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The Limits of Porfirian Influence in Guerrero: Political Autonomy and the Plan del Zapote

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in  
Latin American Studies

by

Christian Andres Ramirez

2021

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## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Limits of Porfirian Influence in Guerrero: Political Autonomy and the Plan del Zapote

by

Christian Andres Ramirez

Master of Arts in Latin American Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Professor Fernando Pérez Montesinos

The Mexican Revolution of 1910 did not happen in a vacuum, it occurred due to a series of grievances against the Porfirian regime. These grievances, which came from a plethora of social groups from the rural peasantry to even the urban liberal elite, sought to return the liberal order back to the ideals enshrined in the Constitution of 1857. One of the biggest grievances for the people of Guerrero was the assault on local and state autonomy that had befallen the region since the rise of Porfirio Díaz. This thesis examines how the challenges to political autonomy of the Indigenous pueblos of Guerrero and the urban state elites during the Porfiriato pushed the region to participate in the Mexican Revolution. A possible explanation can be found by reevaluating the significance of a *pronunciamiento* known as the Plan del Zapote. The Plan del Zapote was a manifesto and uprising that occurred in the municipality of Mochitlán, Guerrero in 1901. The

*pronunciamiento* reaffirmed the liberal tradition that existed prior to the rise of Díaz, a liberalism coined by historian Peter Guardino as popular liberalism. To this end, the *pronunciamiento* defended the rights of the pueblos and municipalities over the power of the federal government in Mexico City. It sought to return Guerrero to a time before Díaz, but paradoxically allowed the Porfiriato to continue with the status quo elsewhere, and while it ultimately failed, the energy behind it would stay strong in the state and compel the people of Guerrero to act and involve themselves in the Revolution. Therefore, this thesis will conduct a careful study of the Plan del Zapote and show how political autonomy and the meaning of liberalism was so crucial for the people of Guerrero that would later motivate them to join the Revolution.

The thesis of Christian Andres Ramirez is approved.

Lauren Derby

Kevin B. Terraciano

Bonnie Taub

Fernando Pérez Montesinos, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2021

*For my mother Macrina and my aunt Juana*

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Terraciano and Professor Fernando Pérez Montesinos who given me the greatest privilege of mentoring me for five years now. Professor Terraciano who I believe was instrumental in getting me involved in historical research and is a wonderful mentor and has shown me nothing but great kindness. Professor Pérez Montesinos who has guided me like no one else to become adept in Mexican history and I believe this project would not be possible without his excellent mentorship and I am deeply honored to be his pupil.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Indigenous people, before and after the creation of the Mexican state in the 19th century, have sought to maintain and guard the political autonomy of their communities. Political autonomy, one might argue, is the fuel that has propelled them into becoming true protagonists of the struggles that have shaped the entire institutional and political life of the country. This includes, most notably, the struggles over the practical meaning of liberalism. Over the course of the nineteenth century, liberalism acquired a different connotation depending on whether it was indigenous people or the predominantly mestizo elite who used it. Whereas for members of the elite it meant individual rights and personal freedom, for Indigenous people the term tended to be synonymous with local self-governance and collective rights. The clash between these very different ways of understanding what liberalism was marked the whole of the century until the Mexican Revolution. When the revolution broke out, Indigenous people rose up with other social groups of various classes to combat a particular strain of liberalism that had taken shape under the long rule of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1880 and 1884-1911). The revolution was, in that sense, an attempt to counter an increasingly oligarchic and authoritarian understanding of the liberal tradition with a more complex, variegated, and plebeian form of liberalism. Perhaps nowhere was this form stronger than in the state of Guerrero.

Conflicts revolving around the meanings of liberalism were a recurring theme in 19th-century Guerrero. The Indigenous people of the southwestern state, similar to other Indigenous Mexicans,<sup>1</sup> found in liberalism a useful tool to validate their claims of local autonomy. In order

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Ducey, *A Nation of Villages: Riot and Rebellion in the Mexican Huasteca, 1750–1850* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2004), 7.

to defend that autonomy, indigenous Guerrerenses often aligned themselves with powerful caciques and caudillos and formed strategic alliances that challenged federal authority and the brand of liberalism upheld predominately by elites in Mexico City. They were, in that sense, the architects of Guerrero's landmark provincial liberalism.

Indeed, partially carved out in 1850 of the personal chiefdom of the caudillo Juan Álvarez, the state of Guerrero became the bastion of a type of liberalism that in many respects was more radical than the one endorsed by liberals of the likes of Benito Juárez, Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, and Porfirio Díaz. This liberalism, coined as popular liberalism by historian Peter Guardino,<sup>2</sup> was hardly the creation of Juan Álvarez alone. It was also the collective creation of thousands of Indigenous people who at the time still comprised the overwhelming majority of the population of Guerrero. Thus, as long as Juan Álvarez and his successors maintained relative control of the region and as long as indigenous people maintained a tacit alliance with Álvarez, popular liberalism would continue to triumph over Juárez's more centralized version of liberal power. Infighting among Álvarez's heirs after his death over petty grievances and the subsequent nation-wide consolidation of political power under Díaz, however, weakened the pact that buttressed popular liberalism.

Indigenous Guerrerenses actively contested the political dominance of Díaz and his adherents and resisted ongoing and emerging threats to their livelihood and self-governance. The liberal reforms of Juárez's generation and Díaz's consolidation threatened to terminate communal land tenure--the source of material strength of Indigenous communities.<sup>3</sup> Indigenous

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Guardino, *Peasants, Politics, and the Formation of Mexico's National State: Guerrero, 1800-1857* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 217.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Wasserman, *Everyday Life and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Mexico: Men, Women, and War* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 187-194.

people employed traditional methods to counter and limit political centralization and land privatizations, ranging from noncompliance, demands for judicial reviews, and (as a last resort) open violence. But it was only when a fraction of Guerrero's political elite finally sensed that their own autonomy and privileges were too threatened by Porfirian consolidation that the old pact between Indigenous people and local elites resurfaced in the form of a major *pronunciamiento*.

Once a dominant tactic of political negotiation, yet seemingly ineffectual by the late nineteenth century, *pronunciamentos* were a quasi-legal method of law and violence that granted legal or legislative change to its adherents when proper political and legal channels had been exhausted.<sup>4</sup> *Pronunciamentos* were used sporadically in Mexico throughout the 19th century, but the practice waned when the balance of power shifted to the center of the country and the monopoly of violence was held almost exclusively by Díaz and his Científicos, his inner circle of advisers. However, in 1901, in the municipality of Mochitlán, Guerrero, a *pronunciamiento* known as the Plan del Zapote was proclaimed, leading to a revolt that attempted to curb the power of the Porfiriato in the state and on its people.

The revolt, as suggested, had long-standing roots. Different forms of liberalism contested for supremacy in the region. Liberalism varied in Guerrero from Vicente Guerrero's radical liberalism to the liberalism practiced in the pueblos, local liberalism. Eventually, Juan Álvarez consolidated power and allied with various factions in the region, creating a liberalism of compromise, first known as popular federalism and later as popular liberalism.<sup>5</sup> However,

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<sup>4</sup> Will Fowler, *Independent Mexico: The Pronunciamiento in the Age of Santa Anna, 1821–1858*, (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 30-34.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Guardino, *Peasants, Politics, and the Formation of Mexico's National State: Guerrero, 1800-1857* (Stanford University Press, 1996), 217.

following the retirement and death of Juan Álvarez, this project fell apart. His successors, Diego Álvarez and Vicente Jiménez, and eventually Benito Juárez's own choice for governing the state, Francisco O. Arce, used the power of popular liberalism to varying degrees to maintain their tenuous grasp on power. However, they did nothing to curtail the rise of authoritarian liberalism; following the resignation of Arce, the liberalism of the elites of Mexico City became ever more pronounced within the state.<sup>6</sup> The encroachment of Porfirian liberalism resulted in a series of revolts and uprisings. The most notable was the 1901 uprising in Mochitlán, carried out under the banner of the Plan del Zapote, which used the language of popular liberalism to challenge the "Pax Porfiriana."

The Plan del Zapote first emerged in response to an election, the gubernatorial race of Guerrero in 1900. Rafael del Castillo Calderón, a lawyer and a lower-ranked member of the Guerrerense Científicos, challenged the gubernatorial rule of Antonio Mercenario, first through the electoral process, and when that proved to be unsuccessful, changed course and sought to use a tactic that was used in Mexican history to contest electoral results through a legitimate form of violence, a pronunciamiento. The Plan del Zapote, first pronounced in the municipality of Mochitlán, denounced Mercenario and Díaz's personal successor for the gubernatorial seat, Agustín Mora, and threatened the use of defensive violence by means of popular support if its demands were not addressed.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, it ended in failure, not because of a lack of support

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<sup>6</sup> Teresa Pavía Miller and Jaime Salazar Adame *Historia general de Guerrero Volumen III Origen y formación - La modernización* (Chilpancingo 1998), 150-151.

<sup>7</sup> José Manuel López Victoria, *Historia de la Revolución en Guerrero: Tomo I de 1901 a 1912* (Chilpancingo, 1985). 7-12.

in the state,<sup>8</sup> but because Porfirio Díaz sent Victoriano Huerta and his battalion to quickly crush the rebellion, to punish those involved, and to set an example for any future attempts.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the failures of the Plan del Zapote, it was able to illustrate the limits of authoritarian liberalism and how Indigenous people would at times align themselves with local liberal elites to safeguard their autonomy. Both of these groups in Guerrero had different motives for entering this alliance, as they had done in previous decades when forced to choose sides between the Independence insurgents and the Royalists, Federalists versus Centralists, and lastly Liberals and Conservatives. Thus, the Plan del Zapote harkens back to a tradition of different social groups jockeying for power but working together to reassert their own demands, a central tenet of those demands being political autonomy. The Plan del Zapote had no intention of overthrowing Díaz or challenging his rule; rather, the Plan challenged the brand of liberalism that was once thought to be the Supreme Law of the land with a form of liberalism that should have died with Juan Álvarez and other liberals like him. And that is why it set a dangerous precedent in Guerrero, one that would explode with the Mexican Revolution.

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<sup>8</sup> Carlos Illades and Martha Ortega, *Guerrero: una historia compartida* (Mexico City, 1989), 206.

<sup>9</sup> José Manuel López Victoria, *Historia de la Revolución en Guerrero: Tomo I de 1901 a 1912* (Chilpancingo, 1985). 7-12.

## Chapter 2: Historiography

### A. Historiography of Porfirian Mexico

The Porfiriato refers to the three decades (1876-1911) of relative stable but authoritarian rule during the presidency of Porfirio Díaz. The dictator maintained order through a series of networks and alliances between a multitude of factions under the supervision of a cabal of elites. For decades, following the Mexican War of Independence (1810-1821), it was unclear what political ideology and project Mexico would pursue. Different social groups held alternative visions for the newly created nation-state; various factions clashed and formed coalitions in an effort to gain supremacy of regions or of the entire nation. These ideologies ranged across the spectrum of liberalism, reflecting the lived realities of the people who subscribed to them. For instance, local liberalism made sense for the peasant mostly Indigenous rural classes because it enabled them to maintain their precious political autonomy and kept the troublesome influence of other middling players out of their affairs,<sup>10</sup> in contrast to the authoritarian centralized form of liberalism of elite Liberals like Benito Juárez and Porfirio Díaz who believed that all levels of Mexico would benefit from elites' control of the nation.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, as historians note, due to pressures from Conservatives and invading foreign forces, the differing factions of liberalism were forced to put aside their differences and unite against their common enemies. Ultimately, Álvarez's vision of liberalism lost out to the liberalism advocated by Juárez and later Díaz. The version of liberalism adopted at the national level after the expulsion of the French and their

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<sup>10</sup> Michael Ducey, *A Nation of Villages: Riot and Rebellion in the Mexican Huasteca, 1750–1850* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2004), 7.

<sup>11</sup> John Tutino, *The Mexican Heartland: How Communities Shaped Capitalism, a Nation, and World History, 1500-2000* (Princeton: Princeton Press, 2018), 356.

Conservative allies, especially under the presidency of Porfirio Díaz, became increasingly authoritarian and stifled all other forms of liberalism.

Traditional histories of 19th-century Mexico have failed to recognize the confluence of social groups that worked together to create changes that transformed regions. Regions were considered stagnant in terms of political change, after three centuries of colonial rule. Instead, Mexican history was viewed through the lens of “great man theory,” a 19th-century idea that history was greatly influenced by the power and manipulation of certain charismatic individuals. This theory reflected the great authority that some men, referred to as *caudillos*, strongmen leaders, had during this tumultuous period. Indeed, men like Vicente Guerrero, Antonio López de Santa Anna, and Juan Álvarez wielded extraordinary power and influence over much of Mexico. However, by subscribing to the idea that Mexico was created by charismatic individuals ignores the influence that other individuals or groups had within Mexican society and the role they played in shaping Mexico’s political destiny.<sup>12</sup>

Likewise, historians have not understood or appreciated the importance of the pronunciamiento as a political instrument in pre-Porfirian Mexico. They were a quasi-legal, unconstitutional but legitimate form of contesting democratic results or the actions of democratic institutions. To outsiders of the region, and even insiders, this particular political tactic was seen a precursor of the violent coups that would later grip Latin America during the Cold War.<sup>13</sup> It was a tool used by caudillos to enlist the support of the apolitical masses for their desperate attempts to maintain power. Nevertheless, this fact fails to explain why a majority of the

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Ducey, *A Nation of Villages: Riot and Rebellion in the Mexican Huasteca, 1750–1850* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2004), 4-11.

<sup>13</sup> Will Fowler, *Independent Mexico: The Pronunciamiento in the Age of Santa Anna, 1821–1858*, (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 2-9.

pronunciamientos were not the creation of a few individuals. Indigenous pueblos using this political tool for their own ends, as well.<sup>14</sup> It is possible that subaltern classes found common cause with other sectors of society, including the elite, and participated actively in pronunciamientos in order to advance their own interests.

Historians have cited the “great man theory” and pronunciamientos to explain why Mexico was a second-rate backwater nation. In comparison to the United States, Mexico could not achieve progress because it was a chaotic nation filled with troublesome caudillos who put their own interests before those of the nation.<sup>15</sup> In this view, Mexico was not a real nation like the United States, where enlightened leaders like George Washington or Abraham Lincoln steered the nation on a proper path. Mexico earned a nasty reputation as a place of anarchy, tamed temporarily by the authoritarian dictator Porfirio Díaz, but then consumed by the violent anarchistic forces of Mexican society. These forces were pacified for a while by authoritarian liberalism but awakened during the Mexican Revolution and pushed the country to a breaking point until the creation of the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party).

Histories that focused on the use of pronunciamientos by caudillos to enact personal coups, without fully understanding the complexities of liberalism, failed to adequately explain the intricacies of 19th century Mexican society and politics. Historians have moved past the idea of great men to explain the complex changes that occurred in the 19th century. Beginning in the 1990’s, histories have begun to understand the transformation of Mexico in the 19th century from a monarchical colonial holding to a liberal modern nation-state as the result of social movements, brought about by the actions of many different social groups that had their own

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 141.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Guadino, *The Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 14-17.

motives for implementing change.<sup>16</sup> These groups had their own ideas about liberalism, and their ability to understand and implement pronunciamientos was crucial in creating the Mexico that emerged following the War of Independence.

In addition to the antiquated historiography of pre-Porfirian Mexico, the historical narrative of the Porfiriato era has shifted, too. Originally, the view of the Porfiriato was that of an absolutist regime that offered little compromise in its definition of liberalism. Essentially, Porfirio Díaz could be described as a simple tyrant who ruled with sole authority and could violate any previously accepted norm if he so chose. We now know that this was not the case. Yes, the Porfirian liberal order was more restrictive and more authoritarian than anything previously seen in the Republic's history, but it was not without limitations. Instead, the Porfirian regime kept a reign on power by forming delicate alliances that ensured "order and progress."<sup>17</sup> With the rise of the Porfiriato, the main focus of the liberal project was to maintain stability. It was not a rigid, autocratic rule but a delicate system of alliances and networks that allowed Díaz to maintain a steady grip on power. Compromises were inevitable. The old notion of an absolutist system in which the political autonomy of Indigenous people was shattered, and only one strain of liberalism dominated all others, is inaccurate.<sup>18</sup> Historians came to recognize that other forms of liberalism had not been fully defeated, and Indigenous communities had not

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<sup>16</sup>John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986) 32-37.

<sup>17</sup> William Beezley, *Mexico in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 82.

<sup>18</sup> Emilio Kourí, *A Pueblo Divided: Business, Property, and Community in Papantla, Mexico*. (Stanford University Press, 2004). 12.

retreated into submission, and these facts explained in part the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution.<sup>19</sup>

The present historiography demands that historians ask new, more difficult questions of what led to the radical transformation of Mexico in the long 19th century and to use new sources to address new questions. Historians like John Tutino have examined Mexico in more global terms, taking into account the impact of the Bourbon Reforms, the Liberal Revolutions of the Atlantic World, and the Napoleonic era. Recent research focuses on how these influences impacted social movements, inviting new questions of how popular classes in the 19th century participated in the shaping of Mexican institutions, ideologies, and the meanings of liberalism.<sup>20</sup> Historians are able to ask these questions and create new answers by looking at new sources from local archives that have received scant attention prior to this change in the historiography. With this change, the field of Mexican history has made tremendous advancements in understanding the impact that social movements and popular classes have had in impacting the course of 19th century Mexico.

## **B. Historiography of Porfirian Guerrero**

“The state has been a violent, ungovernable place since colonial times, and it was a principal theater of all our national wars in the 19th and 20th centuries.”<sup>21</sup> This biting analysis by Mexican historian Enrique Krauze paints a vivid picture of how outsiders typically view the state of Guerrero. A place that is barbarous and lawless. There is some truth to Krauze’s words as

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<sup>19</sup> Alan Knight "Patterns and Prescriptions in Mexican Historiography." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 25, no. 3 (2006): 343.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 347.

<sup>21</sup> Enrique Krauze, *New York Times*, “Mexico’s Barbarous Tragedy,” 2014.

local, national, and international historians have noted. There have been times when the state has become a mess of a political entity that refuses to recognize the authority of Mexico City. Thus, Guerrero appeared to outsiders as a “a violent, ungovernable place.” However, some historians of the state have demonstrated that reality is more complex and nuanced. The state is ungovernable in the eyes of the federal government, in that the state continued to retain a fierce tradition of political autonomy, regional sovereignty, and a unique blend of liberalism that the Porfiriato and subsequent governments tried to quell. Thus, the local historiography of Guerrero has sought to understand the nature of that political autonomy and liberalism within the region and how it has prompted Guerrero to interact with the federal government throughout the 19th century.

The concept of a polity known as Guerrero did not emerge until the mid-19th century. Prior to this, the region that would become Guerrero consisted of the southern portions of the states of Mexico and Puebla. The idea of Guerrero as a political idea first emerged under the Mexican War of Independence, when a series of caciques, patrons, and Indigenous villagers rallied under the banner of Vicente Guerrero, the insurgent general of the South. Beginning with the war of Independence and subsequent violence, these localities would be grouped together as a region because of their continued cooperation. Following Vicente Guerrero’s untimely defeat in 1831 to the Conservatives, Nicolás Bravo and Juan Álvarez gained control of the lands that were once under Guerrero’s dominion. Ultimately, Álvarez became the most powerful caudillo of the state and would run the region seemingly as if it were his own kingdom. Yet Álvarez consolidated regional rule under his guidance through a series of alliances forged through compromises. One of these compromises was liberalism, specifically popular federalism, a form

of liberalism that fiercely advocated the protection of regional and municipal autonomy.<sup>22</sup> Following his union with other prominent national liberals, Álvarez and his liberal cohorts enacted the Plan de Ayutla in 1854 to win control of the nation from the Conservatives and later crafted the Liberal Constitution of 1857 to solidify their victory. However, instead of contesting which liberalism the nation should follow, Álvarez opted out and returned to Guerrero. In Guerrero, Álvarez maintained the brand of government most favorable to him and his allies, first popular federalism and later popular liberalism.<sup>23</sup> This brand of liberalism extolled the continuation of political autonomy for the state, the municipalities, and the pueblos. However, the state fell into decline following Álvarez's death in 1867.<sup>24</sup> The chaotic squabbles for his legacy undermined the state's ability to project power at the federal level and to keep the restrictive influence of Mexico City away from Guerrero's affairs. The political autonomy of the Indigenous pueblos waned during the Porfiriato, as well as the power of other social groups, including the rising urban middle class.<sup>25</sup> Local historians use this decline to explain why multiple factions within the state joined the Maderistas or Zapatistas during the Mexican Revolution, in response to the problem of political autonomy and liberalism.<sup>26</sup>

The history of mid-19th-century Guerrero is dominated by the influence of Juan Álvarez. Álvarez is prominent in both local and national historiographies. Thus, Krauze's observation

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<sup>22</sup> Peter Guardino, *Peasants, Politics, and the Formation of Mexico's National State: Guerrero, 1800-1857* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) 216-218.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 218.

<sup>24</sup> Carlos Illades, *Breve historia de Guerrero*. (Mexico City, 2000), 54.

<sup>25</sup> Teresa Pavía Miller and Jaime Salazar Adame *Historia general de Guerrero Volumen III Origen y formación - La modernización* (Chilpancingo 1998), 150-151.

<sup>26</sup> José Manuel López Victoria, *Historia de la Revolución en Guerrero: Tomo I de 1901 a 1912* (Chilpancingo, 1985). 25-32.

about the chaotic nature of the state are supported by historians who note that Álvarez succeeded in bringing a level of stability to the southern region. After his decline and death, the historiography of Guerrero agrees that instability during the Porfiriato resulted from the competition between both local and federal forces who jockeyed for power to dominate the entire region or a locality. Álvarez, they note, held the state together with a series of patron-client relationships, the force of power, and an ideology and *praxis* that was amenable to many--popular liberalism.<sup>27</sup>

Historians have considered the instability that rocked the region under Díaz to be the byproduct of clashes to define liberalism. Despite those clashes and some periodic rebellions, Guerrero remained a relatively peaceful region. The ability of the social masses to force elites to listen to their demands was apparent during the dissolution of land tenure legislation in Guerrero, which at times resulted in compromises with the Porfirian regime.<sup>28</sup> Despite the legislative assault on Indigenous communities, the pueblos were able to maintain a level of political autonomy from the state and federal governments.<sup>29</sup> This compromise was in part the result of a tenuous balance of peace that popular liberalism created between the various sectors of Guerrerense society. The survival of popular liberalism during the Porfiriato, in spite of the increasing verticality and repressive practices of the regime, is key to understand why revolts continue surfacing in the state and why a pronunciamiento ultimately crystallized in 1901 at the so-called zenith of the “Pax Porfiriana.”

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<sup>27</sup> Carlos Illades, *Breve historia de Guerrero*. (Mexico City, 2000), 44-49.

<sup>28</sup> Teresa Pava Miller and Jaime Salazar Adame *Historia general de Guerrero Volumen III Origen y formación - La modernización* (Chilpancingo 1998), 263-284.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

Emphasizing the local and regional roots of the rebellion, however, must not prevent us from examining the larger implications of these events. Local scholars of Guerrero have skillfully relied on a wealth of municipal and regional archival records to build fine-grain narratives of state and local politics. Yet they have tended to neglect analyzing the ways in which local politics were actually intertwined with larger, nation-wide affairs. While it is true that Guerrero has historically held a great degree of autonomy compared to other regions, it is important to remember that the state was still part of a wider political web. The quick reaction by Porfirio Díaz to crush the Mochitlán rebellion of 1901 is very revealing in that sense. Guerrero remained a vital piece of the national jigsaw puzzle. In fact, federal officials feared that the region could fall into “anarchy” and impact the rest of the country--as it had done in the past. As the following sections will examine, the Plan del Zapote can only be fully understood when placed within a national context. The plan and the *pronunciamiento* that ensued were not just central to the history of Guerrero alone, but also critical to the history of Mexico and the Porfiriato as a whole.

### **C. The Plan del Zapote in the Historiography**

This is where the Pronunciamiento of Mochitlán enters the narrative. The plan confirms most recent national histories that the Porfirian regime was not monolithic. Indeed, local historians have advanced this same argument for decades. Historians make note and seek to explain some local Guerrerense rebellions during the Porfiriato, like those of General Canuto A. Neri who challenged Francisco Arce for the governorship, or the gubernatorial coups that occurred during the Arce, Álvarez, and Jiménez administrations. These coups are studied at length by local historians, but they have not paid due attention to the Plan del Zapote. This

oversight is odd since the Plan del Zapote, unlike other rebellions in Guerrero, sought political change in the state beyond a simple military coup, in that the rebellion of Mochitlán used a pronunciamiento. It was an act that unintentionally challenged the Pax Porfiriana and thus posed a threat to Díaz and his government agents, a threat which they quickly suppressed.

Nevertheless, even the local historiography has paid scant attention to the rebellion of Mochitlán, while national historians of the Porfiriato have ignored this rebellion despite its possible significance for the state of Guerrero and the Porfirian regime. Therefore, the analysis presented here will connect the local historiography to the general ideas that Mexican historians have used to explain the Porfiriato.

The purpose of this thesis is to incorporate the Plan del Zapote into the local state's historiography and to fit it into the overall national narrative of the Porfiriato. Local historians of Guerrero have made valuable contributions to the region's historiography, working at local, state, municipal and parochial archives to construct their histories. Their contributions, and their careful use of local archives, often do not attract the attention of historians who focus on the nation-state as a whole. At the same time, further research is necessary. Most histories of Guerrero, with some notable exceptions, especially Peter Guardino's *Peasants, Politics, and the Formation of Mexico's National State*, tend to isolate the state from overall larger narratives. While microhistories that focus on a state or even a region within the state have their merit, they risk over-emphasizing the fierce federalist traditions that existed in the region and neglect to recognize how Guerrero continued to be a key player in Mexican affairs and by extension, global affairs. Although that role diminished after the liberal consolidation of power following the Plan de Ayutla, Guerrero continued to exert an influence on national affairs. An example of this impact is the Plan del Zapote. It is one of the rare pronunciamientos during the Porfiriato. This

rebellion receives little mention in the national narrative, but it can potentially bridge a gap between the local historiography of the state of Guerrero and the national historiography of Mexico by using Guerrero as a case study for the limits of Porfirian overreach. In addition, this document is a unique product of Guerrero, where a unique type of popular liberalism flourished.

This analysis uses three major arguments to place the Plan del Zapote in the context of the larger historical narrative. The first argument posits that the Plan del Zapote is the result of regional disputes that reflected conflicts between the provinces and federal government. The historiography on the national level examines many conflicts in which Vicente Guerrero and Juan Álvarez took part; however, following the rise of liberals like Juárez and Díaz, the historiography relegates Guerrero to the background. However, while Guerrero's importance on the national stage may have declined, the region continued to be mired in violence, as documented by the multiple rebellions and gubernatorial coups that occurred in the late 19th century. Likewise, other provinces in the nation continued to come into conflict with the government in Mexico City.

The second argument to be made about the Plan de Zapote is that it represents a longstanding tradition of liberalism in Guerrero. The liberalism that Álvarez first espoused was dubbed popular federalism, which over time became known as popular liberalism. The local liberalism of Indigenous Guerrerense became part of the compromise, as they were incorporated into the nation-state building project envisioned by elites. The Plan del Zapote makes various appeals to different forms of liberalism, but the idea of political autonomy is at the heart of the plan. Its language endorsed the political autonomy of the municipalities and pueblos, while acknowledging the political autonomy of local elites and the need to mitigate the influence of Mexico City.

Lastly, the third argument advanced in this thesis is that the Plan del Zapote demonstrates that Porfirian hegemony was neither absolute nor invincible. Previous histories have recognized the many challenges to *orden y progreso*, both at local and national levels, including the Yaqui and Maya revolts to the far north and south, and several fewer known rebellions in Guerrero. However, this rebellion differs from those in some respects. A unique quality of the Plan del Zapote was the desire of various social groups in the state for unity, from the local urban elites of Chilpancingo to the rural peasant Indigenous peoples of the mountains of Guerrero. The Plan del Zapote threatened the Porfiriato because it sought to recreate the old ways of doing politics in Mexico. This is why it deserves more attention in the historiography. My analysis of the Plan del Zapote will attempt to bridge local and national historiographies to demonstrate the importance of this plan to both narratives.

## Chapter III: The Plan Del Zapote

### A. Context of the Plan del Zapote

The Plan de Zapote arose from the clash between two opposing ideologies, the popular liberalism of Álvarez, his Indigenous allies, and the Guerrerense elites versus the ascendancy of the authoritarian liberalism of Díaz and his Científicos. Following the death of Juan Álvarez in 1867, elites found that sustaining order in the state was difficult.<sup>30</sup> Ironically, Álvarez died in the same year that the liberalism of Juárez and Díaz achieved national legitimacy with the ouster of the French and humiliation of their Conservative allies. Symbolically, this meant that with Álvarez's death and the rise of Juárez and later Díaz, authoritarian liberalism reigned supreme above all other forms of liberalism in Mexico, including popular liberalism. Nevertheless, Álvarez's heirs, such as his son Diego Álvarez, tried to rule the state as his father had done. This strategy included incorporating popular liberalism. However, infighting for Álvarez's legacy led to a breakdown and provided an opening for Díaz's administration to further cement their claims to the state. These events culminated in Díaz's appointment of subsequent rulers of the state after Francisco O. Arce retired in 1893. However, his favorites caused tensions with the native inhabitants in their desire to carry out the liberal reforms fully, which clashed with local desires to protect their autonomy.<sup>31</sup> It is in this context that the Plan de Zapote was born. Crafted in 1901 in the municipal capital of Mochitlán, it emerged as the product of several previous revolts and uprisings, as well as a contentious gubernatorial election that was ultimately declared null and void by President Porfirio Díaz himself. The pronunciamiento champions the ideals of popular

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<sup>30</sup> Carlos Illades, *Breve historia de Guerrero*. (Mexico City, 2000), 54.

<sup>31</sup> Teresa Pava Miller and Jaime Salazar Adame *Historia general de Guerrero Volumen III Origen y formación - La modernización* (Chilpancingo 1998), 149-151.

liberalism, which contentiously coexisted in Díaz's Mexico. Much like previous calls for popular liberalism, it was sponsored by local Científicos, including the failed gubernatorial candidate Rafael del Castillo Calderón.<sup>32</sup> The rebellion quickly spread from Mochitlán and smaller revolts broke out through the rest of the state prompting Díaz to react.<sup>33</sup> Díaz instructed Victoriano Huerta to crush the movement swiftly and harshly. However, its legacy remained when the state became a focal point for Maderistas and Zapatistas during the Mexican Revolution.<sup>34</sup>

The plan consists of seventeen articles with an overarching theme of protecting local autonomy and reasserting popular liberalism. The manifesto begins by stating that it is a copy of the original political plan and is meant for the political leaders of the state or nation, in this case the president, Porfirio Díaz. The authors of this plan seemed well acquainted with how politics worked, yet they were clearly pushing the limits on the Porfirian regime by sponsoring a pronunciamiento. They themselves knew it would be met with violence, which is evident in that half of the plan deals with defensive countermeasures in response to possible state repression from Mexico City. The supporters chose Mochitlán to proclaim this plan because of the connections that Rafael del Castillo Calderón had with the municipality, but also because significant local political officials, such as the President of the municipality, Porfirio Jiménez Juan de Dorana, supported it.<sup>35</sup> And ultimately, it mentions article six, which stipulates the terms of this petition, and rebellion until the demands are met.

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<sup>32</sup> José Manuel López Victoria, *Historia de la Revolución en Guerrero: Tomo I de 1901 a 1912* (Chilpancingo, 1985), 17-21.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Carlos Illades and Martha Ortega, *Guerrero: una historia compartida* (Mexico City, 1989), 94.

<sup>35</sup> Plan Politico de Mochitlán. 002993, File XXVI. Porfirio Díaz Archive, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City, Mexico, 1901.

## **B. Articles I-IV: Contesting 1901 Election and Díaz's Influence**

The first three articles address the most important reason for the call to arms, the dubious nature of the 1901 election. Contesting the continued gubernatorial rule of Colonel Antonio Mercenario, lawyer Rafael del Castillo Calderón led a movement to stop the reelection of Mercenario. When that plan failed to help him gain the governorship, he and his allies forced Mercenario to resign. Porfirio Díaz simply replaced Mercenario with another non-Guerrero native, a Pueblan by the name of Agustín Mora. Castillo Calderón and his followers fled to Mochitlán where they took shelter and wrote their grievances to the state in the Plan del Zapote.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the greatest reason for creating this plan was to denounce Díaz's meddling in local Guerrero politics.

Concerns over the 1901 election implied in the plan suggest that they may have been coercive and therefore illegitimate. The first three articles further imply that Díaz has violated the sovereignty of the state of Guerrero by not allowing free elections and instead appointing one of his puppets to rule in his place. This violation is at the heart of the three articles in the plan. The first three articles articulate that the state of Guerrero will respect suffrage beyond anything else and any methods of fraud or coercion to the electoral process will not be tolerated and will be contested and resisted. This call for popular sovereignty and free elections harkens back to liberalism as it was designed in the 1857 Constitution, demonstrating that the authoritarian liberalism of late 19th-century Mexico did not fully silence all other forms of liberalism such as popular liberalism. This plan's contents demonstrate that popular liberalism continued as a functioning liberal ideology in Guerrero despite attempts by the Porfirian forces to curtail it. The

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<sup>36</sup> José Manuel López Victoria, *Historia de la Revolución en Guerrero: Tomo I de 1901 a 1912* (Chilpancingo, 1985), 18.

ideology of local political autonomy insisted that the people of Guerrero, not outsiders, should choose their political leaders.

Despite the ideological clashes between popular and authoritarian liberalism in the first three articles, the most striking theme is the aforementioned political autonomy of the state. It is that same theme which can be construed as a threat to the regime in Mexico City in 1901. Under the rule of Díaz, the political autonomy of states, municipalities, cities, and pueblos were made subservient to the *patria*, the nation, as a whole. This plan went against the status quo. Thus, whether intentionally or not, the creators of this plan defied and challenged Díaz's systematic restructuring of Mexico. The most damning article among these three is the second, which clearly rejects Porfirian norms. It states that those who align themselves with the Plan del Zapote will not recognize any forms of coercion that jeopardize the legitimacy of the democratic process. The authors of the plan were well-acquainted with the unwritten rules and standards of the Porfiriato. Those rules and standards involved accepting violations within the democratic process as long as they ensured stability and the continuation of the status quo as deemed acceptable by Díaz. By stating that such procedures are unacceptable, those who followed this plan attacked the legitimacy of how electoral politics functioned in the Porfiriato. This manifesto had serious ramifications for Díaz because it declared that the stability so cherished by Porfiriato should be subordinated to the democratic principles of popular liberalism. Such a declaration set a dangerous precedent in that states could reject Díaz's hegemony and override his choices. Members of the local liberal elite who wrote this plan were not seeking a revolution or calling for the ouster of the President. They simply wanted to return Guerrero to the politics of old. However, that act of defiance could not be left unchallenged. The quick suppression of this plan

demonstrates that popular liberalism was no longer tolerated for it threatened the status quo imposed by the authoritarian liberalism order.

The fourth article of the Plan del Zapote demonstrates how Guerrerense politics existed prior to the solidification of the Porfiriato. This is accomplished by denouncing the previous governor, Antonio Mercenario, and condemning his entire reign. Castillo Calderón and his allies believed that the measures Díaz had adopted, in the guise of democratic protocols, were unnatural and harmful to the state.<sup>37</sup> Prior to Mercenario's rule, Guerrero had become a battleground for three generals and their various allies in a struggle to gain dominion over the state. The three factions were led by Diego Álvarez, Juan Álvarez's son, Vicente Jiménez, a pupil of Juan Álvarez, and Francisco O. Arce, a general from Mexico City who was sent by Juárez to act as an intermediary between Juan Álvarez's two successors and to bring them into the federal government's sphere of influence.<sup>38</sup> Following the three's decline from power, Antonio Mercenario gained control of the state as governor.

The conflicts between previous governors and questions over the legitimacy of Mercenario's gubernatorial position shed light on why and how the proponents of the Plan del Zapote justified their actions towards the Porfirian regime. Previous heads of state in Guerrero had called on popular support to dethrone their enemies. And prior to the rebellion in Mochitlán, the rebellions of Canuto A. Neri in the 1890s had not been forgotten. Thus, Castillo Calderón and his supporters were simply tapping into a tradition of using popular support, using the language of popular liberalism by calling into doubt the fairness of the election, and the pronunciamiento. By challenging Mercenario's entire term, the promulgators of this manifesto

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<sup>37</sup> Carlos Illades, *Breve historia de Guerrero*. (Mexico City, 2000), 60.

<sup>38</sup> Teresa Pava Miller and Jaime Salazar Adame *Historia general de Guerrero Volumen III Origen y formación - La modernización* (Chilpancingo 1998), 148.

hoped to gain legitimacy for their actions. Ultimately, the actions of Castillo Calderón were not unusual for Guerrerense politics; however, such conduct would be seen as a gross violation of federal authorities, who placed stability and progress over tradition.

While these were the norms of Guerrerense politics, they were most certainly not acceptable within the parameters of the Porfirian state. Antonio Mercenario won the election for governor several times, and thus according to the constitution was the rightful head of state of Guerrero.<sup>39</sup> Díaz recognized that the brazen act of the Plan, no matter how traditional it had become in the state in Guerrero, would question the power and authority of his regime. The old ways of doing politics in Guerrero were unacceptable because they could disrupt stability and undermine Díaz's power. This was most apparent when Castillo Calderón and others refused to recognize Antonio Mercenario's successor and Díaz's personal choice for his replacement, Agustín Mora, and instead threatened Mora and thus by extension Díaz himself. Such defiance could potentially encourage other middling Científicos to do the same in other contentious states and thus possibly unravel the entire liberal project of Díaz. Finally, the most troubling aspect of this plan was that urban middle-class elites attempted to ally themselves with Indigenous Guerrerenses to challenge the will of the Porfirian regime. Naturally, Díaz did not take the potential threat lightly and ordered General Victoriano Huerta to put down the rebellion and punish its leaders.

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<sup>39</sup> Teresa Pava Miller and Jaime Salazar Adame *Historia general de Guerrero Volumen III Origen y formación - La modernización* (Chilpancingo 1998), 311.

### **C. Articles V-VII: Return of the Antiquated, Pronunciamiento**

The following three articles reveal the true nature of the document, a pronunciamiento. The Plan del Zapote is the continuation of bygone traditions that seemed outdated at the apex of late 19th century Mexican Liberalism. Articles five through seven of the Plan del Zapote, might seem benign to the unassuming reader, but they clearly outline that this petition is indeed a pronunciamiento. The fifth article addresses that this plan must be presented to the highest authority, which was mentioned before in the first page, President of the Republic, Porfirio Díaz. The sixth article tries to create the same quasi-legal legitimacy as other pronunciamientos did in the past by invoking the Constitution of 1857. In the sixth article, it claims that Article 116 of the Constitution grants them the powers to exercise the necessary measures when their due sovereignty, as people belonging to a state entity, is violated. Namely, that they have the right to contest it. Thus, this uprising based part of its legitimacy by invoking the most powerful legal liberal document in Mexico prior to the Revolution, the document to which even Díaz was held accountable. The seventh article reaffirms this is a Pronunciamiento by stating that anything contradicting this plan will not be tolerated. Therefore, the opposition was prepared to continue the plan until the federal government recognized its demands. The Pronunciamiento used a legal framework to seek legislative changes and to justify armed conflict until those demands were met.

But why did the authors make a pronunciamiento when they must have known that such a device was an antiquated procedure at the turn of the 20th century, and was bound to be met with harsh resistance and reprisals from the federal government? Pronunciamientos were a way of doing politics in 19th century Mexico. It was a petition that relied on the threat of violence to

force institutions to recognize grievances and strike compromises.<sup>40</sup> The Plan del Zapote does not differ in this regard. It demands that the Porfirian regime heed their requests or face a possible insurrection. Ironically, the petition was crafted at the height of the Pax Porfiriana in 1901. Díaz and the Liberal elites held a monopoly of violence through its control of the military and rural police. Díaz's reign at this time was "peaceful" only because the liberals had thoroughly beaten and discredited their archenemies, the conservatives. Mexico maintained good relations with many western powers, and the wars with Indigenous people, like the Maya and the Yaquis, were coming to an end. So, the timing of the Plan del Zapote was both bold and significant. Pronunciamientos were reminiscent of the more chaotic past of early modern Mexico, before the Liberal elites achieved dominance. It was an antiquated way of doing politics, unacceptable under the conditions in which Díaz and the other Liberal elite had established power. The motives for making a pronunciamiento in 1901 have up to now remained unclear.

Ultimately, the proper channels for political change in the state were exhausted. The democratic process could not remove Antonio Mercenario, who continued to win elections. The local urban elite's only remaining path was to take over state politics, by violence if necessary. The pronunciamiento signified a violent option. However, to implement this petition effectively, local urban elites needed to ally with the subaltern classes and to incorporate their demands. These demands would most likely include a reassertion of their autonomy by arming themselves and governing themselves, as later outlined in the plan.

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<sup>40</sup> Will Fowler, *Independent Mexico: The Pronunciamiento in the Age of Santa Anna, 1821–1858* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 80.

Thus, the threat of a rare *pronunciamiento* in this period offered the possibility that if implemented effectively, certain undesirable social groups might become armed, raising a serious concern for the ruling class in Mexico City. The manpower required to legitimize their claims and force elites to comply with the *pronunciamiento*'s demands involved the threat of insurrectionary violence, with all the chaos and instability that a rebellion entailed. The rebellion could spread to other states and thus undo the Liberal Project. Moreover, in a state like Guerrero, that was predominantly Indigenous, the possibility of an organized insurrection was most troublesome. The Díaz regime had fought previous wars with Indigenous people, especially the Maya and the Yaquis. The Indigenous people of Guerrero (in conjunction with local liberal elites) had threatened the capital of Mexico several times in the first half of the 19th century. Indigenous people joined the Plan del Zapote in part because the language of popular liberalism in the petition appealed to them, especially clauses that promised to reinforce the power of local governance and autonomy. In fact, the Plan del Zapote caused protests throughout the state, from areas such as Iguala and Tepecoacuilco in the north to areas to the south of the state like Ayotac and those as far west as Tlalchapa.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the *pronunciamiento* had the desired effect of mustering sufficient manpower to possibly bring Díaz and his regime to the bargaining table. For the original creators of the Plan del Zapote, they recognized that only a *pronunciamiento* that mobilized the power of the people could make Díaz and his administration comply.

#### **D. Articles IX-X: Call to Arms**

In these two articles, the *pronunciamiento* clarifies that if the demands presented in the petition are not met, the supporters of the petition will levy men and arms against the federal

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<sup>41</sup> Carlos Illades and Martha Ortega, *Guerrero: una historia compartida* (Mexico City, 1989), 206.

government. However, the language is careful to note that this insurrection would be an act of self-defense. Potential physical altercations between the militias and federal troops will not escalate unless federal troops become belligerent and attack the defending militias; in which case, self-defense is authorized by the plan's supporters. Lastly, it declares that federal authority and troops will be awarded the utmost respect as long as they do not commit violence.

A pronouncement required manpower to achieve success. In the state of Guerrero, the militias needed to defend pueblos from Porfirian aggression, so that the pueblos needed to be armed. Arming Indigenous people would lead to their demands for political autonomy. Interestingly, subsequent articles address Indigenous demands for political autonomy.

Despite the obvious desires of the manifesto's drafters to be as respectful as possible so as not to alarm or antagonize the Porfirian regime, they did just that. The document made it clear that they intended to arm the people, which involved giving expanded political autonomy to the pueblos. This autonomy, and the threat of violence, enabled the people of Guerrero to influence the politics of the region and the nation state. The government in Mexico City needed to compromise with the people of Guerrero or risk more pronunciamientos, beginning with the Plan de Iguala (1821) and the Plan de Ayutla (1854). Therefore, the threat of violence allowed Indigenous Mexicans, especially in Guerrero, to maintain their sovereignty and preserve their communities' autonomy.

The risk of inciting widespread violence threatened the Porfirian regime. A monopoly of violence is what allowed Díaz to maintain control over the country for nearly four decades. Without this monopoly, the regime would be susceptible to pressure from a wide range of social groups that had long been silenced, including Indigenous pueblos. They would be free to assert their autonomy and could use the Plan del Zapote to exercise that right.

### **E. Article XII-XII & XV: Political Autonomy**

The next segments of the plan focus on the governance of the state while in a state of rebellion. This part of the plan offers rural peasants additional incentives of political autonomy to unite with local political elites. Political autonomy is either implied or nearly stated outright in these articles. Article 12 lays out the foundation of dividing the state into three regions, while articles 13 and 15 stipulate how they should be governed and how they will pay for resources. In addition, the plan states how the military departments and their districts are prepared to be governed by popular will until the plan's measures are accepted by the Porfiriato.

Article 12 in the second half of the Plan de Zapote deserves special attention for its focus on resistance and military defense. The language in this article must have alarmed Díaz and his *orden y progreso* (order and progress) advocates and could be seen as a call to end the status quo. The article declares that the state of Guerrero will be divided into three armed military juntas that will be manned and governed by the people, and these juntas will be the ultimate authority in their regions until the demands of the pronunciamiento are met. Essentially, these three zones or departments, Northern, Central, and Southern Coast of Guerrero, would be self-governed zones and would appoint their own military commanders, meaning they would be outside the jurisdiction of the Porfirian regime, a plan which clearly undermined the entire Liberal project of Díaz and his Científicos.

It is unclear why the supporters of the Plan del Zapote included article 12. Surely, they realized how shocking it would be viewed by the establishment in Mexico City. While many of the other articles represented clear violations of the Pax Porfiriana, this article would have stood out to the Científicos as a clear threat to the Porfirian order and a return to the disorder of previous decades. Article 12 evoked older strains of local and federal liberalism that would have

threatened the Liberal elite. The authoritarian liberalism from which these elites benefited would unravel if other forms of liberalism existed and succeeded, since it might throw into the question that only one type of liberalism can exist in Mexico.

Article 11 indicates that the creators of the Plan del Zapote did not wish to disrupt entirely the status quo. Article 11 in the plan states that *extranjeros*, presumably US and European investors, shall not have their rights or properties infringed. The creators of the Plan were not trying to unseat Díaz from power or undo the Liberal project; in fact, several of them were local-level members of the Liberal elite. However, no matter how careful they were with their language, they were ultimately setting a dangerous precedent for elites in Mexico City. The petition requires the arming of Indigenous peasants, who had a history of challenging attempts by the national government in Mexico City to exert control over the provinces, especially Indigenous Guerrerenses who had fought with Vicente Guerrero and Juan Álvarez. The protocols of the Porfiriato maintained that ensuring order and progress were paramount. This process entailed limiting the ability of provincial leaders from influencing decisions that they believed were of utmost importance to the nation.

The fear of insurrectionary violence was not unwarranted. As much as it appeared to be absolute, the Díaz regime was vulnerable. The violent Yaqui revolts of Sonora and the so-called Caste War of Yucatan were still smoldering in 1901. Another uprising by Indigenous peasants in Guerrero, closer to the heart of the nation, would have caused great concern. Liberal elites were well aware of the danger that Guerrero posed to the stability of the Republic. Guerrero and its people had waged war on the governments of Mexico City since the very founding of the Republic, usually to defend its autonomy. The liberalism of Guerrero and Álvarez, popular

federalism, and later its successor, popular liberalism, galvanized the Indigenous people to form coalitions with state elites and to engage in armed struggle against elites in Mexico City.

Ultimately, Díaz's worst fears were confirmed, for the Plan del Zapote led to uprisings in Quechultenango, Atoyac, Tlalchapa, Iguala, Tepecoacuilco, Tetelilla, Apango, and Tixtla.<sup>42</sup> Many of these regions were home to Indigenous peasants who likely had scores to settle with the Porfiriato, ranging from violations associated with the liberal land reforms to many other measures that threatened the political autonomy of their pueblos, many which occurred during Mercenario's reign as governor.<sup>43</sup> The rebellion inspired by the Plan del Zapote was one of many rebellions in the state of Guerrero after 1876. There were several coups attempts against the three governors who succeeded Juan Álvarez after his death. In each of these insurrections, Indigenous people from different pueblos united to make common demands. The pronunciamiento is no different in this regard. Communities that participated in the rebellion of 1901 sought autonomy from the state.

#### **F. Article XVII: Ultimatum to the Porfirian State**

The final article in the Plan del Zapote offers little compromise. It states that the armed opposition to Díaz will continue until the federal government gives into the demands and allows the preferred governor, presumably Rafael del Castillo Calderón, to assume his role and to grant all combatants pardons for their actions during the revolt.

A crucial factor of the Díaz regime, even in Guerrero, was the ability to compromise. Again, the Porfirian regime was not entirely autocratic; the system included checks and balances

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Teresa Pava Miller and Jaime Salazar Adame *Historia general de Guerrero Volumen III Origen y formación - La modernización* (Chilpancingo 1998), 282.

to curtail the Díaz's hegemony. Compromise had already been achieved in Guerrero. In 1890, when the people of Zitlala argued over the parceling of their communal lands, the Porfirian regime intervened and ensured that a deal was struck that supported that would benefit the natives of Zitlala.<sup>44</sup> Díaz and the Científicos, members of Díaz's inner circle, knew that they had to keep various factions in Mexico in check, and to be careful when to use violence in order to maintain peace or face a potential backlash.

Whereas previous attempts to compromise in Zitlala favored Indigenous people over landed elites,<sup>45</sup> the governorship crisis failed to produce a compromise and affected all social groups in Guerrero. All peaceful options had been exhausted by Castillo Calderón and his supporters. Díaz would not bend to the opposition and risk losing the entire state of Guerrero, which would send a message to other states and municipalities that the regime was vulnerable. Thus, Díaz sent Huerta to suppress the movement by force. Many of the Plan's supporters were imprisoned, killed, or exiled, as was Castillo Calderón; Agustín Mora continued as governor with relatively little opposition thereafter.<sup>46</sup> However, the spirit of dissent based on tradition and liberalism did not disappear from Guerrero in 1901. It came back with a vengeance a decade later when Francisco Madero called for support in the Plan de San Luis Potosí, which led to Díaz's overthrow in 1910.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 269-271.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> José Manuel López Victoria Historia de la Revolución en Guerrero Tomo I de 1901 a 1912 (1985) 19-21.

## **G. Summary and Significance of the Plan del Zapote Rebellion**

In 1901, Rafael del Castillo Calderón and other local Guerrerense Científicos drafted the Plan del Zapote in Mochitlán Guerrero, with the intention of removing a governor through an archaic tradition of politically motivated violence, the pronunciamiento. Those who carried out this plan hoped against all odds that they could succeed in forcing the Porfirian regime to meet their demands. However, that manner of conducting politics, which was common in the first half of the 19th century, had become outdated. The Liberal Elite of Mexico coalesced under a single strain of liberalism that thrived until it fell apart during the Revolution. Nevertheless, a large coalition of aggrieved people used the pronunciamiento and other older strategies to advance a particular form of popular liberalism and political autonomy for their state and its pueblos.

Three basic premises can explain the Plan del Zapote: (1) it was part of a history of regional disputes between the federal center and the provinces; (2) these disputes were waged over the meaning of liberalism and (3) autonomy threatened to undermine the power of the national elites. The Plan was designed to contest an election that was viewed as legitimate by the Díaz administration and illegitimate by many people in Guerrero. Therefore, the very premise of the plan defies the centralizing authority of Díaz. To that end, the original endorsers of this plan made compromises with other groups in Guerrerense society, especially the rural Indigenous people of the state. They did not seek to upend the Porfiriato, but their actions might have unraveled the entire national project. Their objectives and methods seemed logical to them and to those who were prepared to rebel, but national elites reviled the movement as barbaric and antiquated and moved quickly to crush it. Ultimately, the movement was a precursor of things to come.

The Plan del Zapote signifies a watershed in the history of Guerrero. It marks the moment when the state would no longer tolerate the violations of liberalism that had been imposed on them by the Porfirian regime and lay the groundwork for revolutionaries to ally themselves with Francisco Madero and Emiliano Zapata. It differs from other conflicts that exploded in the state following the repression of the Porfiriato. Instead of inciting violence based on petty local concerns, such as local revolts to preserve communal land tenure, or the typical self-aggrandizing coups endemic to the state, it focused on the root of the problem, the Liberal Project of Porfirio Díaz and his científicos. The Plan del Zapote merits study because it reveals the paradoxical nature of the Porfirian regime and the brand of liberalism that it created, and the effort to silence all other forms of representative government.

## **Chapter IV: Conclusion**

The Porfirian regime reached its peak of power in 1901, when it finally put an end to the Maya war in Yucatan and the Yaqui uprising in Sonora. It seemed as if the regime was poised to consolidate power and advance its liberal vision in the new century. However, a coalition of social groups challenged Porfirian hegemony with a pronunciamiento, a petition that used insurrectionary violence to compel political change. The Plan del Zapote invoked suppressed traditions of liberalism and autonomy to create a dangerous alliance between local elites and Indigenous peasants to challenge the authority of the capital. Such a return to the past could not be tolerated and was quickly snuffed out, but the legacy of it lived on. For such a tradition would reappear less than a decade later during the Mexican Revolution.

Future research for the Plan del Zapote might include examining the motives of the participants beyond their political aspirations. As noted, the Indigenous faction's motives for joining the movement might have transcended a desire to reassert the autonomy of their pueblos. The socio-economic changes that transformed Porfirian Guerrero at the end of the 19th century could be one motive. The same might be true of social groups in the state, such as the local Científicos of Guerrero. Despite being part of an emerging middle class, it is possible that they suffered the same fate as Indigenous people during the Porfiriato.

Another avenue of potential research might be to map out the trajectory of those who participated in the rebellion. There is little information about the participants and their lives. Barring Rafael Castillo de Calderón, everyone else involved in the rebellion effectively disappears from the historiography following this important event in Guerrerense history. A social historical profile of the men and women who crafted the Plan and risked their lives by openly supporting the movement might shed light on their motives and social networks. It would

be equally important to examine the communities that joined the rebellion. Did the same communities involved in the rebellion of 1901 take an active part in the revolution a decade later?

Finally, further research is necessary on how the Plan del Zapote fits into the overall narrative of the Mexican Revolution, beyond the regional concerns of Guerrero. Historians of the state of Guerrero agree that the Plan demonstrated the state's willingness to rebel and see how it presaged Madero's Plan de San Luis Potosí, but few have explored how exactly the plan of 1901 overlapped with the plan of 1910. The extent of the impact remains undetermined. Some local scholars have proposed that the Plan del Zapote influenced revolutionary figures like the Flores Magón Brothers, but more research is needed to verify such claims.

Ultimately, the Plan del Zapote provides important insight into a transitional period of Mexico during the late 19th century, focused on Guerrero. Although the pronunciamiento was considered outdated, its use unleashed a discourse on other forms of liberalism, and the just distribution of power and autonomy. The Plan was paradoxically both a rebuke and a reaffirmation of the Porfirian regime, created by people who were trying to adapt to changes at both the national and local level, and to compromise with a dictator by threatening violence. Politics had changed drastically for many during this period, and for some the changes were unacceptable. They sought a peaceful compromise by threatening violence in order to redefine the terms of liberalism and political autonomy. The prospect of compromise was crushed but not entirely silenced; the same issues surfaced again only a few years later, issues that had not been resolved to the satisfaction of all sides since the birth of the Mexican Republic.

Appendix

UNIVERSIDAD IBEROAMERICANA Legajo XXVI  
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LEGAJO XXVI



Tras la firma de se  
mita a Ud. copia del plan  
politico proclamado hoy en  
este municipio, para su  
suplen conocimiento y de  
acuerdo con lo prevenido  
en el Articulo 6.º del mis  
mo plan.

Patria y Libertad  
Michitla, Abril 8 de 1911  
El Presidente municipal  
Porfirio Jimenez

Manuel A. Garcia

W. A. President  
de la Republica Mexico

A los habitantes del Estado Libre  
y Soberano de Sonora

Plan Político

- Art. 1.<sup>o</sup> El pueblo del Estado Libre y Soberano de Sonora declara que de hoy para siempre en su territorio, será un hecho la libertad del Sufragio.
- Art. 2.<sup>o</sup> Todo acto del Poder Judicial o del Poder Ejecutivo que signifique coacción para los ciudadanos al Sufragio en los comicios, será motivo bastante para que el pueblo rechace tal atentado, haciendo valer su soberanía por los medios que estén a su alcance.
- Art. 3.<sup>o</sup> En la próxima elección de Gobernador el pueblo asumirá la actitud enérgica que le corresponde para defender la libertad electoral que proclama y apoya por consiguiente la candidatura que el mismo pueblo aclame para aquel elevado cargo.
- Art. 4.<sup>o</sup> Para conservar limpias las páginas brillantes de la Historia de Sonora, el pueblo protesta contra la legislación actual, por la declaración ilegal que hizo el Gobernador en favor de Don Antonio Mucunari, y sus demás actos contra las garantías democráticas, dándole a la vez un voto de censura.
- Art. 5.<sup>o</sup> Remítase el presente Plan a los Supremos Poderes del Estado, para su conocimiento.
- Art. 6.<sup>o</sup> Remítase igualmente a los Supremos Poderes Federales, comunicando lo respectivamente, que el pueblo tiene por objeto el caso a que se refiere el art.

116 de la Constitución General que llega a hacer, y a ejercer, ante los Poderes del Estado, para que el uso constitucionalmente, pidiendo de aquellos su apoyo y protección, que se habrán concebido. El mismo pueblo, en consecuencia, por consideración a los parámetros, las dificultades, que pudieran presentarse, y garantizar después la paz y el orden constitucional.

Art. 7º Los actos, leyes y decretos del Poder Legislativo del Estado, solo se numeran y tendrán por válidos en aquellos que no pugnen con lo que en el presente Plan, que da dicho.

Art. 8º Todos los pueblos y Ciudadanos que suenden este Plan, continúan la ineludible obligación de mantener el orden, respetando en todo, caso la vida de las personas y demás garantías individuales.

Art. 9º Los que se adhieren a este Plan y lo defiendan, solo harán uso de las armas contra las fuerzas del Estado, para defender, en el caso único de que dichas fuerzas ataquen a los pueblos o Ciudadanos adictos a dicho Plan o de alguna manera rompan con las hostilidades.

Art. 10 Las autoridades y fuerzas federales serán respetadas y contra ellas no se ejecutaran actos hostiles, por tratarse de una cuestión política puramente local, salvo en el caso de que dichas fuerzas rompan las hostilidades.

Art. 11 Los representantes de las Naciones extranjeras, así como sus nacionales, serán estrictamente respetados y garantizados sus intereses.

Art. 12. Para las efritas de este Plan y solo para el caso de su nombramiento, se dividirá el Estado en tres Departamentos Militares, que serán: 1.º el del Norte, compuesto de los distritos de Beavos, Oldama, Mma, Cidalgos y Alarcón; 2.º el del Cuente, compuesto de los distritos de Guenero, Alvarez, Merules y Saragosa, y el 3.º el de Lombai contra el del Costa Grande y Costa Chica, que se formaron los distritos de Fabares, Galana, Montes de Oro, Allende y Elbasco, quedando cada Departamento al mando de su Comandante Militar que se nombrará por los mismos pueblos y el del 1.º asumirá el mando supremo.

Art. 13. Los Comandantes quedan autorizados para nombrar los Prefectos de sus respectivos distritos, en los casos en que los actuales no reconozcan este Plan, hagan armas contra su defensas o abandonen sus puestos. Los mismos nombramientos y en iguales casos, podrán hacer de las demás autoridades que fueran necesarias, tanto civiles como militares, según las circunstancias lo exigiere.

Art. 14. Las autoridades del Estado, las Guarniciones, las fuerzas de seguridad pública, los agentes del Gobierno o cualquier individuo, que atenta contra los sostenedores de este Plan, que lleguen a hacer armas contra ellos y derramen la sangre de nuestros hermanos, serán considerados como facciosos y rebeldes de alta traición al Estado, condenándoseles militarmente a sufrir las penas a que se hagan acreedores, de acuerdo con las leyes de la materia sancionadas por el Decreto.

Art. 15. Los jefes militares y civiles que tengan que en sus deberes políticos de los arbitrios de los Comandantes de los Departamentos, en lo que al efecto el primer turno de los Armas Ciudadanas. Los adu- dos que se continúan serán sujetos de los Penales del Estado, para que se establezca el nuevo Gobierno, en la forma que acuerde la Legislatura.

Art. 16. Todos los Ciudadanos que secundan este Plan quedan, por el mismo hecho, relevados total- mente del pago de toda clase de contribucio- nes, hasta que comience a fungir el nuevo gobernante, y quede enteramente restable- do el orden Constitucional.

Art. 17. Todos los pretendidos de este mismo Plan depositarán las Armas de guerra que haya to- mado posesión de su cargo. El Gobernador Cons- titucional, por los Armas aseguradas por los Se- cretarios Federales y del Estado sus de- rechos políticos y garantías individuales.

Wendell, Abril 8 del 90.

El Presidente respectivo

Porfirio Jimenez

Juan de P. Pardo

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