal stripes, red-yellow-red, with a crowned elliptical cartouche in the middle stripe showing the lion of León quartered with the castle of Castile. The "current Republic" in 1937 was the second Spanish Republic (1931-39), which used a horizontal tricolor of equal stripes in red, yellow and purple. ED.

<sup>17</sup> Dousdebés' footnote here reads *Catálogo General del Museo* [General Catalogue of the National Museum], by which he appears to mean Ernesto Restrepo Tirado, *Catálogo General del Museo de Bogotá* [General Catalogue of the Museum of Bogotá] (Bogotá, 1917), although it is possible

[footnote continues→]





Figure 2. Coin of Carlos and Juana (1516-1555), showing a general pattern of the Spanish royal arms of the period.<sup>18</sup>

## THE PERIOD OF INDEPENDENCE

### 1810-1820

The Viceroyalty was overthrown in Santa Fe on July 20, 1810.

Perhaps because the political action of such a transcendent event had been plotted and carried out by civilians, with total disregard for the army or military element, in the days, months and even years that followed, the patriotic authorities who replaced the royalists did not change the flag or create an official flag for the new nationality.

Nevertheless, some measures on this matter were taken by the patriots of the Supreme Junta, when, as noted in the *Annals* of July 21 [1810],

the hats of the participants in the movement were seen adorned with red and yellow cockades, on which appeared the slogan VIVA LA JUNTA SUPREMA DE SANTA FE DE BOGOTÁ [Long live the Supreme Junta of Santa Fe de Bogotá].<sup>19</sup>

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[footnote continues ... ]

he used a later edition. The phrase *magna guerra* [great war] meant the independence movement led by Bolívar, as described in the Introduction. ED.

<sup>18</sup> Juana, called *la Loca* [Joanna the Mad], was nominally Queen of Castile and León from 1504 and of Aragon from 1516, but because of supposed mental illness her rights were exercised by co-rulers, notably from 1516 her son Carlos (King Charles I, later Emperor Charles V). ED.

<sup>19</sup> Pedro María Ibáñez, *Las crónicas de Bogotá y de sus inmediaciones* [Chronicles of Bogotá and Its Surroundings], 3:355. The first edition of volume 1 of the *Crónicas* was published in Bogotá in 1891, and all four volumes were often reissued. The author does not specify the edition cited. ED.

In addition, the members of this junta adopted red and yellow armbands on their left arms as a device, and wore them on that day and on solemn occasions that followed; and the President wore across his chest a sash of the same colors.<sup>20</sup> According to the *Diario Político*,

It was time that the national insignia be decreed, and that every citizen and united province bear the motto of liberty. A bicolor ribbon, half yellow and half red, worn on the hat, would be the simplest and most convenient.<sup>21</sup>

After that, despite a diligent search, we could not find any official provision regarding a coat of arms or a flag until the year 1813. But it is not likely that the patriots had no flag, especially the various troop units that had been hastily created, each of which had someone with the title of *abanderado* [standard-bearer].<sup>22</sup> So it is reasonable to suppose that their flag would have been yellow and red, derived from the rosettes, armbands and presidential sash, along with some defiant slogan alluding to the acts that had just occurred.

We are even more inclined to believe that to be the case since these two colors, yellow and red, were as noted the royalist colors, and since even though the viceregal authority had been defeated and delegitimized, the Supreme Junta still continued to recognize “our beloved monarch Don Fernando VII” as king “whenever he might deign to go to Santa Fe [de Bogotá],” which at the moment it was not possible for him to do, especially because of the obstacles that the Emperor [Napoleon] never ceased to create for him.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> “*Diario Político de Santa Fe de Bogotá*” [Political Diary of Santa Fe de Bogotá] [No. 5, September 7, 1810], *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* 1:361 (No. 7) (Bogotá, 1903). The *Diario Político* “appeared in August, 1810, but only 16 numbers were issued. In it were published the edicts, circulars, proclamations, and decrees of the junta, and many other documents. It was the organ of the revolution.” Jesús María Henao & Gerardo Arrubla, *History of Colombia* (Chapel Hill NC, 1938), 202 n.4 (translation by J. Fred Rippy; see note 2 above). The *Boletín*, in which the numbers of the *Diario* were serially reprinted, is available on line through the Hathi Trust Digital Library at <http://tinyurl.com/q3vekhc>. ED.

<sup>21</sup> *Diario Político* No. 5 [September 7, 1810]. See preceding note.

<sup>22</sup> The closest English military title would be *ensign*. ED.

<sup>23</sup> King Ferdinand VII of Spain abdicated in 1808 under pressure from Napoleon, who made him a prisoner in France and installed his own brother Joseph Bonaparte as king. Ferdinand was restored in 1814, but the period of Napoleonic rule in Spain fatally undermined Spanish authority in America and was a catalyst for the rebellions that liberated the Spanish American colonial empire. The inability of the King to come to the place where he claimed sovereignty was a crucial legal and political element in the move toward independence. See page 9 above. ED.

It is almost certain, therefore, that the flag of the Kingdom (as our land was still called during the period 1810 to 1813) was red and yellow; we picture it with horizontal stripes of equal length and width, and without a shield.<sup>24</sup> There would still have been the occasional older flag, which made possible the curious deconsecration [*desbendición*] of one of them, carried by no less than the Auxiliary Battalion, which had been created right after July 20. The scene is recounted by an eyewitness.

They carried it (the royal flag) into the church, with the accustomed solemnity, and up to the high altar, where the chaplain of the troop, the Reverend Father Florido of the order of St. Francis, performed certain ceremonies to take the blessing from it, which I realize would have been as mandated by the Roman Ritual. Afterward the father took a knife and gave it to Brigadier Pey, who began to rip and tear [the flag] all over. Once this was done, they rolled it up and returned it to the provincial, Father Chavarria, who threw it contemptuously on the high altar.<sup>25</sup>

Between 1811 and early 1813 several internecine skirmishes took place where Granadine troops (that is, troops from New Granada) participated, and it is unlikely that these troops did not have a flag. Bolívar's epic campaign [*campaña homérica*], in which he led victorious troops from Cartagena to Caracas, took place at the beginning of 1813. Because these Momposine and Granadine troops were formed in correctly-organized units, they must have carried their corresponding flags.<sup>26</sup> One of our distinguished historians tells us:

The flag carried by the Momposine troops was that of Cartagena, with which the Province of Mompós was united from 1812-13. This flag was made up of three concentric rectangles, the first of which was red, the second yellow, with green at the center. The coat of arms featured a silver star with eight rays set against a green field.<sup>27</sup>

As we will see later, in 1814 New Granada adopted this flag for the navy of the Union.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> For an image of this flag, see Plate II, No. 1. ED.

<sup>25</sup> Ibáñez, *Crónicas*, 3:69. Citation in note 19 above.

<sup>26</sup> The word *Momposine* refers to the Colombian town of Santa Cruz de Mompós (sometimes *Mompox* in English). ED.

<sup>27</sup> Communication from Enrique Otero D'Costa re "Bandera de Cartagena en la Independencia de Venezuela," *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* 12:131-36 (No. 135) (Bogotá, 1918), 135. For an image of this flag, see Plate II, No. 2. ED.

<sup>28</sup> The Union was the ephemeral state of United Provinces of New Granada. ED.

Therefore, the flag carried by the Granadine troops was definitely the red and yellow one we hinted at earlier. This suggestion is corroborated by what General [José María] Ortega, an important figure in that memorable campaign, says in his *Memoirs* when describing the death of Girardot: “He staked the Granadine flag at the top of the enemy trench and fell dead at its feet.”<sup>29</sup> O’Leary copies what the Granadine Congress said to the Venezuelans at the beginning of the 1813 campaign: “Gather yourselves beneath the flags of New Granada that even now wave in your fields.”<sup>30</sup> Finally, in his statement to the Congress of the Union, in which he reports his triumphant entry into Caracas in August 1813, the Liberator [Bolívar] says:



Figure 3. Seal of the State of Cartagena (1812)

If I owe Caracas my life, I owe to Mompós the glory of having liberated the city of my birth, planting the flag of the government of the Union on the summit of El Ávila ...<sup>31</sup>

These three testimonies, so telling and precise, do not leave us the slightest doubt about the existence at that time of a Granadine flag, which was certainly that of gold and red to which we have already referred.

Finally, it is very possible that the above-mentioned flag, aside from the everlasting glory attained in Venezuela, would have felt the first breezes of Granadine victory, covering Baraya and his troops on March 28, 1811 at the battle of Lower [*Bajo*] Palacé,<sup>32</sup> and we are very tempted

<sup>29</sup> Otero D’Costa, “Bandera,” 135 n.1. Citation in note 27 above. Dousdebés’ citation for Ortega’s *Memorias* is *Revista del Colegio del Rosario* [Rosario College Review], No. 7 (Bogotá, 1905). In the quoted passage, Ortega was describing the death of the Colombian military leader Atanasio Girardot (1791-1813) at the Battle of Bárbula on September 30, 1813. A historical painting of this event, by Cristobal Rojas, appears on the back cover of this book. ED.

<sup>30</sup> Dousdebés cites Eduardo Posada, *Congreso de las Provincias Unidas* (Bogotá, 1924), 66. Citation in note 50 below. The mention of O’Leary almost certainly refers to Daniel Florencio O’Leary & Simón B. O’Leary, *Memorias de general O’Leary* (Caracas, 1879-88), issued in 32 volumes, but Dousdebés provides no specific citation to this work. ED.

<sup>31</sup> Pedro Salcedo del Villar, “Bandera en 1813” [The Flag in 1813], *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* 12:269-71 (No. 137) (Bogotá, 1919), 271. El Ávila is a mountain just north of Caracas. ED.

<sup>32</sup> Antonio Baraya (1776-1816), an early military leader of Colombia independence, was captured and executed by the Spanish during the period of the Reconquest. The Battle of Bajo Palacé, on March 28, 1811, was the opening battle of the Colombian War of Independence, a victory for the rebels under Baraya. *Palacé* is a place name; it does not mean *palace*. ED.

to believe that noble Popayán saw it wave on April 26 and 27, 1812. It surely accompanied Cabal on May 24 in Juanambú;<sup>33</sup> then it saw him retreat from Buesaco on the 27th and 28th of the same month, only to return as victor with Macaulay on July 22,<sup>34</sup> and the next day, July 23, swell with pride for the first time as victor at Cebollas, and then perhaps fall vanquished into royalist hands on August 13 in Catambuco.

It might be this same [yellow and red] bicolor that accompanied the handful of Granadines who descended with Morales toward La Costa in the last days of 1811, that triumphed at Simaña on December 2 of that year, and was greeted in Mompós by the Momposine purple and the Cartagena rectangle.<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps it was also fated to be present at the fratricidal killings of 1812. Perhaps it accompanied Santander on October 14, 1813, when he had to abandon Rosario de Cúcuta, and perhaps it would fall riddled with bullets on the 18th of the same month in Llano de Carrillo.<sup>36</sup> We do not know for certain, but this is surely the case, because those troops were led by

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<sup>33</sup> José María Cabal (1770-1816) was a Colombian rebel military leader. He defended the southern province of Popayán against reactionary forces. After a defeat at the Battle of La Cuchila del Tambo in 1816, he was captured and executed. Juanambú is a river outside the city of Pasto, a royalist stronghold during the early independence period. The other places named in this passage were sites of episodes in the Popayán campaign.

<sup>34</sup> Alexander Macaulay (1787-1813) was an American from Virginia. He assisted Cabal on the rebel side, rose to leadership in his army, but was captured and executed at Pasto. For more on him see Enrique Naranjo Martinez, "Alexander Macaulay in the Liberation of Colombia, South America," William & Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, 23:235-248 (No. 3) (Williamsburg VA, July 1943) (retrievable via JSTOR).

<sup>35</sup> The *Cartagena rectangle* is the flag known from its concentric rectangles as the *Cuadrilonga*. It was the flag of Cartagena, and served as its national flag (and the flags of the United Provinces) during their brief periods of independence. See Plate II, No. 2. As noted, the word *Momposine* refers to the town of Santa Cruz de Mompox in Cartagena Province, which was the first town in Colombia to proclaim absolute independence from Spain and remained an important center of *independentista* activity during the war. It is not clear what Dousdebés means by *Momposine purple* – perhaps he is referring to an undocumented flag. ED.

<sup>36</sup> Francisco de Paula Santander (1792-1840) was active as a federalist (that is, decentralist) politician and military leader throughout the revolutionary period 1810-19, and was later Vice President (Acting President in Bolívar's absence) of Gran Colombia (1821-27) and President of New Granada (1832-37). A Colombian *departamento* (equivalent to a state in the modern centralized republic) is named for him. Rosario de Cúcuta and Llano de Carrillo were engagements in Bolívar's first New Granada campaign. ED.

Granadine commanders and officers who had begun their careers in Santa Fe [de Bogotá]; they left from there and stayed in constant communication [with the city].

Uncertainties about the flag and coat of arms cease completely on July 20, 1813. At the suggestion of Nariño on July 16 of the same year, the Committee on Revision [*Colegio revisor*] of the Constitution of Cundinamarca, meeting at that time in Santa Fe, agreed

... that from today (July 16) forward, Cundinamarca is a free and independent state that will remain forever separate from the Crown and government of Spain, and from every other authority that does not emanate directly from the people or from their representatives; that every political union of dependence with the Metropole is entirely broken ...<sup>37</sup>

This celebrated decree, duly sanctioned by Nariño as president of the new state, was published on the evening of July 19. On July 20, the third anniversary of the revolution, among other very important civic ceremonies well related by our historians and chroniclers, the army solemnly swore in favor of absolute independence before the tricolor flag that had been created a few days earlier. On this day the troops and citizens were already displaying their new standards and emblems.

The new flag consisted of three horizontal bands of equal size in the following colors: sky blue (*azul celeste*) above, dark yellow (*amarillo tostado*) in the middle, and scarlet [*punzón*] at the bottom.<sup>38</sup> At the center of the flag was

an eagle with wings spread holding in its right talon a sword pointed upwards, in its left talon a pomegranate, and on its head a Phrygian cap.<sup>39</sup> In addition, three or four

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<sup>37</sup> Henao and Arrubla, *Historia General*, 378. Citation in note 2 above. The word *Metropole* [*metrópoli*] (literally *mother city*) denotes the center of an empire toward which the remoter parts are oriented. Antonio Nariño (1765-1824) was an early political leader in the independence movement and a president of the transitional State of Cundinamarca, which had been the Province of Santa Fe [de Bogotá]. A Colombian *departamento* is named for him. For more on Nariño, see page 8 above. ED.

<sup>38</sup> *Azul celeste*, called *bleu celeste* in English and French, is a heraldic term used to distinguish light “sky” blue from the ordinarily darker heraldic blue. For an image of this flag, see Plate II, No. 3. ED.

<sup>39</sup> As noted, the pomegranate (Spanish *granada*) was a pun or canting charge for the location of the country in the former Spanish Viceroyalty of New Granada. The pomegranate appeared in the Spanish royal arms for Granada, which became in 1492 the last of the Moorish kingdoms to fall to the Christian reunifiers of Spain. The Phrygian cap [*gorro frigio*], characteristic of the people of Phrygia in ancient Anatolia (modern Turkey), became a symbol of liberty by being confused with the *pileus*, a similar-looking hat worn by manumitted slaves in ancient Greece and Rome. ED.

fragments of broken chains were scattered around the eagle. The upper portion carried the motto MORIR O VENCER [die or conquer] and surrounding the entire shield the words GOBIERNO LIBRE E INDEPENDIENTE DE CUNDINAMARCA [Free and Independent Government of Cundinamarca].<sup>40</sup>

That same day, July 20, after the oath mentioned above, the famous deconsecration of the royal flag already referred to was carried out.<sup>41</sup>



Figure 4. Seal of the State of Cundinamarca.  
Compare Plate I, No. 3.

It is worthy of note, for the curious, that in engravings of the period made by participants in military engagements occurring at the end of 1813 and beginning of 1814 ([including some by] José María Espinosa, called Nariño's standard-bearer) our glorious tricolor already appears with its colors in an order different than that indicated.<sup>42</sup>

But not only the flag and the coat of arms were agreed upon as we have just described them, but also the national cockade [*escarapela*] and the presidential sash [*banda*]. The same colors were decreed for them, and in the same order as for the flag. In addition, the presidential sash would carry in its center the initials JHS.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Ibáñez, *Crónicas*, 3:70. Citation in note 19 above. The quoted description is ambiguous, but Dousdebés' illustration (Plate II, No. 3) makes it clear that in his view both inscriptions were placed on a border that formed part of a shield. Such inscriptions are a distinctive feature of Spanish heraldry.

Figure 4 is taken not from Dousdebés but from Enrique Ortega Ricaurte, *Heráldica Nacional: Estudio Documental* [Heraldry of the Nation: A Documentary Study], (Bogotá, 1954), 44. Ortega calls this Cundinamarca's "second arms." For its "first arms" he shows, at 39, an engraving that cannot be accurate: a crowned eagle holding *granadas* in each claw. But they are the wrong kind of *granadas*, bombs rather than pomegranates. Not only does this not match the blazon, but the bombs are shown with their fuses sizzling right down to the end, just about to explode and vaporize the eagle. Unlucky bird! Unluckily prophetic emblem! *Patria Boba* indeed! More versions of this seal can be seen in DeVries, "Colombia," citation in the box on page 71. ED.

<sup>41</sup> See page 21 above.

<sup>42</sup> José María Espinosa (1796-1883) was a Colombian artist who fought with Nariño's forces. He was noted for battle scenes and for portraits of revolutionary personalities, especially Bolívar. ED.

<sup>43</sup> Henao and Arrubla, *Historia General*, 379. Citation in note 2 above. The initials JHS – a familiar element in Christian iconography more commonly seen as IHS – are taken from the first three letters of Jesus' name ΙΗΣΟΥΣ [Iesous] in Greek. ED.

The flag of 1813 was the one Nariño's troops unfurled triumphantly at Upper [Alto] Palacé on December 30 of that year, the one that saw the exploits of that army on April 16, 19 and 28 in what is now known as Juanambú, the one that flew victoriously that same day on the heights of Boquerón and Buesaco, and the one that covered itself in glory on May 4 in Cebollas and May 9 in Tacines. And, finally, on May 10, perhaps one, perhaps all of those flags from the Socorro, Bogotá and Granadine battalions of Cundinamarca would fall – together with the Precursor – into the hands of the royalists.<sup>44</sup>

### 1814, 1815 AND 1816

Uncertainty about what our national flag and coat of arms should be re-emerges midway through the year 1814. One of our scholarly colleagues, now, unfortunately disappeared [*desaparecido*], writes that

the Congress of the United Provinces of New Granada, by the law of 14 July 1814, ratified on November 14 the same year, decreed [*dispuso*] that the coat of arms established by that law would be surrounded by three bands of gold, green and red, which according to that law are the colors of the national flag; and that the motto PROVINCIAS UNIDAS DE LA NUEVA GRANADA [United Provinces of New Granada] would be placed in golden letters at intervals on the green band.<sup>45</sup>

Our late colleague notifies us that

I read the law that established the national flag in a volume in the National Archive of Bogotá, but I did not write down the call number for it, and I do not have a copy of the law in question.<sup>46</sup>

Another esteemed academic colleague tells us that

possibly the idea that a new flag appeared in 1814 is based on the Decree of the Union dated 14 July 1815, which designated the colors that the Granadine coat of arms should

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<sup>44</sup> In the Battles of Cebollas and Tacines, Nariño was defeated by royalist forces. The next day, May 10, he was wounded at Pasto and left for dead. He survived but surrendered to Spanish forces and remained in prison until 1821. The term *Precursor* here refers to Nariño rather than Francisco de Miranda (1750-1816), the first theoretician of South American independence, who is also called by that title. ED.

<sup>45</sup> Tulio Samper y Grau, "Heráldica colombiana," *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* 17:674-6 (No. 179) (Bogotá, 1926), 676. Samper y Grau didn't exactly disappear – he died in 1929. ED.

<sup>46</sup> *Id.*, 675.



bear, and then says that it should all be surrounded by three bands of yellow, green and red, which are the colors of the national flags [*bandera y pabellón*].<sup>47</sup>

He adds:

But how is it possible to admit that a simple incidental phrase from a decree could tacitly repeal a prior law, especially when it has to do with such an important matter as the emblem [*insignia*] of the country? We do not think it prudent to interpret this phrase as anything other than a *quid pro quo* where gold, green [*sinople*] and red were stated instead of gold, blue [*azur*] and red. This error might have been occasioned either by confusion about heraldic terms or out of a desire to contain within the phrase not only the insignia of the army (*bandera*?) but also the maritime insignia (*pabellón*?), which, as has been said, was yellow, green and red.<sup>48</sup>

That same colleague had already informed us that

in April of 1814 the government of the United Provinces of New Granada adopted as the flag of the national navy three concentric rectangles, the first red, the second yellow, and green in the center, with a silver star with eight rays in the central green field.<sup>49</sup>

Our scrupulous search of the documents whose dates are cited by the two named colleagues has unfortunately been completely fruitless. In addition, we have not found anything about emblems or flags in the 1814 legislation, reproduced in the Academy of History's work entitled *Congress of the United Provinces*, which appears to contain everything on the subject that has been saved from oblivion.<sup>50</sup>

There are, however, three sources which, if they do not provide evidence for the existence of the yellow, green and red flag of 1814, are compelling enough at least to incline us

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<sup>47</sup> O'Leary, *Memorias*, 14:338. Citation in note 30 above. Both *bandera* and *pabellón* can be translated into English as *flag*. Dousdebés speculates in the next paragraph that *bandera* refers to the flag of the army, while *pabellón* would be a maritime flag, and indeed it can mean an *ensign*, a flag used to designate the nationality of a ship as required by international law. Usually in this text the phrase *bandera y* [or *o*] *pabellón* is translated as *flag* or *flags*, depending on context, without further comment. ED.

<sup>48</sup> Otero D'Costa, 132. Citation in note 27 above. The parentheticals and their question marks are in Dousdebés' original text – it is unclear if he added them or they were in the text he is quoting. By *quid pro quo* [this for that] Otero D'Costa appears to mean not a *deliberate* exchange such as this phrase usually denotes (as he calls it an error), but a *complete* exchange. ED.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* This flag is of course the *Cuadrilonga* of Cartagena, already discussed. ED.

<sup>50</sup> The reference is to Eduardo Posada, *Congreso de las Provincias Unidas* (Bogotá, 1924), volume 33 in the series *Biblioteca de historia nacional* [Library of National History] issued by the Academia Colombiana de Historia [Colombian Academy of History] and published by the government printer. But the document Dousdebés could not find, dated 26 April 1814, can be read in Enrique Ortega Ricaurte, *Heráldica Nacional*, 49-50. Citation in note 40 above. ED.

strongly to accept it. The first is the testimony of Dr. Samper y Grau, already cited, to the effect that he saw the law that established that flag.<sup>51</sup>

The second is a paragraph of a letter from the Liberator [Bolívar], written on April 13, 1815 from his headquarters at La Popa<sup>52</sup> to the “Most Excellent President of the Congress, Citizen Juan Marimón,” in which (among other things) he says “[a]t La Popa no flag has been hoisted, but a Granadine battalion did signal with one colored yellow, green, and red [encarnado] ...”<sup>53</sup>

On that matter, let it be remembered that when Bolívar left Santa Fe toward La Costa at the beginning of 1815 – six months after the flag in question had been established and more than a year before the flag of 1815 would appear<sup>54</sup> – he took with him, along with the Venezuelan troops with whom he had entered Bogotá in December 1814, the Auxiliary and National battalions of New Granada. They certainly carried the new flags, one of which the Liberator referred to in the fragment of letter that we have transcribed.<sup>55</sup>

The third source, finally, is a suggestive note that the chronicler Caballero wrote in his diary, namely:

On the fifth [of August 1814], the tricolor flag of the *Cabildo* appeared for the first time .... The flag has on one side the arms of the city and on the other a cross over a pomegranate, with Jesus in the middle.<sup>56</sup>

The phrase “appeared for the first time” [*se estrenó*] is very telling, because it is not to be believed that in four years of independence a revolutionary flag had not already flown over the *Cabildo*, the site of so many transcendent events. Unfortunately, the taciturn [*parco*] reporter of

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<sup>51</sup> Samper y Grau, “Heráldica,” 675. Citation in note 45 above.

<sup>52</sup> La Popa is an elevated feature in Cartagena City. ED.

<sup>53</sup> Dousdebés provides no citation for this letter. ED.

<sup>54</sup> Dousdebés is untidy in his rhetoric here. Probably he means that the flag of 1814 was established more than a year before that of 1815. ED.

<sup>55</sup> Samper y Grau, “Heráldica,” 676. Citation in note 45 above.

<sup>56</sup> José María Caballero, “Días de la Independencia” [Days of Independence], in Eduardo Posada et al., *La Patria Boba* [The Foolish Fatherland] (Bogotá, 1902), 199. In Spanish America the *Cabildo* was a town council, and by extension the town’s corporation and government. *La Patria Boba* is an epithet for the period 1810-1816 in New Granada, beginning with the first assertions of independence and concluding with the Spanish reconquest, a period marked by persistent, extreme and debilitating internal conflict among provinces and factions. ED.

the notice does not say whether this was a new flag, nor does he mention which three colors formed it. It does show, as happened in the past and will continue in the future, that the patriotic, not to say rebellious, spirit loved to make and adorn its ensigns very capriciously, without submitting to the legal dispositions that then existed and will surely continue to exist. The worst part is that the above uncertainty includes not only the flag but also the national coat of arms [*escudo de la patria*].

We have already seen that from mid-1813, a somewhat modified royal eagle of Santa Fe was drawn or woven into the flags, to cover itself with glory and later with pain along with our Precursor Nariño. But from July 1814 we do not know for sure if this was the one that would have been surrounded with three bands of gold, green and red; we do not know whether with its respective bands it went on to ornament the supposed flag with the same colors from 1814. And we do not know whether, perhaps, those bands would have surrounded the shield with interlaced hands clasped over the middle of an inverted lance or arrow, with a Phrygian cap at the top and two cornucopias on the right and left, out of whose mouths spill flowers and tropical fruits, the whole surrounded by a circle within which can be read this inscription in Latin: RESP. NEO-GRANAT. JUNGIT OPES FOEDUSQ[UE], FERIT, TUM LIBERA FATI.<sup>57</sup>



Figure 5. First New Granada arms of 1815. See Plate II, No. 4.

<sup>57</sup>

This supposed shield is really more of a cartouche, and the device is more of a seal than a coat of arms. Other versions can be seen in de Vries, “Nueva Granada,” (citation in the box on page 71). RESP. NEO-GRAT. abbreviates RESPUBLICA NEO-GRANATINA, a Latin form of the ephemeral country’s name. The Latin motto, translated in italics below, is taken from Book X, lines 153-5 of Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Aeneas asks Tarchon, King of the Tyrrhenians, for help in the war against Turnus. “Tarchon *joined forces with him without delay, and agreed a treaty: then fulfilling their fate*, the Lydian people took to their ships by divine command.” Translation by A. S. Kline (2002); the whole *Aeneid* is available in his translation at [www.poetryintranslation.com](http://www.poetryintranslation.com). Thanks to Brother William J. Short, OFM, for identifying this passage. ED.

Another very distinguished academic colleague opines that this coat of arms did not go on to be used by the Congress of the United Provinces in 1814 to seal its official acts.<sup>58</sup> But we find it not improbable that it replaced the Santa Fe eagle on the flags.

Here is a fourth reason that has strongly inclined us to accept as certain the existence of a new coat of arms and flag in July of 1814. It is a fact that the flag and coat of arms of 1813 were not only decreed at the insistence of Nariño, but were in fact exactly what he prescribed (*indicó*).<sup>59</sup> Such acceptance by the Congress of the will and desires of Nariño was due to a great extent to the fact that he was still surrounded by the halo of the triumph of January 9,<sup>60</sup> for many of the patricians who made up that Congress had been and still were his bitter political enemies. On May 13, 1814, Nariño fell into the hands of the royalists. This disaster was known quickly in Santa Fe and it was as if lightning had struck among his loyal followers. On the other hand, his conquered enemies condemned him with the frosty comment that “we had already foreseen this disaster.”<sup>61</sup> But the union that the illustrious prisoner had asked for so many times was imposed as a last hope; the unitary government he had sought so often and with such determination was belatedly born.

It was very human that Nariño’s rivals, men of the stature of Camilo Torres, President of the Congress, of the wise Caldas, of Ricaurte, of Antonio Baraya, would in the end lay the blame for the disaster on him.<sup>62</sup> And, since fate obliged them to accept their captive’s forms of

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<sup>58</sup> Posada, *Congreso*, 79. Citation in note 50 above.

<sup>59</sup> Henao and Arrubla. *Historia General*, 378. Citation in note 2 above.

<sup>60</sup> The capture of Popoyán. See text at note 33 above. ED.

<sup>61</sup> Dousdebés provides no citation for this quotation, if indeed it is one. ED.

<sup>62</sup> Camilo Torres Tenorio (1766-1816), a distinguished lawyer and a pioneering activist of the Colombian independence movement, was named President of the Congress of the United Provinces in 1815. He was a leader of the federalist faction, which aimed for a federation of strong states, as opposed to the powerful central government favored by Nariño. He was captured by Morillo’s *reconquista* forces and executed. Antonio Baraya (1776-1816) (the hero of the Battle of the Lower Palacé, see note 32 above), Francisco José de Caldas (1791-1816), and Antonio Ricaurte (1786-1814) all opposed Nariño’s centralist faction in the civil war of 1812. Ricaurte died heroically at San Mateo in Venezuela by exploding a store of ammunition the enemy was about to capture; Baraya and Caldas were both executed by the Spanish. ED.

government,<sup>63</sup> they would have wanted to eliminate any measures that might have been of particular or personal interest to Nariño, such as the blue, yellow and red flag and the coat of arms with the eagle grasping the sword and pomegranate.

And so appeared the yellow, green and red tricolor and the coat of arms with the interlaced hands. Let us not forget that Antioquia, Cauca, and Cartagena had green in their regional flags.

By the middle of 1815, we find the central government dictating the following legal decree.

The Central Government, etc. ...

... The Congress of the same has issued the following law.

The national coat of arms will be quartered for the distribution of the symbols [*signos*] that distinguish and characterize New Granada, namely: the first quarter will depict [the volcano] Chimborazo erupting in fire from the area of Altizana; the second, a condor in the attitude of taking flight, and with a raised talon;<sup>64</sup> the third, the waterfall of Tequendama; the fourth, the Isthmus of Panamá with two ships at its sides to denote the two seas.<sup>65</sup> Overall<sup>66</sup> will be an open pomegranate; the *timbre* a bow and a quiver with arrows in saltire, one of the arrows being vertical.<sup>67</sup> A garland composed of pomegranates

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<sup>63</sup> Dousdebés means that they were compelled by circumstances to accept a centralist government rather than the federalist one they favored. ED.

<sup>64</sup> The Andean condor (*Vultur gryphus*) is a national symbol of Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, and appears in many of their past and present national emblems. See the example on page 65. It has long occupied a special place in the culture and iconography of Andean peoples, similar to that occupied by the eagle in Europe. The Andean condor is one of the largest flying birds in the world, by weight and wingspan, and also one of the longest-lived. ED.

<sup>65</sup> The Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, which the Isthmus of Panamá separates. ED.

<sup>66</sup> In Spanish *el sobretodo*, meaning literally *what is placed above everything*. It usually means (and means here) a small shield or cartouche (an *inescutcheon*) placed over the main shield. *Overall* is the best modern equivalent in English blazon, but the German *Herzschild* [heartshield] gets closer to the core meaning and communicates that the pomegranate is on a shield or cartouche. ED.

<sup>67</sup> *Timbre* is a technical heraldic term for ornaments placed outside and above the shield, in the crest position. It is really a French word, but is used in Spanish also. It is appropriate to keep it here as the material above this shield is not strictly speaking a crest, there being no helmet for a crest to adorn, nor any torse (the wreath-like structure originally covering the join between helm and crest) for it to rest on. The term translated *in saltire* is *en aspa*, indicating that the bow and quivers are crossed diagonally. Although Dousdebés' image on Plate III, No. 7, shows the quiver passing between the bow and the bowstring, the blazon does not prescribe this, and it does not appear so in Figure 6 on page 32, or in most images of the arms. ED.

and branches, appropriately interlaced, will surround its edge;<sup>68</sup> and finally, the inscription or motto *Provincias Unidas de la Nueva Granada* [United Provinces of New Granada] will be placed around its circumference, over the colors of the national flag.

Given in Santa Fe de Bogotá, July 14, 1815.

For the Congress, PADILLA, President, MADRID, Vice-President, etc.

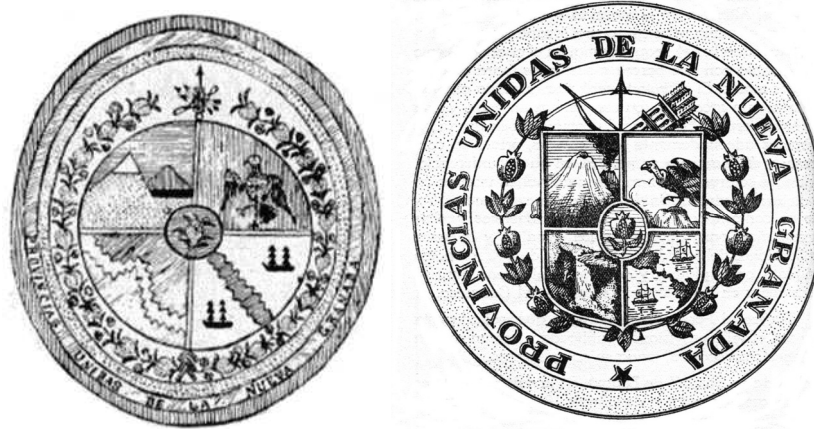


Figure 6. Second New Granada arms of 1815.  
Left: an early draft. Right: a later, more accomplished rendition.  
Compare Plate III, No. 5.

And this next decree is complementary to the previous one.

The General Government, etc., ... decrees:

That the first quarter is blue, containing a gold mountain with two summits, the highest topped with white and the lower one red over a black base, representing the Chimborazo of Quito, which nature crowned with snow and fire. The second is purple, with a black condor preparing to rise, its head and throat red, its beak and legs yellow, and its left talon raised.<sup>69</sup> The third is green, with an indented and wavy silver diagonal stripe, representing the Tequendama waterfall in the Province of Cundinamarca.<sup>70</sup> The fourth is

<sup>68</sup> *Surround* translates the Spanish *orlarán*, a form of the verb *orlar*, a heraldic term meaning to position as with an *orle* (a free-standing border placed at a small distance in from the edge of the shield or cartouche). It is used metaphorically here, meaning to surround the shield (or an interior charge) as an orle would surround the part of the shield it contains. ED.

<sup>69</sup> The word translated here as *preparing to rise* is *azorado*, a heraldic term meaning (for a bird) with wings just unfolding, looking upward as it begins its flight. The English equivalent is *rising*. The image in Plate III, No. 5 shows the condor on red, not purple. ED.

<sup>70</sup> *Banda denticulada y ondeada*. This is a curious blazon indeed. A *banda* (English *bend*) is a diagonal stripe running across a shield or a quartering. *Denticulada* (*indented*, as with pointed teeth) and *ondeada* (*wavy*) are heraldic terms descriptive of lines, and a line must be one or the other but not both (although it could, at a stretch, be indented on one side and wavy on the other). It seems evident, especially after comparing it with the images in Figure 6 and on Plate III, No. 5, that this is an effort after the fact to render into technical heraldic language what is not really a

[footnote continues→]

silver on an indented green diagonal stripe, accompanied by two black ships, representing the Isthmus of Panamá.

Overall, on blue, is a golden pomegranate, showing red where opened, with leaves and stalk of green, alluding to the name and emblem by which this part of the globe has been known.<sup>71</sup>

The *timbre*: a bow and quiver with golden arrows, crossed,<sup>72</sup> the arrows feathered in blue and red, one of them vertical in black, tipped in gold, behind the shield.<sup>73</sup>

The shield is surrounded by a garland of golden pomegranates, red at their openings, garnished with green leaves and stalk, and with flourishes [*florecida*] in purple. The whole is surrounded [*envuelto*] by three bands of gold, green and red, which are the colors of the national flag [*de la bandera y pabellón nacional*].

The legend *Provincias Unidas de la Nueva Granada*, in gold letters at intervals over the green band.

\* \* \*

Given at Santa Fe, July 14, 1815.

For the Congress, PADILLA, President, etc...<sup>74</sup>

If not for the fact that in the transcribed law the heraldic designation sinople is repeated two consecutive times (“... tres vendas de oro, sinople y gules ...”<sup>75</sup> and later “la devisea ... sobre la venda de sinople”),<sup>76</sup> we would have continued believing with one of our valued colleagues that the use of that heraldic term was a lapse on the part of our legislators from the

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[footnote continues ... ]

heraldic design at all, but an attempt at a realistic view of the waterfall. The same comment applies to the blazon of the fourth quarter. ED.

<sup>71</sup> As has been mentioned, the pomegranate (Spanish *granada*) is a pun or canting charge for the territory of [New] Granada. See Figure 7, page 34. The Spanish blazon is rather confused here, using *fustada* to indicate that the pomegranate’s stalk is green like its leaves. *Fustada*, translated here as *stalk*, is a word properly used for tree trunks and shafts of objects like lances, to indicate a difference in color; correct English blazon for a plant with its stalk attached would be *slipped*. ED.

<sup>72</sup> The term translated *crossed* in *en aspa* (English *in saltire*). ED.

<sup>73</sup> The blazon adds the term *en barra* for the vertical arrow, but this is incomprehensible as it means *set diagonally* (English *in bend*). ED.

<sup>74</sup> Posada, *Congreso*, 135. Citation in note 50 above.

<sup>75</sup> “Three bands of gold, green and red.” TR.

<sup>76</sup> “The motto on the green band.” TR.

Patria Boba.<sup>77</sup> Moreover the phrase “which are the colors of the national flag” is incontrovertible proof that our flag, which disappeared during the reconquest, had green between the yellow and the red.<sup>78</sup>

The two legislative acts we just transcribed completely resolve the problem, as far as the coat of arms is concerned, but do so only partially when it comes to the flag, because even if they are clear concerning the colors yellow, green, and red, they are not clear regarding their position on the flag. It is very possible that the three bands were in the order just mentioned, but it is impossible to determine whether the stripes were parallel or perpendicular to the staff. Therefore the problem of our flag in 1814 will only be resolved satisfactorily when we are lucky enough to find a copy of the law of July 14 of that year – it was seen, as we said, in one of the countless bundles that make up our National Archive.<sup>79</sup>

Meanwhile, because of lack of data or even traditions, we have to limit ourselves to assuming that in the fighting in 1815 and 1816 – supported with varying success by the soldiers of the United Provinces against the royalists in Chopo (January 21), Cúcuta (February 18), Ovejas del Cauca, Planadas del Pital (June 30), Mondomo (July 1), the glorious battle of Palo (July 5), the disastrous one of Cuchilla del Tambo (June 29, 1816), the two at Páramo de Cachiri (February 8 and 22, 1816), the pit of Rio Negro (May 8) – the gold, green and red tricolor was blown by the winds of victory, and at other times by bloody defeats. Perhaps even within the solemn walls of *La Heróica* [Cartagena] some of the Granadine flags could be seen held upright by the glorious remnant of troops which the Liberator had led to its very outskirts [*adelantos*].



Figure 7. Pomegranate coin of New Granada (Cundinamarca eight reales silver piece), reverse (1821).

## 1816-1819

Years of desolation, of blood on the gallows.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>77</sup> As elsewhere in this text, the technical heraldic word *sinople* is translated as *green*, just as *gules* is always translated as *red* and *sable* as *black*. The meaning both of the original decrees and of the author’s interpretation of them is unaffected, as the words are not capable of any other meaning. ED.

<sup>78</sup> Perhaps in memory of this, the yellow-green-red horizontal tricolor is now used as the flag of the Department of Bolívar, whose capital is Cartagena. See Plate I. ED.

<sup>79</sup> Ollé, “Independencia” (citation in the box on page 71) shows various possibilities for this flag. ED.



Once Morillo's reconquest had been carried out, the Viceroyalty was reborn over the tomb of the Republic.<sup>81</sup> Fortresses, squares and parade grounds once again saw the royal flags, white, dark red [*rojos oscuros*], or yellow [*gualdas*] and red, and even purple [*morados*], displaying the crenellated castles, the lions and the fleurs-de-lys, some already known in 1810 and others brought by the pacifying expedition.<sup>82</sup>

The republican flags sank back into shadow. Barely one or two rectangular tricolors ventured to raise themselves on the mast of some bold corsair. Only winds of the low Llano caused the rainbow [*iris*] of Miranda to wave.<sup>83</sup>

Luckily for the Republicans, the incredulous eyes of the royalists did not notice that miniature tricolor pennants from the lances of Apure began to multiply and grow in Casanare.<sup>84</sup> It was the standard devised by the great Miranda, which waved for the first time on March 12, 1806 on the mainmast of the schooner *Leander*, which on the 24th of the same month received the oath of a handful of brave men, companions in that first ill-fated departure of the new Quixote of La Mancha.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, on 12 March 1806, in the waters of the West Indies, the

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[*footnote continues ...*]

<sup>80</sup> Those were the years of the Spanish reconquest. Dousdebés inserts a page-wide ellipsis here; as he is not quoting from a historic text it is unclear what if anything has been omitted. ED.

<sup>81</sup> Pedro Morillo (1775-1837), a Spanish military commander, led the forces sent by the monarchy (restored in 1814) to reimpose Spanish authority in northern South America. He did this very effectively during 1815-16, interposing a *reconquista* [reconquest] period between the first and second phases of the independence struggle there. ED.

<sup>82</sup> Fleurs-de-lys are the emblem of the Bourbon dynasty, which came to the throne of Spain (and Spanish America) after the extinction of the Spanish Hapsburgs in 1700. It took the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-14) to determine whether the French Bourbons or the Austrian Hapsburgs would take that throne. ED.

<sup>83</sup> Meaning the yellow-blue-red tricolor. See notes 88-89 below. The *Llano* (literally *plain*) is an extensive low-lying grassland in the Orinoco Valley, which periodically floods into a marsh. ED.

<sup>84</sup> The Apure River is in the Valley of the Orinoco in Venezuela; the plains [*llanos*] of Casanare are just over the border in what is now Colombia. Dousdebés may have mentioned these places because they foreshadow Bolívar's famous campaign of 1819, which began along the Arauca and Apure Rivers, continued across Casanare, over the Paya Pass in the Andes, and eventually down to victory at Boyacá (near Bogotá). ED.

<sup>85</sup> William Spence Robertson, *Francisco de Miranda and the Revolutionizing of Spanish America* (Washington, 1909), 227. Don Quixote de la Mancha was the protagonist of Miguel de

[*footnote continues*→]

Venezuelan Precursor deployed the flag that, with the passing of several years, would be the glorious insignia of a third of South America.<sup>86</sup>

In a recent speech [*discurso*] by our academic colleague and Director of this *Boletín*, Dr. Luis Augusto Cuervo, we find an interpretation of the flag of Miranda, which we transcribe below.<sup>87</sup>

There is in Miranda's *Diario de Viajes* [Travel Diary] for 1788, in the lands of Germany, a reference of strange originality and which is, at the very least, a suggestive coincidence. The restless leader recounts that on the evening of April 19, standing on the walls that surrounded the city of Hamburg, he watched with enthusiasm the parade of the Town Guard [*guardia de burgueses*, German *Bürgerwache*] who were marching, "flag displayed and drums beating," to guard the gates above the Elbe. And the traveler says: "the troops consist of 1,600 infantry and artillery and 75 mounted dragoons, very disciplined, with their yellow, blue, and red emblems [*divisas*]." Perhaps in the course of the years, after a life of adventure and intrigue, the memory of those soldiers of Frederick the Great came to the mind of Miranda when his arm pointed the liberating expedition of 1806, now in Venezuelan waters, to the new promised land that awaited them with laurels of glory.<sup>88</sup>

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[footnote continues ...]

Cervantes' famous novel of the same name, the national epic of Spanish literature, first published in 1605-15. Don Quixote was a deluded gentleman who imagined he was living in a chivalric romance; the word *quixotic*, applied to impractical visionaries who defy reasonable odds, derives from his name and fits Miranda's attempts to overthrow the Spanish Empire. See following note. ED.

<sup>86</sup> Francisco de Miranda (1750-1816), called the *Precursor*, was the first visionary of Latin American independence. For more on him, see pages 8-9. Dousdebés is referring to the first known raising of the yellow-blue-red tricolor in the anti-colonial struggle in Latin America, when Miranda left Jacmel in Haiti with a squadron of three ships to attack Venezuela. This attempt, and another that followed, were easily repelled by the Spanish, but it was a start. *Leander* was Miranda's flagship, named after his eldest son. ED.

<sup>87</sup> Dousdebés identifies Cuervo's remarks as given at a oath of allegiance to the flag [*jura de bandera*] taken by school children in Bogotá; they were later published in the newspaper *Registro Municipal de Bogotá* (No. 105), May 2, 1937. ED.

<sup>88</sup> The image of Miranda with his arm pointing to the promised land [*tierra prometida*] recalls that of Moses on Mount Nebo, where God said to him: "I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over ...." (Deuteronomy 34:1-5, at verse 4). ED.

Red, yellow and blue are the primary colors, which combine with each other to form every hue and shade. A more appealing and more convincing account of the flag of primary colors traces its origin to 1785, when in the course of his extensive wandering across Europe Miranda met the German poet and polymath Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), who later developed a complex theory of color (published in 1810 as *Zur Farbenlehre* [Theory of Colors]). Miranda later related how, after listening to his adventures in the Caribbean and elsewhere, Goethe told him that his destiny was "to create in your land a place where primary colors are not distorted."

[footnote continues→]

## Plate II

### Historic Flags and Emblems of Colombia

Reproduced, and captions translated, from Dousdebés' original text.



1. Arms of the New Kingdom (1548-1810), and the Granadine flag supposed to have been used by patriots (1811-13)



2. Flag of Cartagena, and version adopted as naval flag of the United Provinces in 1814



3. Flag (1813-14) and arms (1813) of Cundinamarca



4. Flag supposed to have existed in 1814-16, and arms of the United Provinces (1814)



## Plate III

### Historic Flags and Emblems of Colombia

Reproduced, and captions translated, from Dousdebés' original text.



5. Arms of the United Provinces decreed in 1815, and flag hoisted by Miranda on the *Leander* in 1806



6. Flag carried by the patriots in the Boyacá campaign in 1819, and arms used in 1820-21



7. Arms of Gran Colombia, decreed in 1821



8. Flag and arms of New Granada, decreed in 1834

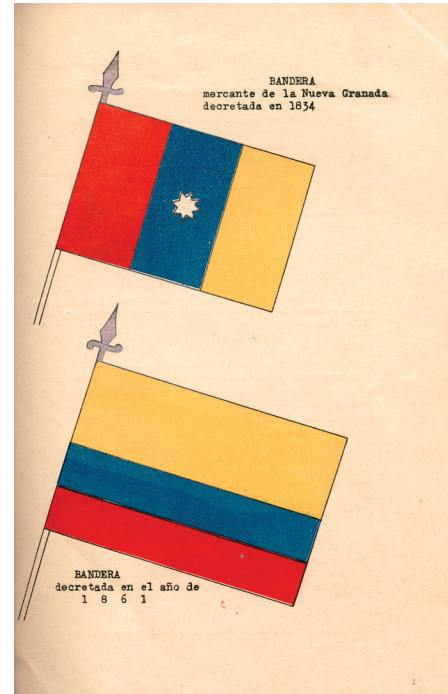
## Plate IV

### Historic Flags and Emblems of Colombia

Reproduced, and captions translated, from Dousdebés' original text.



9. Arms decreed in 1861, modified in 1866, augmented in 1924 and provided for in 1934



10. Merchant flag of New Granada, decreed in 1834, and flag decreed in 1861



11. Merchant marine and "consular" flags created by resolution in 1936



12. Modern flags of Venezuela, Ecuador and Colombia [not from Dousdebés]



## Plate V

### Historic Flags and Emblems of Colombia

For images marked with a lozenge [♦], see notes on page 72



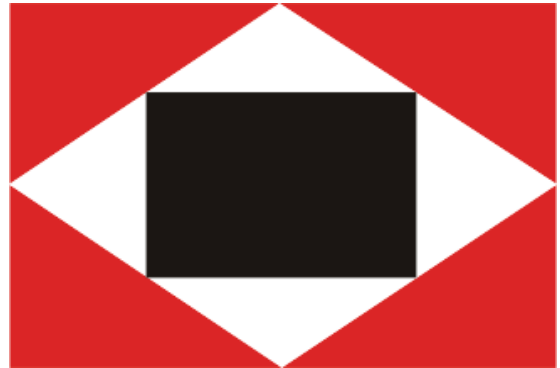
13. Flag of Cundinamarca, 1813-14



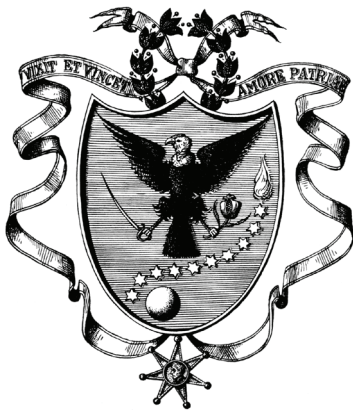
14. Cundinamarca military flag, 1813 ♦



15. Venezuelan flag from 1811 ♦



16. Ensign used by Captain José Prudencio Padilla (1784-1828) in his naval action against the Spanish at Cartagena Bay in 1821



17. Provisional Cundinamarca (Gran Colombia) arms proposed by General Santander, 1820 ♦



18. Flag with Santander's provisional arms, 1821 ♦

The new insignia was composed of the colors of the rainbow: yellow, blue and red, grouped in that order in horizontal bands of equal width and length, with the effigy of an Indian woman adorning the center of one of its faces as an emblem.<sup>89</sup> This is the tricolor that, as we already said, was sworn on March 12, 1806 and first heard the name of Colombia. Let us hear how that oath went:

I ... swear here loyalty and fidelity to the free people of South America, independent of Spain, and I swear to serve them honorably and faithfully against all their enemies and oppressors. I swear to observe and obey the orders of the legally constituted government, the orders of General Francisco de Miranda and those of the Chiefs that the Government may employ for the Army of Colombia.

Aboard the *Leander*, Jacmel Bay, March 24, 1806.<sup>90</sup>

Five years after our Quixote's first sally, the second took place. But by then the rainbow that, fallen into royalist hands off the coast of Coro, had been taken as a trophy to Caracas and solemnly burned on August 4th of that same year 1806 by the same Governor Guevara de

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[footnote continues ... ]

The source of this story is said to be a 1792 letter by Miranda to the Russian diplomat Count Semyon Vorontsov (1744-1832). Unfortunately we cannot at this remove determine which of these stories (if either of them), both coming from Miranda himself, reflects the true conceptual origin of his flag.

We know Miranda had this design in mind at least five years before the *Leander* because in 1801 he made an unsuccessful request to the British Cabinet for supplies to help him overthrow the Spanish colonial empire. According to this account Miranda asked for material for "ten flags, whose colours shall be red, yellow and blue, in three zones." The Wikipedia citation given for this is Miranda's *Colombeia* 1:80, issued by the Venezuelan Presidency in Caracas in 1978. I have not consulted this source. ED.

<sup>89</sup> Dousdebés cites Eduardo Posada, "El Acta de la Independencia [The Act of Independence]," *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* 6:165 (No. 68) (Bogotá, 1911). Of course yellow, blue and red is not the order of these colors as they appear in a rainbow – there yellow falls naturally between red and blue. It seems unlikely that Miranda's flag on *Leander* had the Indian woman. The Venezuelan independence flag of 1811 showed her on a canton, see Plate V, No. 15 and its source note. Ollé, "Nueva Granada" (citation in the box on page 71), reconstructs the flag described above. ED.

<sup>90</sup> Henry Rowan Lemly, "Un episodio internacional olvidado" [A Forgotten International Episode], *Memorial del Estado Mayor del Ejército de Colombia* [Memorial of the Colombian Army General Staff] 9:218-234 (No. 53) (Bogotá, 1916), 218. C. Padilla is credited as translator of Lemly's article into Spanish; the English version given here is not Lemly's original but is re-translated from the Spanish. ED.

Vasconcelos<sup>91</sup> – that same rainbow, we say, was now legally established and enthroned in a free land. Let us see how.

Once Venezuelan independence was declared on July 5, 1815, an attempt was made to establish the national flag.<sup>92</sup> A commission composed of the deputies General Francisco de Miranda, Lino de Clemente and José de Sata y Bussy was named to present to the Assembly a design for the flag and cockade that the new independent and sovereign state should establish.<sup>93</sup>

By July 14, 1811, the [Venezuelan] Constituent Congress had approved the flag for the state according to the model presented by that commission, and that day – July 14 – solemnly published the Act of Independence agreed on July 5, and with appropriate solemnity raised the national flag adorned with the emblem of the Indian woman.<sup>94</sup>

The flag, according to the design presented by the commission and approved by the Congress, was composed of three colors: yellow, blue and red, arranged in horizontal stripes of equal length, but the first (yellow) being of greater width than the second (blue), which in turn was a greater width than the third (red).<sup>95</sup>

Despite the fact that this stepped [*escalonada*] width of the three stripes is very precisely indicated in the source from which we have taken it, there is another very authoritative source



Figure 8. A version of the "Indian Woman" arms dated to 1820. Compare Plate V, No. 15.

<sup>91</sup> Felipe Larrazábal, *Vida del libertador Simón Bolívar* [Life of the Liberator Simón Bolívar] (Madrid, 1918), 1:85. Manuel de Guevara Vasconcelos (1739-1807) was Captain-General of Venezuela at the time of Miranda's attempted invasion. ED.

<sup>92</sup> Admiral Lino de Clemente (1767-1834) was a Venezuelan military leader and that country's first Minister of Navy and War. José de Sata y Bussy (1779-1815), although a Peruvian, lived in Caracas during the independence period and served in the revolutionary government. As Dousdebés will shortly explain, the flag of Venezuelan independence is relevant here because it was used soon thereafter in New Granada also. ED.

<sup>93</sup> Dousdebés sets this paragraph off in quotation marks, but gives no citation. ED.

<sup>94</sup> Luis Orozco, "Nuestra Bandera," *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* 6:465 (No. 68) (Bogotá, 1911). The original watercolor pattern for the Venezuelan flag of 1811 appears on Plate V, No. 15. ED.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*



that says that the blue and red stripes were of the same width, but the yellow one was of slightly greater width than each of the other two. There is, therefore, uncertainty about the width of the stripes.<sup>96</sup>

The ensign (whose proliferation in Casanare confident royalist eyes refused to see) was yellow, blue and red, like enormous butterflies of light and liberty. This is the ensign that Barreiro disdained, paying for his disdain with the most unheard of surprises at Laguna, Pore and Caño Chichire on April 13 1819 and at Barranca del Palmar the next day; later on June 27 at Paya; at Corrales and Gámera on July 10 and the next day at Peñón and Molinos de Tópago; then, heroic, at Pantano de Vargas on the 25th of the same month, dazzling on August 7 at Boyacá and triumphantly overthrowing the last viceroy on August 10, when it entered Santa Fe forever.<sup>97</sup>

Once the incredible news of the independence of the Viceroyalty of New Granada had been received by the Venezuelan Congress, assembled at Angostura, this body, whose president was the Granadan Zea,<sup>98</sup> created the Republic of Colombia, and said:

The sovereign Congress of Venezuela, to whose authority the recently-liberated peoples of New Granada have voluntarily wished to subject themselves, considering, etc. [*sic*] has decreed and decrees: [...]

Article 10. The coat of arms and flag of Colombia will be decreed by the general Congress (scheduled to meet at Rosario de Cúcuta in 1821), meanwhile the better known arms and flag of Venezuela will be used. [...]

Given at Angostura December 17, 1819.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Dousdebés gives here what looks like a citation to an obsolete cataloguing system for the national law library: National Library. Laws. Room [*Sala*] I. No. 11091. ED.

<sup>97</sup> These were engagements in Bolívar's Boyacá Campaign, the key to the defeat of the Spanish power in New Granada. ED.

<sup>98</sup> Francisco Antonio Zea (1766-1822) was the first President of the Congress of Angostura, which declared Venezuelan independence. He later became a Vice President of Gran Colombia under Bolívar. He had been arrested in 1794 in Nariño's plot to circulate *The Rights of Man* and imprisoned for two years, then exiled to France. Unusually for a South American patriot, he supported Joseph Bonaparte's claim to the Spanish crown. He was also a noted botanist and a diplomat; he died in England while representing Colombia there. ED.

<sup>99</sup> Rafael María Baralt & Ramón Díaz, *Resumen de la historia de Venezuela desde el año de 1797 hasta el de 1830* [Summary of the History of Venezuela from 1797 to 1830] (Paris, 1841), 1:393. The Republic of Colombia established here ultimately included modern Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador. As noted, it was later known as *Gran Colombia* to distinguish it from the Republic of Colombia established in 1886. ED.

The voluntary and successive submission of the recently-liberated provinces of New Granada to the government of Venezuela (as Casanare had done from March 1819) is the reason why Miranda's beautiful and telling [*diciente*] tricolor triumphed as far as Bogotá. But if it is indisputable that the rainbow, in horizontal bands of gold, blue and red, covered itself in glory during the immortal campaign of Casanare and Boyacá, it is also indisputable that we are left in the dark regarding the details of its makeup, as well as the coat of arms it displayed.

Our ignorance in this respect is painful, and therefore we ask: Is there not one of the fifteen million current citizens who achieved manhood under that flag and coat of arms who possesses the definitive document that can strike to the root of our ignorance?<sup>100</sup> Does there not exist, in some dark and forgotten corner or jewel-encrusted reliquary, at least a scrap [*trozo*] of the sacred cloth that saw Venezuelan and Colombian blood flow together in immortal fields?

## 1820

Eduardo Posada tells us that in the period from 1820 to 1821 a new coat of arms appeared on the horizon of the Colombian nation, formed in the following way.



Figure 9. Arms 1819-1821.  
Compare Plate VI, No. 19.

<sup>100</sup>

It is not quite clear what Dousdebés means here, at least about the coat of arms, as the arms he is discussing were superseded in 1821, or perhaps in 1834. Someone who “came to manhood” under a coat of arms superseded in 1834 would have been more than 120 years old when Dousdebés wrote this in 1937. ED.

Three quarters: above, on a red field, three silver stars, symbolic of the three great sections that comprised *Gran Colombia*.<sup>101</sup> In the lower left, on a blue field, a white horse, untamed, symbol of liberty, and in lower right, on gold, a broken scepter, symbolic of the defeated monarchy.<sup>102</sup> At the top of the composition, a condor or eagle with open wings, and below, a motto SER LIBRES O MORIR [Be Free or Die] on a ribbon. At the sides of the shield were two figures representing the Orinoco and the Magdalena [Rivers]; the first, at the left, an old man armed with a mace; the other, on the right, a woman with a branch in her hand. Each rests a foot on an amphora where the names of the two rivers were written.<sup>103</sup>

This, certainly, was the shield that figured on the flags of the Venezuelan forces which, with the Granadans, carried out the campaign of 1819.<sup>104</sup>

### 1821 to 1831

The long-awaited Congress of 1821, assembled at Rosario de Cúcuta, dealt with the flag and coat of arms of the Republic in this way.

Fundamental Law of the Republic of Colombia. We, the representatives of the peoples of New Granada and Venezuela, assembled in general Congress, etc. ... decree: [...]

Article 11. As long as the Congress does not decree the arms and flag of Colombia, the current arms of New Granada and the flag of Venezuela will continue to be used. [...]

Given at Rosario de Cúcuta, July 12, 1821.

JOSÉ I. DE MÁRQUEZ, President, etc.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Venezuela, Cundinamarca and Quito. See Map III on page 14. The word *quarters* [*cuarteles*] here means not *fourths*, but independent fields displayed on a single shield. ED.

<sup>102</sup> The untamed [*indómito*] quality of the horse is shown by the absence of trappings such as a saddle or bridle. In the original the blue field at the left is called *derecha* and the gold field on the right is called *izquierda*. These correspond to English *dexter* and *sinister*, which (counter-intuitively) identify the sides of a shield as they appear to a person *behind* the shield, holding it. Thus *dexter*, which means *right*, denotes left as seen from the front, and *sinister*, meaning *left*, means right as seen from the front. Here and elsewhere I have ignored this complication and adopted the viewer's vantage point in translating terms of blazon. ED.

<sup>103</sup> Eduardo Posadas, "Heráldica Colombiana [Colombian Heraldry]," *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* 2:346-356 (Bogotá, 1903) (No. 18), 351. An amphora was a vessel used in antiquity for storing fluids like wine and oil. The object held by the old man, the Spirit of Orinoco, looks more like a rudder or a steering-oar than a mace. ED.

<sup>104</sup> Later versions have more stars. Ollé, "Nueva Granada" (citation in the box on page 71), shows examples. ED.

<sup>105</sup> Luis Augusto Cuervo *et al.*, eds., *Congreso de Cúcuta: Libro de Actas* [Book of the Acts of the Congress of Cúcuta] (Bogotá, 1923), 276.

Almost three months later the Congress said:

Article I. From now on, instead of arms, two cornucopias will be used, full of fruits and flowers from the cold, temperate and hot lands, along with the Colombian *fascies*, comprised of a sheaf [*hacecillo*] of lances with an ax, crossed by a bow and arrows, and tied with a tricolor ribbon at the lower part.<sup>106</sup>

Art. 2. The great seal of the Republic, [...] etc. [...]

Given at [...] Rosario de Cúcuta, October 4 1821, 11th of Independence.

JOSÉ I. DE MÁRQUEZ, President, etc.<sup>107</sup>

We have established, therefore, from what the Congress of Angostura said in 1819, along with the two laws whose pertinent parts we have just transcribed, that the Venezuelan tricolor, and the shield with the cornucopias we have described, constituted the national insignia.<sup>108</sup> As luck would have it, three examples of the flag with the coat of arms mentioned above are preserved with religious veneration in our National Museum.

The careful inspection we have made of these three flags suggested a few reflections that we decided not to keep to ourselves [*in pectore*], regarding on the one hand the absolute impossibility of Colombians complying strictly with the law, and on the other hand the lasting deficiency of our legislators' and leaders' explanations [*eterna deficiencia explicativa*].

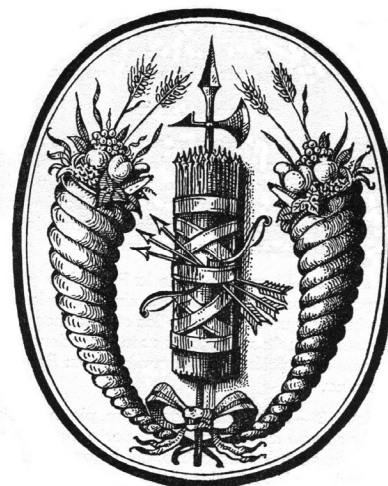


Figure 10. Arms of 1821.  
Compare Plate III, No. 7.

<sup>106</sup>

The *fascies* are an ancient symbol of power first used in Republican Rome. Originally they were a bundle of sticks (sticks lashed together are harder to break than a single stick), and symbolized the right of corporal chastisement exercised by the representatives of the people. Later an ax was added in the center of the sticks (or rods) to denote the right to impose capital punishment. The fascies were carried before Roman magistrates by officials called *lictors*; the number of lictors depended on the magistrate's rank. Fasces (the word has only a plural form) are often used by republican governments as an emblem of authority, and not only republican ones – they were also the symbol of fascism, which was named for them. The substitution in this case of lances for sticks or rods is unusual. Even more unusual and unhistorical are the versions by Dousdebés (see Plate III, No. 7) and in de Vries, “Nueva Granada” (citation in the box on page 71), where the bow and arrows are *passed through* the lances. This is unexampled, and violates the nature of the fascies as a symbol of the strength of collectivity. ED.

<sup>107</sup>

Cuervo, *Congreso*, 735. Citation in note 105 above.

<sup>108</sup>

This device is found on Colombian coins of the period, for example the gold peso of 1825 shown on the title page of this book. ED.

While it is true that the shields of the three flags in the museum coincide in that they depict the two cornucopias overflowing with fruits and flowers, when it comes to the bundle of lances and arrows, the objects depicted are entirely different in form, dimension and color. And it could not be any other way, because the concision [*laconismo*] with which the Law of October 4, 1821 is expressed left the door open to the most extraordinary and inartistic fantasies.<sup>109</sup>

The flags to which we refer are of three different sizes. They are tricolors, yes, but curiously even though two are yellow, blue and red, one is yellow, white and yellow, which demonstrates that caprice marched alongside the law. There was a flag that included the motto *Viva Bolívar - Muerte a los tiranos*<sup>110</sup> beneath the words *República de Colombia*.<sup>111</sup>

Even with the two flags that are yellow, blue and red, the tone of the colors, which should be the same, is totally different. Is it from the passage of time? Different forms of service? Distinct raw materials? A bit of everything.

Finally, the three flags are totally different, not so much in the mottos (since they have different purposes) as in their placement [*colocación*]. What's more, one of the yellow, blue and red tricolors, whose cornucopias overflow not with flowers and fruits as the law specifies but rather with golden spangles [*lentejuelas doradas*], has in its upper left corner a grenade, and immediately beneath it two cannons firing.<sup>112</sup> In the opposite corner, the arms of Santa Fe (an eagle grasping pomegranates). Above the central shield an inscription which reads, in gilded letters: *Viva la libertad*, and beneath it, also in gold, *Brigada nacional de militias*.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Without having seen the flags Dousdebés refers to, it is difficult to know what to make of this statement. But general descriptions such as are given in the laws he quotes are not intended to be exact guides to depiction, but allow liberal artistic variations as long as they do not contradict the explicit language of the grant or law. It seems likely that, in an age before photography, the variances from blazon Dousdebés notes resulted from the need of artisans to work from inaccurate descriptions, sketches or models. ED.

<sup>110</sup> Long live Bolívar. Death to Tyrants. TR.

<sup>111</sup> Ibáñez, *Crónicas*. 4:233. Citation in note 19 above. The yellow-white-yellow flag could have been yellow-blue-red, but have faded after years of exposure to the sun. ED.

<sup>112</sup> The grenade [*granada*] cannot be a modern hand grenade, which had not yet been invented, but a stylized round bomb (the Spanish adds the parenthetical word *proyectil* [projectile]). The word is cognate to *granada* [pomegranate], which it resembles. ED.

<sup>113</sup> Long live Liberty. National Militia Brigade. TR. It appears that Dousdebés is describing a military unit flag rather than a national flag. ED.

The successive patriotic legislatures up to the year 1831 do not appear to have taken up the question of the flag or the shield. From that we can infer that this flag with this shield was the one that paraded triumphantly in Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia in the years 1821, 1822, 1823, 1824 and 1825, consolidating on December 9, 1824, in Ayacucho, the absolute independence of an entire continent.<sup>114</sup>

## 1831

We arrive at the month of December, 1831. It is yet two days until the first anniversary of the death of the Liberator. This is a signal day because of the approbation and promulgation of the law that consummated the dissolution of Gran Colombia.

*The Convention of New Granada,*

assembled in Bogotá,

### DECREES

Article 4. "No changes will be made to the arms, flag and seal established by the laws of the Republic of Colombia, until decided otherwise by the present Convention or by the legislative bodies that succeed it. [...] Where before it said *República de Colombia* (on the shield, flags and coinage) there will be substituted *Colombia, Estado de Nueva Granada* [...]"

Given at Bogotá, December 15, 1831.

JOSÉ I. DE MÁRQUEZ

Secretary, FLORENTINO GONZÁLEZ<sup>115</sup>

Which is to say that Gran Colombia had died.

He who as President of the Congress had signed on December 17, 1821, the laws creating the flag and coat of arms of the nation forged by Bolívar in 1819, now signed on December 15, 1831, the decree of the convention that prolonged with anguish the existence of this flag, only so that he might say: *sic transit gloria mundi*.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Dousdebés may be overreaching here by extending his speculations to Peru and Bolivia. ED.

<sup>115</sup> National Library. Laws. Room I. No. 11209. See note 96 above.

<sup>116</sup> *Thus passes the glory of the world*. This phrase was used for centuries in papal coronations as a twist of flax was burned before the Pope, to remind him that his power and glory were fleeting and would vanish into air. ED.

## 1834

The Law just mentioned governed unmodified for two years and four months. Our chronicler Ibáñez says the Congress of 1833

decided that the national coat of arms and flag were to be distinct from those of Gran Colombia and that the country should be called *República de la Nueva Granada*.<sup>117</sup>

It appears that the date is in error because, as we will see later, these changes were the reason [*motivo*] for the laws of the legislature in the year 1834. At the beginning of this last year the Representación Nacional assembled in Bogotá.<sup>118</sup> One of the various laws that was passed said the following:

*The Senate and Chamber of Representatives of the State of New Granada*, assembled in Congress, DECREE:

\* \* \*

Article 1. The arms of New Granada will be a shield divided into three horizontal bands, which will carry, in the upper part, on a blue field, a gold pomegranate with stem and leaves of the same, open and seeded [*graneada*] in red. At each of its sides will be a cornucopia, both of gold, inclined, and spilling out toward the center coins from the one on the left side and tropical fruit [*frutas de la zona tórrida*] from the one on the right side. The first denotes the name of this Republic, and the second the richness of its mines and the fertility of its lands.

Article 2. In the second band, over a platinum [*platina*] field, a red cap hung on a lance, as a symbol of liberty and of a precious metal that is particular to this country.<sup>119</sup>

Article 3. At the bottom will be the Isthmus of Panamá, the two seas of blue with silver waves, and a black ship with its sails unfurled in each of them, indicating the importance of this precious neck [*garganta*] that forms an integral part of the Republic.

Article 4. The shield will be suspended from its upper part by a green crown of laurel, hanging from the beak of a condor with its wings unfurled; and on a wavy ribbon tied to the shield and intertwined with the crown will be written in black letters over a gold background this motto: *Libertad y Orden* [Liberty and Order].

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<sup>117</sup> Ibáñez, *Crónicas*, 4:380. Citation in note 19 above.

<sup>118</sup> The Representación Nacional was the New Granadan Congress. That is what Henao and Arrubla call it (in J. Fred Sippy's 1938 translation, 439) when speaking of a presidential message of the same year. Citation in note 2 above. ED.

<sup>119</sup> As a practical matter platinum, like silver, is typically shown in white. Attempts to reproduce a metallic finish only yield a depressing gray. An unadopted proposal by Alejandro Vélez in 1833 is substantially the same, but with a horse in the center field. See Table of Contents page for an image of the Vélez proposal, reproduced from Ortega's *Heráldica Nacional*, 95 (citation in note 40 above). The horse was a survival from the arms of 1819; even today it is still part of the arms of Venezuela. ED.

Article 5. The shield will rest on a green field adorned with small plants.

Article 6. The national colors of New Granada will be red, blue and yellow. They will be distributed on the national flag in three vertical divisions of equal size: that closest to the hoist red, in the center blue, and at the fly yellow.<sup>120</sup>

Article 7. The flags that are to be hoisted over ships of war, forts and other public places, and those that the ministers and agents of the republic unfurl in foreign countries, will carry the arms of the nation in the center of the blue division. Those of merchant ships will carry in the same place a white eight-pointed star.

\* \* \*

Article 10. The Law of October 4, 1821, is repealed [*deroga*] in every part.

Given at Bogotá, May 8, 1834.

VICENTE BORRERO, President of the Senate

MANUEL M. QUIJANO, President of the Chamber.<sup>121</sup>



Figure 11. Arms of 1834. Compare Plate VI, Nos. 21 and 27.

Repeated readings of this Law have done nothing less than cause us to exclaim: what poverty of description for such a beautiful conception of shield and flag!<sup>122</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Here as elsewhere the Spanish *asta* and *extremidad* are translated as *hoist* and *fly*, meaning the parts of a flag closest to, and furthest from, the flagstaff. ED.

<sup>121</sup> National Library. Laws. Room I. No. 4891. See note 96 above. Gustavo Arboleda, *Historia Contemporánea de Colombia* (Bogotá, 1918), 1:215. I have corrected the date – Dousdebés gives it as May 9, but Ortega, *Heráldica Nacional*, 104 (citation in note 40 above), shows May 8. ED.

<sup>122</sup> Dousdebés misses the point that a blazon, or legal description of a coat of arms, is not supposed to be poetic or emotional, but to express in words as precise and economical as possible the essentials of the design, so it can be reproduced correctly from the description alone without the aid of an accompanying image. ED.



At least this Law does clear up all the existing unknowns about the general form of the homeland's symbols.

Oddly enough, the legislators finally remembered to lay down the insignias of our merchant ships and warships, as well as those of our consuls and representatives abroad. From April of 1814 – when it appears that the triple quadrilateral of Cartagena was adopted for our ships – up to this point, nothing whatever was said about maritime and consular insignia.<sup>123</sup>

The Law we are studying, however, neglected three important details. It did not fix the dimensions of the flag or its stripes or its shield or quarterings. And what's worse, it did not give the motto or name that the coat of arms was to carry, or state whether the shield was to be enclosed in a rectangular, circular, or oval frame. It also didn't indicate the tone of the colors.<sup>124</sup>

Through these doors, unthinkingly opened, entered the imaginings [*fantasía*] that fostered the inconceivable excesses that almost ruined our beautiful insignia, not only in the immediate future but also at the height of the Granadine Confederation and in its final years [*postrimerías*].

The introduction of the country's new insignia was delayed until August 7 of that year [1834], certainly with the goal of using it in the commemoration of the 15th anniversary of the Battle of Boyacá, to the great satisfaction of Santander, who was at that time the President of New Granada.<sup>125</sup>

This was done with all solemnity. Along with the religious and military events, the eminently civil and generous manumission of three slaves (of the few that still existed) was added as a very special offering to the new flag.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> For the “triple quadrilateral” flag of Cartagena, see Plate II, No. 2. ED.

<sup>124</sup> Dousdebés is mistaken about the dimensions of the stripes, as Article 6 of the law just quoted specifies that the stripes are to be of equal size. A blazon does not fix the size of a flag, but fixes the pattern from which flags are manufactured in whatever sizes are needed or prescribed by regulation – obviously smaller for a table flag than for one intended to fly over a public building. And while modern official flag specifications do often prescribe exact color tones according to objective measurements, this was not the case in 1834. ED.

<sup>125</sup> The Battle of Boyacá in 1819 was the culmination of Bolívar's most famous campaign and the determining battle in the military struggle for Colombian independence from Spain. As mentioned in note 36, General Francisco de Paula Santander (1792-1840), Vice President of [Gran] Colombia and Acting President during Bolívar's absence, was one of the leaders of the *independentista* forces at Boyacá. He was later President of New Granada. ED.

<sup>126</sup> Orozco, “Nuestra Bandera,” 466. Citation in note 94 above. Slavery was not abolished in Colombia until 1851. ED.

## 1858

One month after the Granadine Confederation was established (May 22, 1858), the first Congress of the new entity decreed:

Article 7. In the official documents, seals, coats of arms, and national coinage the phrase *República de la Nueva Granada* will be replaced by with *Confederación Granadina*.

Given at Bogotá, June 23, 1858.<sup>127</sup>

As can be seen, the flags were forgotten in the replacement of that phrase. Certainly, as we mentioned in our treatment of the 1834 flag, the poor flags [*las pobres banderas*] did not carry that phrase. But neither did the shield, as we already clearly noted.

Oh, our legislation and its infinite gaps and lacunae! On the other hand, a law that was promulgated a year prior, on June 30, 1857, says this regarding coinage:

Article 1. The monetary unit in New Granada will be the *peso*, a silver coin with the weight, type and form that was given for the *granadino* by the Law of April 27, 1847.<sup>128</sup>

Since we observed that the shield that figured on this coin was adorned with the addition of two little flags at each side, we set out to look for the legal provision that had ordered that addition and specified how it should be. To that effect we found the law of April 27, 1847, which says in relevant part:

Article 2. The die-impression [*sello*] of the *granadino* will be: on the reverse side, the national coat of arms with the condor of the timbre erect [*en pie*], the shield adorned with the national flags...

\* \* \*

Given at Bogotá, April 27, 1847.

President of the Senate, PEDRO A. HERRÁN

President of the Chamber, EZEQUIEL ROJAS

Since that phrase “adorned ... with the national flags” is extremely vague, we continued looking to see if we could find something a little more explicit, and we came across the following.



Figure 12. New Granada ten reales coin (1848). Not a *granadino*, but with a similar pattern.

<sup>127</sup> National Library. Laws. Room II. No. 11086. See note 96 above.

<sup>128</sup> Arboleda, *Historia*, 5:79. Citation in note 121 above.

*The Senate and Chamber of Representatives of New Granada, etc.*, DECREE:

Article 7. The seal of the national gold coins will be ... namely: On the *onzas* and *condors*<sup>129</sup> ... on the reverse side, the complete national coat of arms, adorned with the national flags, the condor of the *timbre* to be placed standing with wings half displayed, with a laurel crown held in its beak.<sup>130</sup>

Given at Bogotá, June 2, 1846.

President of the Senate, ANTONIO MALO

President of the Chamber, MARIANO OSPINA<sup>131</sup>



Figure 13. Granadine revenue stamp (1858)

It was urgent for us seek out the legal origin of these ornaments because, as we will see later, those little flags, which still are used today [1937], are the cause of some errors and mistakes contrary to a legal provision that is really hard to understand. And since the laws prescribing the adornment of the shield with national flags are not very clear either, we will take some time to describe them in detail.

Of course the national flags in 1846, 1847, and 1858 were the two from 1834: yellow, blue and red, in vertical stripes (the red closest to the hoist), the flag of war containing the shield, without a border or inscription of any kind, and the merchant flag with a white star over the blue middle stripe of the flag.

On the coinage we have studied, four little flags appear, distributed two by two on the right and left sides of the shield; on the right side are the merchant flags, and on the left those of war.<sup>132</sup> The two flags on each side are placed one on top of the other, the upper one in front of the lower, and even though colors do not appear on the coinage, they are clearly marked [as having vertical stripes] by dividing lines parallel to the staff. There are finally divergences of

<sup>129</sup> Gold coins. *Onza* means *ounce*. TR.

<sup>130</sup> *Half displayed* translates *mitad explayadas*. The word *explayadas* corresponds to the English heraldic term *displayed*, meaning with wings fully extended and held as high as possible, a customary position for a heraldic bird. The closest English equivalent to *mitad explayadas* would be the somewhat antiquated heraldic term *disclosed*. ED.

<sup>131</sup> National Library. Laws. Room II. No. 4955. See note 96 above.

<sup>132</sup> Left and right are corrected here, as elsewhere, to their ordinary non-heraldic sense implying the point of view of the observer. ED.

different gradations from the center of the shield towards the sides.<sup>133</sup> Their staffs end in lance-points, but they do not have cravats of any kind.

This flag with the vertical stripes, with its beautiful shield quartered into three, born at the same time as New Granada, was a mute witness – raised by partisans on both sides<sup>134</sup> – to the bloody killings [*cruentas matanzas*] to which the Colombians (at that time Granadans) were led, sometimes by blind and ferocious politics, sometimes by the predominance of utopian ideas and exaggerated independence, and on a glorious occasion, the need to return to the Constitution outraged by the powerful and daring Melo.<sup>135</sup>

## 1861

One thousand eight hundred and sixty-one. The Granadine Confederation disappears. The name changes, and as a consequence, there is a change in the coat of arms and flag. The conqueror of Usaquén and Bogotá, a few days after his triumphal entry into the capital,<sup>136</sup> decreed:

The blue background of the national flag will display as many white stars as there are States in the Nation.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> It is unclear what Dousdebés means here – he could be referring to hatching lines, which follow an established convention (called the *Pietra Sancta system*) to indicate color. ED.

<sup>134</sup> Spanish *tirios y troyanos*, literally *Tyrians and Trojans*. The allusion is to Virgil's *Aeneid*. Aeneas, a refugee from ruined Troy, lands at Carthage, in modern Tunisia, which was traditionally regarded as having been founded by the city of Tyre in modern Lebanon. Dido, Queen of Carthage, invites Aeneas and his men to stay, promising that she will treat his Trojans and her own Tyrian people equally.

Or do you wish to settle here with me, as equals in my kingdom?

The city I build is yours: beach your ships:

Trojans and Tyrians will be treated by me without distinction.

*Aeneid* 1:573-5 (translation by A. S. Kline; citation in note 57 above). Dousdebés seems to be making the point that the opposing sides in the civil war could have lived together peacefully. ED.

<sup>135</sup> General José María Melo (1800-1860) took power as President in a complicated coup d'état in 1854, but fell from power later that year after losing a civil war. For his short-lived provisional national arms and flag, see Plate VI, Nos. 22-23. ED.

<sup>136</sup> Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera entered Bogotá on July 18, 1861, marking a victory for the forces of regionalism over those of centralism during the civil war of 1860-62. ED.

<sup>137</sup> There were nine such states at the founding of the United States of Colombia in 1861: Antioquia, Bolívar, Boyacá, Cauca, Cundinamarca, Magdalena, Panamá, Santander and Tolima. The design

[footnote continues→]

Given at Bogotá, July 26, 1861.

Provisional President of New Granada, TOMÁS CIPRIANO DE MOSQUERA<sup>138</sup>

This is a *ukase*, but a defective one, since it is incomplete.<sup>139</sup> For a small example,<sup>140</sup> the blue background of the flag comprised a rectangle 60 centimeters long by 80 centimeters wide. In what part of the rectangle, how, and of what size should the white stars stipulated by the decree be drawn or embroidered? Why was the exact number of them not given?<sup>141</sup>

Many will venture the opinion that it is foolish for a President to concern himself with such minor details, but they forget that Napoleon specified even the most insignificant details about the design of his imperial flag.

A few months later the official newspaper declared:

TOMÁS CIPRIANO DE MOSQUERA

Provisional President of the United States of Colombia, etc., DECREES:

Article 1. The coat of arms of the United States of Colombia will be the same as that of the old Granadine Confederation, which more properly is stamped on the silver coin known as a *granadino*, the only change being that the elliptical zone that surrounds it will have a width of 10 centimeters and will carry this motto: *Estados Unidos de Colombia* [United States of Colombia], and in the lower part as many eight-pointed silver stars as there are or may be States in the Union, all on a field of red.

Article 2. The colors of the national flag of the United States of Colombia are yellow, blue and red, distributed in horizontal bands, with yellow occupying half of the flag, in

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[footnote continues ...]

was presumably intended to reflect the decentralizing emphasis of the new régime, another fluctuation in the continuing exchange between centralizing and federalizing tendencies that had dominated Colombian politics from the beginning. Flags showing this pattern appear on Plate VI, Nos. 24-25. ED.

<sup>138</sup> Manuel María Fajardo, “Bandera Nacional: Historia Legal de su Establecimiento” [The National Flag: Legal History of Its Establishment], *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* 12:249-354 (Bogotá, 1918) (No. 138), 352.

<sup>139</sup> The Spanish is *ukase-decreto*. *Ukase* is a Russian word for a decree with the force of law, and has in English and Spanish a connotation of arbitrariness. It is not clear what *ukase* adds to *decreto* in this context. ED.

<sup>140</sup> The Spanish is *en el peor de los casos*, literally *in the worst of cases*. TR.

<sup>141</sup> Presumably an exact number was not given so that the number could be changed if the number of states changed, as was well known to be the practice in the United States of America, and as had been done with the river-spirit arms of 1819 (see Figure 9, page 40, and examples in Ollé, “Gran Colombia,” citation in the box on page 71). This also explains why their arrangement was not prescribed. ED.

the upper part, and the other two colors the other half, divided in equal bands, blue in the center and red in the lower part.

Article 3. The flag of war has the following dimensions: the hoist [*asta*], two meters; the width of the yellow band, 72 centimeters, and that of the blue, as well as the red, 36 centimeters; the length will be 1.80 meters.

[\* \* \*]

Given at Bogotá, November 26, 1861.

Provisional President, T. C. DE MOSQUERA<sup>142</sup>

The modifications the Provisional President made to the original coat of arms of New Granada (as supplemented by the Granadine Confederation) are therefore few. The colors of the flag were realigned<sup>143</sup> and received new and now precise dimensions, and are very well arranged from an esthetic point of view. The coat of arms was surrounded by an elliptical zone, making it more visible and elegant.

It was very unfortunate that General Mosquera forgot to make any mention of the naval flag for the new United States [of Colombia]. Nevertheless, if we examine the matter, we should remember the terms of the Decree of November 26 [1861], above all the part that says:

The coat of arms ... will be the same as that of the old Confederation which more properly is stamped on the silver coin, known as a *granadino*.

And we should especially remember that two of the four little flags that adorn the sides of the shield, those on the right side are specifically the merchant flag, distinguished by the white star in the middle of the blue band, and those on the left side are flags of the ships of war – see Article 7 of the Law of May 8, 1834. Then we will be able to deduce that General Mosquera wanted merchant ships as well as ships of war to continue with the Granadine flag assigned to them by the law of May 1834.

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<sup>142</sup> Dousdebés citation is to *Registro Oficial* No. 33 (1861). This was the official Colombian government gazette. However, Worldcat gives the official Colombian government gazette in 1861 as the *Gaceta Oficial*, and lists the *Registro Oficial* as published only in 1862-63. I have not tried to settle the question. The present official government gazette, the *Diario Oficial*, first appeared on April 30, 1864. ED.

<sup>143</sup> Literally: suffered an upset [*sufrieron un vuelco*] by being positioned horizontally instead of vertically as before. TR.

Very shortly after it was born this flag had its baptism in blood: on December 6, 1863 it waved victoriously in Cuaspud, fittingly [*precisamente*] in the hands of its creator.<sup>144</sup> But it also fell to this same flag, to his chosen daughter, to be present one memorable May 23, the day on which her bold and rebellious father was overthrown.<sup>145</sup>

It also waved at Los Chancas (August 31, 1876), and at Garrapata (November 20-22 of the same year), where it saw rivers of Colombian blood.<sup>146</sup> Rather than ceasing, the torrent increased at Manizales, Mutiscua and La Donjuana; and finally, it was witness to the innumerable battles of 1885.<sup>147</sup>

During the month of February of that year [1885] our national tricolor was accompanied by another of red and green, created by the government army of Occidente, when that of Centro was fused with that of what was then the State of Gran Cauca. That reminds us of our suppositions that the gold, green and red flag that we mentioned had been created in 1814 by Torres, the Caucan martyr.<sup>148</sup>

### **1887, 1889, 1890 to 1906**

On August 4, 1886, the Congress of Delegates assembled in Bogotá issued the new Constitution, known as the Constitution of '86, which was ratified on August 5 and went into effect that same day.

From this new Constitution our country received the name *Republic of Colombia*. As was natural, that change of name had an impact on our national coat of arms and flag. Let us see how.

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<sup>144</sup> At Cuaspud on December 6, 1863, General Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera repelled an Ecuadorian invasion under General Juan José Flores. ED.

<sup>145</sup> Henao & Arrubla. *Historia*, 673, 681, 687. Citation in note 2 above. Dousdebés is referring poetically to the overthrow of Mosquera from his fourth presidency in a *coup d'état* led by Colonel Daniel Delgado París on May 23, 1867. ED.

<sup>146</sup> During a violent but unsuccessful rebellion by conservative forces against the national government. ED.

<sup>147</sup> This was yet another bloody rebellion. It developed into the War of 1885, eventually won by the incumbent president Rafael Núñez. ED.

<sup>148</sup> As mentioned in note 62 above, Camilo Torres Tenorio (1766-1816), one of the pioneers of Colombian independence, was captured and executed by the Spanish during the Reconquest. Why the appearance of this flag for Occidente in 1885 should remind us of Torres' flag is not clear. ED.

DECREE No. 838 of 1889

(November 5)

*The President of the Republic*, CONSIDERING

1. That the Nation, in Article 1 of the Constitution assumed a unitary form, and through Article 4 took the name Republic of Colombia, facts in virtue of which the old motto “Estados Unidos de Colombia” no longer had a reason to exist, as well as the nine stars that made up a part of the coat of arms of the Republic and which were a federal symbol.<sup>149</sup>

\* \* \*

DECREES:

Article 1. In the coat of arms, seals and national documents, the nine stars will be removed, and for the old inscription *Estados Unidos de Colombia* will be substituted this other one: *República de Colombia*.

Given at Bogotá, November, 1889.

CARLOS HOLGUIN etc.<sup>150</sup>

Dr. Holguin also filled a gap that had been observed concerning the flag that our merchant ships were to raise. To that effect he issued the following decree [No. 309 of 1890].

CARLOS HOLGUIN, etc. [...] decrees:

Article 1. The merchant flag of the Republic of Colombia will be three meters long by two wide with an oval shield forty centimeters in diameter, placed vertically, with a blue background, with a white eight-pointed star in the center. This shield will be surrounded by a red zone, five centimeters wide.

Given at Bogotá, April 29, 1890.

CARLOS HOLGUIN etc.<sup>151</sup>

This well-intentioned decree suffers from readily apparent deficiencies.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> The word *federal* in a Colombian context emphasizes the power of the states over that of the central government. This is, confusingly, exactly opposite to its meaning in the United States of America. ED.

<sup>150</sup> Posadas, “Heráldica,” 355. Citation in note 103 above.

<sup>151</sup> Ramón Guerra Azuola, “Bandera y Escudo de Colombia [Flag and Shield of Colombia],” *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* 2:72-74 (Bogotá, 1903) (No. 38), 74.

<sup>152</sup> These deficiencies are not as readily apparent now as they seemed to Dousdebés. But one is that it specifies an *oval* shield [*escudo ovalando*], but with only one dimension given. All images of this flag, and the sense of the blazon, show an *ellipse* (see Plate IV, No. 11). An ellipse is symmetrical on two independent axes, but they must be different and *together* fix its dimensions. But an oval, like the egg for which it is named, may be wider at one end than at the other. An oval may, but need not, be an ellipse. Article 1 of the Decree of November 26, 1861 (see page 51 above) and

[*footnote continues*→]



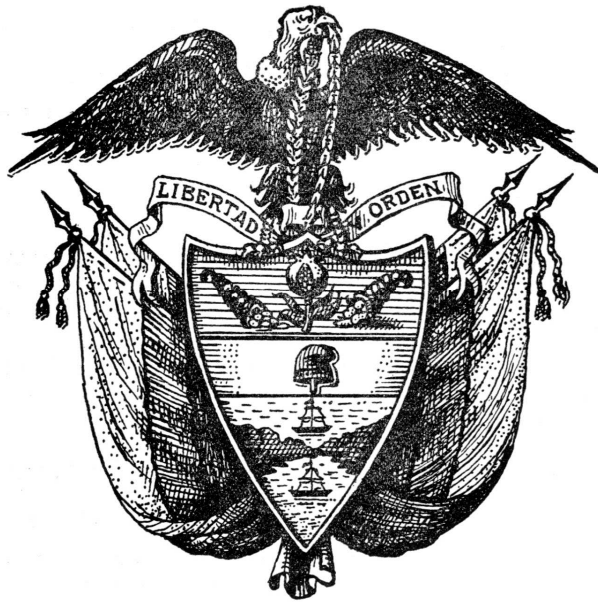


Figure 14: National arms, 1889 pattern

It fell to the flag created by Mosquera [in 1861] to be present at the bloodbaths [matanzas] whose outline we have just drawn. It fell to the tricolor that once again carried the name *República de Colombia* (after the name had spent 56 years in obscurity) to be madly paraded through our killing fields in 1895.<sup>153</sup> In the War of a Thousand Days, even more madly, we set it against its revolutionary brother in Piedecuesta, Bucaramanga, La Amarilla and Palonegro; in Bolívar, Tolima, Cundinamarca, Boyacá, Cauca, Magdalena, Santander and Panamá.<sup>154</sup> When speaking of the historic life of our flag, it is impossible for us not to exclaim with a voice choked with pain: our tricolor flag was present at on November 3, 1903.<sup>155</sup>

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[footnote continues ... ]

Article 2 of the Decree of May 17, 1924 (see page 58 below) both place the arms in an elliptical zone [zona elíptica]. ED.

<sup>153</sup> In yet another unsuccessful rebellion. ED.

<sup>154</sup> The War of a Thousand Days (1899-1902) was an especially savage and prolonged civil war. It was originally a struggle between the Liberal and Conservative parties, but both parties fractured and the war degenerated into guerilla warfare. At the end of a conflict that took 100,000 lives, Colombia was devastated and unable to resist the American-directed secession of Panamá. ED.

<sup>155</sup> The date of Panamá's separation from Colombia. ED.

## 1906

In one of the issues of the *Diario Oficial* for the month of July, 1906, we read the following.

DECREE NO. 844 OF 1906

(July 14)

By which are declared some provisions about the national coat of arms and flag.

The President of the Republic, etc.

DECREES:

Article 1. The national flag [*pabellón o bandera*] used by the Army of the Republic will be 1 meter and 35 centimeters long by 1 meter and 10 centimeters in width.

Article 2. The standard [*estandarte*] for a squadron of cavalry will be 1 meter in length and 1 meter in width.

Article 3. The coat of arms for the flags and standards to be used by the army will invariably be 40 centimeters in diameter, with 15 stars representing the 15 Departments into which the Republic is divided.<sup>156</sup>

Article 4. The flags that are raised over public offices and on ships and forts [*baluartes*] may have larger dimensions and need not carry the coat of arms of the Republic.

Article 5. The width of the flags and banners [*banderolas*] will be distributed in four equal parts: two for the yellow, one for the blue, and another for the red [*colorado*].

Article 6. It is prohibited, etc. [...]

Given at Bogotá, July 14, 1906.

RAFAEL REYES

Minister of War, VICTOR CALDERON<sup>157</sup>

The provisions contained in the transcribed decree are very curious, but still appropriate. For example, it is very curious that it says that the coat of arms is to have a diameter of 40 centimeters because that means the oval form – fixed by the law of 1834 and the decree of General Mosquera applied in 1890 to the shield of the merchant marine – disappears, and instead

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<sup>156</sup> According to Ollé there were actually only 13 departments in 1906, including Panamá whose secession was unrecognized. The number of stars in the flag of this pattern varied – Plate VI No. 26 shows the 14-star version used from 1910-1914. The substitution of departments [*departamentos*] for states [*estados*] reflects the centralizing tendency of the regime of 1886. As mentioned in the Introduction, the precedent for this was set in France, which at the time of the Revolution established departments to replace the former feudal provinces in order to redirect civic identity toward a national center rather than regional ones. ED.

<sup>157</sup> Guerra Azuola, “Bandera y Escudo,” 352. Citation in note 151 above.

a circular form is established, to the detriment of esthetics. It is certain, nevertheless, that the decree of 1890 specifies an oval with a single diameter, which in practice would never produce anything other than a circle.<sup>158</sup>

Where are the 15 stars specified to be placed, and of what color, shape, and size are they to be?

It is well enough that the shield be left off the flag on walls and forts, but very wrong that it be left off the flags of the ships of war, even though, looked at carefully, its optional use was still permitted.<sup>159</sup> But who was to make the decision?

The word *colorado* means, among other things, a color more or less red, but the colors of the flag should have their tones precisely determined.<sup>160</sup>

It was good that the dimensions of the war flag had been reduced to a rational size. We well remember the occasion in which a gust of wind on a hilltop threw us to the ground, driven by a large flag of 12 square meters, impossible for our young arms to handle. We could mention a few more little defects, but we will wait until the end when it is time to discuss the provisions in effect today.

For now, let it be enough for the respected memory of our President Reyes to know that all of his predecessors on the chair of state [*solio*] – and even the Founding Fathers of the country whenever they took up the question of our insignia – fell into the same errors, if not worse.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Dousdebés is confused here – as discussed in note 152 above, a figure defined as an oval (or an ellipse) has two axes of different lengths, and can never be a circle (all axes identical) even though its dimensions may be insufficiently described. But the 1906 military flag pattern nevertheless defined a circle. ED.

<sup>159</sup> Indeed the decree only states that these flags *need not* carry [*no necesitan llevar*] the arms. ED.

<sup>160</sup> As mentioned (see note 124 above), while modern official flag specifications do often prescribe precise color tones according to objective measurements, this was not the case at the time Dousdebés is discussing. ED.

<sup>161</sup> The term translated here rather freely as *Founding Fathers* is *Padres Conscriptos*, really *Conscript Fathers*. It refers to the Roman Senate, whose first members were just called *fathers* [*patres*], but whose number was, according to tradition, increased in 509 BC by summoned members [*conscripti*] appointed by Junius Brutus (the republic's first consul) to newly established seats. See Livy, *History of Rome*, II, 1:10-11 (English translation at <http://tinyurl.com/gub28w4> through Tufts University's Perseus Catalogue). The term *Conscript Fathers* was later used for the

[*footnote continues*→]

## 1924

The following legal provision concerning coats of arms and flags appears in a *Diario Oficial*<sup>162</sup> from the month of May, 1924.

DECREE NO. 861 of 1924

(May 17)

by means of which all the provisions dictated up to the present date concerning the composition and use of the national flag and coat of arms of the republic are brought together in one text [*cuero*].

*The President, etc.*

DECREES:

Article 1. The flags and standards [*el pabellón, bandera o estandarte*] of the Republic of Colombia are composed of the colors yellow, blue and red, distributed in three horizontal bands; the yellow band, situated in the upper part, will have a width equal to half of the flag, and the other two bands will be of equal width, each a quarter part of the whole, with the blue in the center.

Article 2. In accordance with Decree 309 of 1890, the merchant flag of Colombia will be three meters long by two wide; it will carry in the center a shield of oval shape [*de forma ovalada*], over a blue field, bordered by a zone of red velvet [*terciopelo*] five centimeters in width, with a white eight-pointed star in the center, ten centimeters in diameter. The axes of the oval, within the blue field, are of forty centimeters for the larger and thirty for the smaller.<sup>163</sup>

This will be the flag that will be used by the ships of the Colombian navy and for legations and accredited consulates abroad.

Article 3. The flag of war used by the army will be one meter and thirty-five centimeters in length by one meter and ten centimeters in width for infantry [*armas de á pie*], and the standard for cavalry [*armas montadas*] will be one meter in width by one meter in length. These flags will carry in the center the coat of arms of the Republic, framed by a border of red velvet five centimeters wide and forty centimeters in diameter in its exterior part, within which will be written in gold letters the name of the body of troops to which it pertains.

Article 4. Flags that are raised over public buildings and ships and forts may have greater dimensions and will not carry any coat of arms.

Article 5. The coat of arms of the Republic, whether for flags, standards, letterheads, etc., will have the following composition, in accordance with the provisions of Law 3 of 1834:

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[*footnote continues ...*]

Senate as a whole, and in subsequent times for republican assemblies (such as the Venetian Senate) and by writers and orators emphasizing the ancient republican tradition. ED.

<sup>162</sup> The official government gazette. See note 143 above. ED.

<sup>163</sup> See notes 152 and 158 above.

The perimeter will be in the Swiss form, six parts wide by eight parts in length, and divided in three bands.<sup>164</sup> The superior band, or chief, on a blue field, carries in the center a gold pomegranate, opened and seeded in red, with branches and leaves of gold;<sup>165</sup> at each side of the pomegranate will be a gold cornucopia, inclined, with each spilling its contents toward the center: the one on the left pouring out coins, and the one on the right pouring out tropical fruit. The middle band, on a silver field,<sup>166</sup> carries in the center a Phrygian cap perched on a lance as a symbol of liberty. On the lower band goes the Isthmus of Panamá, in blue, with its two adjacent seas in wavy silver, and a black ship with its sails unfurled in each of them.

The shield rests on four flags diverging from the base, of which the two lower ones form a 90-degree angle, while the two upper ones will be separated from the lower ones at a 15-degree angle. Those flags will be gathered together toward the apex of the shield.

The top of the shield is suspended from a laurel crown hanging from the beak of a condor with its wings displayed.<sup>167</sup>

The slogan *Libertad y Orden* [Liberty and Order] is written in black capital letters on a gold ribbon.

Article 6. Outside of public buildings, etc. [...]

Article 7. The insignia pennants of military units described in the Campaign Service Regulations will continue to be used in the dimensions and forms established there.

Article 8. [...]

Article 9. Decrees 309 of 1890 and 844 of 1906 are repealed.

Given at Bogotá, May 17, 1924.

PEDRO NEL OSPINA, etc.<sup>168</sup>

We may have considerable difficulty with this decree, despite the fact that it is the most complete to have been issued on this matter throughout our civic life. But we will limit ourselves only to discussing the most salient of its points.

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<sup>164</sup> The term *Swiss form* refers to the shape of the shield, but it is not distinctively Swiss. ED.

<sup>165</sup> The Spanish translated here as *gold* is *del mismo metal* [of the same metal], incorporating the awkward and antiquated conventions that the name of a tincture should not be repeated, and that heraldic gold is a metal rather than a color. It seemed clearer just to say *gold*. ED.

<sup>166</sup> Note that this field is no longer called *platinum*. ED.

<sup>167</sup> The word translated here as *top* is *jefe*, cognate to the English heraldic term *chief*, meaning the uppermost area or compartment of a shield. ED.

<sup>168</sup> Pedro Nel Ospina & Alfonso Jaramillo, “Decreto Número 861 de 1924,” *Memorial del Estado Mayor del Ejercito de Colombia* [Memorial of the Colombian Army General Staff], 17: 240-243 (No. 143) (Bogotá, 1924), 240.

Article 4 removes the shield from the flags on ships of war; but Article 2 said that the ships of the Colombian navy should raise a flag with the shield having a star. There is therefore some confusion.

How many masts and how many sails should the black ships mentioned in Article 6 have?<sup>169</sup>

Are the colors and shields to be deleted from the four little flags that frame the arms?

Where should the ribbon go that carries the slogan *Libertad y Orden*?

The way in which the shield is to fit over the little flags is quite a puzzle [*rompecabezas*].

Our condor, the main figure in the arms, needs a complete regulation. The condor is classic and has unmistakable traits; but we have never really managed to represent it, except in very rare cases. Instead we have run the most picturesque gamut of eagles, kestrels, owls, buzzards, doves, etc., sometimes seated, other times in flight, now with the head toward the left, now toward the right, completely forgetting that in sound heraldry, every living being that looks towards the right is a bastard.<sup>170</sup>

We must repeat that in this and many other matters it is necessary to shut the door firmly [*rotundamente*] on what we have called patriotic fantasy.

## 1932

With our flag and shield more or less as stipulated in the last decree we commented on, we arrive at the year 1932 of imperishable memory. The nation well remembers how our beautiful tricolor was paraded proudly and triumphantly over the waves of Putumayo.<sup>171</sup> At the end of that year, when we had to be present at our rendezvous with honor that was made in the

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<sup>169</sup> Here as elsewhere, Dousdebés improperly faults the blazon for a lack of minute specificity. A detail such as the number of sails on a ship is customarily left to the artist. ED.

<sup>170</sup> This rant is quite misguided. First, it is sufficient for the blazon to specify that the bird is a condor – it is for the artist to render it so it looks like a condor. And second, it is a completely false idea that an animate charge facing sinister is a mark of bastardy. ED.

<sup>171</sup> Dousdebés refers to the sending of a river flotilla under General Alfredo Vasquez Cobo in December 1932 to relieve the Amazonian port of Leticia in the Putamayo territory (not then a Department) after it had been seized by Peruvian irregular forces. But President Enrique Olaya Herrera did not allow Vasquez to reoccupy Leticia, and the war between the two countries continued into 1933, when the Peruvian president was assassinated and his successor agreed to settlement of the dispute by the League of Nations. ED.

far east of Colombia, it was necessary to send some units of our navy toward Amazonas and Putumayo; and *here was Troy*.<sup>172</sup> Our warships either did not have a legal flag to raise, or they had to raise the merchant flag.

The difficulty was resolved very rapidly, like all our difficulties, with an executive decree that ordered that the flag with the national coat of arms should be raised in the Republic's warships.

We do not know the terms in which this decree was conceived, nor if it included something concerning the dimensions of the flag (the relationship between the length and the width, as the sailors say), nor does it say when and where, etc., it should be raised, because this provision has not been published. We only know that it was decreed during the month of November, 1932.<sup>173</sup> Thus was corrected and complemented General Ospina's decree on a matter of prime importance.

## 1934

In Executive Decree No. 62, issued on January 11, 1934, we find the following concerning our national insignia.<sup>174</sup>

207. The flag of the Republic of Colombia is composed of the colors yellow, blue and red, distributed in three parallel and horizontal stripes, of which the yellow, placed in the upper part, will have a width equal to half of the entire flag, and the other two in stripes equal to a quarter part of the whole, with the blue stripe in the center.

208. The war flag used by the army will be, in accordance with the law, 1.35 meters in length by 1.10 meters in width for infantry and one meter in width by one meter in length for cavalry. These flags will carry in the center the coat of arms of the Republic, within an oval of red cloth, within which will be written in gold-embroidered letters the name of the body of troops or military department to which it belongs.

209. The flag with the coat of arms may only be used by the armed forces of the Nation.

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<sup>172</sup> Emphasis in original. Meaning "*and here the trouble began.*" ED.

<sup>173</sup> Actually it *was* published, as it is included in Ortega's documentary compilation *Heráldica Nacional*, 143 (citation in note 40 above) as Decree No. 120 of November 22, 1932. ED.

<sup>174</sup> These regulations come from Article 1 of the decree. Dousdebés cites *Reglamento de servicio de guarnición* [Garrison Service Regulations], 60, as the source for this 1934 decree. But this citation cannot be confirmed. The most recent edition of this title listed in Worldcat as issued in Colombia was published in Bogotá in 1909. ED.

210. The national flags that are raised on barracks, public buildings, merchant ships, forts, etc. can be of greater or lesser dimensions and will not carry the coat of arms.

The pennants [*gallardetes*] of warships will be in the form of an isosceles triangle measuring 0.60 meters at the base and 0.80 meters in height.<sup>175</sup>

211. Concerning the coat of arms of the Republic, the stipulations expressed in Article 5 of Executive Decree number 861 of 1924 should be complied with, as follows:

Article 5. The coat of arms of the Republic, whether for flags, standards, letterheads, etc., will have the following composition, in accordance with the provisions of Law 3 of 1834:

The perimeter will be in the Swiss form, six parts wide by eight parts in length, and divided in three bands. The superior band, or chief, on a blue field, carries in the center a gold pomegranate, opened and seeded in red, with branches and leaves of gold; at each side of the pomegranate will be a gold cornucopia, inclined, with each spilling its contents toward the center: the one on the left pouring out coins, and the one on the right pouring out tropical fruit. The middle band, on a silver field, carries in the center a Phrygian cap perched on a lance as a symbol of liberty. On the lower band goes the Isthmus of Panamá, in blue, with its two adjacent seas in wavy silver, and a black ship with its sails unfurled in each of them.

The shield rests on four flags diverging from the base, of which the two lower ones form a 90-degree angle, while the two upper ones will be separated from the lower ones at a 15-degree angle. Those flags will be gathered together toward the apex of the shield.

The top of the shield is suspended from a laurel crown hanging from the beak of a condor with its wings displayed.

The slogan *Libertad y Orden* is written in black capital letters on a gold ribbon.<sup>176</sup>

Article 2. All prior provisions having to do with garrison service and those that are contrary to the provisions of this Decree are repealed.<sup>177</sup>

[\* \* \*]

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<sup>175</sup> Warship pennants usually signify that a ship is in active commission. But these are traditionally many times longer than their height. Either Dousdebés means some other kind of pennant or these proportions are incorrectly stated. The German Admiralty's authoritative *Flaggenbuch* [Flag Book] (Berlin, 1939) shows (at page Kolombien:I) a masthead pennant in use by Colombia at the time in proportions 56:700, with a tricolor at the hoist and a long fly of solid blue. For an image of this flag in roughly similar proportions, see Plate VI, No. 29. ED.

<sup>176</sup> This language is exactly the same as that in the Decree of May 17, 1924, quoted on page 59 above. For an example of the pattern, unchanged except in detail since 1834 and still in use, see Figure 14 on page 55, and compare Plate VI, Nos. 21 and 27. ED.

<sup>177</sup> If this is Article 2, it is not entirely clear where Article 1 begins. But as Dousdebés' citation for the passage quoted here is to page 60 of the Garrison Service Regulations, perhaps the numbered sections are subdivisions of Article 1. ED.



Given at Bogotá, January 11, 1934.

ENRIQUE OLAYA HERRERA

Minister of War, ALFONSO ARAUJO

We will make no comment, although many could be made. We will limit ourselves to presenting the coat of arms drawn with religious fidelity to what was prescribed in item 211 of Decree 62 [of 1934], and the two forms of placement of the colors of the flag suggested by the of the word *horizontal* in part 207 of the same decree, instead of *perpendicular to the hoist*, which is clearer.<sup>178</sup> (It is certain that nothing has been said of staffs, ferrules, finials [*lanzas*] and cravats of flags and standards since the decree of November 26, 1861, which stated that the staff should be 2 meters long.)<sup>179</sup>

If we have allowed ourselves to show disagreement with the letter of the legal provisions concerning arms and flags of the Republic, it is because we hope that the regulations about the national flag and insignia that appear to be now in preparation will be a perfect model in terms of precision, clarity and heraldry.

We do not believe it out of place to profess here our opinion that the arms and flags of the Republic well deserve to be the subject of a statute [*ley*]. That way we will know the popular national will regarding the question, controversial at one time and then forgotten, whether or not the Isthmus of Panamá should continue to be represented in our coat of arms.

As a brief review, we hold, then, that today [May 1937] the following legal provisions govern the matter we have studied in such detail.

- Parts 207 and 217 of Executive Decree No. 62 of January 11, 1934.
- The Executive Decree of November 1932 that prescribes the flag that should be raised over our ships of war.
- Article 2 of the Executive Decree No. 861 from 1924, regarding the merchant flag, keeping in mind that Part 210 of Decree No. 62 removes the coat of arms from the flags of merchant ships.

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<sup>178</sup> It is uncertain what Dousdebés might have meant, as there is no ambiguity in the description of the stripes as *parallel and horizontal*. ED.

<sup>179</sup> Actually the decree sets two meters as the dimension of the hoist of the flag (the border nearest the staff), not the staff itself. See text of Article 7 in Ortega, *Heráldica Nacional*, 130 (citation in note 40 above).

- The Resolution of October 1936, issued by the Ministry of War to approve and give the force of law to the content of a very elegantly printed pamphlet entitled *Ceremonial marítimo de la Armada nacional de Colombia*.<sup>180</sup>

Many flags, pennants, insignias, etc., are mentioned in that [1936] pamphlet, but nowhere are they described. Only at the end of it is there appended a clear lithographic plate in which twelve distinct flags and one pennant are depicted. Concerning these flags, and following their order, we should make these observations.<sup>181</sup>

- The pennant that the Resolution orders is in conflict with the passage following Part 210 of Decree 62.

- Flags 2 through 9 can be called internal service insignia for ships of war, of the same type as the insignia pennants of the Army which Decree 62 of 1934 repealed, no doubt by omission.<sup>182</sup> Those naval flags are very splendid but perhaps not as exclusively Colombian as our patriotism would desire. They will certainly be corrected in the [forthcoming] national insignia regulations to which we have alluded.

- Flag number 11, Department [*Dirección general*] of the Navy, does not accord with part 210 of the decree cited, which prohibits the use of the coat of arms on the flags of barracks and public buildings.

- Flag number 10, the merchant flag established by Decree No. 861 of 1924, is modified by the suppression of the shield in Part 210 cited above.

- With respect to flag number 12 – Air Forces – we do not know the decree that prescribes it; and flag number 13, the consular flag, is in conflict with what was set out in the paragraph of Article 2 of Decree No. 861 of 1924.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Maritime Ceremonial of the National Navy of Colombia. TR.

<sup>181</sup> It is impossible to assess the observations that follow, or even understand them, without access to the official pamphlet Dousdebés alludes to. ED.

<sup>182</sup> It is unclear without the text whether Dousdebés means that the army pennants were accidentally or intentionally repealed by not having been mentioned. ED.

<sup>183</sup> The paragraph Dousdebés cites appears on page 58 above. For an image of the Air Force flag of the time, see Plate VI, No. 29. ED.

We have finished. Perhaps we have gone on too long. The cause: our misguided standards that made us consider the materials as if they were dogma. For that we ask your pardon. What else were we to do, if custom makes the law?

PEDRO JULIO DOUSDEBÉS

Bogotá, May 20, 1937



Condor on reverse of Colombian one-peso note (1968)

## COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT

by Gustavo Tracchia

The paper translated here was composed in 1937 by General Pedro Julio Dousdebés Escallón for the *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades*, the journal of the Colombian Academy of History, with the intention of setting the record straight about the history of Colombian flags. But Dousdebés presents the early history from a historical rather than a vexillological point of view, focusing on events rather than flags, and so his narrative is sometimes unclear.

The names given to the early historical flags are also not always clear. For example, he elaborates on the *bandera Granadina* which he supposes existed, but is not quite sure.<sup>1</sup> He assumes the existence of yellow and red bicolor flag based on cockades and armbands that supporters of the independence movement used as early as 1810 (mainly in Bogotá, where a junta was formed). But the flag with those colors is not fully documented, and from its colors it is sometimes called *la bandera realista* (the royalist flag). That leaves us uncertain whether the flag, if it existed, was that of the *independentistas* or their opponents – its use from 1810-13 is tenuously documented.

The formation of governmental *juntas* spread throughout most of the viceroyalties in South America when Napoleon deposed the Bourbon King of Spain, Ferdinand VII, and took over the throne. Juntas like the one in Bogotá were also formed in Santiago de Chile, Montevideo, Caracas, Buenos Aires and Quito. These juntas, composed mainly of Americans, supplanted royalist viceroys, governors and *corregidores*.<sup>2</sup> The idea was to maintain loyalty to the Bourbon king but at the same time entertain the *idea* of independence. This contradiction led to use of royalist colors in flags and cockades to mask the impulse toward independence. In Buenos Aires the blue and white colors from the sash of the Spanish royal Order of Charles III showed loyalty to Ferdinand VII.

Dousdebés sometimes does not make it clear enough that some of the early flags existed simultaneously and sometimes on opposing sides. That was the case with the flag of Cartagena, known as the *Cuadrilonga*.<sup>3</sup> The existence of this flag as early as 1811 is quite well documented by many writers. The *Cuadrilonga* became the flag of the United Provinces of Nueva Granada with its capital in Tunja. At the same time we have the blue, yellow and red horizontal tricolor of the State of Cundinamarca (1813-14), with its capital in Bogotá.<sup>4</sup> Dousdebés does not always give us adequate perspective on points like these.

Another flag Dousdebés mentions, a horizontal tricolor of yellow, green and red, also represented the United Provinces of Nueva Granada. During the civil war with the United Provinces, the federalists under Camillo Torres prevailed over Cundinamarca centralists led by

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<sup>1</sup> See Plate II, No. 1. ED.

<sup>2</sup> A *corregidor* was an official appointed to govern a district rather than a province. ED.

<sup>3</sup> See Plate II, No. 2. ED.

<sup>4</sup> See Plate II, No. 3. ED.

Antonio Nariño, and their flag replaced the others. Its colors were inspired by the *Cuadrilonga*. Dousdebés mentions that the choice of green reflected its use by other regions such as Cartagena, Antioquia and Cauca. Really, though, the flag of the Confederation of the Cauca Valley was a blue and white horizontal bicolor with a silver (grey) border.

After reconquest by Spanish royalist forces under General Morillo, these and other short-lived republics merged into the reconstituted New Granada, and their leaders went into hiding or exile. That period ended with Bolívar's victory at Boyacá in 1819 under the yellow-blue-red horizontal tricolor created by Francisco de Miranda. The Mirandine colors dominate Colombian national flags from then on. The union of the former Granadine provinces and republics with Venezuela (and what is now Ecuador) under the name *República de Colombia* [Gran Colombia] lasted until 1831; those countries, now separate, still use the Mirandine colors in their own flags.<sup>5</sup>

Despite inconsistent coverage before 1833, Dousdebés is meticulous in listing decrees and legislation from then until 1937. He shares with the readers his frustration with the defects in those sources, which sometimes left crucial points obscure or ambiguous.

The country changed its name several times in the 19th century, as noted in the text, but (as Dousdebés often complains) it is sometimes hard to tell from the legislation where the new name of the country appeared in the coats of arms carried on the flags.

From 1906 the war flag (or armed forces flag) was also used by the President as commander in chief of the armed forces. Later a merchant flag and consular flag were added, having at the center of the flag a blue circle with a red border and an eight-pointed white star in the middle.<sup>6</sup> In 1936 a new and different consular flag with a five-pointed star at the upper hoist replaced the previous merchant flag, but this flag is no longer used.<sup>7</sup>

Despite its shortcomings, which are largely due to failures in the legislation rather than in his own scholarship, Dousdebés has given us a work that continues to be useful as a historical record. It was written for a highly educated Colombian audience thoroughly grounded in their country's history. It is perhaps an understandable difficulty of the work that it is not always as transparent to a later and wider audience as it was to the readers of the *Boletín* in 1937. But its value today, and the value of this translation, is found not only in its detailed citation of primary sources and its helpful illustrations but in its different perspective.

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<sup>5</sup> See Plate IV, No. 12. ED.

<sup>6</sup> See Plate IV, No. 11. ED.

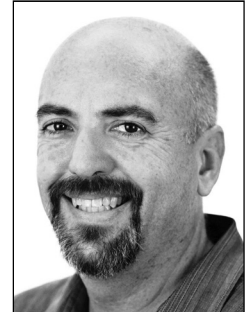
<sup>7</sup> See Plate IV, No. 11. ED.

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS



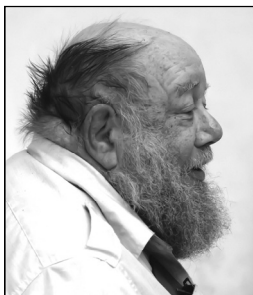
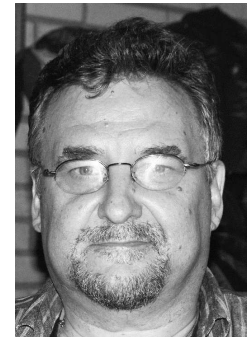
**AUTHOR. Pedro Julio Dousdebés Escallón** was born on September 3, 1883, in Cúcuta in the Department of Santander, Colombia. He was a career army officer, and in 1935, as a brigadier general, became the commandant of the Fifth Brigade of the Second Division of the Colombian Army. He contributed articles to learned journals on historical and professional topics. Dousdebés died in 1954.

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**CONTRIBUTING ILLUSTRATOR. Jaume Ollé Casals** was educated in Reus and Barcelona. He was chosen as a Notary in 1980 and retired from that field in 2016. He has studied flags from childhood and has long been associated with the Catalan Vexillological Association and other international flag societies. Editor of the journal *Flag Report* since 1997, Ollé is the author of the scholarly series *Historic Flags* (see note in the box on page 71), and is a frequent contributor to *Flags of the World*.



**EDITOR. David F. Phillips** is a heraldic scholar based in San Francisco. Trained as a lawyer and librarian, he is the author of two books and a number of articles on heraldic topics, which can be found on his website [www.radbash.com](http://www.radbash.com). Phillips is a Trustee of the Flag Heritage Foundation and Editor of its Publication Series. He is a Craft Member of the [British] Society of Heraldic Arts.

## SOURCES OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS

- Sources marked **Ortega** are from Enrique Ortega Ricaurte, *Heráldica Nacional: Estudio Documental* [Heraldry of the Nation: A Documentary Study] (Bogotá, 1954).
- Sources marked **Ollé** are by Jaume Ollé Casals, reproduced with his kind permission from the Colombia pages of his *Historic Flags*. See note in the box on page 71.
- Sources marked **de Vries** are from the Nueva Granada, Colombia and Venezuela pages of Hubert de Vries, *National Arms and Emblems Past and Present*. See note in the box on page 71.

### COVERS

Front cover ornament	Detail from the United States of Colombia civil ensign (1861). Adapted by Charles Whitmire from Ollé, “Estados Unidos de Colombia.”
Back cover	<i>La Muerte de Giradot en Barbuda</i> [The Death of Giradot at Barbuda], by Cristobal Rojas (1883). Image from Wikimedia Commons at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/jpe9wow">http://tinyurl.com/jpe9wow</a> , archived at <a href="https://perma.cc/6kbkf-zc9x">https://perma.cc/6kbkf-zc9x</a> .

### COLOR PLATES

Plate I	Chart by Blas Delgado (2001), from the <i>Flags of the World</i> Colombia pages, <a href="http://tinyurl.com/hbke3us">http://tinyurl.com/hbke3us</a> , revised and updated by Rob Raeside (2016).
Plates II-IV, Nos. 1-11	Reproduced from the color plates in Dousdebés’ original publication, in the Whitney Smith Flag Research Center Collection at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin. They were copied by the Center’s Photography Services Department and are reproduced here by courtesy of the Center.
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Plate VI, No. 28	Air Force flag. From French Naval Hydrographic and Oceanographic Service, <i>Album des pavillons nationaux et des marques distinctives</i> [Album of National Flags and Distinctive Markings] (Paris, 1990), 67. The German Admiralty’s official <i>Flaggenbuch</i> (Berlin, 1939) shows the same flag in use then.
Plate VI, No. 29	Naval commission pennant. By Charles Whitmire, after the 1939 <i>Flaggenbuch</i> , 69.

## MAPS

Map I, page 13	By Noah Phillips, adapted as fair use based on an untraceable Internet image found on the “Under the Northern Star” blog for August 2, 2010, at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/gufm2kz">http://tinyurl.com/gufm2kz</a> , archived at <a href="https://perma.cc/a5pf-cctq">https://perma.cc/a5pf-cctq</a> .
Map II, page 13	By Noah Phillips, based on <i>Mapa Nueva Grenada</i> (1811) on Wikimedia Commons at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/z9kxta5">http://tinyurl.com/z9kxta5</a> , archived at <a href="https://perma.cc/s8sL-agj4">https://perma.cc/s8sL-agj4</a> . This derivative adaptation is published under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike License.
Map III, page 14	By Noah Phillips, based on the Wikimedia image <i>Gran Colombia 1820, guerras de independencia 1821-23</i> , at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/zn23kl4">http://tinyurl.com/zn23kl4</a> and archived at <a href="https://perma.cc/z6Lw-wrjh">https://perma.cc/z6Lw-wrjh</a> . The Wikimedia image is in turn based on Agostino Codazzi, “Carta de la Antigua Colombia dividida en los departamentos de Cundinamarca, Venezuela y Quito,” Map IX in the <i>Atlas geográfico e histórico de la República de Colombia</i> (Paris, 1889).
Map IV, page 14	By Noah Phillips, adapted as fair use from a map found on the Internet at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/hz5wb35">http://tinyurl.com/hz5wb35</a> , archived at <a href="https://perma.cc/f263-sn2k">https://perma.cc/f263-sn2k</a> . Although the Internet source attributed the map to the Public Broadcasting System television documentary “Civilization: The West and the Rest,” PBS attributes it to WNET-TV, New York, which was unable to find it in the documentary and agreed that I might adapt it for use here.

## TEXT ILLUSTRATIONS

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Frontispiece	Original front cover of <i>Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades</i> , Volume 24, No. 274 (Bogotá, 1937). Reproduced by courtesy of the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin.
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Figure 12, page 48	Colombian silver ten reales coin of 1848. Reproduced from the World Coin Gallery website at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/juxmhx3">http://tinyurl.com/juxmhx3</a> , with their kind permission. Archived at <a href="https://perma.cc/ur6q-bz36">https://perma.cc/ur6q-bz36</a> .
Figure 13, page 49	Colombian revenue stamp (1858). Reproduced under general license from Wikimedia Commons, and may be seen there at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/h3j9qkt">http://tinyurl.com/h3j9qkt</a> , archived at <a href="https://perma.cc/km9v-kng6">https://perma.cc/km9v-kng6</a> .
Figure 14, page 55	National arms, 1889 pattern. From Ortega, 135, where it is incorrectly dated as from 1886.
Main text tailpiece, page 65	Reverse of Colombian one peso note (1968). Image courtesy of Banknotes.com.
Contributors, page 68	The picture of Dousdebés comes from the <i>Galeria de Comandantes</i> on the Colombian Army’s website <a href="http://www.ejercito.mil.co">www.ejercito.mil.co</a> ; see <a href="http://tinyurl.com/zjhowjq">http://tinyurl.com/zjhowjq</a> , archived at <a href="https://perma.cc/d7y5-nf6w">https://perma.cc/d7y5-nf6w</a> . The photograph of Gustavo Tracchia is by Ted Kaye; that of David Phillips is by William Phillips. The photographs of Michael Hammer and Jaume Ollé are from their own collections.
Final tailpiece, page 72	Heraldic pomegranate from J. P. Brooke-Little, <i>An Heraldic Alphabet</i> (New York, revised ed. 1975), 167. Brooke-Little credits Norman Manwaring and Alison Urwick for the line drawings without specifying which artist created this particular image.

#### **NOTE ON INTERNET RESOURCES**

The skillfully illustrated essays by the Catalan flag scholar **Jaume Ollé Casals** are a rich source of information about Colombian flags of all periods. Ollé provides images of many variant designs not pictured elsewhere, and adds detailed historical context. His essays – part of a longer series called *Historic Flags*, which aims to cover all the countries of the world – are available on line, in Spanish but accessible through Google Translate. They can be opened from his index page <http://tinyurl.com/olle-hist>. I have archived five of them with PermaLinks as follows: Independencia <https://perma.cc/4y7w-chww>; Gran Colombia <https://perma.cc/qe2m-4zgb>; Nuevo Granada <https://perma.cc/2n2m-y53L>; Estados Unidos de Colombia <https://perma.cc/r473-gazc>; República <https://perma.cc/n7sc-qtx7>. He also has pages on Colombian rank and service flags.

*National Arms and Emblems Past and Present* is the encyclopedic work of the Dutch heraldic scholar **Hubert de Vries**. Unlike Ollé, whose illustrations are largely his own reconstructions, de Vries reproduces images of period material – seals, coins, documents, paintings, and much else – and sets them in historical context. His pages are an essential reference for scholars documenting the symbols of any country his work covers. They can be opened from his index page <http://tinyurl.com/deVries-arms>. I have archived the three pages relevant to Colombian iconography with Permalinks as follows: Nueva Granada <https://perma.cc/37uf-gxh6>; Colombia <https://perma.cc/3hv7-qk43>; Venezuela <https://perma.cc/9ujr-yf3w>.

## COLOPHON

This book was composed on a Microsoft Word word processing system, with the aid of a Hewlett-Packard Scanjet 3500c image scanner. It was printed with Flint soy-based inks on 60 pound offset paper (12 point C2S paper for the covers) by Specialty Graphics, Inc., of San Leandro, California, on a Harris M-700 web press (text) and a Heidelberg 40 sheet-fed press (covers and color section), using PDF Workflow and Kodak EVO digital publishing programs. The type font is Times Roman: 12 point for body text, 11 point for footnotes and block quotations, 10 point for tables. Picture captions are set in 12 point Calibri. The first printing was 1200 copies.



### ◆ NOTES TO PLATES V AND VI ◆

- No. 14 This design follows the text of the *Gazeta Ministerial de Cundinamarca* (No. 130, dated Bogotá, 26 August 1813), 198, quoted in Ortega, 40.
- No. 15 Dousdebés reports this flag having equal stripes, with the “Indian Woman” emblem in the center of the middle stripe (see text, page 37). But there are many differing reports about this flag, and little reliable documentation. Instead I have shown the Venezuelan flag of 1811, which was used for New Granada from its accession to [Gran] Colombia in 1819 until 1821. See illustration source note.
- No. 17 These provisional arms were decreed on January 10, 1821 by General Francisco de Paula Santander. He was Bolívar’s deputy in Cundinamarca, as New Granada had been renamed under the Gran Colombia regime, and was effectively leader there. The decree and blazon may be found in Ortega, 61.
- No. 18 Documentation for this flag is scarce. Ollé, “Nueva Granada,” offers several versions and I have chosen one with unequal stripes, as a way to show a tricolor of this pattern, which was sometimes used in the early 19th century (see text, pages 38-39). These arms were superseded in 1821.
- No. 19 Documentation for a flag with these arms is even scarcer than for No. 18. The arms were likely adopted in 1820, when New Granada was still using Venezuelan symbols. See Figure 9 and accompanying text, pages 40-41. But the flag is speculative. Ollé, “Nueva Granada,” offers many choices and this was the handsomest.
- No. 24 This was the flag decreed by General Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera on July 26, 1861, for the short-lived transitional United States of New Granada, reflecting the new decentralized governmental structure. The state was renamed United States of Colombia later that year, and the flag was supplanted by that shown in Plate VI, No. 25. See text, pages 53-54.
- No. 26 This flag was established in 1906; the number of stars varied from time to time. This version, with 14 stars, was in use from 1910 to 1914.
- No. 26 The roundel on the fly of this flag was used to distinguish Colombian military aircraft beginning in 1927. The roundel, based on the national flag of the time, is still in use, but the star was changed from eight points to five in 1953. The Air Force ensign is harder to document with the eight-pointed star, but this image by Ollé conforms to the pattern shows as in use in 1939 in the usually reliable and authoritative German Admiralty flag book (*Flaggenbuch*, Berlin 1939).
- No. 27 The national arms, last revised in 1955 and still in use. It is essentially the same pattern adopted in 1834.
- No. 28 Naval Commission pennant, adapted by Charles Whitmire from the 1939 German Admiralty *Flaggenbuch*, in proportions 56:700. The original appears in an inset. See text, page 62, note 175.



## Plate VI

### Historic Flags and Emblems of Colombia

For images marked with a lozenge [♦], see notes on page 72



19. Supposed national flag, 1820 ♦



20. Cornucopia flag of Gran Colombia, 1821



21. Official model, arms of 1834 ♦



22. Provisional arms proposed by General Melo during his insurgency, 1854



23. Flag with General Melo's provisional arms, 1854



24. Flag of transitional United States of New Granada, 1861 ♦



25. Flag of United States of Colombia, 1861



26. Colombian military flag, 1910 ♦



27. National arms of Colombia (2016) ♦



28. Colombian Air Force flag in use in 1939 ♦



29. Commission pennant in use in 1939 ♦



**THE DEATH OF GIRARDOT AT BÁRBULA, BY CRISTOBAL ROJAS (1883)**

**In an article in a scholarly journal in 1937, Brigadier General Pedro Julio Dousdebés Escallón of the Colombian Army published a carefully researched study on arms and flags of Colombia throughout its varied history, based on historical records and original sources. He traced their development from Spanish colonial days and the chaotic time of independence through the Gran Colombia period and the various forms of the modern Colombian state. The Flag Heritage Foundation is pleased to make this work available for the first time in English, along with a new introduction and notes, four maps, and all the original illustrations plus many others.**

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