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Party of the Century: Juárez, Díaz, and the End of the "Unifying Liberal Myth" in 1906 Oaxaca

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of History
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts of History

by
John Radley Milstead
May 2012

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ABSTRACT

Party of the Century: Juárez, Díaz, and the End of the "Unifying Liberal Myth" in 1906 Oaxaca

by

John Radley Milstead

I will analyze the posthumous one-hundredth birthday celebration of former Mexican president and national hero, Benito Juárez, in 1906 Oaxaca City, Mexico. The Juárez celebration took place during the lengthy presidency of fellow Oaxaca native and former political rival Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911). Even though the two men experienced an antagonistic relationship, Díaz embraced the celebration and emphasized his connection to Juárez and, by extension, liberalism, the dominant political ideology. By all accounts, people enthusiastically took part in this official commemoration. But the festivities hid three years of contentious preparations whereby people questioned the political legacy of both men and even liberalism itself.

Numerous historians of Mexico have argued that Díaz, a veritable dictator, used national celebrations and civic ceremonies throughout his presidency to foster nationalism among the populace. As such, this celebration provides an important entryway into the debates among historians over hegemony and state formation in Mexico.

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CHAPTER 1

JUÁREZ AND DÍAZ IN OAXACA

A canon blast outside the governor's palace at daybreak on March 21, 1906, in Oaxaca City marked the beginning of Mexico's first centennial celebration. A military detachment ceremoniously responded to the canon's signal by raising the tricolor Mexican flag, thereby commemorating the one-hundredth birthday of former president and national hero Benito Juárez. The event's meticulous planning had left little room for any spontaneous eruption of disorder. Mexico's President, Porfirio Díaz, had himself worked closely with Oaxaca Governor Emilio Pimentel to assure that the celebration honored Juárez in the appropriate manner. Fittingly, foreign dignitaries, powerful politicians, elites, and a large crowd of residents of the state of Oaxaca, or *oaxaqueños*, gathered in a band-led parade up to the *Cerro del Fortín* (a large hill immediately outside the city limits) where Pimentel dedicated a giant statue of Juárez overlooking the capital.

By all accounts, the day's closely planned events proceeded smoothly. Politicians politely watched as representatives of various indigenous groups from the diverse regions around the state--dressed in *traje* (traditional attire)--assumed their orchestrated roles in the procession. In addition, the "great allegorical float of 'Reform, Liberty, and Progress,'" complete with a bust of Juárez for which local businessmen had paid, prominently testified to the commemoration's significance.¹ Highlighting the day's numerous events, students from throughout the state simultaneously read a short biography of Juárez and, later, elites taught lessons about the reform

¹ "Programa de Las Festividades del Centenario de Juárez," *Periódico Oficial*, Oaxaca de Juárez, Marzo 17 de 1906, no. 22.

hero to schoolchildren. Noted oaxaqueño Andrés Portillo commented afterward that the event's numerous participants had celebrated the birth of Don Benito in an "enthusiastic and orderly" manner.² Portillo added that, perhaps surprisingly, Oaxaca's police had no need to intervene due to the pacific and harmonious nature of the large crowd on hand.³

This centennial celebration honoring Juárez took place at the height of Porfirio Díaz's long presidency from 1876 to 1911, an era known as the Porfiriato. Oaxaca City represented a uniquely appropriate location for the event. After all, the political careers of both Juárez and Díaz had begun in the state of Oaxaca where they each served as governor, although this fact had not made them allies. The pair experienced a well-publicized, adversarial relationship. Nevertheless, the eventual rise of the two men to the highest political office in the country assured that oaxaqueños enjoyed a special relationship with the central government for decades. And, for a moment in time, the ceremony linked Oaxaca's most influential people and places to Mexico's difficult road to stability during the late nineteenth century.

Despite its orderly appearance, this elaborate state celebration poses several questions for historians of the Porfiriato. Foremost among these, why would Díaz, whom many scholars have portrayed as a veritable dictator, sanction such an elaborate celebration of a former political rival while at the height of his own political power? At the surface, the answer seems obvious. Throughout Díaz's presidency, he used civic ceremonies and commemorations to inspire nationalism and to teach history to Mexico's citizens; this celebration and monument dedication apparently proved no different.⁴ Arguably, the dedication of the impressive monument

² Andrés Portillo, *Oaxaca en el Centenario de la Independencia Nacional: Noticias históricas y estadísticas de la Ciudad de Oaxaca, y algunas leyendas tradicionales* (Oaxaca City: Imprenta del Estado, 1910), 106.

³ Portillo, *Oaxaca en el Centenario*, 106.

⁴ See the following for broad overviews of the use of festivals throughout Mexican history. These edited collections coherently offer excellent analyses of Porfirian civic ceremonies. William H. Beezley, Cheryl English Martin, and William E. French, *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1994),

overlooking the residents of the capital city symbolically connected the Díaz regime with the legacy of Juárez, undoubtedly the most recognizable hero of Mexico's national past. As this thesis will show, the Juárez statue and ceremony also reminded oaxaqueños of the sacrifices and difficulties of Mexico's tumultuous nineteenth century while highlighting modernity in a rapidly transforming and expanding city and nation.⁵ Díaz used the commemoration to position his regime in Mexico's history by portraying himself as both the sacrificial hero tied to the recent past and the logical heir to the liberal reforms and popular government that Juárez represented to many Mexicans.⁶ In practice, the orderly celebration apparently met the expectations of its planners by metaphorically connecting Díaz to the past. Nevertheless, the celebration's outward tranquility masked three years of contentious preparations wherein the very meaning of liberalism and, by extension, the political legacies of both Juárez and Díaz underwent intensive negotiation.

William H. Beezley and David E. Lorey, *¡Viva Mexico! ¡Viva La Independencia!: Celebrations of September 16* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2001). See, Linda A. Curcio-Nagy, *The Great Festivals of Colonial Mexico City: Performing Power and Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), for more on colonial era festivals. For an interpretation of Porfirian state funerals see, Matthew D. Esposito, *Funerals, Festivals, and Cultural Politics in Porfirian Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010). Also see, Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969); Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974); Victor Turner, ed. *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982); Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Mary Ryan, "The American Parade: Representations of the Nineteenth-Century Social Order," in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) for helpful theoretical models on how to approach civic ceremonies.

⁵ By modernity, I refer to the idea that swept the West in the late nineteenth century "when industrialization rapidly transform[ed] social and economic life." Many people during this time "aggressively embraced 'the new' and reveled in challenging and overthrowing the old forms, traditions, theories, institutions, and authorities." See Stuart Hall, "Introduction," in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, ed. David Held, Don Hubert, and Kenneth Thompson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 17.

⁶ See Benedict Anderson's treatment of memory to promote nationalism. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 187-206. See also Mona Ozouf's examination of the French revolutionary government's use of civic commemorations. She employed Emile Durkheim's argument regarding the substitution of religion with a new state religion of nationalism and citizenship. She concluded that these public ceremonies promoted Republican ideals and nationalism in place of older religious traditions. Ozouf, *Festivals*.

The Codification of Liberalism

By 1906, two people could not have commanded more attention in any Mexican state than did Juárez and Díaz in Oaxaca. The two leading figures in the second half of the nineteenth century served the nation during the civil war known as the War of Reform (1858-1861), which resulted in liberalism becoming the dominant political philosophy in the second half of the nineteenth century. Following the War of Reform, the two men defended Mexico against Napoleon III's invasion, commonly referred to as the French Intervention (1862-1867). As president, Juárez steadfastly faced both internal and external challenges. For his part, Díaz gained notoriety as a capable military leader during these wars. He earned high regard for his leadership in the Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862 where Mexicans soundly defeated French forces.⁷ From the time Governor Juárez appointed him to the rank of captain, Díaz's career and his responsibilities developed at a rapid pace culminating in his long presidency.⁸ Together these men dominated politics throughout the latter half of the nineteenth-century, and they led the country through a tumultuous period in its history.⁹ All told, Juárez's and Díaz's careers represented the triumph of the modern nation-state over colonial era institutions and their conservative proponents.¹⁰

Liberalism had a long history in Juárez's and Díaz's home state of Oaxaca. Prior to the reform era, this political ideology attracted numerous supporters among the students in Oaxaca

⁷ Patrick J. McNamara, *Sons of the Sierra: Juárez, Díaz, and the People of Ixtlán, Oaxaca, 1855-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 54.

⁸ Paul Garner, *Porfirio Díaz* (Harlow, England: Longman, 2001), 36.

⁹ For more on the continuity and transformation of liberal politics from Juárez to Díaz in the latter half of the nineteenth-century see, Laurens Ballard Perry, *Juárez and Díaz: Machine Politics in Mexico* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1978); Charles A. Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

¹⁰ For more on early liberalism see, Charles A. Hale, *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora, 1821-1853* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); Pamela Voekel, *Alone Before God: The Religious Origins of Modernity in Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

City's prestigious *Instituto de Ciencias y Artes* (Institute of Science and Art, ICA), which both Juárez and Díaz attended.¹¹ Reared in the ICA's liberal pedagogy, Juárez eventually gained national notoriety as a reformer. His stature grew throughout the reform era, which culminated in the passage of the 1857 Constitution. This document effectively codified the basic tenets of the broad discourse of Mexican liberalism: individual rights, the authority of the secular state, and economic and social progress.¹²

Following the reform era, Juárez and Díaz developed an intense political rivalry. Though they continued to align politically in the Liberal Party, they led competing factions within it. Their divergent political ambitions made post-war reconciliation difficult. The 1867 presidential election eventually pitted the two men against one another. Juárez won easily due to his popularity among war-weary citizens following almost a decade of war and sacrifice.¹³ The two men faced off again in the 1871 election, but this time Juárez did not have enough votes to gain an outright victory. The close results sent the decision to congress, whose members sided with Juárez. Claiming that Juárez had manipulated the election, Díaz forcefully tried to overturn the results with his 1872 La Noria rebellion. For the most part, oaxaqueños did not respond to Díaz's call to arms, choosing instead to support President Juárez. The shocking murder of Díaz's brother Félix in the small town of Juchitán ended the revolt, but Juárez's untimely death on July 18,

¹¹ For more on the rise of liberalism and liberal politics in Oaxaca see, Brian R. Hamnett, "Benito Juárez, Early Liberalism, and the Regional Politics of Oaxaca, 1828-1853," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 10, no. 1 (1991): 3-21; Brian R. Hamnett, "Liberalism Divided: Regional Politics and the National Project during the Mexican Restored Republic, 1867-1876." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 76, no. 4 (November 1996): 659-689; Charles Redmon Berry, *The Reform in Oaxaca, 1856-76: A Microhistory of the Liberal Revolution* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981); Francie R. Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary Oaxaca: The View from the South: Mexico, 1867-1911* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 351-400.

¹² Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism*, 3-4. Hale's book remains the best resource for the changing meaning of liberalism during the Porfiriato. For more on liberalism see, Guy Thompson and David LaFrance, *Patriotism, Politics and Popular Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1999); Guy Thompson, "Popular Aspects of Liberalism in Mexico, 1848-1888," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 10, no. 3 (1991): 265-292.

¹³ Ralph Roeder, *Juarez and His Mexico* (New York: Viking Press, 1947), 681-685; Garner, *Díaz*, 52-54.

1872, paved the way for Díaz's run at the presidency. The 1876 Tuxtepec rebellion finally landed him the office he had tried so hard to attain.¹⁴

The traditionally independent state of Oaxaca, with its mixture of sixteen indigenous groups, rugged terrain, and isolation provided a unique political environment for Juárez and Díaz.¹⁵ By 1900, while Díaz enjoyed the peak of his national power, the state consisted of approximately 200,000 inhabitants.¹⁶ Díaz, whose long presidency brought to Mexico the most stable regime in its history to that point, never overlooked Oaxaca politically. As president, he maintained close military and political relationships there, remaining involved in local disputes and development plans, as the Juárez commemoration demonstrated.¹⁷ Even though he did not personally attend the ceremony in Oaxaca, President Díaz, *científicos* (a powerful faction of Porfirian elites), and other government officials began planning for the Juárez centennial as early as 1903, three years ahead of the commemoration. They also planned celebrations in cities across Mexico in preparation for the milestone. Porfirian officials organized a national committee headed by fellow oaxaqueño Félix Romero to coordinate events with local officials.¹⁸ Despite

¹⁴ Hale explored reconciliation in his book Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism*, 9. For an examination of the three rival political factions following the French Intervention see, Frank S. Falcone, "Benito Juárez versus the Díaz Brothers: Politics in Oaxaca, 1867-1871," *The Americas* 33, no. 4 (April 1977): 630-651. Ralph Roeder, *Juarez*, 681-685, 719. See also Garner, *Porfirio Díaz*, 52-58 for an analysis of both elections. Garner concluded that Juárez manipulated votes in a similar manner that Díaz would in the future. Both men employed what he termed "pragmatic liberalism" while in office. At times they posited liberal reforms while carefully manipulating elections. Hamnett, "Liberalism Divided": 684. See also Carleton Beals, *Porfirio Diaz: Dictator of Mexico* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1971), 181-185.

¹⁵ For more on Oaxaca's legendary isolation and unique political environment both before and after Juárez and Díaz see, Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary*; Benjamin T. Smith, *Pistoleros and Popular Movements: The Politics of State Formation in Postrevolutionary Oaxaca* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 1-21.

¹⁶ Stephen A. Kowalewski and Jacqueline J. Saindon, "The Spread of Literacy in a Latin America Peasant Society: Oaxaca, Mexico, 1890 to 1980," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34, no. 1 (January 1992): 113.

¹⁷ McNamara establishes this close connection throughout *Sons of the Sierra* by providing countless examples of letters to Díaz, which were at times answered personally, from citizens of Oaxaca asking for help settling disputes.

¹⁸ "El Centenario de Juárez," *El Imparcial*, March 19, 1903. Anastasio Juárez, et al. to Emilio Pimentel, June 29, 1903. Secretario del gobierno, Legajo 113, Exp. 9. Archivo General del Poder Ejecutivo del Estado de Oaxaca (Hereafter cited as AGPEO). For more on the national committee see, Charles A. Weeks, *The Juárez Myth in Mexico* (Tuscaloosa AL: University of Alabama Press, 1987), 46-47.

their troubled personal history, Juárez, or at least his image, had apparently become useful to Díaz during the latter stages of the Porfiriato. By honoring the fallen hero, Díaz apparently manipulated national history to make the case that Juárez laid the foundation for his own government.¹⁹ But why? This thesis seeks to answer that question.

Historians and the Porfiriato

Historians of Mexico have analyzed Porfirio Díaz's presidency for over a century.²⁰ As Historian Paul Garner explained, both favorable and critical interpretations of the administration originated while Díaz still held office.²¹ Advocates of the regime, or *Porfiristas*, held that Díaz represented an era known as the *pax porfiriana*. Justo Sierra, one of the Porfiriato's leading intellectuals, advanced a prototypical Porfirista argument in 1902, stating that "all the facts [of history]... point to a recent forward movement...equivalent to Mexico's social evolution."²² Sierra and other Porfirista positivists argued that Díaz broke with Mexico's tumultuous past, which

¹⁹ Weeks, *The Juárez Myth*, 30.

²⁰ As one would expect, historians have also examined the Juárez years for over a century. Early interpretations include, Francisco Bulnes, *El Verdadero Juárez y la verdad sobre la intervención y el imperio*, rev. ed. (México, D.F.: Ediciones Ateneo, 1989); Francisco Bulnes, *Juárez y las revoluciones de Ayutla y de Reforma*, 2nd ed. (México, D.F.: Editorial Milenario, 1967); Justo Sierra, *Juárez: su obra y su tiempo*, rev. ed. (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1970). Ralph Roeder's biography remains an excellent resource for scholars, Roeder, *Juarez*. For an interpretation of the importance of Juárez and Mexican identity see, Weeks, *The Juárez Myth*. For some recent interpretations that have reexamined the Juárez presidency see, Carlos Sánchez Silva, *La formación política de Benito Juárez, 1818-1872* (Oaxaca: Universidad Autónoma "Benito Juárez" de Oaxaca, 2007); Carlos Monsiváis, *El estado laico y sus malquerientes (crónica / antología)* (Mexico, D.F.: Universidad Autónoma de México, 2008).

²¹ He identified three schools of interpretation. However, I have found that interpretations among historians do not necessarily fit his three categories. Nevertheless, his Porfirista and anti-Porfirista categories provided an important beginning point for an analysis of the historiography. Garner, *Porfirio Díaz*, 1-15.

²² Justo Sierra, *The Political Evolution of the Mexican People*, trans. Charles Ramsdell (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), 343. For other examples of Porfirismo literature see, Sierra, *Juárez*; Andrés Portillo, *Oaxaca en el Centenario*; J.R. Southworth, *El Estado de Oaxaca ilustrada: su historia comercio minería agricultura e industrias, sus elementos naturales en español e inglés* (Liverpool: Blake and MacKenzie, 1901); Marie Robinson Wright, *Picturesque Mexico* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1897); Francisco Belmar, *Breve reseña histórica y geográfica del Estado de Oaxaca: Edición oficial dedicada a los Delegados del Congreso Pan-Americano* (Oaxaca: Imprenta del comercio, 1901).

included seemingly countless civil wars, in a manner that had not been achieved previously. In effect, they credited Díaz with modernizing Mexico.

For their part, anti-*Porfiristas* argued that the Díaz era simply represented one of despotic rule. These historians contended that Díaz used force to oppress civil rights so as to ensure his own political future. Anti-*Porfirista* interpretations began in the latter stages of the regime and survived what Garner termed the "post-revolutionary mythology of the twentieth century." John Kenneth Turner's *Barbarous Mexico* (1910), a scathing exposé of political oppression during the Porfiriato, exemplified the caustic treatment of the Díaz regime prior to its undoing as a result of the 1910 Revolution.²³ The anti-*Porfirista* school survived well beyond the downfall of the regime, as illustrated by Daniel Cosío Villegas's *Historia Moderna de México*, a seven volume history of Mexico from 1867-1911 published in the 1950s and 1960s featuring research on the Díaz era.

Numerous historians have since the 1980s reassessed the Díaz years, revealing a wealth of new source materials and interpretations.²⁴ According to the recent scholarship, the Díaz presidency represented a period of burgeoning nationalism, modernization, and political development tempered by repression. These scholars largely hold that the simple assertions about Díaz's presidency prevalent in the traditional scholarship obscured a realistic understanding of the era. Garner concurred in his informative comparison of Juárez and Díaz,

²³ Garner, *Porfirio Díaz*, 5-7. See also, John Kenneth Turner, *Barbarous Mexico*, Rev. ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969); Lesley Byrd Simpson, *Many Mexicos* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1941); Daniel Cosío Villegas, Francisco R. Calderón, Luis González y González, Emma Cosío Villegas, and Moisés González Navarro, *Historia moderna de México*, 10 vols. (México: Editorial Hermes, 1955-74).

²⁴ These scholars have examined the Díaz regime and drawn a wealth of nuanced and insightful interpretations of the Porfiriato. Some important examples of recent interpretations are certainly not limited to the following. William H. Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); William E. French, *A Peaceful & Working People: Manners, Morals, and Class Formation in Northern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); Raymond B. Craib, *Cartographic Mexico: A History of State Fixations and Fugitive Landscapes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation*, *The New Historicism*, 35 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Paul J. Vanderwood, *Disorder and Progress: Bandits, Police, and Mexican Development* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981).

concluding that over time Díaz's "personal and patriarchal authority... became gradually consolidated and increasingly uncontested."²⁵ The recent scholarship has thus largely corrected the generalizations of prior polemics, popular histories, and academic interpretations in an effort to present a more balanced and nuanced interpretation of this period.²⁶

In his recent book, *Funerals, Festivals, and Cultural Politics in Porfirian Mexico*, Historian Matthew Esposito follows this model. In so doing, Esposito also divided Díaz's lengthy presidency into three parts. He termed Díaz's first stint as president (1876-1880) the *necesariato*, and argued that during this era the regime balanced precariously on a highly volatile popular legitimacy since, at this time, Díaz had only limited capability to enact real change. The "mature Porfiriato (1890-1905)" was the period when, according to Esposito, Díaz held enough popular support to authorize an enhanced program of social, economic, and political transformation. Esposito concluded that, during the mature Porfiriato, and despite the claims of despotism from among the anti-Porfiristas, the president relied upon considerable popular support to retain his office. Esposito argued that Díaz achieved popular credibility through the use of civic ceremonies and state funerals during his regime's second stage. This situation broke down in the third stage beginning in 1906, leaving Díaz increasingly at odds with Mexico's population and paving the way for the 1910 revolution.²⁷ Much like other recent historians of the Porfiriato, Esposito found that Díaz remained in office due to his ability to maintain a substantial

²⁵ Paul Garner, "The Civilian and the General, 1867-1911," in *A Companion to Mexican History and Culture*, ed. William H. Beezley (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 297.

²⁶ Matthew D. Esposito, "Death and Disorder in Mexico City: The State Funeral of Manuel Romero Rubio," in *Latin American Popular Culture: An Introduction*, ed. William H. Beezley and Linda A. Curcio-Nagy (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2000), 100. See also, Florencia E. Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) 274; Mark Wasserman, *Everyday Life and Politics in Nineteenth Century Mexico: Men, Women, and War* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 210; Garner, *Díaz*, 14-15; Edward N. Wright-Rios, *Revolutions in Mexican Catholicism: Reform and Revelation in Oaxaca, 1887-1934* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009). Wright-Rios contended that Díaz fostered popular support through a network of local caudillos along with church reconciliation. See also, Jürgen Buchenau, *Tools of Progress: A German Merchant Family in Mexico City, 1865-Present* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 40.

²⁷ Esposito, *Funerals*, 4-5.

amount of popular support.²⁸ Building on Esposito's approach, this study examines the 1906 Juárez commemoration as a possible window into the dissolution of Díaz's popular consensus, as numerous participants contested the meaning of liberalism and the legacy of both Juárez and Díaz well before the ceremony ever took place.

Festivals and the Porfiriato

Esposito's study represents the most recent of several innovative examinations of Díaz's use of civic ceremonies and monuments.²⁹ Barbara Tenenbaum employed Jacob Burckhardt's "the state as a work of art" approach in her study of the transformation of Porfirian Mexico City. Reading the city as a text, she analyzed how the dictator transformed urban space with monument projects along the Paseo de la Reforma. Tenenbaum argued that during Díaz's presidency residents of the capital witnessed the birth of official history on the famous city street. Porfirian officials in Mexico City modernized streets with monuments to fallen heroes, thereby codifying a national myth all residents could readily experience visually. Tenenbaum contended that the Díaz administration sought "sometimes to impress foreigners and sometimes to teach the virtues the Porfirian government thought appropriate" to the Mexican people.³⁰ Mauricio Tenorio Trillo took this approach, further arguing that by 1910 citizens could literally experience a

²⁸ The recent regional treatments of the Porfiriato in Oaxaca generally support a more nuanced approach to the era. See Mark Overmyer-Velázquez, *Visions of the Emerald City: Modernity, Tradition, and the Formation of Porfirian Oaxaca, Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary*; McNamara, *Sons of the Sierra*; Wright-Rios, *Revolutions*.

²⁹ For some of examples see, Beezley, Martin, French, *Rituals of Rule*; Beezley and Lorey, *¡Viva Mexico!; Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club*; William H. Beezley, *Mexican National Identity: Memory, Innuendo, and Popular Culture* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2008); Esposito, *Funerals*; William H., Beezley and Linda A. Curcio-Nagy, eds., *Latin American Popular Culture: An Introduction* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2000); Claudia Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress: Modernization and Public Health in Mexico City, 1876-1910* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003).*

³⁰ Barbara A. Tenenbaum, "Streetwise History: The Paseo de la Reforma and the Porfirian State, 1876-1910," in *Rituals of Rule*, 128. See also Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress*, for an analysis of Díaz's employment of monuments to shape history.

timeline of Mexican history with a walk along the Paseo.³¹ Other historians have built upon Tenenbaum's and Tenorio Trillo's conclusions by arguing that Díaz's efforts to define national history extended to civic commemorations as well. William H. Beezley, a pioneer among cultural historians of Mexico, recently argued that Díaz used festivals to express "the Porfirian understanding of what national virtue should be."³²

Historians of Oaxaca have followed these examples in examining the use of festivals at the state level.³³ These historians have analyzed the construction of monuments, the modification of city streets and neighborhoods, and the regulation of public space. While analysis of festivals represents just one element of their more comprehensive historical studies, Mark Overmyer-Velázquez, Patrick McNamara, and Francie Chassen-López have found that officials transformed space and employed festivals to reinforce Porfirian values in Oaxaca.³⁴

Despite the numerous studies of the use of festivals during the Porfiriato, none has yet thoroughly analyzed the Juárez centennial commemoration in Oaxaca. Many scholars have chosen to focus instead on the more well-known 1910 independence celebrations. For example, William Beezley and David Lorey's collection of essays traced how various governments have planned these civic ceremonies throughout Mexican history. Beezley and Lorey stressed that "Independence Day... has long been the most important public festival in the civic ritual calendar and has bequeathed to Mexicans a rich tradition that is part creation myth, part official pomp,

³¹ Mauricio Tenorio Trillo, "1910 Mexico City: Space and Nation in the City of the *Centenario*," in *¡Viva Mexico! ¡Viva La Independencia!: Celebrations of September 16* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2001), 184.

³² Beezley, *Mexican National Identity*, 66.

³³ Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary*; McNamara, *Sons of the Sierra*; and Overmyer-Velázquez, *Visions of the Emerald City*. These three accounts deal with Porfirian festivals as part of larger analyses of other events.

³⁴ Overmyer-Velázquez examined this theme in Oaxaca City during the Porfiriato. He analyzed the of the city through the regulation of public space. Overmyer-Velázquez, *Visions*, 40-69. McNamara, *Sons of the Sierra*, 157-168; Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary*, 414-426, 385-386, 479-480. For a look at how Díaz manipulated the church to enhance his popular support see, Wright-Rios, *Revolutions*.

and part popular merrymaking.”³⁵ This has proven true throughout the course of the national history, they added. They made the case that Independence Day celebrations have been a major factor encouraging nationalism among Mexicans over nearly two centuries.

Despite Independence Day's obvious importance, the Juárez centennial under analysis here represented a unique moment in Porfirian Mexico. The event challenged the prominence of Independence Day in 1906 Oaxaca. It marked a time for Porfirians to celebrate the relative stability of the Díaz era after almost a century of instability, warfare, and hardship. The new world of the Porfiriato represented an era when Mexico joined other modern nations commemorating centennial milestones.³⁶ The Díaz regime's commemoration allied former political enemies, the turbulent past, the stable present, modernity, and the most important political state in Mexico at a single point in time during the waning days of the Porfiriato.

Historians researching the independence celebrations have typically called attention to their undeniable popularity among the citizenry. Government officials in Mexico have often co-opted the imagery of the past to encourage nationalism. As such, independence celebrations during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries “informed people of the most pressing national issues of the day.”³⁷ Some of these issues included “the milestones of state building, the evolution and resolution of social conflicts, and the emergence of new national heroes and villains.”³⁸ In addition, Beezley and Lorey argued that these celebrations “served as public theater” wherein officials and elites “presented appropriate norms of interaction, proper behavior

³⁵ Beezley and Lorey, *¡Viva Mexico!*, ix.

³⁶ For a useful overview of the importance of centennial commemorations throughout Europe and the Western world see Roland Quinault, “The Cult of the Centenary, c. 1784-1914,” *Historical Research* 71, no. 176 (October 1998): 303-323.

³⁷ Beezley and Lorey, *¡Viva Mexico!*, xi.

³⁸ Beezley and Lorey, *¡Viva Mexico!*, xi.

in the public arena, and the relationship of individuals to the government.”³⁹ All of this amounted to a “medium for informal education” of the values of the state.⁴⁰

The Juárez centennial in Oaxaca also strongly exhibited these Porfirian values. In fact, only the centennial commemoration of Mexican independence in 1910 matched the importance of the Juárez celebration during the era. The 1906 Juárez commemoration served as the predecessor to this grand civic ceremony, and it exhibited all the ritualistic elements of other independence celebrations. While Tenorio Trillo accurately described the 1910 independence centennial as the Porfirian “apotheosis of a nationalist consciousness,” the 1906 Juárez centennial provides a unique example of Porfirian state building--or possibly its demise--that historians have generally overlooked.⁴¹ Many Porfirians actually felt that, due to Juárez's prominence, 1906 represented the year of the authentic centenario.⁴² A similar amount of planning went into the Juárez commemoration as into the later independence ceremony, and an equal amount of national enthusiasm permeated the Juárez celebration. In addition, preparations for the ceremony in Oaxaca displayed an open negotiation of the liberal tradition in this most fitting location, the home of both Díaz and Juárez.

³⁹ Beezley and Lorey, *¡Viva Mexico!*, xi.

⁴⁰ Beezley and Lorey, *¡Viva Mexico!*, xii. Beezley and Lorey concluded that these celebrations performed a similar function to print media in Benedict Anderson's groundbreaking analysis of the phenomenon of nationalism. Anderson contended that people could imagine a connection to a larger community by reading newspapers and other widely circulated publications. Beezley and Lorey took this further stating that civic commemorations in Mexico served a similar purpose among a largely illiterate population.

⁴¹ Tenorio Trillo, “1910 Mexico City,” 168.

⁴² Emilio Pimentel, *Mensaje leído por C. Lic. Emilio Pimentel, Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, ante la XXIII Legislatura del mismo y contestación de su Presidente C. Lic. Francisco Parada, Al abrir aquella su segundo periodo sesiones ordinarias, el 16 de Septiembre de 1906* (Oaxaca: Tip. Del Estado, 1906), 19. McNamara, *Sons of the Sierra*, 157-158.

Ceremonies and State Formation

The 1906 celebration in Oaxaca offers yet another example of what historians of state formation and ritual in Mexico consider a nation-building project.⁴³ By state formation, I refer to a cultural process combining efforts to centralize state power and popular social experience along the lines of Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, who looked at state formation in England over the course of eight centuries.⁴⁴ They argued that "the enormous extent of [state] power cannot be understood unless state forms are understood as cultural forms, state formation as cultural revolution, and cultural images as continually and extensively state regulated" so as "to cement loyalty both to the nation and to the regime in power."⁴⁵ Rather than using the examination of the Juárez festival to evidence state power, I instead use it to gauge the weakness and decline, or possibly the absence, of Díaz's alleged hegemony.

I also draw from the work of Mona Ozouf, who, in her excellent treatment of the nationalistic festivals of the French revolutionaries, found that "the Revolutionary festival would try to give new life to the cast of characters of a country celebration."⁴⁶ She concluded that the Revolutionary festival updated and appropriated traditional popular celebrations by projecting

⁴³ Mary Kay Vaughan built upon the distinction posited by Guy Thomson. See, Mary Kay Vaughan, "The Construction of the Patriotic Festival in Tecamachalco, Puebla, 1900-1946," in *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico*, ed. William H. Beezley, Cheryl English Martin, and William E. French (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1994), 215-216; Overmyer-Velázquez, *Visions*, 54; Nora Pérez-Rayón E., "The Capital Commemorates Independence at the Turn of the Century," in *¡Viva Mexico! ¡Viva La Independencia!: Celebrations of September 16*, ed. William H. Beezley and David E. Lorey (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2001), 141-144; Beezley, *Mexican National Identity*, 79. For more on the distinction between state formation and nation formation see, Guy P.C. Thompson, "Popular Aspects of Liberalism in Mexico, 1848-1888," 265-268.

⁴⁴ Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation As Cultural Revolution* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1985); Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent, "Popular Culture and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico," in *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994) build on this approach.

⁴⁵ Corrigan and Sayer, *The Great Arch*, 199-200. Beezley and Lorey, *¡Viva Mexico!*, ix. For more on the collaborative process of state formation in Oaxaca see, Smith, *Pistoleros*, 11-21.

⁴⁶ Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, 7.

them onto the state. Ozouf contended that beyond inventing a new set of traditions, the French revolutionaries adopted their rituals and replaced religious traditions with those of Republican France. As previously discussed, historians of Mexico have concluded that often the post-colonial governments, and the Díaz regime in particular, performed a similar substitution.⁴⁷

One will certainly encounter similarities between the Juárez commemoration and what historians have identified elsewhere. This study will also illustrate that the Díaz regime established continuity with heroes from Mexico's past in its specific use of Juárez's imagery. In the process, the organizers of the festival made the case that the legacy of one of Mexico's few recognizable heroes and that of the current president were historically bound. One aspect of my examination into this celebration will determine how Porfiristas chose and employed imagery they deemed useful to realizing this end.

At the turn of the century, the figure of Juárez was tightly interwoven into the collective identity and popular culture of Mexicans.⁴⁸ Díaz grudgingly understood this political reality.⁴⁹ For several years, Mexicans popularly reenacted the massive funeral procession that they experienced when Juárez died in 1872. July 18, Juárez Day, became a national holiday in 1887, fifteen years after his passing, following a lengthy political debate. Congress passed the bill in November proclaiming the "18th day of July...a day of public mourning."⁵⁰ Newspapers typically marked the day with poems, excerpts from history books, and often with Juárez's own words. For his part, President Díaz recognized the growing importance of the national day of honor. Matthew Esposito argued that Juárez represented a figure for Díaz "akin to that of

⁴⁷ Beezley, *Mexican National Identity*, 72; Matthew Esposito referred to this phenomenon in Porfirian Mexico as a "national religion." Esposito, *Funerals*, 145-147; David E. Lorey, "The Revolutionary Festival in Mexico: November 20 Celebrations in the 1920s and 1930s," *The Americas* 54, no. 1 (July 1997): 44-45. Tenorio-Trillo, "1910 Mexico City," 170.

⁴⁸ Weeks, *The Juárez Myth*, 61-62.

⁴⁹ Esposito, *Funerals*, 145-159.

⁵⁰ "About Town," *The Two Republics*, November 27, 1887.

Washington or Lincoln" due to the reproducibility of the images and the popularity of the man himself.⁵¹ Díaz abandoned the troublesome history he experienced with Juárez, as he and Governor Emilio Pimentel set Mexican history in stone on the side of a mountain for all oaxaqueños to see.

Hegemony and the Party of the Century

When looking at celebrations, numerous historians have argued that Díaz manipulated popular culture to exercise his power in lieu of using outright repression and force.⁵² Such scholarship builds upon Antonio Gramsci's analysis of cultural hegemony in Italy, which hypothesized that those in power manipulate culture to reinforce their system of values.⁵³ Esposito argued that, in the Mexican case, "through strategic cultural politics, governing elites connect with the everyday experiences and traditions of the very people they subordinate in order to stabilize undemocratic regimes."⁵⁴ Esposito thus argued that Porfirian officials could avoid the use of force by appealing to patriotism and the construction of a national culture through public ritual.⁵⁵ Public rituals also reinforced what Charles Hale termed the "unifying liberal myth" in Mexico. Hale argued that this myth emerged after the War of Reform and the French

⁵¹ Esposito, *Funerals*, 50.

⁵² Beezley, "Porfirian Smart Set Anticipates Veblen," 186-187; Esposito, *Funerals*, 7; Pérez-Rayón, "The Capital," 146-147;

⁵³ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, Trans. and ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Rev. ed. (New York: International Publishers, 2010). For more on the phenomenon of hegemony see, William Roseberry, "Hegemony and the Language of Contention," in *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); Mallon, *Peasant and Nation*, 1-20. For a critique of hegemony see, James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 304-350; Smith, *Pistoleros*, 6-11. For an analysis of festivals demonstrating a hegemonic appearance only see, Daniel Newcomer, *Reconciling Modernity: Urban State Formation in 1940s León, Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 12-17.

⁵⁴ Esposito, *Funerals*, 7.

⁵⁵ Esposito, *Funerals*, 7.

Intervention, whereby liberalism "became transformed from an ideology" into the core political philosophy uniting the country until after the 1910 revolution.⁵⁶ For their part, the popular classes may have negotiated and resisted elite rule, but Esposito contended that this activity merely reinforced both the unifying myth and elite control. He noted, often "hegemony is such a pervasive force that oppressed peoples can semiconsciously or unwittingly participate in their own victimization."⁵⁷

The present study builds on Esposito's work, demonstrating that the 1906 Juárez centennial represented a moment when the Díaz regime attempted to use public ritual to assert its power, consolidate popular support, and teach national history to the Mexican people. However, I contend that any analysis stressing the *public* performance of the well-planned and executed festival would mesh nicely with Esposito's conclusions regarding the alleged hegemonic quality displayed in civic rituals. By contrast, three years of intensive *preparations* for the ceremony demonstrated just how difficult it proved for the regime to carry off such an outwardly tranquil celebration. This was due especially to the contested meaning of liberalism itself that appeared during preparations for the event. In the end, the contentious planning leading up to the celebration suggests that the regime may have actually lost popular credibility *prior* to the event itself. Therefore, this celebration could represent a moment when the hegemony that kept Díaz in power for so long at long last had broken down. Once again, the dictator's long-time political nemesis--Benito Juárez--may have proven too great an adversary.

⁵⁶ Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism*, 3. Alan Knight argued that liberalism extended to all aspects of Mexican society dating back to the mid-nineteenth century. He termed this "folk liberalism" and noted the devotion to the 1857 Constitution and to Juárez. See, Alan Knight, "Revolutionary Project, Recalcitrant People: Mexico, 1910-1940," in *The Revolutionary Process in Mexico: Essays on Political and Social Change, 1880-1940*, ed. Jaime E. Rodríguez O. (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1990), 233.

⁵⁷ Esposito, *Funerals*, 7.

This study necessarily relies heavily upon state and municipal documents illustrating the lengthy planning among Porfirian officials in preparation for the celebration. I have made this a local study, choosing to focus on the material available in Oaxaca. The newspaper accounts, with few exceptions, reflect a Porfirian slant on the events of March 21, 1906, but such evidence makes clear that the Díaz regime attempted to make the connection to Juárez. Numerous Porfirians nevertheless debated the meaning of liberalism during this time, illustrating the contested nature of Juárez's legacy. So, while one limitation of any historical study is the obvious lack of popular evidence, the Juárez celebration demonstrates that resistance to Díaz's regime existed even among elites.

Oaxaca: The Modernization of the Emerald City

In the latter half of the nineteenth century the passage of several laws transformed life in Oaxaca. In particular, the 1856 *ley Lerdo*, which legalized the privatization of Church and communal land, began Oaxaca's economic revolution. Land privatization brought the international market to the region and altered society, but the pace of industrialization increased intensely during Díaz's presidency.⁵⁸ Nineteenth century científicos equated modernity with industrialization. Elites championed the introduction of the railroad into Oaxaca as a way to

⁵⁸ J. Edgar Mendoza García concluded that the passage of the *ley Lerdo* in 1856 began land privatization on a large scale. This took on a heightened pace with Díaz's modernization efforts in the 1890s. He argued that these two turning points proved pivotal in the loss of communal lands in Oaxaca. J. Edgar Mendoza García, "La desamortización de la propiedad comunal en los pueblos chocholtecos, 1856-1900," in *La Desamortización civil en Oaxaca: colección del bicentenario del nacimiento de Benito Juárez*, ed. Carlos Sánchez Silva (Oaxaca: Universidad Autónoma "Benito Juárez" de Oaxaca, 2007) 69-70. Also see, Francie R. Chassen and Héctor G. Martínez, "El desarrollo económico de Oaxaca a finales del Porfiriato," in *Lecturas históricas del estado de Oaxaca: Volumen IV 1877-1930*, ed. Angeles Romero Frizzi (México D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1990), 47-72. For an instructive model on the introduction of capitalism see, E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 50 (February 1971): 76-136. See, Wright-Rios, *Revolutions in Mexican Catholicism*, 1-60, for an account of how liberal reforms Juárez enacted while governor of Oaxaca attacked the privileges of the Catholic Church. Conservatives fought to restore church influence throughout the Reform era.

combat what they saw as barbarism and ignorance. For científicos, traditional society represented an obstacle on the nation's rapid path toward progress. Therefore, they believed that the introduction of railroads and capitalism was part of a larger struggle that encompassed politics, culture, and society.⁵⁹

The race toward industrialization dramatically transformed the state capital, Oaxaca City.⁶⁰ Historian Mark Overmyer-Velázquez demonstrated that científicos worked diligently to make the city *legible* to the state and federal government.⁶¹ This process took on numerous forms as elites regulated everything from streets and gardens to architecture. In Oaxaca, legibility meant transforming diverse and hard to define populations, geographic areas, city streets, and modes of communication into an arrangement that "simplified the classic state functions."⁶² This process reworked many aspects of the city. Unpopular Governor Emilio Pimentel (1902-1911), who embodied the científico philosophy, pursued a rapid policy of economic and social modernization that relocated the popular classes, usually to the margins of the city.⁶³ Likewise, elite oaxaqueños either heavily regulated the moral life of everyday citizens or forced undesirables outside the city limits. Streets, architecture, and gardens reflected the Porfirian modernist aesthetic, the end result being that elites effectively dismissed the majority of the population from public view. By 1906, the Porfirian city of Oaxaca had effectively marginalized

⁵⁹ Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary*, 46-48. For a groundbreaking analysis of this process in rural France see, Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

⁶⁰ For a helpful model dealing with the effects of modernization on communities see, Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978). He concluded that while modernization transformed communities, people adapted their communal relationships as society changed.

⁶¹ Overmyer-Velázquez, *Visions*, 40-69. He used James Scott's approach of governments in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a model for Oaxaca even though the study primarily focused on later "high modernist" projects. Scott nevertheless examined how numerous government officials employed methods throughout the nineteenth-century to enhance control over wide areas and large populations. See James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

⁶² Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 2.

⁶³ Overmyer-Velázquez, *Visions*, 41.

a large portion of the city's popular classes. Científico politicians had altered the appearance of the city to something more familiar to European travelers than the majority of Mexican citizens.⁶⁴

Pimentel represented a break with earlier Porfirian governors of Oaxaca. He replaced the largely unpopular and close Díaz ally Governor Martín González in 1902. Pimentel was a highly educated and accomplished young oaxaqueño whose late candidacy represented a compromise for Díaz. The president apparently shunned both family and friends alike in favor of the powerful emerging group of young technocrats who had worked with his father-in-law Manuel Romero Rubio in Mexico City.⁶⁵ After hearing of the president's decision to support Pimentel's bid for governor in Oaxaca, numerous influential oaxaqueños quickly followed suit. José Zorrilla and Guillermo Meixueiro, president and vice president of the Club Central Unión y Paz in Oaxaca City, dispatched a telegram to Pimentel in Mexico City asking him to accept their nomination to the governorship on June 6, 1902. In their local newspaper the club described Pimentel as the "well-known and irreproachable son of Oaxaca" who was capable of "good government."⁶⁶

The young governor immediately took Oaxaca in a new direction. Díaz's military comrades had embarked upon beautification and modernization projects prior to Pimentel's arrival, but the scope and pace of the projects changed dramatically during his tenure in office. During his inauguration on December 1, 1902, wherein Pimentel required city and state employees with access to the capital to attend the event in the Salon of Congress, the governor

⁶⁴ Overmyer-Velázquez deals with this transformation throughout his look at Porfirian Oaxaca. Nevertheless, his chapter "The Legible City: Constructed, Symbolic, and Disciplined Spaces" best describes the attempt to control and modernize the city. Overmyer-Velázquez, *Visions*, 40-69.

⁶⁵ For more on the group of men working for Díaz's father-in-law that later became a powerful political faction see, Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary*, 406-409.

⁶⁶ "Telegramas Relativos," *La Unión: Organo del "Club Central Unión y Paz,"* and "Acta del Instalación del Club Central Unión y Paz," *La Unión: Organo del "Club Central Unión y Paz."*

brought his avid technocratic viewpoint to his post.⁶⁷ In one of his first acts as governor, Pimentel reorganized the state government into six sections “for the best order of the administrative business of the state.”⁶⁸ While in office, Pimentel both heightened the pace of modernization and bulked up the bureaucratic offices. He approved numerous projects to clean city streets, upgrade water and sewer lines, and bring reliable electricity to the city.⁶⁹ Elites believed that these projects would promote morality and aid sanitation, thereby achieving progress and modernity.⁷⁰ The Meteorological Network created in 1905 represented an interesting example of this rationale. Its regional weather stations displayed advances in communication at the turn of the century that helped oaxaqueños overcome the state's historic isolation.⁷¹

The new científico governor and his cadre of young technocrats effectively pushed aside an older generation of Díaz’s military comrades.⁷² The new generation's mining projects, city-wide improvement plans, and railroads nevertheless captured the imagination of elder Porfirian statesmen, foreign investors, and wealthy entrepreneurs alike. Pimentel embraced numerous efforts to improve the infrastructure in the name of progress. The bilingual English and Spanish newspaper, *The Oaxaca Herald*, championed the governor as a man who had judiciously “used his efforts for the best of all interested.”⁷³ One of the editors, Paul Wooton, came to Oaxaca from Mexico City where he worked for the American-owned *Mexican Herald*. Perhaps noting the

⁶⁷ “Decretos y circulares, Oaxaca de Juárez,” November 28, 1902. Secretario del Gobierno. Legajo 34, Exp. 3. AGPEO.

⁶⁸ Emilio Pimentel, *Memoria Administrativa presentada por El C. Lic. Emilio Pimentel, Gobernador Constitucional del Estado de Oaxaca, a la XXII Legislatura del Mismo, el 17 de Septiembre de 1903* (Oaxaca: Imprenta del Estado, 1904), 11-12.

⁶⁹ Carlos Lira Vásquez, “La ciudad de Oaxaca: Una aproximación a su evolución urbana decimonónica y al desarrollo arquitectónico Porfiriano,” (Maestría tesis, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1997), 271-274.

⁷⁰ Overmyer-Velázquez, *Visions*, 40-41.

⁷¹ “La Red Metereológica,” 1905. Secretaría del Gobierno del Estado. 1302, c41. Fondo Luis Castañeda Guzmán. (Hereafter referred to as FLCG). Pimentel, *Mensaje 1906*, 40-41.

⁷² For an instructive interpretation of the political change Pimentel represented see, Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary*, 401-430.

⁷³ “Governor Emilio D. Pimentel,” *The Oaxaca Herald*, April 22, 1907.

friendly business environment present in the Pimentel administration, Wooton's newspaper stated that the governor gave foreigners "favours" in all matters "when it is seen as an effort to advance the state's standing is being made."⁷⁴ Considering the land disputes, land contracts, and mining claims that preoccupied state government activity in the early years of the Pimentel administration, the editors at the newspaper were probably correct.

At the turn of the century, few things depicted modernity better than access to reliable electricity. In 1905, Governor Pimentel struck a deal with long-time friend and colleague Federico Zorrilla to bring electricity to the streets, homes, and businesses in the city. Zorrilla worked out the details with General Secretary of the State Joaquín Sandoval, and all the parties agreed on an elaborate network of electric lines and streetlights for city and nearby residents. State officials believed this project would update the "bad facilities and provide efficient service" to more people.⁷⁵ The planners stated that the project would "establish electric light for society" through the construction of a power plant in the city. This would make it possible to "extend services to other populations" and factories.⁷⁶ By the time of the 1906 commemoration, Zorrilla's company frantically built a network of streetlights with plans to unveil Oaxaca's improved electrical network on September 17, 1906. The plan encountered construction problems Pimentel described as minor difficulties while announcing a postponement of the inauguration.⁷⁷

Modernity nevertheless did not always advance smoothly under Pimentel. The Theatre Luis Mier y Terán represented one of Pimentel's most ill-advised projects. After taking office, the governor attempted to bring the culture and sophistication of Mexico City into the Central

⁷⁴ "Editorial: The First Year," *The Oaxaca Herald*, April 22, 1907.

⁷⁵ Pimentel, *Memorias 1903*, 25.

⁷⁶ Juan Varela, 1905, No. 269, 902-911. AGNE.

⁷⁷ Pimentel, *Mensaje 1906*, 51-52.

Valleys of Oaxaca. While the city already boasted several theatres, Pimentel felt that this project, "built with the best materials in the capital," would serve the people well with the most "ornate and useful building in the city."⁷⁸ In the end, the governor's project proved overly expensive. Pimentel played a major role in planning the building even though a private organization made up of the governor's associates funded the theatre. The governor became increasingly frustrated as construction costs increased well beyond original projections. Investors ran out of money by 1906, and it looked as though construction would remain suspended indefinitely. Construction crews completed the theatre in 1909 after Pimentel manipulated state funds to rescue the project. An extravagant dedication on September 5, 1909, marked its completion. Yet, numerous oaxaqueños loathed the involvement of public funds. Interestingly, the building remains an iconic architectural achievement in the city.⁷⁹

Pimentel's projects ranged from very ambitious large-scale and expensive transformations to the construction of well-groomed gardens highlighting the beauty and unique architecture of the Emerald City.⁸⁰ Some of the projects fostered a great deal of anger among well-to-do opponents of Pimentel's regime. Over forty concerned oaxaqueños eloquently lambasted the governor--project by project--in their scathing 1910 pamphlet *Proceso de la administración*.⁸¹ Senobio Ramírez, Calixto Jiménez, Próculo González, and numerous others offered their take on

⁷⁸ Emilio Pimentel, *Memoria administrativa presentada por el C. Lic. Emilio Pimentel, Gobernador Constitucional del Estado de Oaxaca, a la XXII Legislatura del mismo el 17 de Septiembre de 1904* (Oaxaca: Imprenta del Estado, 1904), 41.

⁷⁹ *Proceso de la administración del Señor Lic. Emilio Pimentel* (Oaxaca, 1910), 99-108. For problems with the construction, and an analysis of the construction of the building see, Luis Alberto Arrijo Díaz-Viruell, Letocia Gamboa Ojeda, and Carlos Sánchez Silva, *Historia gráfica del Teatro Macedonio Alcalá: Centenario* (Oaxaca: Teatro Macedonio Alcalá, 2009), 53-86. The contributors made the point that when this book was published no one knew how much the theatre actually cost. Estimates ranged from a little over \$100,000 to almost \$500,000. Please note: all currency referred to in Pesos unless otherwise noted.

⁸⁰ I have relied heavily on these two works dealing with the architectural transformation of Oaxaca City prior to the 1910 Revolution. See, Lira Vásquez, "La ciudad de Oaxaca," 250-362; see also Lira Vásquez, *Arquitectura y sociedad: Oaxaca rumbo a la modernidad, 1790-1910* (México, D.F.: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2008), 159-190.

⁸¹ *Proceso de la administración*.

Pimentel's attempts to modernize Oaxaca City. The authors concluded that ill-advised development plans, a reckless fiscal policy, and a lack of focus on education marred the governor's two terms in office. They argued that oaxaqueños in 1910 "must be astonished and convinced that we have a bad and evil administration without precedent" in Oaxaca's history.⁸² Nevertheless, the unpopularity of the governor at the end of his second term does not override the dramatic physical transformation many experienced within the city. Opponents increasingly voiced their displeasure, but they could do little to stop Díaz's election to the presidency and Pimentel's re-election to the governorship in 1910.⁸³ Their well-known displeasure, while curiously absent from the record during the tranquil March 21, 1906, event, was certainly evident during the extensive preparations for the celebration.

⁸² *Proceso de la administración*, 147.

⁸³ "Decreto número 2, que declara gobernador del estado," September 30, 1910. Secretario del gobierno. Legajo 51, Exp. 11. AGPEO; "Decreto por el que declara presidente y vicepresidente," October 8, 1910. Secretario del gobierno. Legajo 51, Exp. 13. AGPEO. Local leaders immediately responded to these decrees offering their support for both Díaz and Pimentel.

CHAPTER 2

THE PARTY OF THE CENTURY

Images from the Festival: Modernity and Tradition

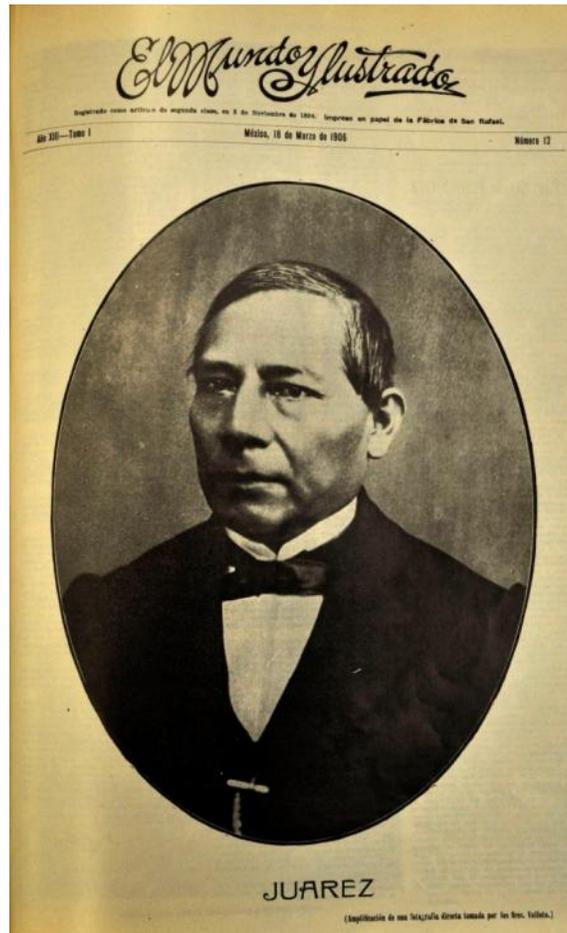


Figure 1. Juárez assumed top billing as the editors of *El Mundo Ilustrado* prepared for the commemoration.¹

On Juárez's one-hundredth birthday, Governor Emilio Pimentel and a large gathering of people watched a lengthy procession pass by the Governor's Palace in Oaxaca City. The

¹ *El Mundo Ilustrado*, March 18, 1906, Cover.

architects of the parade carefully blended symbols of progress and tradition, and the figure of Juárez himself connected Mexico's past to the Porfirian era. Participants placed a giant bust of the former president on the so-called great float of "Reform, Liberty, and Progress." In what the newspaper *El Imparcial* characterized as a historic procession, the float made its way along the parade route "surrounded by an entourage made up of representatives from the diverse people living in the state."² This group, dressed in indigenous *traje* (attire), led a large contingent of federal and state troops marching behind in formation (See Figures 2 and 3). Pimentel and the large crowd on hand celebrated Juárez, Mexico's only indigenous president, as the great reformer with ethnic ties to Mexico's pre-Colombian past and political ties to Díaz himself. The numerous images from this parade demonstrate that the three years of planning leading up to the event had proven successful in producing a peaceful, popularly attended celebration.



Figure 2. The great float with a bust of Juárez surrounded by representatives of Oaxaca's indigenous groups.³

² "En la Patria de Juárez," *El Imparcial*, March 24, 1906.

³ "El carro de la Reforma a palacio - grupo de Tehuanas," *El Mundo Ilustrado*, April 1, 1906, 3.



Figure 3. A formation of federal forces in the procession.⁴

The planning commission had worked tirelessly in the days leading up to the ceremony to organize such a complex celebration. The Instituto de Ciencias y Artes (ICA, Institute of Science and Art) took the example of Díaz's literary contest and sponsored a statewide competition beginning in 1903 and lasting until early 1906.⁵ The planners also organized an elaborate parade emphasizing both modernity and tradition. Immediately beforehand, government officials built arches that the procession would pass under during the parade.⁶ Fraternal and private organizations also took part by constructing similar festive arches. An arch at the Paseo Juárez, where an older statue of Juárez still stands, marked the location where the procession would

⁴ "Desfile de la columna militar frente a palacio," *El Mundo Ilustrado*, April 1, 1906, 4.

⁵ "Concurso científico-literario del Instituto Ciencias y Artes del Estado," *Periódico Oficial del gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca*, April 11, 1903. "Concurso literario en honor al natalicio de Don Benito Juárez," April 8, 1905. Actas de Cabildo. Libro 88, 75v-79r. Archivo Histórico Municipal "Manuel R. Palacios" de Oaxaca. (Hereafter cited as AHMO). Charles Weeks analyzed the national literary contest at length along with an analysis of the national celebration. Charles Weeks, *The Juárez Myth in Mexico* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987), 46-53.

⁶ "Sesión ordinaria del 20 del Octubre de 1905." Actas de Cabildo. Libro 88, 128v-129. AHMO.

begin. The route took celebrants through the city center to the final arch at the base of the Cerro del Fortín. Many of these props displayed slogans and icons representing progress and industrialization. The Railroad Arch, located in the middle of the parade route, exemplified this imagery. The arch displayed a train crossing over the street on a steel and stone trestle. In Oaxaca City during the Porfiriato, few images could convey modernity more effectively than did railroads (See Figure 4).⁷ On the other hand, the ICA embraced the past with an arch on Independence Avenue displaying Zapotec carvings. Officials left these structures erect throughout the week so that all people could experience the festive atmosphere in the city.



Figure 4. The railroad arch with the Santo Domingo cathedral in the background.⁸

Few publications offer historians a clearer picture of the Juárez celebration in Oaxaca City than does the April 1, 1906, edition of *El Mundo Ilustrado*.⁹ Oaxaca native and close friend

⁷ For an overview of the impact of railroads in Porfirian Oaxaca see, Francie Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary Oaxaca: The View from the South: Mexico, 1867-1911* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 45-76.

⁸ "Arco de los ferrocarriles, levantado en celebración del Centenario de Juárez," *El Mundo Ilustrado*, April 8, 1906, 3.

⁹ For an analysis of popular newspapers during the Porfiriato see, Maria Elena Diaz, "The Satiric Penny Press for Workers in Mexico, 1900-1910: A Case Study in the Politicisation of Popular Culture," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 22, no. 3 (October 1990): 497-526; Patrick Frank, *Posada's Broadsheets: Mexican Popular Imagery 1890-1910* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); John Mraz, *Looking for Mexico: Modern Visual Culture and National Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Joshua Salyers, "A

to Finance Minister José Yves Limantour, Rafael Reyes Espíndola, established this weekly magazine in 1894. Mexico's first modern newspaper publisher stressed reporting rather than the traditional approach featuring editorials from essayists, and the Porfirian government financed all three of his publications: *El Mundo Ilustrado*, and his two daily newspapers *El Imparcial* and *El Universal*. The powerful editor hired Mexico's best photographers and imported the latest equipment in order to print photographs in his newspapers and magazine.¹⁰ Throughout the short history of the weekly magazine, photographs often emphasized Porfirian progress.¹¹ The editors usually published photographs of construction projects, powerful politicians, entrepreneurs, and of Díaz himself (See Figure 5).¹²

Community of Modern Nations: *The Mexican Herald* at the Height of the Porfiriato, 1895-1910" (master's thesis, East Tennessee State University, 2011). For an analysis of the influence of newspapers in the growth of the phenomenon of nationalism see, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 37-46.

¹⁰ Mraz, *Looking for Mexico*, 42-54. See also, Antonio Saborit, "*El Mundo Ilustrado*" de Rafael Reyes Spíndola (Mexico, DF: Centro de Estudios de Historia de México Condumex, 2003), 15-55.

¹¹ Mraz, *Looking for Mexico*, 47-48.

¹² For more on Porfirian photography see, John Mraz, "Picturing Mexico's Past: Photography and 'Historia Gráfica,'" *South Central Review* 21, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 24-45; Deborah Poole, "An Image of 'Our Indian': Type Photographs and Racial Sentiments in Oaxaca, 1920-1940," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 84, no. 1 (February 2004): 37-82; Teresa Matabuena Peláez, *Algunos usos y conceptos de la fotografía durante el Porfiriato* (México: Universidad Iberoamericana, 1991). For an excellent theoretical framework for analyzing photography see, Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

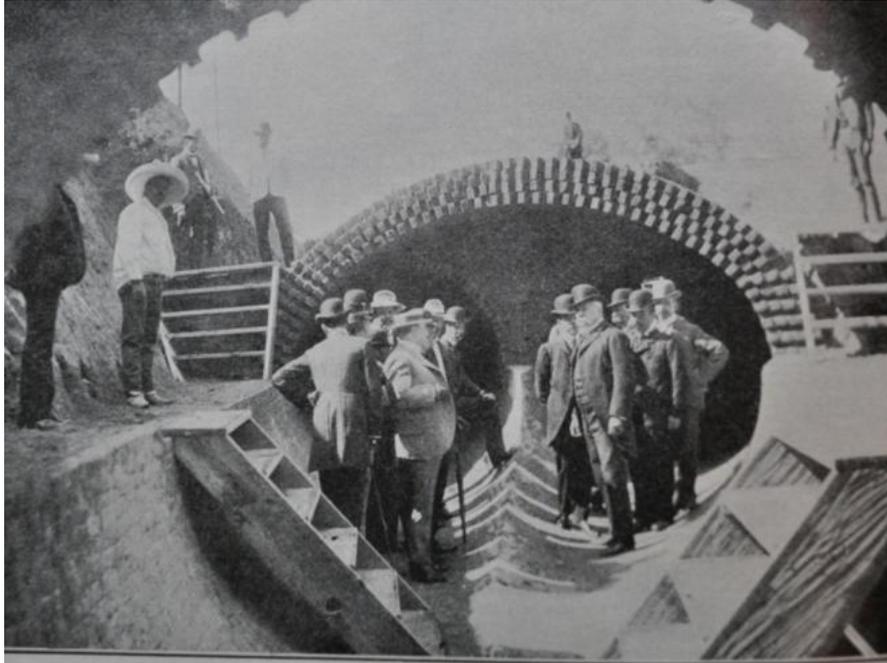


Figure 5. This is a typical photo the editors of *El Mundo Ilustrado* published with President Díaz dedicating a construction project to visually emphasize Mexico's progress. In this photo, Díaz was inspecting the construction of a sewage pipe in Mexico City.¹³

The April 1, 1906, edition of *El Mundo Ilustrado* featured a photographic essay of the celebration for the magazine's wealthy readers in the Federal District. These photos highlighted the state's unique history while stressing the benefits of modernity in the state capital. Photographers took numerous photos of the parade, the dedication of the statue, and the commemoration of state construction projects. The magazine's editors certainly made a substantial investment in order to bring these photos to Mexico's citizens. Photographers had to haul large, heavy cameras throughout the city and up the steep walk to the Cerro del Fortín.¹⁴ One photographer chose a side of the paved street opposite stately buildings so as to provide readers with the best view of this part of the city. In particular, Figures 2 and 3 give the viewer a feel for the considerable length of both the street and the procession. These photos avoided the

¹³ "El Sr. Presidente de la República visitando las obras del gran colector del sur," *El Mundo Ilustrado*, February 25, 1906, 5.

¹⁴ Mraz estimated that a typical camera during this time weighed about 35 pounds. The photographer would also have had to transport numerous glass plates as well. Mraz, *Looking for Mexico*, 40.

use of posing celebrants so as to give readers a sense of motion from right to left, the result of which arguably merges Oaxaca's past and present, highlighting modernity, the state's liberal tradition, popular participation in the festival, and the state's indigenous heritage (See Figures 2, 3, and 4).

The *El Mundo Ilustrado* photographs verified that Pimentel's administration had carefully planned an orderly and elaborate commemoration. State officials arranged a military detachment to fire cannons while raising the Mexican flag to mark the beginning of the day. Plans called for an 8:00 a.m. state and municipal reception in the salon at the Governor's Palace. The short reception joined politicians and bureaucrats with federal officials, foreign dignitaries, and entrepreneurs. At 9:00 a.m., this group planned to take part in an enormous procession featuring residents from the capital and all regions of the state. Díaz's famous *rurales* (rural police force) led the procession accompanied by a military band. Next, representatives from Oaxaca's sixteen indigenous groups marched with the allegorical float of "Reform, Liberty, and Progress." The lengthy procession included numerous dignitaries, students from city schools, a host of bands, federal officials, judges, wealthy foreigners, and the governor. The crowd on hand filled eight city blocks lining the entire parade route up to the Cerro del Fortín.¹⁵

First arriving at the base of the Cerro del Fortín, the festival committee and the governor made their way along the recently constructed Calzada Juárez (See Figure 6). They walked past the state artillery regiment, a small contingent of federal forces, and alumni from the Industrial School for disadvantaged youth, assuming an impressive pose along the promenade. A military band played music from "El Cid" before State Engineer Rodolfo Franco addressed the crowd. Franco described the substantial task of moving the colossal statue of Juárez up the hill. He

¹⁵ Andrés Portillo, *Oaxaca en el Centenario de la Independencia Nacional: Noticias históricas y estadísticas de la Ciudad de Oaxaca, y algunas leyendas tradicionales* (Oaxaca City: Imprenta del Estado, 1910), 105; "Programa de las festividades del Centenario de Juárez," *Periódico Oficial*, March 17, 1906.

believed that future generations would benefit from the hard work since the monument would remain accessible for all of Oaxaca's social classes to pay homage to Juárez, their fallen hero. Franco described the monument as a sculpture with a mountain for a base.¹⁶

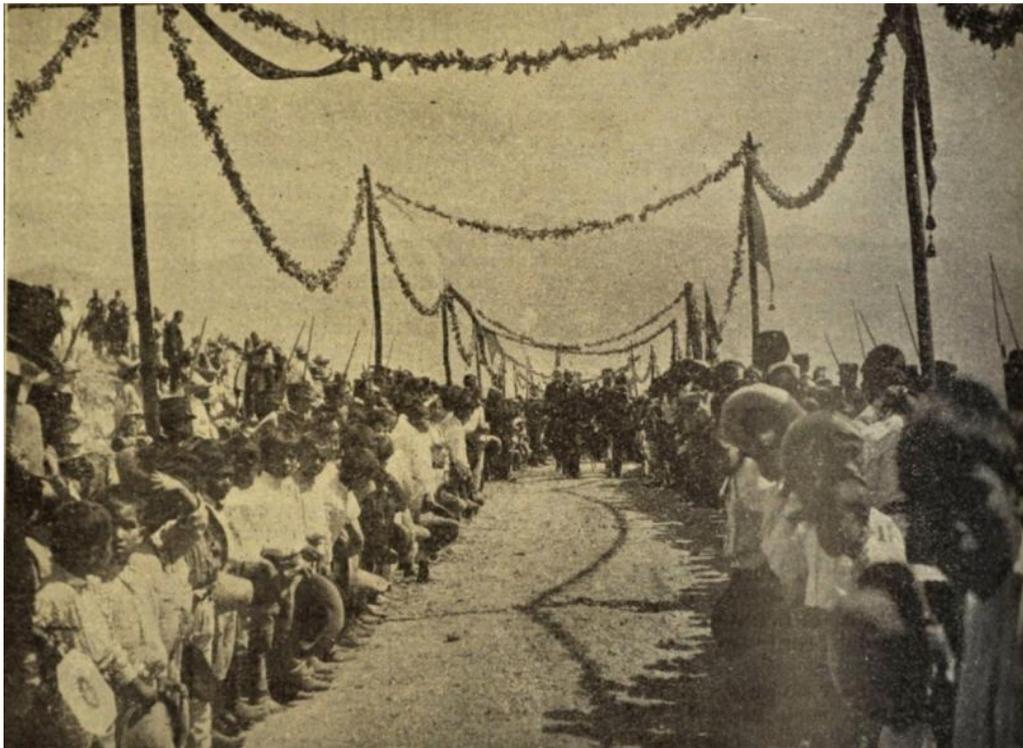


Figure 6. Governor Pimentel and fellow dignitaries arriving on the Cerro del Fortín.¹⁷

The unprecedented nature of this undertaking in Oaxaca was a befitting tribute to this giant figure of Mexico's past. From Franco's perspective, Juárez could overlook more than simply the capital. He could see and be seen "throughout the valley and the mountains."¹⁸ Franco noted the difficulty of constructing the numerous ramps and stairs. Originally, planners discussed installing an electric cable car from the train station in El Marquesado, but they opted for the pedestrian path instead. He described how construction took roughly three and a half months

¹⁶ "Breve reseña," *Periódico Oficial*, March 28, 1906. "En la patria de Juárez," *El Imparcial*, March 24, 1906.

¹⁷ "El Señor Gobernador Pimentel en el Fortín de Zaragoza," *El Mundo Ilustrado*, April 1, 1906, 3.

¹⁸ "Breve reseña," *Periódico Oficial*, March 28, 1906. "El Centenario en los Estados," *El Imparcial*, March 22, 1906.

even while employing the most modern of tools. Builders used explosives to clear obstructions while ensuring that no grade exceeded eight percent. They employed over 150 horse drawn vehicles to haul materials to and from the site. Ultimately, builders constructed ninety-six stairs extending over seventy meters of road.

Franco praised Engineer Mauro Canseco for meeting the challenge without damaging the statue. Canseco made use of the 1st Cavalry Regiment stationed nearby, even paying each man twelve centavos for the backbreaking work. Canseco also constructed the large *cantera* (green volcanic tuff) foundation of the statue where Franco and others in the commission stood. Planners believed this area would provide an ideal location for large crowds to gather for future national holidays. The pedestal, which had originally been conceived for the monument to be placed in the *zócalo* (city center), served as the large stone base where officials affixed Juárez's name and the date of the commemoration. The finished product measured over ten meters in height. This dwarfed Oaxaca City's other prominent monument to Juárez located in the Paseo Juárez where sculptors bonded the hero with Mexico's pre-Colombian past.¹⁹ The new mammoth, with its combined dimensions of the mountain, stone base, and tall monument, assured Juárez a glorious place where he could eternally guard the city as its "advanced sentinel and tireless guardian of human rights."²⁰

The homage to Juárez extended to the highest state office as Governor Pimentel dedicated the monument. He offered the new colossal figure to all oaxaqueños so they could take pride in the state's unique history. After his address, organizers unfurled a massive flag while the state artillery regiment fired a twenty-one cannon salute and a band played the National Hymn

¹⁹ Oaxaca officials constructed this monument to highlight Juárez's and Mexico's indigenous past. See, Carlos Lira Vásquez, *Arquitectura y sociedad: Oaxaca rumbo a la modernidad, 1790-1910* (México, D.F.: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2008), 164-165. "Monumentos a Juárez," *El Imparcial*, April 4, 1906.

²⁰ "Breve reseña," *Periódico Oficial*, March 28, 1906.

(See Figure 7). According to a dispatch from Oaxaca published in *El Imparcial*, the sounds of this moment were an "immense concurrence of... electrified cheer for the great son of Oaxaca."²¹ As if this did not capture the attention of oaxaqueños throughout the valley, one hundred children sang the The Hymn to Juárez composed by local schoolteacher José Alcalá.²² Joaquín Aristain gave yet another speech before celebrants and officials placed crowns at the foot of the monument.²³



Figure 7. Governor Pimentel dedicating the statue.²⁴

²¹ "En la patria de Juárez," *El Imparcial*, March 24, 1906.

²² "En la patria de Juárez," *El Imparcial*, March 24, 1906.

²³ "Programa de las festividades del Centenario de Juárez," *Periódico Oficial*, March 17, 1906; "Breve reseña," *Periódico Oficial*, March 28, 1906. "En la patria de Juárez," *El Imparcial*, March 24, 1906.

²⁴ "El Centenario de Juárez en Oaxaca," *El Mundo Ilustrado*, April 1, 1906, 7-8.

The patriotic display at the statue spilled over onto the streets later in the day as schoolchildren returned to their classrooms to learn more about Juárez. At 12:30 p.m., students throughout the state read a Juárez biography written by Dr. Adalberto Carriedo. Carriedo informed students in his introduction that he had written this book solely for them, the future generation, to teach them about the "best Mexican."²⁵ This coincided with Governor Pimentel's visit to a school for girls. Other prominent officials canvassed various classrooms throughout the city, teaching lessons about Juárez to the youth. The focus on education carried over to 4:00 p.m. when Pimentel and the commission dedicated a major renovation of the ICA. In a similar manner to the dedication at the monument, military bands played the National Hymn after officials discussed the importance of the construction project. ICA Director Dr. Aurelio Valdivieso reflected on the history of the institution, offering praise and gratitude to the founders of the university, but he noted that Juárez "the illustrious son of our mountains," stood out as both an alumnus of the institute and savior of the nation.²⁶

This dedication highlighted an important moment in the city's history. The ICA had long served to educate the city's intellectual elite and future leaders. Originally erected in 1679 as a seminary, in 1826 the newly formed state government proclaimed the school an institute of higher learning, thereby breaking its obvious colonial ties.²⁷ Governor Martín González initiated an overhaul of the building's facade in 1899, and Governor Pimentel ordered that the interior of the school undergo an extensive renovation in 1903. Few occasions could highlight such a

²⁵ Adalberto Carriedo, *Biografía de Juárez que deberá ser leída en todas las Escuelas del Estado de Oaxaca, el 21 de Marzo de 1906*, Rev. ed. (Oaxaca: Ediciones de la Universidad "Benito Juárez" de Oaxaca, 1971), 1.

²⁶ "Alocución pronunciada por El C. Director del Instituto de Ciencias y Artes del Estado," *Periódico Oficial*, March 31, 1906.

²⁷ "Informe leído por su autor, el Sr. Ingeniero del Estado, Teniente Coronel Rodolfo Franco," *Periódico Oficial*, March 31, 1906.

fundamental renovation in the school where Juárez and Díaz earned their degrees. Officials understood this when they chose to commemorate these projects on the Juárez centennial.²⁸

Looking back a few months later, Pimentel noted the importance of the ICA's transformation. He proclaimed that the institute now comprised the first scientific educational facility in the state modeled after the most modern schools of Europe.²⁹ The updated look of the building, along with the interior renovations, reflected the Porfirian approach to scientific instruction.³⁰ Valdivieso announced on March 21 that he welcomed the addition of a new facade to his school (See Figure 8). He stated that the art adorning the building and the newly planted laurel trees had transformed the old building into a palace. On the inside, Valdivieso believed that the institute's curriculum would change fundamentally due to the new classrooms, laboratories, and meteorological observatory. The liberal and progressive institution, wherein so many important oaxaqueños received their education, once again brought pride to the city. While the director talked about the future of the institution at length, he also paused to thank those that came before him with a special message to Juárez.³¹ The ceremony highlighted the transformation of the city, and the project suggests the connection between national historic milestones and public projects.³² In so doing, Pimentel tied the present, past, and future of the Díaz regime to Juárez, the national hero. At the end of a day filled with dedications to Juárez,

²⁸ Gustavo Pérez Jiménez, *Historia gráfica del Instituto de Ciencias y Artes erigido en Universidad Autónoma "Benito Juárez" de Oaxaca* (Oaxaca: Universidad Autónoma "Benito Juárez" de Oaxaca, 1999), 44.

²⁹ Emilio Pimentel, *Mensaje leído por el C. Lic. Emilio Pimentel, Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, ante la XXIII Legislatura del mismo y contestación de su Presidente, C. Lic. Francisco Parada, al abrir aquella su segundo periodo de sesiones ordinarias, el 16 de Septiembre de 1906* (Oaxaca: Imprenta del Estado, 1906), 22. (Hereafter cited as *Mensaje, 1906*). "En la patria de Juárez," *El Imparcial*, March 24, 1906.

³⁰ Pimentel, *Mensaje, 1906*, 22.

³¹ "Alocución pronunciada por el C. Director del Instituto de Ciencias y Artes del Estado," *Periódico Oficial*, March 31, 1906.

³² Weeks, *The Juárez Myth*, 48.

people made their way to a nearby public garden where three military bands played from 9:00 p.m. until midnight.³³



Figure 8. The new facade decorated for the celebration.³⁴

The festivities carried over to the next day when officials met to continue celebrating Juárez. Governor Pimentel and the committee planned to meet at 10:00 a.m. on March 22 to place a commemorative plaque on the side of a building on Hidalgo Street. The plaque memorialized the location where Juárez lived when he wrote his contribution to the 1857 Constitution (See Figures 9 and 10).³⁵ The commission then moved on to the first house in which Juárez had lived in Oaxaca City. Onlookers watched as Pimentel dedicated the site as the future home of the Benito Juárez Museum (See Figure 11). The governor appointed a committee to

³³ "Programa de las festividades del Centenario de Juárez," *Periódico Oficial*, March 17, 1906.

³⁴ "Oaxaca - fachada del Instituto," *El Mundo Ilustrado*, April 1, 1906, 13.

³⁵ "Programa de las festividades del Centenario de Juárez," *Periódico Oficial*, March 17, 1906.

verify the authenticity of museum exhibits so as to ensure the care of "each relic of oaxaqueño patriotism."³⁶ At the ICA, administrators opened the school so all oaxaqueños could tour the renovated building.



Figure 9. Governor Pimentel unveiling the plaque memorializing the location where Juárez wrote the 1857 Constitution.³⁷



Figure 10. The same plaque in 2010.³⁸

³⁶ Pimentel, *Mensaje*, 1906, 21.

³⁷ "El Señor Gobernador Pimentel, descubriendo la placa conmemorativa en la casa que habitó Juárez en 1857," *El Mundo Ilustrado*, April 1, 1906, 4.

³⁸ Amanda Milstead, "Juárez Plaque," Oaxaca de Juárez, 2010.

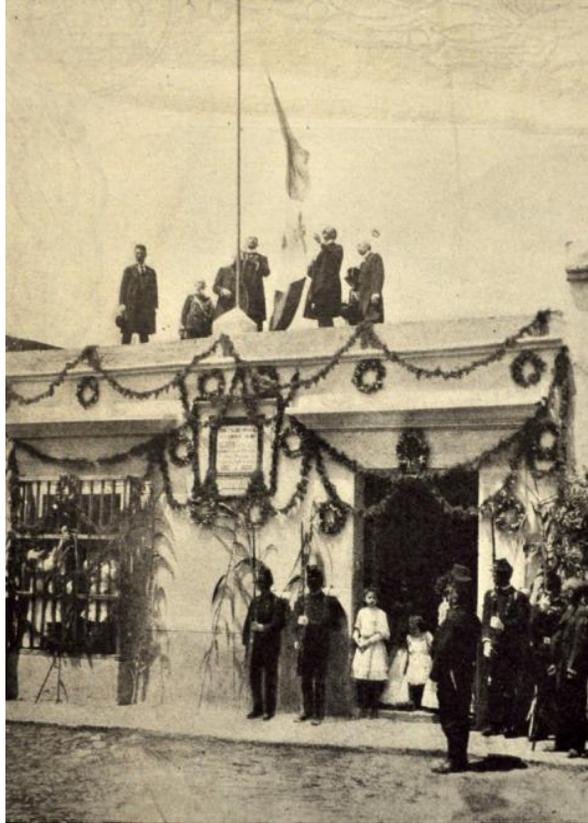


Figure 11. Governor Pimentel dedicating the Benito Juárez Museum.³⁹

Oaxaca City's elites planned yet another procession outside the Centro at 4:00 p.m. along the Calzada Porfirio Díaz. This newly constructed avenue featured large *glorietas* (roundabouts) modeled after Mexico City's Paseo de la Reforma. Fashionable carriages with patriotic decorations made their way up and down the street while others rode their bicycles in the procession.⁴⁰ Police officers maintained an orderly traffic pattern to guard against the possibility of embarrassing collisions. Later that evening, officials and city residents met in the Paseo Juárez for a three-hour serenade. The celebration then carried over to March 25 when Pimentel

³⁹ "Oaxaca - El Señor Pimentel izando el Pabellón Nacional en la casa del Padre Salanueva," *El Mundo Ilustrado*, April 1, 1906, 9.

⁴⁰ For more on the popularity of bicycles during the Porfiriato see, William H. Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 41-52. Elites apparently enjoyed Sunday promenades on the Calzada Porfirio Díaz. See, Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary*, 423.

dedicated construction of the *Hospicio de la Vega* (an orphanage). Afterward, the crowd reconvened at 9:00 p.m. in the Paseo Juárez for a final serenade.⁴¹

Andrés Portillo, an insider in state politics, gave his commentary on the Juárez festival four years later in 1910 as oaxaqueños prepared for the centennial of Mexican independence. In his history of Oaxaca commemorating the upcoming centennial, Portillo concluded that the Juárez celebration stood out as a real spectacle when compared to earlier celebrations in the city. Interestingly, Portillo's brief analysis of the celebration included a comparatively lengthy statement about the crowd's behavior. He remembered that "the police actively engaged their job, but the manner of the crowd was more pacific because there was not one dissonant cry, no pushing and shoving, nor was there one person jailed due to their participation in the festivities."⁴²

Portillo's curious commentary regarding the crowd's behavior, much like the photographic essay in *El Mundo Ilustrado*, corroborated newspaper reports that the commemoration proceeded smoothly as planned. These two accounts also support recent interpretations among historians arguing that Porfirian festivals legitimized Díaz's presidency and instilled nationalism among Mexicans.⁴³ In retrospect, the elaborate commemoration of

⁴¹ "Programa de las festividades del Centenario de Juárez," *Periódico Oficial*, March 17, 1906.

⁴² Andrés Portillo, *Oaxaca en el Centenario*, 106.

⁴³ Mark Overmyer-Velázquez, *Visions of the Emerald City: Modernity, Tradition, and the Formation of Porfirian Oaxaca, Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 54; Nora Pérez-Rayón E., "The Capital Commemorates Independence at the Turn of the Century," in *¡Viva Mexico! ¡Viva La Independencia!: Celebrations of September 16*, ed. William H. Beezley and David E. Lorey (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2001), 141-144; William H. Beezley, *Mexican National Identity: Memory, Innuendo, and Popular Culture* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2008), 79; Mauricio Tenorio Trillo, "1910 Mexico City: Space and Nation in the City of the Centenario," in *¡Viva Mexico!*, 184; Mary Kay Vaughan, "The Construction of the Patriotic Festival in Tecamachalco, Puebla, 1900-1946, in *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico*, ed. William H. Beezley, Cheryl English Martin, and William E. French (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1994), 215-216; Claudia Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress: Modernization and Public Health in Mexico City, 1876-1910* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003); Barbara A. Tenenbaum, "Streetwise History: The Paseo de la Reforma and the Porfirian State, 1876-1910," in *Rituals of Rule*, 127-150; Matthew D. Esposito, *Funerals, Festivals, and Cultural Politics in Porfirian Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010).

Juárez's one-hundredth birthday provided a well-orchestrated homage to a figure whose memory expertly united Oaxaca's—and by extension the nation's—past, present, and future. But did these accounts accurately portray the Juárez centennial? To answer this we turn to the lengthy preparations.

The Myth of Juárez in Oaxaca City: Popular Memory and National Politics

The Díaz regime established what historians have described as a veritable national religion based upon the remembrance of heroes from Mexico's past.⁴⁴ Many interpretations of Porfirian celebrations honoring national heroes and historic milestones suggest that festivals served as one of the cultural foundations sustaining Díaz's hegemony. *El Mundo Ilustrado's* images of the 1906 Juárez centennial celebration certainly support this line of reasoning. Officials in 1906 used Juárez's memory as a means to assert Díaz's connection with Mexico's liberal past. By all accounts, it appears that oaxaqueños enthusiastically took part in this commemoration, and they welcomed the new statue, construction projects, and parades that officials planned for the occasion.

An analysis of only the public performance of the festival, however, would neglect crucial evidence. Such an approach would necessarily cause historians to interpret this festival from the regime's perspective and, therefore, would risk mistaking the regime's portrayal of these events as social fact. Three years of contentious preparations prior to the centennial offer

⁴⁴ Matthew D. Esposito, *Funerals*; William H. Beezley, "The Porfirian Smart Set Anticipates Thorstein Veblen in Guadalajara," in *Rituals of Rule*, 175; Mary Kay Vaughan, "The Construction of the Patriotic Festival in Tecamachalco, Puebla, 1900-1946," in *Rituals of Rule*, 218-219; Nora Pérez-Rayón E., "The Capital Commemorates Independence at the Turn of the Century," in *¡Viva Mexico!*, 145-147; Claudia Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress: Modernization and Public Health in Mexico City, 1876-1910* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003), 77-78; Charles A. Weeks, *The Juárez Myth*, 29-31.

an opportunity to examine these events beyond their face value. During this time, many Mexicans throughout the country and oaxaqueños alike debated the political legacies of Juárez, Díaz, and even liberalism itself. Neglecting to consider this contentious period of planning leading to the spectacular event itself would distort one's view of the Juárez centennial. The contested nature of both Juárez's and Díaz's political legacies leading up to the commemoration suggests that the Juárez centennial failed to reinforce both the unifying liberal myth and by extension Porfirian hegemony. Therefore, we will shift the focus of our attention to the period prior to the 1906 commemoration.

Matthew Esposito showed that, in general, Porfirian officials developed celebrations for three distinct eras of Mexico's history by honoring national heroes on the anniversaries of their deaths. A tribute to the last Aztec emperor Cuauhtémoc represented the Porfirian interpretation of Mexico's pre-colonial and indigenous histories.⁴⁵ Tributes to the early independence heroes Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, Vicente Guerrero, and José María Morelos y Pavón represented the fight for national sovereignty. Commemorations of the young cadets, or *los Niños Héroes*, who committed suicide rather than surrender to the invading US army during the US - Mexican War (1846-1848), reminded Mexicans of the difficult war with the United States. In addition, Porfirian officials also celebrated heroes from the recent French Intervention, a war in which Díaz distinguished himself as a formidable leader. Periods of national mourning on important dates reconnected the populace to the past and, by 1906, Juárez's memory proved especially important to the regime.⁴⁶ Porfirian officials did their best to connect Díaz to the popular legacy of his former political rival.

⁴⁵ Esposito, *Funerals*, 145-175.

⁴⁶ For more on Juárez's posthumous connection to the Díaz regime and popular memory in the Sierra Juárez see, Patrick J. McNamara, *Sons of the Sierra: Memory, Patriarchy, and Rural Political Culture in Mexico, 1855-1911* (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1999), 287-330.

The tradition of commemorating Juárez in Oaxaca City began shortly after his death on July 18, 1872, with a massive citywide tribute on July 30. This reenactment of an earlier Mexico City funeral procession allowed residents to mourn publicly for the first time. The procession slowly traversed Oaxaca City's streets while a massive crowd watched from sidewalks, second-story windows, and balconies.⁴⁷ Later that year, on October 7, Governor Miguel Castro proclaimed that government officials would remember Juárez annually on July 18 by flying the flag at half-mast on all state and municipal buildings. He also promoted the construction of a primary school in Juárez's hometown of Guelatao, renamed the capital "Oaxaca de Juárez," and announced the construction of two monuments to the fallen hero.⁴⁸

Oaxaqueños commemorated Juárez in various ways on each subsequent anniversary of his death during the Porfiriato. Local and national newspapers published tributes to Juárez that glorified his strong leadership during the French Intervention. One Oaxaca newspaper editor exemplified this tendency when he described Juárez in 1891 as "the sublime priest of civilization and liberty."⁴⁹ The stories often illustrated the nostalgic mood that oaxaqueños experienced on Juárez Day. Newspaper editors, journalists, and wealthy businessmen sometimes joined the public observations carried out in a given year. Other people in Oaxaca would reenact the hero's funeral with a somber procession to his statue on the Paseo Juárez.⁵⁰

President Díaz formally incorporated his former political rival into Mexico's pantheon of national heroes during his second term in office. On Independence Day in 1885, Guillermo Meixueiro, a close ally to Díaz and a son of a former Oaxaca governor, delivered a speech in Oaxaca City at the unveiling of Juárez's statue there. Meixueiro tied the monument to Mexican

⁴⁷ Portillo, *Oaxaca en el Centenario*, 102.

⁴⁸ Portillo, *Oaxaca en el Centenario*, 102-103.

⁴⁹ Cenobio Palma, "Benito Juárez, 18 de Julio de 1872," *La Voz de Tlaxiaco*, July 25, 1891.

⁵⁰ For more on Juárez Day celebrations see, Esposito, *Funerals*, 145-159; Weeks, *The Juárez Myth*, 26-42.

Independence by reminding citizens that the statue represented liberty, since Juárez would live on in the memory of all Mexicans as the "lion at the door of Mexican homes," defending national honor.⁵¹ In the following years, numerous oaxaqueños reenacted the original funeral procession in honor of Juárez by culminating their procession through the city at this statue. Díaz recognized the popularity of the anniversary, and Porfirian officials immediately began stressing his connection to Juárez while preparing to amend the constitution for a third presidential term.⁵² In fact, according to Charles Weeks, the first Porfirian commemoration on the fifteenth anniversary of Juárez's death in 1887 highlighted the continuity of liberalism in Mexico.⁵³ The success of this event led officials to declare July 18 a national holiday in November of 1887.⁵⁴



Figure 12. Díaz leading a procession to Juárez's tomb on July 18, 1906.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Portillo, *Oaxaca en el Centenario*, 102-103.

⁵² Weeks, *The Juárez Myth*, 26-27; Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress*, 104.

⁵³ Weeks, *The Juárez Myth*, 36-41.

⁵⁴ "About Town," *The Two Republics*, November 27, 1887.

⁵⁵ "La última manifestación en honor de Juárez," *El Mundo Ilustrado*, July 29, 1906, 4.

In 1901, Oaxaca City elites and well-to-do businessmen formed the *Asociación Juárez* (Juárez Association) to honor Juárez each year on July 18. Members elected the powerful politician Joaquín Aristain president of the new organization. They formed the *Asociación Juárez* to "annually organize the demonstrations of sorrow with the Oaxacan people to help them honor" Juárez.⁵⁶ The association members worked with state and city officials to plan the festivities and maintain the statue dedicated in 1885. Members of the association met annually on July 18 to vote for leadership roles, and, in 1902, they elected Guillermo Meixueiro president.⁵⁷ The popularity of the association among oaxaqueños coincided with a revival of Juarista liberalism in Oaxaca City. Francie Chassen-López attributed this revival to the increased influence of científicos nationally. Many local and national politicians, known as *Juaristas*, became critical of Díaz in the later stages of his presidency. They identified ever-increasingly with Juárez as the authentic representation of Mexican liberalism.⁵⁸

Porfirian officials focused considerable attention on Juárez's birthday as the milestone of its centennial approached. Díaz himself appointed fellow oaxaqueño Félix Romero, one of the signers of the 1857 Constitution, to head the Liberal Patriotic Committee in Mexico City (See Figure 13). *El Imparcial* announced that the committee would meet for the first time on March 21, 1903 to organize the celebration.⁵⁹ The initial meeting featured two members of Congress, D. Justino Fernández and Benito Gómez Farías. Ignacio Mariscal, Díaz's long-time Minister of Foreign Relations, delivered an address to the new committee before excusing himself from official membership. The members discussed "the formal announcement to organize a national

⁵⁶ Formación de la organización "Asociación Juárez," July 18, 1901. Secretario del gobierno. Legajo 113. Exp. 2. Archivo General del Poder Ejecutivo del Estado de Oaxaca. Hereafter referred to as AGPEO.

⁵⁷ "Renovación de la Mesa Directiva de la Asociación Juárez," July 18, 1902. Legajo 113. Exp. 8. AGPEO.

⁵⁸ Francie R. Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary*, 395-398.

⁵⁹ "El Centenario de Juárez," *El Imparcial*, March 19, 1903.

delegation to prepare details [for] the centenario.”⁶⁰ Committee planners immediately began working with sub-committees around the country, and most liberals apparently embraced the upcoming milestone with few reservations. Clearly, the 1906 celebration afforded the Díaz regime with a tremendous opportunity to capitalize on Juárez’s popularity and galvanize some much-needed popular support.

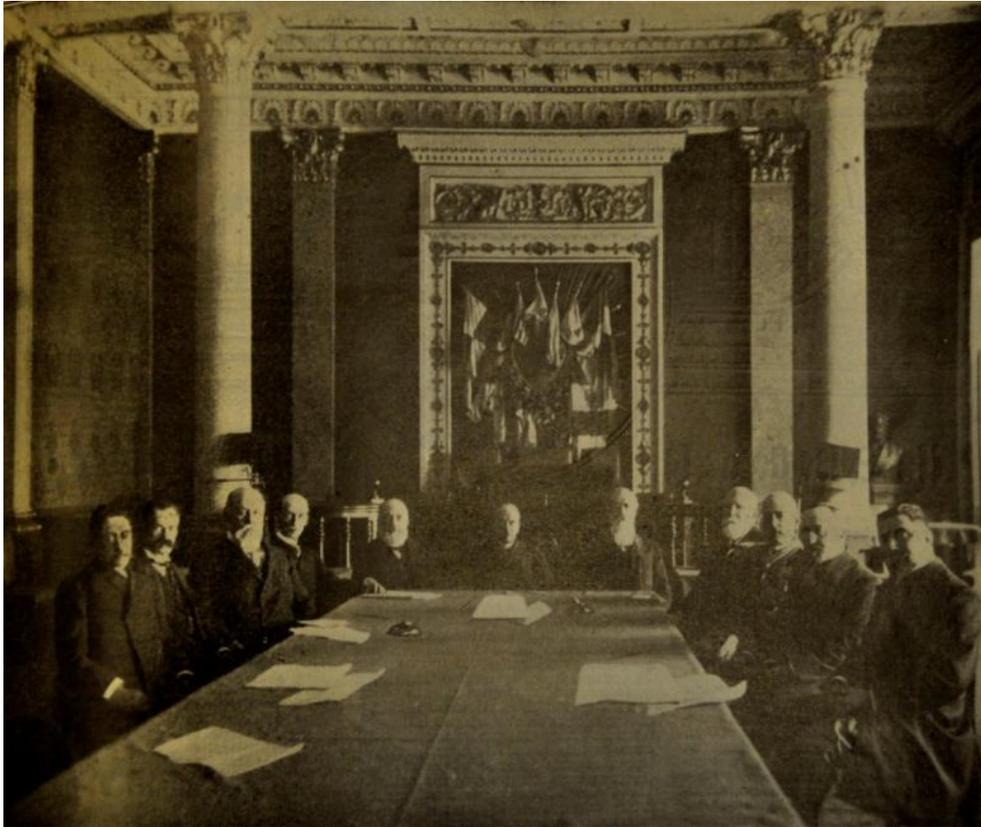


Figure 13. Members of the National Committee in 1906.⁶¹

The National Liberal Convention and the Legacy of Díaz

As Mexican citizens and officials began to think about the upcoming centennial milestone, Díaz sought Liberal Party support for yet another term in office. The National Liberal

⁶⁰ “El Centenario de Juárez: Importante Reunión,” *El Imparcial*, March 22, 1903.

⁶¹ “La Comisión Nacional del Centenario en sesión,” *El Mundo Ilustrado*, March 25, 1906, 4.

Convention met in June, 1903 with the upcoming centennial only three years away. Party members used the opportunity to debate the political legacies of both Juárez and Díaz.⁶² The Liberal Party had not held a national convention since 1893, during which científicos assumed Party leadership roles for the first time. At that convention, Justo Sierra defended Díaz's government by stressing the legitimacy of its controversial amendments to the constitution allowing for presidential reelection.⁶³ This issue was especially controversial since Díaz himself had rebelled against the Juárez regime in 1872, charging it with violating the 1857 Constitution's "no reelection clause." The 1903 convention promised fundamental political changes as party members pressured the president to choose a successor and to step down from the presidency. Díaz faced a growing faction of Juaristas in the party who identified Juárez with "authentic" Mexican liberalism, which they defined as adherence to the "no reelection" clause. When the convention met, the political legacies of both men were thus debated. The outspoken party member Francisco Bulnes's endorsement of Díaz during the meeting not only revealed an interpretation of Mexican history that challenged traditional readings of liberalism and the constitution, but its veiled references to Juárez made some members downright uncomfortable.⁶⁴

The long-time president nevertheless ultimately received an endorsement for his seventh term in office. Party delegates arrived in Mexico City anticipating a thoughtful series of philosophical discussions that would end with the usual gratuitous vote of confidence in Díaz. In states like Oaxaca, the set of young científico technocrats posed a challenge to the established older liberals who had long held sway with Díaz. This group of young politicians rose to political prominence in the 1890s as the regime stabilized. Seeking to establish an institutional foundation

⁶² Charles Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 130-138; Weeks, *The Juárez Myth*, 54-60; Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary*, 398-399.

⁶³ Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism*, 103.

⁶⁴ Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism*, 133-135; Weeks, *The Juárez Myth*, 59-61.

for Mexico's political future, they began pressuring Díaz to name a vice president to ensure an orderly succession of power at the national level. Científicos had recently won key political victories in various elections with the influence of Díaz's Finance Minister, José Limantour.⁶⁵ Opposition to the científico agenda caused consternation and controversy during the 1903 convention. The controversial nature of Díaz's bid for yet another presidential term and the addition of a vice president also ensured a lively debate over these important issues, especially since Díaz was 73 years old at the time.

The convention ended with a compromise between the Party's two factions. The Liberal Party endorsed Díaz's candidacy for the 1904 election, voting to extend his term in office from four years to six. In exchange, Díaz agreed to name Ramón Corral vice president. Liberals in Oaxaca readily supported the agreement.⁶⁶ Party members selected the outspoken and highly effective orator Francisco Bulnes to deliver the address endorsing Díaz's candidacy. The esteemed orator enjoyed a lengthy political career that lasted more than thirty years from Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada's presidency in 1872 to Francisco I. Madero's term in office beginning in 1911. Trained as an engineer, he spent much of his time in the Mexican congress, where he earned a reputation as a capable politician and journalist. He identified with científicos in the party and openly attacked Juaristas, who he believed clung to Juárez's "jacobin" liberalism. Bulnes exemplified in many ways a typical científico, allying himself with Justo Sierra, Emilio Rabasa, and José Limantour. He advocated amending the 1857 Constitution to accommodate Díaz's numerous bids for the presidency, thereby demonstrating his belief in the maintenance of order and a robust economy over any deference to popular sovereignty. This attitude angered

⁶⁵ Historians have debated the political importance of científicos. See, Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution: Porfirians, Liberals and Peasants* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 21-24; Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary*, 401-409; Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism*, 122-132.

⁶⁶ "La reelección del Sr. Gral. Díaz," *El Imparcial*, June 15, 1903.

political opponents who ever-increasingly viewed Díaz's presidency as unconstitutional and as a veritable stain on Juárez's liberal legacy. In the past, Bulnes had thus effectively ridiculed this faction of Juaristas by labeling them jacobins.⁶⁷

Following the agreement, the convention culminated on June 21, 1903, when, in his keynote address, Bulnes enthusiastically endorsed Díaz's bid for the presidency. Providing insight into how he and many of Díaz's supporters viewed post-colonial Mexican history, Bulnes broke national history into two epochs. The first represented the "demolition work that lasted over seventy years."⁶⁸ The Díaz era represented the second phase, or what Bulnes called "reconstruction." He did not openly criticize Juárez at the convention, but he did distinguish Díaz from earlier liberals while simultaneously highlighting the continuity between the two eras. Bulnes contended that the leaders of the first age following independence attacked and destroyed the Spanish colonial-era institutions. These "Jacobin" liberals succeeded in destroying remnants of the colonial era, but Bulnes argued that they governed ineffectively. Speaking to a large crowd that applauded and often cheered, Bulnes described the legacy of earlier liberals as an important step in the nation's development that ultimately benefitted Mexico by leading to Díaz's rise to power. For his part, Díaz not only governed effectively, supplying Mexico with relative stability, but the orator contended that Díaz destroyed the power of Mexico's *caciques* (regional strongmen) in favor of an orderly and modern network of bureaucrats.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Weeks, *The Juárez Myth*, 54-57.

⁶⁸ Fransico Bulnes, "Discurso del Sr. D. Francisco Bulnes, pronunciado anoche en la Tercera Sesión de la Convención Nacional Liberal," *El Imparcial*, June 22, 1903.

⁶⁹ The term cacique denoted an established leader or "political boss who...stood at the interface between 'traditional' communities and the...new 'modern' institutions of the nation state." Caciques had a historical precedent in the colonial era when Spanish authorities viewed indigenous leaders as "vital cogs in the colonial administration." Alan Knight, "Caciquismo in Twentieth-century Mexico," in *Caciquismo in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, Alan Knight and Wil Pansters eds. (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2005), 10. Contrary to Bulnes's assertion, historians have concluded that this informal institution survived the strains of modernity and bureaucratization. See, Knight, "Caciquismo," 7.

Many delegates at the convention understood the implications of Bulnes's oration. While he avoided an open confrontation with the Juárez supporters, or party "jacobins," he effectively lauded Díaz—not the revered Juárez—as the man who had stabilized Mexico. Juárez's presidency, on the other hand, was implicitly chaotic and overwhelmingly unsuccessful when compared to the tenure of Díaz. Bulnes compared Díaz to Augustus Caesar when discussing the president's numerous accomplishments and in the asserted achievement of modernity. This comparison demonstrated Bulnes's unfavorable interpretation of Juárez's presidency. For Bulnes, the unstable decades leading Rome to Caesar's empire represented an excellent metaphor for Juárez's unsuccessful and highly volatile presidency. Apparently, however, even the outspoken Bulnes knew that an open confrontation at the National Liberal Convention, while planners prepared for Juárez's centennial commemoration, would be foolish. Bulnes intelligently played to the crowd, whose members "at various times interrupted [his speech] for prolonged periods of applause," rather than overtly alienating a sizable political faction.⁷⁰

The Liberal Patriotic Committee in the Sierra Juárez

Following the convention, the state of Oaxaca captured the attention of the national committee when Díaz himself approved a project involving Juárez's hometown of Guelatao. Members of the oaxaqueño-led national organization began discussing a tribute to Juárez in the small village. Committee members decided to build a primary school for boys and girls, which they named the Benito Juárez School. Guelatao, an area of considerable isolation in one of

⁷⁰ "La Convención Liberal," *El Mundo Ilustrado*, June 23, 1903; *El Imparcial*, June 22, 1903; *El Imparcial*, June 23, 1903; *El Imparcial*, June 24, 1903; *El Imparcial*, June 25, 1903. For an overview of the Bulnes speech, and an analysis of his two polemics see Weeks, *The Juárez Myth*, 54-70. For an analysis of how oaxaqueños received the speech and later writings see Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary*, 398-399, and 461-466.

Oaxaca's mountainous regions, quickly became the centerpiece of what promised to be a grand celebration in honor of the liberal icon. Committee members laid out a six-point plan that hinged on a vote of confidence from Díaz himself. Once the project received the approval of the president, planners moved quickly, naming General Manuel Sánchez Rivera to coordinate with local and state officials.⁷¹

Once residents of the small mountain town learned of the project, they took action to capitalize on it. They apparently understood the implicit political importance of the upcoming anniversary and formed a local committee to oversee preparations for the event. Members of this committee petitioned Governor Pimentel to extend his Cinco de Mayo proclamation, symbolically joining "Juárez and Progress." In the letter, they cited the "efforts and sacrifices [Juárez had made] that benefit[ted] the general good of civilization and progress."⁷² The committee members demonstrated their understanding of the connection of past to present in their appeal to the governor. For the local committee, Juárez remained an important tie to the past, linking local residents to both Juárez and Díaz.

The governor delighted Guelatao leaders when he informed them that Romero's committee had a project in mind that would require their assistance. Pimentel worked with the Liberal Patriotic Committee to plan the Benito Juárez School, and he established a local committee in Guelatao under the name of "Juárez and Progress" to "tirelessly work for this project."⁷³ The Juárez and Progress Committee would work with the national organization to find a suitable location and raise funds. He anticipated that the school would "be inaugurated during the first centennial of the birth of Benito Juárez," and the building would "not only serve

⁷¹ "La Escuela Nacional en Guelatao," *El Imparcial*, June 16, 1903; "El Centenario de Juárez," *El Imparcial*, June 20, 1903.

⁷² Anastasio Juárez, et al. to Emilio Pimentel, June 29, 1903. Secretario del gobierno, Legajo 113, Exp. 9. Archivo General del Poder Ejecutivo del Estado de Oaxaca (Hereafter cited as AGPEO).

⁷³ Pimentel to A. Juárez et al., July 18, 1903. Secretario del gobierno. Legajo 113. Exp. 9. AGPEO.

children of both sexes... but also adults.”⁷⁴ Pimentel assured committee members that Díaz himself supported the project while urging them to raise money for construction from Mexico's prominent citizens and politicians. For his part, Romero proposed a “one cent tax for each citizen older than twelve years of age.”⁷⁵ It remains unclear how Díaz reacted to the proposal, but planners in Guelatao and Mexico City petitioned citizens to participate with their donations.

Polemics and Popular Memory

The debate over Díaz's and Juárez's respective contributions to liberalism intensified as the centennial approached. Francisco Bulnes continued to claim that Díaz was Mexico's more authentic patriot. Unlike at the 1903 National Liberal Convention, he did not hold back his disdain for Juárez in these years. He published two books: *El verdadero Juárez y la verdad sobre la intervención y el imperio* in 1904 and the follow-up, *Juárez y las revoluciones de Ayutla y de Reforma*, a year later. The author left little room for doubt as to whom he had referred in his address months earlier. He now openly attacked Juárez's legacy. Bulnes asserted that Juárez did little to expel the invading French army. Instead, he argued that Napoleon III's installed Emperor Maximilian I proved incapable of effective leadership. He further argued that the "Empire was impossible with or without Juárez, with or without liberals, and with or without [intervention from] the United States.”⁷⁶ This line of reasoning dismissed the sacrifices of an entire generation who endured the French occupation by asserting that Maximilian's government would have failed even without their resistance. In Bulnes's estimation, the Reform heroes did little to defeat

⁷⁴ Pimentel to A. Juárez et al., July 18, 1903. Secretario del gobierno. Legajo 113. Exp. 9. AGPEO.

⁷⁵ “El Centenario de Juárez,” *El Imparcial*, June 6, 1903.

⁷⁶ Francisco Bulnes, *El Verdadero Juárez y la verdad sobre la intervención y el imperio*, rev. ed. (México, D.F.: Ediciones Ateneo, 1989), 257.

Maximilian. As Charles Weeks argued, Bulnes's books had the unintended effect of "unif[ying] the liberals as the factions rose to defend Juárez" from the attack.⁷⁷ All major political factions came together to defend Juárez, and the vociferous opposition even forced Bulnes to leave the country for a short time. Even Díaz defended the man he had rebelled against thirty-two years earlier. Perhaps feigning offense, the Díaz regime responded by sponsoring a nationwide contest for a more accurate Juárez biography.⁷⁸ Díaz himself summoned Bulnes to the presidential palace to offer numerous corrections of historical facts he claimed to have seen for himself.⁷⁹

The Bulnes polemics may have brought liberals together in their defenses of Juárez, but the episode nevertheless illustrated the severity of political factionalism among elites in Porfirian Mexico prior to the 1906 celebration. Justo Sierra, Francisco Cosmes, and Carlos Pereyra, all noted científicos, publicly protested with publications refuting Bulnes's bold claims, and Ignacio Mariscal offered his rebuttal at the Mexican History Academy.⁸⁰ Benito Juárez Maza, Juárez's son, met with members of the Patriotic Liberal Committee, an organization opposed to the científicos headed by Félix Díaz, to determine a proper response to Bulnes's attacks.⁸¹

Traditional Juaristas throughout the country also rushed to the defense of their national hero. For its part, Romero's Liberal Patriotic Committee remained out of the dispute, choosing instead to plan for the 1906 centennial. The organization's leaders did not deem a response necessary due

⁷⁷ Weeks, *The Juárez Myth*, 54.

⁷⁸ Weeks, *The Juárez Myth*, 49-50.

⁷⁹ Esposito, *Funerals*, 158.

⁸⁰ People flooded printing presses with pamphlets, articles, and biographies challenging Bulnes's conclusions. For some examples of some of the more widely read works see, Justo Sierra, *Juárez: su obra y su tiempo*, rev. ed. (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1970); Francisco G. Cosmes, *El verdadero Bulnes y su falso Juárez* (México: Talleres de tipografía, 1904). For responses from oaxaqueños see, Ramón Prida, *Juárez: como lo pinta el Diputado Bulnes y como lo describe la historia* (México: Imprenta de Eusebio Sánchez, 1904); Adalberto Carriedo, *Biografía de Juárez que deberá ser leída en todas las Escuelas del Estado de Oaxaca, el 21 de Marzo de 1906*, Rev. ed. (Oaxaca: Ediciones de la Universidad "Benito Juárez" de Oaxaca, 1971). For more on his speech to the history academy see, Ignacio Mariscal, "Juárez y el libro de Bulnes: alocución leída el 17 de Octubre de 1904, ante algunos miembros de la Academia Mexicana de la Historia," October 17, 1904. Juárez Collection. Fundación Dr. Juan I. Bustamonte Vasconcelos. (Hereafter cited as FBV).

⁸¹ Weeks, *The Juárez Myth*, 63.

to the widespread defense of Juárez. Many liberals opposed Bulnes's assertions since his argument apparently challenged both Porfirista *and* Juarista interpretations of Mexican history. Bulnes's argument angered Juaristas because his conclusions diminished Juárez's contributions to national stability, while Porfiristas apparently found his argument unsatisfying since it questioned Díaz's place in Hale's unifying liberal myth. Rather than focusing on the rift between the politicians, as had Bulnes, Porfiristas argued that Juárez laid the liberal framework upon which Díaz had built, thus establishing an arc of continuity between the nation's two most prominent liberal regimes.⁸² The Bulnes episode demonstrated that Liberal Party members were forced to reexamine national history in regard to both Juárez and Díaz in planning for the centennial commemoration.

Members of the Asociación Juárez in Oaxaca also reacted to the Bulnes polemic. Francie Chassen-López noted that between 1902 and 1905 the organization changed dramatically. Many of the organization's by-laws were rewritten as elites abandoned it. Remaining members opted for monthly meetings rather than the symbolic annual meetings on Juárez Day. In addition, leaders attacked Pimentel's embattled administration and Bulnes's interpretation of Mexican history. These changes prompted the last of the Porfiristas to abandon the organization. The new leaders published a mission statement in 1905 articulating what they deemed to be Juárez's authentic legacy. This included a strict interpretation of the 1857 Constitution and its "no re-election" clause. Members also increasingly determined that Díaz and Juárez had little in common and advocated free and fair elections for all Mexicans. They restructured the organization under the leadership of Heliodoro Díaz Quintas and Ismael Puga y Colmenares, differentiating between "founding and non-founding members" for the first time. The new

⁸² Weeks, *The Juárez Myth*, 54-55.

statutes called for the association to meet on the first of every month in addition to the commemoration of Juárez Day.⁸³

The remaining members of the Asociación Juárez also rolled out their revitalized and transformed organization with a newspaper. *El Bien Público*, a bi-monthly publication, reflected the new members' Jacobin values. Puga y Colmenares and Díaz Quintas continued the task of memorializing Juárez, but they began doing so twice a month in print. In addition, the paper published articles criticizing Pimentel as his 1906 gubernatorial election drew closer. Condemning publications friendly to the Governor, the editors promised readers in the premier edition that they would publish a paper free of "dogma, mystery, and fallacy."⁸⁴ They declared that the paper would "never employ jingoistic displays...[and] pedantic affirmations" common elsewhere, a clear reference to the pro-Díaz Mexico City press.⁸⁵ The publishers attacked the undemocratic nature of the Pimentel and Díaz regimes while championing Juárez as the protector of democracy. For the members, Díaz had betrayed Juárez's liberal legacy.

Puga y Colmenares and Díaz Quintas went so far in their critique of Díaz as to begin planning an alternative celebration in Guelatao. Despite the initial support from the Díaz regime, the Benito Juárez School project in Guelatao had made little progress since 1903. The national committee's project apparently could not overcome state and local political divisions regarding interpretations of Mexican liberalism. Apparently, Pimentel did little to help the village with the project after he formed the Juárez and Progress Committee.⁸⁶ Yet, the school seemed to be on the

⁸³ Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary*, 462. Francie R. Chassen, *Los precursores de la revolución en Oaxaca* (Oaxaca: Instituto de la Administración Pública de Oaxaca, 1985), 7-14, see also reprints of original documents, 24-31. I have had to rely on her analysis of the 1905 statutes due to the very rare nature of the document.

⁸⁴ "Por la patria y por la ley," *El Bien Público: Órgano de la Asociación Juárez* (Hereafter cited as *El Bien Público*), July 18, 1905.

⁸⁵ "Por la patria y por la ley," *El Bien Público*, July 18, 1905.

⁸⁶ Patrick J. McNamara, *Sons of the Sierra: Juárez, Díaz, and the People of Ixtlán, Oaxaca, 1855-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 159-167.

right track in its early stages. By November of 1903, General Manuel Sánchez Rivera donated \$100 pesos while the governor of Tlaxcala, Próspero Cahuantzi, donated another \$196.⁸⁷ The early planning and enthusiasm had spread to other areas of the country, as the people of Guelatao appeared to have brought a new prosperity to their village.⁸⁸ Village planners picked a location that angered the larger nearby town of Ixtlán. Upset over water rights, the once politically dominant neighboring village immediately challenged the legality of the location. This forced state and local officials into a complicated set of negotiations threatening the entire project.⁸⁹ Aware of the problems in Guelatao, the Asociación Juárez planned their own celebration in the small town beginning in 1905.

Final Preparations for Oaxaca City: Land and (a Lack of) Liberty

Following the celebration, the national committee composed a list of monuments that municipal and state governments had constructed for the centennial celebration. The editors of *El Imparcial* published a short list of the most notable statues. Committee members in Mexico City and the editors agreed that the "principal was, without doubt, the monument on the Cerro del Fortín in Oaxaca."⁹⁰ The editors cited the grandiosity and originality of the monument before taking readers across the country with a brief description of Juárez statues and centennial ceremonies in various cities. This article succinctly described the scale, uniqueness, and significance of the Oaxaca monument, but what the editors did not say was that this statue had a

⁸⁷ Pedro Vassero to Joaquín Sandoval, November 30, 1903. Secretario del gobierno. Legajo 113, Exp. 9. AGPEO. All currency referred to in Pesos unless otherwise noted.

⁸⁸ The state promoted the village to the status of *villa* in 1900. This formerly separated town affairs from that of the nearby town of Ixtlán, the district *cabecera*. McNamara, *Sons of the Sierra*, 159. On the national level, the Mexican government lifted import tariffs on "statues and busts of Juárez that state and municipal governments purchased abroad for public buildings and plazas." Weeks, *The Juárez Myth*, 46.

⁸⁹ McNamara, *Sons of the Sierra*, 158-167.

⁹⁰ "Monumentos a Juárez," *El Imparcial*, April 4, 1906.

lengthy history of its own prior to the Juárez celebration. In fact, the eventual controversy surrounding the statue demonstrates the extent of the contested nature of Juárez's legacy among oaxaqueños.

The statue had travelled a great distance prior to arriving in Oaxaca City in 1905. The odyssey began with a national project initiated more than a decade before the Juárez centennial. An Italian firm under the direction of César Orsini planned a grand representation of Juárez's substantial achievements in 1889 (See Figure 14). Orsini's firm worked with Porfirian officials in Mexico City and designed with no particular location in mind, but his firm envisioned the statue of Juárez with his "arm extended to the east" showing the way to the foreign "usurper."⁹¹ In his other hand would rest the laws of the Reforma representing civilization. "The sleeping Mexican nation following the fight" over Juárez's reforms would stand in front of the statue with "eyes looking to the sky giving thanks."⁹² Below, an eagle guarded the statue while behind it rested the "results of peace: commerce, overseas trade, and industry."⁹³ One would have encountered at the four corners on the base of the statue "the four cardinal points of civilization: strength, liberty, justice, and science."⁹⁴ Such imagery arguably represented the continuity of Mexican history by demonstrating the sacrifices of the past so as to remind people of peace and prosperity during the Porfiriato.⁹⁵ Sculptor Adalberto Cencetti completed the statue in Rome in 1891, but the Díaz

⁹¹ "Monumento a Juárez," *Periódico Oficial del gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca*, January 10, 1889.

⁹² "Monumento a Juárez," *Periódico Oficial del gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca*, January 10, 1889.

⁹³ "Monumento a Juárez," *Periódico Oficial del gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca*, January 10, 1889.

⁹⁴ "Monumento a Juárez," *Periódico Oficial del gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca*, January 10, 1889.

⁹⁵ For more on the meaning of monuments during the Porfiriato see, Claudia Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress: Modernization and Public Health in Mexico City, 1876-1910* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003), 77-114; Barbara A. Tenenbaum, "Streetwise History: The Paseo de la Reforma and the Porfirian State, 1876-1910," in *Rituals of Rule*, 127-148; Mauricio Tenorio Trillo, "1910 Mexico City: Space and Nation in the City of the Centenario," in *¡Viva Mexico!*, 167-190.

administration never undertook the construction of this large project.⁹⁶ Apparently, after ten years in limbo, officials decided to send the statue to Oaxaca City in 1901.⁹⁷



Figure 14. Several views of the famous statue in 2010.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, *La crítica de arte en México en el siglo XIX*, 2nd ed. (México, D.F.: Universidad Autónoma de México Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1997), 364-365.

⁹⁷ "Breve reseña," *Periódico Oficial*, March 28, 1906.

⁹⁸ Amanda Milstead, "Four Views of Juárez," Oaxaca de Juárez, 2010.

In Oaxaca, Pimentel's predecessor, General Martín González, contracted sculptor Jesús Contreras to build a base for the recently arrived monument in 1902. The contract stipulated a \$40,000 payment to Contreras upon completion, but the sculptor died unexpectedly after initiating the project in July 1902. This left little room for error if the state government wanted to dedicate the monument on the Juárez centennial. In his address to congress in 1903, Pimentel noted the difficulties facing state planners. Officials had to rescind the original contract after the government had paid \$8,000. Most importantly for Pimentel, planners had to find an artisan capable of "carefully erecting the monument in the best condition possible."⁹⁹

Federal officials arranged to send the monument to Oaxaca, where it took almost three years to find a suitable engineer. On December 22, 1905, State Engineer Rodolfo Franco finalized a contract with Mauro Canseco to transport the monument from the nearby village of El Marquesado up to the Cerro del Fortín. The contract also called for Canseco to construct a stone pedestal. Franco drove a much harder bargain than did his predecessors in 1902. The contract stipulated a payment of \$1,000 upon completion of construction on February 5, 1906.¹⁰⁰ Officials chose the skirt of the large hill whereby residents could see the monument throughout the city. At this location, Canseco would build the base for the statue partly encompassing the green cantera stones that made the city famous.¹⁰¹ A long series of apparently hastily built stairs provided public access to the statue.¹⁰² State officials named the stairs the Calzada Juárez to

⁹⁹ Emilio Pimentel, *Memoria Administrativa presentada por el C. Lic. Emilio Pimentel, Gobernador Constitucional del Estado de Oaxaca, a la XXII Legislatura del mismo, el 17 de Septiembre de 1903* (Oaxaca: Imprenta del Estado, 1904), 34-35.

¹⁰⁰ Rodolfo Franco and Mauro Canseco Contract, December 22, 1905. Clave 877, 22. Archivo de la Dirección General de Notarías del Estado de Oaxaca (Hereafter referred to as AGNE).

¹⁰¹ Franco and Canseco Contract, December 22, 1905. AGNE. For more on the green stones that gave the city the name the "Emerald City" see, Overmyer-Velázquez, *Visions*, 1-2.

¹⁰² The stairs had numerous problems from the beginning. In their critique of Pimentel's costly projects a group of citizens in 1910 criticized the governor for this project along with a laundry list of other grievances. *Proceso de la administración del Señor Lic. Emilio Pimentel* (Oaxaca, 1910), 129-130.

articulate the prominence of the path. Officials named many of the new avenues in Oaxaca City *calzadas*, and they had recently dedicated the most notable example to Díaz.

The site Franco chose, however, presented a problem for the Pimentel administration. Anastasia Martínez, a thirty-five year old illiterate resident of Oaxaca City, purchased a small hacienda known as "El Petatillo" on the Cerro del Fortín in 1903.¹⁰³ She had bought the land before marrying her husband Alberto, thereby retaining its title in her name. Martínez and her husband lived in Oaxaca City, but she purchased the land to build a home and plant fruit trees.¹⁰⁴ The parcel fell under the jurisdiction of the less affluent working-class municipality adjacent to Oaxaca City known as El Marquesado. Historically, tension existed between the well-to-do oaxaqueños in the Centro and the residents of this nearby popular neighborhood.¹⁰⁵ El Petatillo blocked Franco's access to the monument from both El Marquesado and Oaxaca City. He proposed to solve this problem by forging a path directly through the middle of the property, thereby carving it in half. He offered Martínez \$40 for a small allowance whereupon officials could construct this road.

State officials contended that the land had actually lain fallow long enough to enable the government to access the property legally, but Martínez and her husband fought this ruling. Working through an intermediary, she asked Pimentel to intervene since Franco had already occupied part of the land without official notification from the state. Up to this point, Franco had been her only contact with the state government. Martínez and her husband argued that this project would prevent them from planting fruit trees and running a productive farm.¹⁰⁶ Pimentel

¹⁰³ Martínez to Pimentel, December 6, 1905. Conflictos. Legajo 51. Exp. 1. AGPEO.

¹⁰⁴ Anastasia Martínez pide indemnización por el terreno de su propiedad por donde pasara la Calzada a la estatua de Juárez en "El Petatillo," Cerro del Fortín," 1905-1906. Conflictos. Legajo 51. Exp. 1. AGPEO.

¹⁰⁵ For more on the conflicts and eventual annexation of El Marquesado see, Overmyer-Velázquez, *Visions*, 45-47.

¹⁰⁶ Anastasia Martínez to Pimentel, December 6, 1905. Conflictos. Legajo 51. Exp. 1. AGPEO.

apparently referred the dispute to Secretary Joaquín Sandoval who urgently ordered Franco to provide Martínez with proper documentation. The engineer complied but countered his original offer by reducing the price to \$20. Claiming that the \$40-peso offer had been for her entire hacienda, Franco appraised her property at \$3.64 for the road. Nevertheless, Franco allowed that he would go ahead and pay her \$20. Along with the official documentation, he provided Martínez with a map illustrating where engineers would build the stairs to the Cerro del Fortín through El Petatillo.¹⁰⁷

The offer emboldened Martínez and her husband. The two sent numerous letters to the governor, compelling state officials to engage in further negotiations. Franco waited until after his office drafted the official offer for El Petatillo before moving forward with Mauro Canseco, though he bound the contract with the engineer even though the legal dispute with Martínez had not yet been settled. In the midst of planning the commemoration, the regime essentially appropriated Martínez's land. For her part, Martínez did not ask to have the statue taken elsewhere. On the contrary, the record indicates that she and her husband sympathized with the importance of the occasion. Martínez indicated that Juárez should be honored on his one-hundredth birthday, but she sought a settlement above the rather low \$20-peso offer. The couple nevertheless continued to fight the decision beyond the centennial celebration, and they eventually received \$20 in August from Pimentel's administration.¹⁰⁸

Governor Pimentel and his committee also dedicated numerous public works projects that stressed Porfirian modernity and Díaz's connection to Juárez leading to the ceremony. Throughout the festivities, electric lights illuminated the Paseo Juárez and the Governor's Palace. Government officials also encouraged prominent citizens to follow suit and illuminate windows,

¹⁰⁷ Rodolfo Franco to Martínez, December 15, 1905. Conflictos. Legajo 51. Exp. 1. AGPEO.

¹⁰⁸ Sandoval to Martínez, July 14, 1906. Legajo 51. Exp. 1. Conflictos. AGPEO.

doors, and homes. In Guelatao, the people celebrated the centennial without the Benito Juárez School. Apparently, the land dispute with neighboring Ixtlán and the perceived indifference of the governor left residents without the official grandeur of the Oaxaca City festival, but Pimentel did construct two primary schools for indigenous children in Juchitán, a historically independent area in the Tehuantepec Isthmus. For Juaristas this must have appeared as tantamount to an insult to Juárez's legacy, since the former president had a troubled history with oaxaqueños from this area of the state. On the other hand, Díaz wielded considerable influence in Juchitán. Thus, the celebration illustrated two realities: On the one hand, the ceremony itself represented an attempt to use Juárez's legacy to bond with Díaz the unifying liberal myth; on the other, its contentious preparations suggested the dissolution, or perhaps even the absence, of Porfirian hegemony.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ "Programa de las festividades del Centenario de Juárez," *Periódico Oficial*, March 17, 1906; Sandoval to A. Juárez et al., March 7, 1906. Secretario del gobierno. Legajo 113. Exp. 9. AGPEO; Pimentel, *Mensaje*, 1906, 20-21. For more on Juárez's rival with the Zapotecs in the Isthmian region of Juchitán see, Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary*, 320-328, and Brian R. Hamnett, "Benito Juárez, Early Liberalism, and the Regional Politics of Oaxaca, 1828-1853," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 10, no. 1 (1991): 15-19. For more on Díaz's connection to the area see, Paul Garner, *Porfirio Díaz* (Harlow, England: Longman, 2001), 36-42; See also Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary*, 251 for one of Díaz's reported romantic connections with the local cacica Juana Catarina Romero.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION: THE END OF THE MYTH?

Carlos Monsiváis observed that, during his presidency, Porfirio Díaz inundated Mexico with statues so as to define the liberal tradition and illustrate "the nation's maturity."¹⁹³ The renowned Mexican author reasoned that each monument offered an illustration of what arguably most characterized the Díaz regime: reconciliation among various political factions to ensure support for his rule. Monsiváis's analysis supports many recent interpretations among historians regarding Díaz's use of state ceremonies that emphasize the hegemonic, consensual basis of Díaz's power. At face value, an analysis of the public performance of the 1906 Juárez commemoration seemingly confirms these interpretations. Three years of preparations resulted in a grand celebration that oaxaqueños apparently supported enthusiastically. The imagery of the festival highlighted the regime's connection to Mexico's liberal past, the Porfirian interpretation of national history, and the benefits of progress obtained during the Porfiriato. Accounts from regime insiders emphasized the widespread popularity of the festival, and an examination of the ceremony itself suggests that the Juárez centennial celebration legitimized Díaz's presidency.

Nevertheless, such an analysis of only the festival distorts conclusions concerning the ceremony's effectiveness and ignores crucial evidence. By contrast, my thesis has featured an examination of the contentious preparations for the event and demonstrates that Mexicans debated the political legacies of both Juárez and Díaz and, for that matter, liberalism itself in the years prior to 1906. Clearly, there existed controversy regarding the authenticity of Díaz's liberalism as early as 1903. Moreover, the enormous efforts made by the editors of *El Mundo*

¹⁹³ Carlos Monsiváis, *Los rituales del caos*, 2nd ed. (México: Biblioteca Era, 2003), 144.

Ilustrado to publicize the event in favor of Díaz, taken alongside the commentary of Andrés Portillo, suggest that Porfirian officials may have even questioned the effectiveness of the ceremony itself. In fact, Portillo seemed genuinely surprised that the large crowd in the state capital celebrated the event peacefully.

How should we interpret Portillo's curious description of the crowd's behavior during the Juárez celebration? On the one hand, Portillo's apparent surprise regarding the crowd's docile behavior could suggest that other Porfirian festivals in Oaxaca failed to come off so smoothly. Thus, Portillo's comments could indicate that, in comparison to the 1906 celebration, officials expected civic ceremonies in Oaxaca City to incite public disorder and, thus, usually did little to reinforce Díaz's legitimacy. But Portillo's comments more likely suggest that the crowd's orderly behavior surprised him due to his knowledge of the lengthy debates concerning Juárez's and Díaz's legacies during the three years of contentious preparations for Juárez's centenario. This latter interpretation also explains the considerable expense that the editors of *El Mundo Ilustrado* assumed in their efforts to portray the festival in a light favorable to Díaz. While all of the published accounts stressed the crowd's pacific nature during the commemoration, Portillo's emphasis on the crowd's behavior seems to have betrayed the concerns Porfirian officials had about the mounting resistance to Díaz's regime apparent by 1906, even in the President's home state of Oaxaca.

Such a reading certainly does not support the conclusion that this commemoration reinforced Porfirian hegemony. Indeed, Portillo's commentary in particular casts doubt on the extent or perhaps even the existence of the Díaz regime's hegemony. Matthew Esposito convincingly argued that, on the whole, the effective nation-building festival would "silence

contrary interpretations of the past... [and] encourage collective amnesia."¹⁹⁴ In the preparations for the 1906 Juárez commemoration, however, it appears that Díaz could do little to silence competing interpretations of the past. Francisco Bulnes's keynote address at the National Liberal Convention demonstrates that Díaz failed to mute the increasingly polarizing debate over Mexico's liberal tradition. By contrast, it seems the controversy surrounding the Bulnes address and his subsequent polemics *promoted* numerous reinterpretations of national history as Juaristas, liberals, and members of the popular classes each attempted to defend Juárez's legacy. In fact, one explanation for participants' peaceful behavior in 1906 may have had nothing to do with citizens' alleged respect for Díaz; that is, oaxaqueños simply may have been memorializing *Juárez*, their fallen hero. Celebrants may well have understood the Díaz regime's attempt to demonstrate its continuity with Juárez's legacy, but they may have chosen to celebrate peacefully simply as a means of showing respect for Juárez. Seen from this perspective, this peaceful commemoration may well have represented the subversive act that Portillo apparently had expected after all.

At the very least, the events surrounding Juárez's one-hundredth birthday celebration could suggest that Díaz's hegemony, if it ever existed, began at long last to break down by 1903. One could argue that the Juárez festival shows that liberalism itself, ala Hale's unifying liberal myth, represented the hegemonic order underpinning both Díaz's and Juárez's presidencies. Such an interpretation remains difficult to confirm due to the numerous and ever-changing definitions of liberalism during the latter half of the nineteenth century leading to the 1910 revolution. Nevertheless, if the liberal ideal was hegemonic, then the events surrounding the centennial suggest that Díaz failed to connect himself to Juárez and, by extension, Hale's unifying liberal

¹⁹⁴ Matthew D. Esposito, *Funerals, Festivals, and Cultural Politics in Porfirian Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010), 10-11.

myth. As such, the Juárez centennial offers an important entryway whereby historians moving forward can discuss the complex means by which Díaz used culture to legitimate his power at times successfully, and at times unsuccessfully.

Taken together, the evidence strongly indicates that the 1906 Juárez centennial was not the typical Porfirian festival legitimizing Díaz's presidency. This conclusion, reached after an analysis of the festival and the three years of preparations for it, differs dramatically from other conclusions historians have reached when analyzing Porfirian state ceremonies. In 1906, Porfirian officials attempted to use the centennial milestone to illustrate historical continuity and legitimize Díaz's presidency. Nevertheless, the evidence indicates that the regime failed to make the connection to Mexico's liberal past. I would suggest that Díaz's old nemesis, Benito Juárez, returned posthumously during the 1906 commemoration to challenge Díaz's legitimacy at a crucial moment during the Porfiriato. The evidence also suggests that the 1906 Juárez centennial celebration revealed an ideological fissure in Oaxaca City between the president and the populace at least four years before the revolutionary crisis in 1910.

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