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Review / Reseña

Will Fowler, Ed. *Forceful Negotiations: The Origins of the Pronunciamento in Nineteenth-Century Mexico*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010.

The *Pronunciamento* and Political Culture in Early National Mexico

Daniel S. Haworth

University of Houston-Clear Lake

Between 1810 and 1876, through most its first century of independence, Mexico experienced hundreds of *pronunciamentos* that destabilized the republic. These ritualized expressions of dissent depended on the threat of rebellion to force the government to negotiate, ideally without bloodshed. Nevertheless many *pronunciamentos* resulted in violence, and in the most extreme instances precipitated civil war. Taking the centrality of this phenomenon to Mexico's early national history as its point of departure, *Forceful Negotiations* is an anthology of research by

scholars from Mexico, Spain, Great Britain, and the United States who assess the origins, nature, and significance of the *pronunciamiento*. The core of the volume consists of nine case studies of *pronunciamentos* between 1821 and 1852 presented in chronological order, and a thematic essay exploring the connection between the *pronunciamiento* and national identity. Interest in the way the *pronunciamiento* conjured a nexus of the national and the local forms a unifying theme in an otherwise sharply differentiated body of work. The contributors collectively illuminate the complexity of a political phenomenon synonymous with the tumultuous aftermath of Mexico's transition from colony to republic.

In his introductory chapter, Will Fowler acknowledges that a *pronunciamiento* could result in a coup or be nothing more than a statement of intent. He therefore proposes to replace a rigid definition with a taxonomy that classifies the distinguishing features of the *pronunciamiento*, namely a convergence of interests uniting a group of military officers and civilians around a shared grievance; their formulation of a written declaration (*acta* or *plan político*) seeking redress of a presumed injustice often equated with the popular will; a search for sympathizers through distribution and publication of the text; and the outcome, which depended on whether and how others replicated the original act of insubordination (xvii-xix). The reader must keep Fowler's taxonomy in mind to make sense of the diverse approaches the contributors of the volume take to the *pronunciamiento*.

Chapters one and two describe how the consummation of independence established the *pronunciamiento* as an accepted political practice. In 1821, after nearly a decade fighting in the royalist militia, Lt. Col. Augustín Iturbide issued the Plan of Iguala, setting forth a framework for Mexico's independence in the guise of a limited compromise between the aims of royalists and rebels that forged erstwhile antagonists into a powerful coalition. In chapter two Timothy Anna demonstrates the Plan of Iguala movement to have been the prototypical *pronunciamiento*, the earliest instance in Mexico of an uprising that conformed to Fowler's taxonomy. Chapter three, by Ivana Frassetto and Manuel Chust, maps the connection between the *pronunciamiento* of Iguala and Iturbide's eventual

coronation as emperor in 1822. Frasquet and Chust underscore the trans-Atlantic link between the Iguala movement and the first identifiable *pronunciamiento* in the Hispanic world, the Riego revolt of 1821 in Spain, which saw an element of the military allying with civilian politicians to force the absolutist king Fernando VII to share power with a Cortes, or parliament. In chronological terms, Anna's account is the more expansive of the first two chapters. Frasquet and Chust present a more detailed treatment of Iturbide's path from *pronunciado* to emperor than does Anna. Read together, chapters one and two spell out the reasons why Iturbide's short-term successes spelled his eventual undoing, inasmuch as the Plan of Iguala movement politicized the military and provided a model that a group of dissident generals would follow in overthrowing the emperor in 1823. By that time, as Anna points out, "the *pronunciamiento* had become the preferred and almost automatic mechanism for regime change" (17).

The fall of Iturbide led Mexico to become a republic in 1824. Over the next four years the first president, Guadalupe Victoria, served two terms almost without incident, but the selection of his predecessor renewed the cycle of *pronunciamientos* Iturbide had initiated. Chapters three and four survey the crisis and collapse of the first federal republic (1824-1836) from contrasting perspectives. High politics is the subject of chapter three, in which Josefina Vázquez crafts a detailed narrative showing how two *pronunciamientos* in reaction to the disputed election of 1828 merged with and ultimately intensified a nationwide debate over the presidential succession. In chapter four Michael Ducey shifts our gaze to the local arena with a richly developed essay about how people from small towns in the hinterlands of the northeast gulf coast, a region known as the Huasteca, became swept up in national movements during the 1830s. This chapter proves that a *pronunciamiento* was never the sole preserve of military and civilian elites. In that way the *pronunciamiento* linked local and national concerns, and sharpened ideological divisions in the countryside.

The thematic coherence of the first four chapters of *Forceful Negotiations* leads into to a thematically divergent middle section. In chapter five, Kerry McDonald undertakes a comparative analysis of *pronunciamientos* launched between the 1820s and the 1850s in the

northern state of San Luis Potosí, categorizing them as either nationally or locally inspired. The former, with one exception, occurred when outsiders used the strategically important state capital to mount a challenge to the national government, while the latter involved local actors seconding a previous *pronunciamiento*. McDonald's discussion of local movements confirms Michael Ducey's. However, whereas Ducey sees them as subsumed *within* a *pronunciamiento*, McDonald interprets them as *pronunciamientos* in their own right, even if in most respects they do not correspond to Fowler's taxonomy. Indeed, McDonald disagrees with those, notably Josefina Vázquez, who maintain that such *actas de adhesión* did not qualify as *pronunciamientos*. Michael Costeloe leads the reader back across the Atlantic in chapter six with his insightful investigation of British investors entangled in a *pronunciamiento* in 1833. He reminds us that a *pronunciamiento* could have international importance. In chapter seven, Shara Ali returns to the question of origins, locating the roots of the Santiago Imán rebellion (1838-1840) in the state of Yucatán in the fraught relationship between Yucatán and the federal government, which prompted Imán to embrace secession. Through a close reading of Imán's *plan político* and contemporary accounts of the rebellion by Yucatecan elites, Ali reconstructs the interplay of local and national factors in spawning a *pronunciamiento*. She argues that local resentment to Yucatecan troops being sent to faraway Texas to suppress the secessionist movement there in 1835-1836 intensified regional suspicions of an increasingly authoritarian federal government, enabling the relatively small faction Imán led to transform into a broad-based regional movement.

Thematic coherence resumes with chapters eight, nine, and ten insofar as they analyze the instrumentality of the *pronunciamiento*. In chapter eight Melissa Boyd profiles the ideas of Mariano Otero, a leading moderate in an era of polarization, to convey the entrenchment of the *pronunciamiento* as a political instrument. Though publicly opposed to *pronunciamientos* in principal, Otero nevertheless published a lengthy tract in 1842 that Boyd reads as a defense of the so-called Triangular Revolt of the previous year. In chapter nine Reynaldo Sordo Cedeño describes a power struggle between the Congress and the presidency that precipitated

the collapse of Antonio López de Santa Anna's autocratic administration in a matter of hours without a shot being fired when, on December 6, 1844, the Congress sanctioned an earlier *pronunciamiento* against the government by the departmental assembly of Jalisco. Sordo Cedeño confirms that acceptance of the *pronunciamiento* as a legitimate means to pursue political change permeated even the highest reaches of civilian government. In chapter ten Rosie Doyle considers the 1852 Blancarte conspiracy, named for its figurehead, Col. José María Blancarte, that led to the restoration of Santa Anna as president the following year. Blancarte acted as the public face of an alliance of otherwise antagonistic groups—radical liberals, moderates, conservatives, monarchists, and supporters of Santa Anna—united in opposition to president Mariano Arista. Doyle explicitly reconfirms what other contributors to the anthology have also observed, that soldiers and civilians alike embraced the *pronunciamiento*.

Chapters eleven and twelve build on this idea and offer synthetic analyses of the *pronunciamiento* as a political phenomenon. In chapter eleven, Germán Martínez Martínez portrays the *pronunciamiento* as a building block of national identity. Basing his interpretation on an understanding of the *pronunciamiento* as a written text, he charts the discursive dimension of nationhood. Like Kerry McDonald (in chapter five), Martínez hews to an expansive definition of the *pronunciamiento*. Yet whereas the other contributors present the *pronunciamiento* as a process, Martínez sees it as a literary genre. His essay therefore marks an original and thought-provoking departure from other essays in the volume. The volume concludes with Will Fowler's summation of the contributor's findings, in which he points out two matters of consensus within a disparate collection of essays. First, the *pronunciamiento* was not only a means of pursuing political change, but also one of "public relations," a means of publicizing a view, cause, or person. Second, the *pronunciamiento* represented a paradoxical outcome of independence. Each and every one contributed to political fragmentation, undermining governance; but they also expressed Mexico's cohesion, for through the *pronunciamiento* Mexicans debated the terms of their incorporation as a nation.

Though undeniably central to the political history of nineteenth-century Mexico the *pronunciamiento* did not previously receive a book-length treatment. *Forceful Negotiations* makes a substantive contribution by providing a detailed rendering of an understudied subject. Moreover, the anthology enhances our understanding of how Mexicans defined the meaning of freedom in the formative decades after independence. Fowler and his collaborators forcefully demonstrate that the *pronunciamiento* was symptomatic of something more than chaos or dysfunction; they reveal an underlying order predicated on the attitudes, assumptions, and understandings that made the *pronunciamiento* into a fundament, indeed an institution, of political culture. The value of this anthology will be most readily apparent to historians of Mexico, who seem to be the target audience. The general reader, however, may find the array of people, places, and political factions confusing despite Fowler's introductory essay and the chronology that follows it. For this reason *Forceful Negotiations* is ill suited for undergraduate courses, even as the anthology merits the attention of a broad scholarly audience that includes those interested in politics, political discourse, civil-military relations, and the comparative history of the Iberian Atlantic.